

2 Chronicles 16

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[0 : 00] 2 Chronicles 16, we'll look at the chapter in its entirety.! It's not a very long chapter, but we'll look at the chapter in its entirety. Word of God says, In the 36th year of Asa's reign, Basha, king of Israel, came up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from going out or coming into Asa, king of Judah.

Let me stop right there for just a moment. If you go back to chapter 15, you would see why he is needing to stop people. Now, again, this is part of that taking your text in context, okay? And really where the truth of what's happening settles in. And I don't normally stop, but I want you to catch this. If you were to go back to the 15th chapter, you will find that numerous people are leaving the northern kingdom and coming and joining Asa in the southern kingdom of Judah. And the reasoning behind their fleeing the nation of Israel to the north is because they heard of the Lord God among his people down in Judah.

So that is the manifestation of the presence of the Lord is drawing the people there. And now to preserve his own empire, if you will, Basha is fortifying the cities not just to keep people out, but also to keep people in.

[1 : 25] So that people don't leave the northern kingdom and go into the southern kingdom. So keep that in the back of your mind as you're reading this and you understand what's going on. So he did it to prevent anyone from going out or coming into Asa king of Judah.

Then Asa brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the king's house. And he sent them to Ben-Hadad king of Aram who lived in Damascus saying, Let there be a treaty between you and me as between my father and your father.

Behold, I have sent you silver and gold. Go break your treaty with Basha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me. So Ben-Hadad listened to king Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the kings of Israel.

And they conquered Ishan, Dan, Abel, Mame, and all the store cities of Naphtali. When Basha heard it, he ceased fortifying Ramah and stopped his work. Then king Asa brought all Judah and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Basha had been building. And with them they fortified Geba and Mizpah. At that time Hananiah the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand.

[2 : 42] Were not the Ethiopians and Lubom, an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen. Yet because you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. And for the eyes of the Lord moved to and fro throughout the earth, that he may strongly support those whose heart is completely his.

You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars. Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this.

And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. Now the acts of Asa from first to last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. So Asa slept with his fathers, having died in the forty-first year of his reign.

And they buried him in his own tomb, which he had cut out for himself in the city of David. And they laid him in the resting place, which he had filled with spices of various kinds, blended by the perfumer's art.

[3 : 49] And they made a very great fire for him. I want you to see this evening, the danger of depending on man. The danger of depending on man.

In the previous chapter, Asa does some amazing things. He is greatly used of the Lord. And in the previous chapters, actually, we would say he is greatly used of the Lord. The Lord does a mighty thing of delivering him from the battle with the Ethiopians. Actually, it was the battle with the people out of Egypt who was ruled by an Ethiopian king. Or there was a Pharaoh out of Ethiopia at that time. And it was a million-man army with 300 chariots. And this really surpassed the military force of the men of Judah. But yet the Lord delivered him. And time and time again, Asa sees his faithfulness. He is one of those that is declared in the book of Kings. He is declared here as well as being one who does what is right in the sight of the Lord his God.

[4 : 48] Now, he starts his reign properly, but he does not end so well. And so we see the ending of it tonight. And really what we see is the danger of depending on man.

Now, before we get into it, we need to be careful. Because some can, there are many portions in Scripture and there are many texts which you can twist and distort and make them say any number of things that you want them to say.

I don't know if you have realized it or not. But throughout history, people have used various texts to be their proof texts. That is, to build a theology and say, I know that I'm right because of this text. This is what it says. There are some in church history and even in church present that will tell you that we need to have healings by faith alone and not trust in doctors. And they will use this as a proof text.

For he trusted in the physicians. He did not turn to the Lord. Now, that is a very poor proof text. Because in taking that as your proof text, you are taking it out of the context. Because the disease was not just a physical ailment.

[5 : 48] The disease was a divine discipline. And so when that which is ailing you is being disciplined, is issued as a discipline by the Lord, the solution is not found in man.

Now, I'll say that on the front end. And we will repeat it here in a little bit. Because when we read it, we're like, oh, well, I guess we shouldn't turn to physicians. There are so many things that that runs contrary to in all of scripture.

I mean, Paul's traveling companion was Luke, the beloved physician. Jesus himself told people to go to the physicians, right? We see this over and over again throughout scripture. So clearly, this is not what this text is talking about.

But what it is talking about is the danger that comes from dependence upon man. We are told here that it begins in the 36th year of Asa's reign.

Now, numerically, if you do the math, it doesn't seem to add up. And I'll go ahead and let you know that. Because I expect you to be good students of the word. And you'll say, well, that doesn't add up. Asa shouldn't have been reigning at the same time in the 36th year of his reign.

[6 : 52] And something doesn't happen. So most Bible scholars will tell you that it was the 36th year since the division of the kingdom. And in our translation of the text into the English, the wording gets a little confused.

It doesn't mean that the Bible is wrong. It doesn't mean there's contradictions there, right? It just means we need a little bit of clarity if we're going to make the numbers add up. But that really is not the major issue.

It really wouldn't matter when it happened. But what we find is that Basha, the king of Israel, begins to respond to everyone that is fleeing from Israel. Because while he has the majority of the land, he does not have the temple, nor the Levites, nor the priests.

And he doesn't have the manifest presence of God. And God has been delivering the people of Judah through wondrous deeds, even during the reign of Asa. And many people are flowing there. So he wants to stop that flow.

And he wants to fortify cities. And he begins to fortify it. Now, the problem happens in Asa's response. The first thing that we notice when we depend upon man, the first danger that we see, is that dependence upon man will always deplete our treasure.

[8 : 00] It will always deplete our treasure. It tells us that when this happens, Basha is building and fortifying the city. Then Asa brought out the silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the king's house.

Now, that's astounding because it is Asa who just reintroduced the treasures into the house of the Lord. It was he who put them there because his father before him did not do what was right and did not do what was righteous and had emptied the storehouses of the Lord.

And Asa, after his great delivery, now go back in your mind, where did these treasures come from? Well, these treasures came from the great plunder of the Judah people after their battle with the Ethiopian army.

So, after they defeated a million-man army simply because Asa cried out and said, We are not strong enough. We are not able. God, we have to have your help. And the Lord answers. They win the battle. The Lord goes and fights the battle before them. And then they plunder everyone around them. And all this plunder they bring back. And he fills up the storehouses of the temple.

[9 : 11] And he is enriched because God has been favorable to him. And he has trusted in the Lord with all of his heart. And yet now, when a rather inferior opponent, Basha, king of Israel.

And if you remember, if we were to look at the numbers of their military at this time, the military force of Judah is increasing and the military force of Israel is decreasing correspondingly. And the reason it's doing that is because the people of Judah are faithful and the people of Israel are not. And God is reigning his favor upon them. But yet when this really inferior enemy begins to fortify cities, Asa's first response is to empty the treasures of the temple and his own house. And he sends them to King Ben-Hadad who is in Damascus who reigns over Aram. And Aram is in league with the nation of Israel.

So what he's doing, he is trying to enter into a contractual, we don't want to say covenant, But he's entering into a contractual relationship. Our wording here is a covenant, but it looks more like a contract.

[10 : 22] I pay you for your resources or I pay you for your time and you repay me with your time and your resources. So it's more like a contract than it is a covenant. But he reaches out and he goes and he says, Have I not sent you the silver and gold?

Friend, listen to me. Trust in man will always cost us. Always. The word of God is clear. That when we see his people relying and trusting upon him, He enriches them through their reliance upon him. But when we begin to trust in man, we always pay.

It may not be financially or physically, but it is not free. Trusting in man to be the deliverer and the redeemer at that time is at a great expense to oneself and even to one's nation.

And we see that Asa pays this price and he wants to come and enter into this contract and he's longing for this. But yet what we notice is that the word of God tells us that the Lord is searching for the one whose heart is committed to him, that he may bless him.

[11 : 41] Those who trust in the Lord are blessed by him. Those who trust in the world bless the world with it. We will either be given our riches from the Lord God or we will give our riches to the world around us.

And it is a matter of the treasure that we have. When we begin to trust and depend upon man, it always depletes our treasure.

And it may not just be a physical treasure. It may be the days of our lives. It may be the time that we possess. It may be the moments and the opportunities.

But when the trust is given to man, those resources are always depleted. Secondly, and probably most telling from this passage is not only does dependence upon man deplete our treasure, it dismisses an opportunity.

We miss out on what God may be doing simply because we trust in man. Now, admittedly, when we see this text before us, when Asa does this, he sends the money to Ben-Hadad.

[12 : 54] Ben-Hadad responds and says, okay, that sounds good. And he breaks his covenant or his contract with Basha, king of Israel. He goes and fights against them because he's a hireling. The highest bidder wins, right?

And all of a sudden, he's there and Israel pulls back. And then Asa and his men, they go. They don't want all these stones and these timbers to rot. So they go and they get them and they reuse them. They build the city.

So they're expanding. So from the world's point of view, it looks like a win, right? Israel's leaving us alone. Not only is Israel leaving us alone, they're out fortifying cities. Look at all these resources we gathered.

Look at everything that we have. They brought the stones to our border because the town he was fortifying was really right on the border. They brought all the timber here. We didn't have to hew these timbers. We didn't have to hew these stones.

We have them. Now we can build our own cities. So it looks like a win-win. And while they're rejoicing in this victory, it tells us in the very next verse, in verse 7, At that time, Hananiah the seer came.

[13:49] I love that. Now I underline that in my other Bible. I don't do any writing in my preaching Bible because it distracts my eyes. But in my other Bible, I underline that at that time. Do you know the word of God is always on time?

And he has the right word at the right time, even when we don't expect it. And at that time, Hananiah shows up. When they are rebuilding these cities that probably needed a repair, and they're doing it with the resources from this victory, which they did not win.

But it was a victory that only cost them these treasures that they weren't using anyway, right? Small price to pay for in their mind. But at that time, Hananiah the seer came to Asa, king of Judah, and said to him, Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God. So we see his reliance. But what follows is telling because it doesn't even seem as if it was in the sphere of thinking.

Because you have relied on him and not relied on the Lord your God. Look at this. Therefore, the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand. You say, wait a minute.

[14:59] They weren't fighting a battle with the king of Aram. It was the king of Israel, Basha, that was fortifying the city, right? So they were concerned about the king of Israel. But who was in allegiance with the king of Israel?

The king of Aram. Right? And what God is saying is, while you were trying to preserve what you had, I wanted to expand your reach. Too often, we try to preserve what we already have when God wants to expand us.

And relying on man may help us self-preserve. But it will never push us to the expanse that God wants. God said, I would have not only delivered Israel into your hand.

I would have delivered the king of Aram, who, by the way, is one of the foes of the people of Judah. This would have been a great opportunity for me to deliver them.

But because you trusted in man, now you not only, as Israel left you alone, but you've missed the opportunity to defeat one of your enemies.

[16:05] And see, by relying upon man, we dismiss the opportunities that God puts before us. They saw a threat when God was looking at an opportunity. And their dependence and their reliance was misguided.

Too often, we say, well, that's a threat to what we already have. Let's preserve that. And we understand this in the rest of Scripture. God is not always about self-preservation, really. He's about exalting his glory and exalting his position among the world.

And Asa should have known this because God had already defeated much larger enemies before him. And yet he missed it. And he missed it because it was so much easier, so he thought, just to break the covenant.

God wasn't overwhelmed by the king of Aram. He wasn't concerned about what Israel was doing for to find the city. He was setting Judah up with the opportunity to be victorious once again.

And yet they were more concerned about maintaining what they already had. And too often, we get in this maintenance role. We just want to preserve what we have instead of allowing the Lord God to push us beyond what we would expect.

[17:23] And we need God to work and do those mighty things. And if you guard it like this, in our prayer life, too often our prayer life is our prayers of maintenance rather than prayers of growth.

And we want to maintain what we have personally. We want to maintain what we have corporately instead of asking God to do something that only he can do.

When sometimes what God is doing is giving us the opportunity to go further. So we see the dismissed opportunity. There's a depleted treasure. There's a dismissed opportunity.

Third and finally, because I know we need to get to our business tonight. We need to get to our time of prayer. When we depend upon man, we diminish our faith.

You say, well, yeah, pastor, that makes sense. But look at just how far we can diminish our faith. See, Asa had committed to know the Lord.

[18 : 27] Asa had sought the Lord with all of his heart. He had done more than just give lip service. He had actually cried out in dependence upon him. God had used him in a mighty way. God was drawing people to Judah because of Asa's dependence upon him.

So much so that it was a threat to Israel that so many people were leaving. So God was doing some wonderful things. We will read in the next chapter of Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, who reigns upon the throne.

We'll see his faithfulness. But we'll begin also to see this, the expanse of the army, how the army is growing. God was doing some wonderful things. And yet Asa, in this moment, looks up and forgets all about that.

And all he sees is a personal concern. And he just wants to hold on to what he already has.

Contrast that to when he went and fought against the Ethiopians. He took the offensive. He went out and trusted in the Lord.

Now he's more on the defensive, right? God doesn't call his people, right, to maintain a defensive position. Because Jesus says the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. Which just implies, because gates are by nature defensive.

[19 : 31] They defend a piece of property. So the implication there is that the church will be on the offensive. That the church is not sitting back and waiting for hell to attack the church. But rather that the church is on the offensive going and attacking hell.

Hell is the one, don't miss it, that has the gates set up there. So he is anticipating that the church will be moving forward. And he is anticipating that the church will continue to be walking faithfully. David is a man after God's own heart. But do you ever find David fighting a defensive battle? I answered that for you. No, you find David fighting offensive battles. He's trusting in the Lord and doing something.

Because faith, the book of James tells us what? Has action. Faith without works is dead. And so we see that. That he's trusting. Okay, I'm going to go do something.

Asa all of a sudden doesn't do anything. So therefore he doesn't have faith. He wants to send some money. And he wants somebody else to do it for him. And he kind of goes around the Lord God so he thinks. But then Hananiah comes.

[20 : 29] And he reminds him in verse 9. For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth. That he may strongly support those whose heart is completely his. You know, do a quick word study on that.

It is amazing how many times that one phrase is repeated in the Old Testament. That God is constantly looking throughout the earth to see who he can bless.

Whose heart is completely set upon him. This is not just a one time thing. We've said this in scripture. When scripture says something, we ought to pay attention to it. Because it is the word of God.

When scripture repeats something, we ought to say, wow. Okay, he wants us to get that. When he repeats it multiple times, we ought to say, okay. He wants us to really let that sink in.

Over and over again, in the Old Testament, it tells us that the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth. Seeking those whose heart are completely set upon him. Why? That he may bless them. That he may use them. That he may increase them.

[21 : 26] This isn't a name it and claim it theology. This is just saying he is looking for the people whose heart is completely set upon him. That he may utilize them and use them for his glory. And the reality is this reminder there.

So when the heart, when we're not looking to the Lord, even though he's looking to us, then we're missing the opportunity. He says, you have acted foolishly and indeed from now on you will surely have wars.

He had just experienced a time of peace because of his faithfulness. And in that time of peace, he had been able to do repairs to the temple. But now notice this. God sent this rebuke.

Being a man after God's own heart, as David, who's always the standard, especially in the Old Testament, does not imply perfection. Because there were times when David was rebuked. Right? We see if they're a man after God's own heart or a woman after God's own heart and how they respond to the rebuke. We have the penitent psalms of David that are his responses to the rebukes he had from the prophets or the seers.

[22 : 29] But look at what Asa's response is. Then Asa was angry at the seer and put him in prison. So rather than responding appropriately to the word, this is a man who has just declared a couple chapters prior to this that he is too weak and he needs the Lord.

And now when the Lord speaks to him, he gets angry and he puts him in prison. And we begin to see this diminishing faith. But the vertical always affects the horizontal.

That is, how we stand before the Lord our God will always determine how we affect and how we respect the people around us. Our relationship vertically will always influence our interactions horizontally.

And you can connect this in this verse. Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison. And now look at the last of it. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.

When he began to rebel against the word of God, he began to mistreat the people of God. And when we have horizontal problems, the root is not always horizontally.

[23 : 41] Horizontal problems are often, if not always, a result of vertical issues. When he began to rebel against the word, he began to oppress the people.

And these are his people. At the same time. Why? Because faith is being diminished. And you see this in our churches today.

You see it in our own personal relationships. When I have a problem with someone horizontally. The first thing that I need to do, personally. Is go before the Lord God and see where I stand vertically.

And there are times where I need to go back to that individual. And I need to repent. Not because I may have done something wrong to them. But because of the wrong that I was doing for the word of God.

It led to my relationships with people being strained. And I need to admit the reality that the root cause was not the individual. But rather it was self. And sometimes when I go before the Lord, maybe the problem is not with me.

[24 : 52] It says, live peaceably with all men as much as depends upon you. Right? So what you do is you go before the Lord and say, Lord, search me. Know me. Test me. You say, well then pastor, do you go point their faults out?

That's not my role and responsibility outside the realm of the church. If we're inside the realm of the church, then we can talk about it. We can. I'm not going to come to you and go, oh, you had this issue.

I saw this issue in your life. But we can talk about it. Right? We can understand what's going on here. Let's get to the root of the problem. Understanding that we all can be Asa at any given moment. Every one of us.

And it says, and now the acts of Asa from the first to the last. Behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. In the 39th year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet. So now we're introduced to this disease. Now this disease is set in the context of his rebellion against the word of God. He's put Hananiah in prison. He's oppressing the people of God. His diminishing faith.

[25 : 51] Now we have the disease in his feet. Again, take it in context. And this is, again, God's way of trying to get his attention.

We see this later with Hezekiah. And he tries to gather his attention, but he doesn't. Because it says, even in his disease, it did not seek the Lord, but the physicians.

What does that tell us? It's not that physicians are wrong, but that what he had started when he began to trust in man and depend upon man, when Basia was fortifying a city, he continued the remainder of his life.

Now, in sickness, he's trusting in man. Now, in sickness, he's, and even when it's severe, he won't humble himself and call out to the Lord. Why? Because his faith has been diminished.

He has moved away. He's walked away in rebellion. There are great and grave dangers of depending upon man. We cannot fully depend upon man and upon the Lord God simultaneously.

[27 : 01] We can depend upon the Lord God Almighty to use man. And we do. But our dependence must be rooted wholly and completely in the Lord God and his moving and interactions through man.

We see the danger of bypassing that found for us in 2 Chronicles 16. Thank you, my brothers.