

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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God is With You When You Are With Him

by Dan Trygg

“Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, ² and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Yahweh 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. ³ For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. ⁴ But in their distress they turned to Yahweh God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him.’”

II Chronicles 15:1-4

“They entered into the covenant to seek Yahweh God of their fathers with all their heart and soul... 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! So Yahweh gave them rest on every side.”

II Chronicles 15:12,15

Asa was the great-grandson of Solomon, Israel’s most powerful king. **Solomon had started out well, but succumbed to the subtle enticements of pride, wealth and fleshly indulgence.** His reign was the high point of Israelite power and prosperity, but he disregarded the Lord’s counsel. Instead of trusting in God as the true basis of his prosperity, he made marriage alliances with neighboring kings. He also got heavily into the lucrative weapons trade, buying horses and chariots from Egypt to sell to nations to the north. This was “easy money”, and for a time silver and gold were as common as stones in Jerusalem. Sound pretty good? Well, God had counseled kings to *avoid three things*, ...they were *not* to return to Egypt to obtain horses, multiply wives for themselves, nor greatly increase silver and gold for themselves! **The king was to write out a copy of the Torah, and read from it every day of his life**, so that “he would learn to fear God”, ...and so that “his heart would not be lifted up above his countrymen”, which means that he would not come to think of himself as better than others. Why? Because pride and arrogance usually lead to a sense of entitlement and the abuse of power (Deut. 17:14-20). **Solomon, who started out so well, ended as a lecherous, idolatrous, despot.** His many foreign wives led him to seek and worship other gods, and indulge in the evil, degrading practices associated with them.

His son, Rehoboam, reared within this atmosphere of entitlement, pride and indulgence, rejected the appeal of the nation to moderate his father’s abusive policies. He threatened even harsher policies. As a result, the people rebelled, and he was left with only a fraction of the kingdom given to his father. He, too, worshiped other gods. Yahweh withdrew His protection and blessing, and **within only five years of Solomon’s death, the Egyptian pharaoh captured Jerusalem, and stripped it of its great wealth** (II Chron. 12:1-12). The mighty kingdom of Solomon, to whom *other* kings had paid tribute, now became a shattered, minor puppet nation under Egyptian control. **Rehoboam lived another 12 years, dying at 58.**

Rehoboam’s son, Abijah, only reigned three years. He was *not* wholly devoted to Yahweh, living in the arrogance and self-indulgences of his father. **He did have one moment of clarity, where he stood up against attacks from the northern kingdom,** the tribes who had rebelled against his father. **In the face of two-to-one odds, Abijah boldly took his stand against them, confident that Yahweh would support him,** because he and his kingdom had not forsaken worshipping Him according to the Torah. **God honored his faith and the stand he took, routing the opposition,** and destroying over half of the enemies’ forces. Abijah became powerful, and had 14 wives and 22 sons and 16 daughters (II Chron. 13:21).

Asa was a young man when he came to power. It is conceivable that he could have lived from the end of Solomon’s reign, right through his grandfather’s and father’s reigns. **He would have grown up surrounded by all of the excesses of the royal family.** He would have had knowledge of Solomon’s 300 wives and 700 concubines, and potentially many children (although there are only *three* mentioned by name), as well as the harems of his grandfather and father. **He would have seen the idolatrous shrines, and the evil practices of their devotees. He undoubtedly heard of his grandfather’s arrogance, and later humiliation.** He may even have been old enough to *remember* the Egyptian invasion, and the plundering of Jerusalem, because of unfaithfulness to Yahweh. **He could have been in the army, when his father stood up to the armies of Israel, and personally witnessed the miracle, as God routed and destroyed the enemy army.** In any case, *when he became king, he initiated significant reforms.* He removed the foreign altars, the high places where people worshiped other gods, tore down the sacred pillars and Asherah poles of idolatrous worship. **He commanded Judah to seek Yahweh, and observe His commandments and covenant.** He built fortified cities during the early years of his reign. They had peace from the Lord. His thinking is revealed in the statement recorded in II Chronicles 14:7, “The land is still ours, because we have sought Yahweh our God, and He has given us peace on every side.” **Clearly, he was deeply impacted by the great deliverance God gave to his father, Abijah.** The people of Asa’s kingdom took advantage of the peace God had given them, built their cities and farms,

and enjoyed prosperity. **He also equipped and trained a large army**, ...300,000 from Judah, who bore large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, who bore smaller shields and were archers (II Chron. 14:7,8).

His faith was put to the test, when an Ethiopian king came out against them with an army of 1,000,000 men, and 300 chariots (chariots were like the equivalent of a tank in modern warfare). **By all appearances, there was little hope that they could oppose such an overwhelming, superior force. Instead of negotiating with them, however, Asa went out to meet them in battle.** Asa cried out to God, “*Yahweh, there is no one besides You to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O Yahweh our God, for we trust in You, and in Your name have come against this multitude. O Yahweh, You are our God; let not man prevail against You*” (II Chron. 14:11). **God not only routed the Ethiopians before Judah, but Asa’s men pursued them nearly 20 miles to Gerar! They conquered a number of cities in that region, and took much plunder back to Jerusalem.**

The Holy Spirit came on Azariah the prophet, and he went out to meet the victorious king and his army, and declared the words recorded at the top of this paper. “**Yahweh 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.**” He spoke of how for many years Israel had been without God, and without teachers who would teach the Law. Whenever they encountered trouble, and sought God, however, He was gracious to let them find Him. *He exhorted them to be strong and courageous, for there is reward and blessing in the work Asa had been doing. As a result of this direct encouragement, Asa went even further in his religious reforms*, purifying the land of idolatry, and restoring the altar of Yahweh in the Temple. **He gathered the people from Judah, Benjamin, and many others** who defected to him from Israel (because they could see that Yahweh was with Asa), and they assembled in Jerusalem **to offer sacrifices and to covenant together to seek God with all their hearts and souls.** As they did so, He let them find Him, and He gave peace for the next 20 years.

At that time, **in his 36th year as king, another big test came along.** Baasha, the king of Israel, the nation immediately to the north, started fortifying one of its cities, so that it could blockade trade going to or from Jerusalem. **Instead of seeking God, or preparing to defend Judah, Asa resorted to taking silver and gold out from the Temple treasury, and making a covenant with the Syrians**, convincing them to attack Israel on its northern border. While this tactic worked, **God sent a prophet to Asa, rebuking him for trusting in the king of Syria, rather than in Yahweh.** The consequence would be that the Syrians would “escape out of his hands” (16:8). He reminded Asa of the wonderful deliverance God had worked on his behalf, 20 years earlier. **God is always searching for those whose hearts are completely dedicated to Him, so that He might strongly support them.** “You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars” (16:9). **Instead of repenting, Asa became angry with the prophet, and threw him in prison, and he began to be oppressive toward others, as well.** After three more years of resistance toward God, Asa became diseased in his feet. *Even then, he did not seek Yahweh*, but the physicians (16:12). **He had forsaken God, so God left him to his affliction. He had become the arrogant, conniving, oppressive despot!!**

Boy, there are a lot of lessons in this study! A key point is that **God is looking for those people whose hearts are fully committed to Him.** Note that **they are people who expect God to work.** Both Abijah and Asa believed in God enough to *face* overwhelming odds. These men believed that the Lord could give them the victory, *in spite of* the apparently unequal nature of the contest. It is reminiscent of Jonathan’s comment to his servant, “...the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few” (I Sam. 14:6). **Another lesson is that people can start out well, and become seduced by wealth, fleshly desires, and power. Over time, their minds become dulled to the reality of God.** They lose sight of Him in their earthly pursuits. They begin to think they can solve their own problems, coming up with their own plans, using their own resources, often by compromising with the enemy himself! **They do not expect God to work, so they don’t seriously seek for Him.** They *look to human solutions* to their problems, *instead of expecting God to act* on their behalf (e.g., Isa. 30:1,2). **The prophet had said that if we seek God, He will let us find Him, but if we forsake God, He will forsake us.** David had told Solomon the very same thing, when he was just starting out as king (I Chron. 28:9). God is calling us *away*. He is calling us to *follow Him*. **If we hear His call, and begin to pursue Him, we will have to put aside the comfortable things of life, to some degree, to get closer to Him.** Look at the reforms Asa introduced. He *radically* cleaned house! He purposefully removed all remnants of false religion, or competing Gods. He “cleansed” areas that had been contaminated with idolatrous practices. *If we want God, we have to do the same.* **We have to “prepare the way for the Lord” by repentance, purification, and pursuing Him.** We must turn away from the path of the unbelieving, the wicked or foolish, and choose to draw near to God, and to gather with God’s people. **You can’t go with God, and stay where you are! If you are going to find God, you have to frequent the paths He travels.** You have to go where *He* goes. Jesus said that the Spirit would be with us forever. I believe that is true. However, **if we forsake God and His plans for our lives, if we choose not to follow Him, He will leave us in our circumstances, choices and consequences.** Paul alluded to this in I Cor. 9:27. It is possible to be un moldable and useless for the Lord’s service. The potter takes such a pot, and sets it aside.