



2 Chronicles 13-15

Tape #7134
II Chronicles 13-15
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to II Chronicles, chapter thirteen, as we continue our study through the Bible. It is interesting that as we are going through the Chronicles, actually it is sort of a repetition of the Kings, the books of Kings, in that it does cover again, the history of the kings of Judah. Of course we did look at them somewhat in the book of the Kings, of Judah and Israel. The Chronicles are more of the kingdom of Judah than the kingdom of Israel, so we'll be following close with the kings of Judah. In chapter thirteen...

It came to pass that when Jeroboam [The king of the northern tribes of Israel] was in his eighteenth year of his reign that Abijah began to reign over Judah (13:1).

So the reign of Rehoboam was not that long actually, an eighteen year reign, he began to reign about the same time, and in the eighteenth year Jeroboam of Jeroboam's reign, Abijah began to reign over Judah.

He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Michaiah [And here it is Michaiah.] the daughter of Uriel. [She was the granddaughter of Absalom. So sometimes you will see her called Michaiah, the daughter of Absalom. But they really don't have a term for granddaughter, so they uh, say the daughter of Absalom, through Uriel.] And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam (13:2).

Now from II Kings, we find out that this fellow Abijah isn't really as solid with the Lord as he could be. "He followed in the sins of his fathers", it says. Not much told us in Kings, concerning Abijah, but quite a bit, that is in I Kings, actually, quite a bit here in Chronicles.

So there was this war, northern and southern kingdom. Now Rehoboam was forbidden from going to war. It would appear that when Abijah came to the throne, that Jeroboam figured that it was a time of weakness, the change of kings, and a good time to attack, and to perhaps take the southern kingdom, and bring the whole thing under his control. He had an extremely large army...

eight hundred thousand men [armed men] valiant men ready for war [So with the death of Rehoboam, the ascension of Abijah, he figured that, that was a good opportunity to attack.] and so Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war of four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam set his troops in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, who were mighty men of valour. And so Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which was in the area of Ephraim, and he said, Hear me, Jeroboam, and all of Israel (13:3-4);

So this is one of those kind of things that you try to talk things out first. And, if you can talk your way out of war, great! War should always be a last resort after all of the talks have failed. So Abijah is addressing Jeroboam, the people of Israel. And he said...

Ought you not to know that Jehovah the God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and his sons by a covenant of salt (13:5)?

Now it would seem that Jeroboam is trying to destroy the Davidic kingdom. "Don't you realize that God is the one that established the dynasty of David, the house of David over Israel for ever?" Now we do know that God's promise was a conditional promise. He would establish it forever if they continued to walk in the ways of the Lord. It was a conditional promise. Abijah doesn't really recognize a conditional promise by a covenant of salt.

Now when they would offer the sacrifices, they would always salt the sacrifices as a preservative. So the idea of the covenants of salt was a preserving, or a covenant that would not cease. It was a continuing covenant, the covenant of salt, it was one that was preserved. Thus the idea the covenant of salt, one that was to be preserved.

Yet [he declares] Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, has risen up, and has rebelled against his Lord. And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and they have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young, tenderhearted, could not withstand them (13:6-7).

So they caught Rehoboam at a time of his youth, tenderhearted didn't have the strength to withstand them, they rebelled.

And now you think to withstand the kingdom of Jehovah in the hand of the sons of David; and you are a great multitude, but you have with you your golden calves, which Jeroboam made for your gods. [You have not, and you have not, or,] And have you not cast out the priests of the lords the sons of Aaron, the Levites, and you have made priests after the manner of the nations of the other lands? so that whosoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods (13:8-9).

So as he is addressing them, he is showing actually how they've turned away from the true and the living God, from Jehovah. Now Jeroboam has set up these golden calves, and they did expel the priests out of the land of Israel. We remember under the reign of Rehoboam, we were there last week, where the priests from the northern area left their cities, the suburbs there, and they joined with Judah. But then, in the northern kingdom, the priesthood was just up for anybody. Anybody could be priest. Just bring an offering, and you could become a priest. Priests who were really no priests, but they were, I guess even enough, because the gods that they were priests of really weren't gods anyhow, so what difference does it make? Priests that are no priests who are serving gods that are not gods. So, pretty even. "Have you not cast out the priests of Jehovah, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made the priests out of the manner of nations", and so forth, "so that any man who comes to consecrate himself may be a priest of them that are no gods?"

But as for us, Jehovah is our God, [So Abijah acknowledges a continual allegiance to, and a reliance upon Jehovah.] and we have not forsaken him; the priests, which minister unto Jehovah, are the sons of Aaron, the Levites and they wait upon their business: ["We are following after the covenant that God made with our fathers."] They burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening the burnt sacrifices the sweet incense: they offer the shewbread that is set in the order on the pure gold table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of Jehovah our God; but you have forsaken him (13:10-11).

So he is plainly and clearly declaring, "Look, you've got us outnumbered, except the Lord is on our side. You have forsaken the Lord, you've cast out the priests of the Lord, you're not following after the Lord at all! You're serving false gods. We have continued faithful to Jehovah. We still have the offerings that are being made daily. We still have the covenant of the priesthood with the house of Aaron, and they offer the sacrifices, and they take care of the worship and so forth, and you have forsaken Him. We still serve Him".

And, behold, [he said] God himself is with us as our captain, [Now he's, he's again as I said, trying to talk his way out of the battle.] his priests are with us that sound their trumpets to cry the alarm against you. O children of Israel, do not fight against Jehovah the God of your fathers; for you shall not prosper (13:12).

Now he's really laying some heavy truths on them! "We are serving Jehovah, He is the captain of our host, don't fight against Jehovah, the God of your fathers!"

It's interesting to me, how many people who do fight against Jehovah, the God of their fathers. The prophet Isaiah said, "Woe unto him who fights with his maker. Woe unto the man who sets his heart to fight against God!" Yet, we look around and we see how many people have deliberately set their hearts against God. How many people are at war, at a real conscious war with God, deliberate war against God! There are those who are seeking to corrupt our whole nation. They have set themselves to fight against God. But the scripture says, "Woe unto him who fights with his maker!". The thing about fighting with God, how in the world could you ever hope to win? I mean that has to be the height of folly for a man to set himself against God, and to think that, "I can fight God". So he is warning them. "Fight not against Jehovah God of your fathers, because you can't prosper."

But Jeroboam, during this whole thing, was using this opportunity for treachery. While he was up there talking, trying to come to some kind of an appeasement so that the war would not be fought, trying to get things settled without a battle, Jeroboam had secretly sent some troops around behind the armies of Judah, planning to just circle them, and attack them from all sides. It is a, it's, well, it's just not practiced. It's when you're talking at a peace conference, you've gathered together to talk things out, to actually go ahead and prepare for war is not congenial, but yet Jeroboam, while he was talking and trying to establish peace, was

actually already engaged in his plan of battle. Much like during World War II, when the Japanese Ambassador came over to the United States, and was with Roosevelt, and all, talking about peace and resolving the problems, when Pearl Harbor took place. While the fellow was here supposedly on some kind of a peace mission, the ships were on their way with planes to bomb Pearl Harbor. So, much the same kind of a sneaky attack that we have here with Jeroboam.

*He caused an ambushment to come around behind them: so that they were in front of Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. And so when the men of Judah looked back, behold, the battle was in front and behind: and they cried unto Jehovah, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, **that God smote Jeroboam and all of Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men** (13:13-17).*

Never in the history of a battle in the Bible, where so many men slain in a battle. Five hundred thousand of the men of Israel. It just decimated, uh, more than decimated their troops.

Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because [and the reason is given] they relied upon Jehovah the God of their fathers. And so Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, he took cities from him, the city of Bethel [Where of course, they had set up the golden calves.] and the towns around it, the city of Jeshanah with the towns around it, and Ephraim with the towns that were around that vicinity. Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again [It was all over for Jeroboam.] and in the days of Abijah: the Lord struck him, and he died (13:18-20).

So it actually um, brought the end of the reign of Jeroboam in the northern kingdom.

Now, Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, he had twenty two sons, sixteen daughters. And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo (13:21-22).

Now evidently they are learning something. Solomon carried this multiplicity of wives to his max. Rehoboam, his son, was a little more restrained than his father. Now, Abijah is more restrained than Rehoboam, and really after this, we do not find the multiplicity of wives like this. It's sort of the end of that. Women started getting control of the issue.

Chapter 14

So Abijah slept with his fathers, they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In the days of the reign of Asa for ten years the land was quiet. And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord: For he took away the altars of the strange gods, the high places, he broke down the images, and cut down the Ashorems (14:1-3):

The idols of the female goddesses. The multi-breasted idols of the sex goddesses. Now, it is interesting Abijah evidently allowed these to, well, actually they were established by Solomon, were not totally eradicated by Rehoboam, and continued to exist through the reign of Abijah. Though Abijah gave this, you know, impassioned speech said, "We serve Jehovah God", yet uh, these other gods were there. Abijah did not reign but for three years, so he did not have a long reign in Judah. But here is Asa now, starting his reign in strength, a spiritual reform, he took away these strange gods.

And he commanded Judah to seek Jehovah the God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment (14:4).

Now it must be noted at this point, that though he did initiate this reform, it was not as yet a complete reform. There was sort of a surface reformation which often times takes place in the history of a people, or of a nation. There are reforms that are initiated, but they are not really truly deep reforms, they are surface reforms, and under the guidance of strong leadership. Many times there come certain surface reforms among the people. But unless it's really down into the heart of the nation, and into the hearts of the people, those kind of reformations are not lasting. So, we will come to the second reform of Asa, in the fifteenth chapter.

He took away out of all of the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him (14:5).

So during this period of peace, during this period of strength, they decided to increase their strength by...

Building the fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no wars in those years; because Jehovah had given him rest. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make walls around them, with the towers, and the gates, and the bars, while the land is yet quiet before us; because we have sought Jehovah our God, and we have sought him, and he has given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered (14:6-7).

So seeking God, they had peace, they had prosperity. Always true. "Righteousness exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people." As the nation seeks God, the nation will experience prosperity, it'll experience peace. But as sure as a nation forgets God, there's gonna be turmoil, there's gonna be crisis.

And Asa had an army of men that bore targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, those that bore shields and drew bows, two hundred and eighty thousand: so all of them are mighty men of valour (14:8).

Now it is interesting from a genetic standpoint, the tribe of Judah were shorter guys. Tribe of, I mean the tribe of Benjamin were shorter, the tribe of Judah were taller. So those fellows from the tribe of Judah had these big targets as shields, they were sort of a full-bodied kind of a thing, and they used the spears, the bigger guys, stronger. These guys from Benjamin, a little smaller, they used bows. They hit their enemy from a distance, and they had shields that they used in defense. So, total of, of course, uh three hundred thousand, let's see, of Judah, and two hundred and eighty thousand, five hundred and eighty thousand total army. So it has grown from the time of, of Abijah.

There came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with a host of one million men, [So, Asa has a lot of men, five hundred and eighty thousand, but this guy's coming with a million men plus,] three hundred chariots; and they came to Mareshah. And Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah (14:9-10).

Facing an opponent that has more powerful weapons, and that outnumbers you, the wisest thing you can do is what Asa did, pray!

And Asa cried unto the Lord his God and said, Jehovah, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or them that have no power: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go out against this multitude (14:11).

First of all, in his prayer, he recognizes that, "If God helps us, that's all we need. And, it doesn't make any difference to God whether we are weak, or whether we are strong. God can help the weak as well as the strong". Difficulty has to always be measured by the capacity of the agent that's doing the work. He is calling upon God to do the work, thus any thought of difficulty is absurd. "Lord it is nothing for you to help, whether with those that are weak, or those that are strong." It is interesting how that we almost automatically, and naturally carry over unto God, our own limitations.

When we are faced with something that doesn't seem to be any problem, it seems to be just a simple solution, we have several alternatives, and you know, there's nothing. "Lord help us", you know, "and thanks a lot. Just stand by, and you know we can do our thing", and we don't really get too excited about it. But when you're coming up against some impossible situations, then it seems that our whole tenor of prayer changes. They're not really sort of casual, nonchalant prayers, now they become desperate prayers. We even consider fasting and praying! This takes a whole different type of a prayer, because this is a real problem, "I don't know the answer". It's like if a person comes, and says, "Would you pray? I've got a headache", "Sure! Can pray for headaches. No problem, you know! If the Lord doesn't take it away, take an aspirin. You know, it's, headaches are simple things to pray for." But if a person calls up and says, "I just got reports from the tests that they have made upon my little girl, and she has leukemia." We say, "Oh God! Oh no! OH GOD!", you know, I mean you can't just pray, "Oh Lord, touch and heal this headache". Now you've gotta really get into the prayer. If it's leukemia, that takes really, a real forceful prayer. One where you sustain a bit. You get even the prayer voice, and the prayer language. "Have to use King James for this one", you know. "OH GOD!!! Thou art the Creator Lord!" You know, you really get into it, because leukemia is tough.

If someone comes along who has an arm amputated, and they say, "You know it's really convenient not

having an arm, would you pray that God would give me a new arm?" You don't even pray about that. You tell them that they have to learn to live with things, you know, and God will help them to live with it. But, I mean after all, "What do expect God to do? You know, put a, come on!" Yet God said to Jeremiah, "Behold, I am God. Is there anything too hard for me?" You know, if you take an octopus and cut off its arm, it'll grow a new one. You take a worm and cut it in half, and it'll grow a new half. But God can't you know, do something like that for man. Only for octopus, and worms does God save His special powers.

The limitations are not with God, the limitations are with us. Because we carry our human qualifying over into the divine. If it's easy for us, must be easy for God. If it's difficult for us, it must be difficult for God. If it's impossible for us, must be impossible for God. That's unfortunately the way we look at things, and consider things, but that's wrong! It is just as easy for God to heal a person of leukemia, as it is to heal them of a simple little earache. It doesn't take any more effort or power on the part of God, to heal from the most severe of diseases or illnesses, from a human standpoint. God is not limited.

As the king recognizes, "Lord, it is nothing for you to help". What seems to us, to be so difficult or so impossible, is really nothing at all for God! Nothing for God! "Behold I am God. Is there anything too hard for me?" Jeremiah, when he prayed again said, "Lord you are God, there is nothing too hard for you". God wants to bring us to that realization, that it isn't the prayer that does it, nor is it the fervency of the prayer, or whatever, it's just the faith in God that counts. Can I believe that God is able to do it.

Now our problem in looking at things from the human standpoint, and from the human diagnoses, is that so many times we are so overwhelmed by the power of the disease, or by the impossibility of man's being able to cope with it, that we come really defeated. We don't really expect God to work because the doctor has said that it's hopeless, there's just absolutely nothing that can be done. So we take that as, "It's just hopeless". But we're not taking God into account.

When in the new testament, the fourth chapter, the book of Acts, when the disciples had gathered back with the body of believers, after having been threatened and beaten in the, or threatened actually by the religious rulers, as they gathered back and told the things that had happened, the threats that were made, they said, "Well let's pray". As they began to pray, they said, "Oh Lord, you are God. You created the heavens and the earth, and everything that is in them". I think that, that's a good way to begin prayer, as we acknowledge the power of God.

He is the creator of this whole universe. He is the creator of our bodies. He is the creator of all of these marvelous functions within the bodies. He is the creator of the various glands, that produce the various hormones and chemicals, that keep the body in balance. Now we can ascribe to God the power of creation, but we can't ascribe to Him, the capacity of tuning up His creation. "Oh my body chemistry is just all out of whack. You know my hypothalamus is just doing too much", or "my pituitary and, oh!". God's not able to make minor adjustments you know, with these things is He? He only created them and designed them to begin with!

"Lord, it's nothing for you to help." We need to have that awareness when we come to God, and we're asking God to intervene, then it doesn't make any difference if I'm weak as a kitten, or as powerful as a lion. Doesn't make any difference! "God help me! I'm calling upon you, I'm not gonna rely upon my strength, or I'm not gonna worry about my weakness Lord. I'm looking to you to help." "Help us, O Lord; for we rest in thee." God help us, to be able to do that.

How difficult that is, isn't it? We lay the problem before God, and then we go to bed and wrestle all night with the problem. We wake up during the night thinking about it, and we can't go to sleep, as we wonder, "Well what's gonna happen, and what if I do this, and what if I do that, and maybe I should do this". And, we're not really resting in God to take care of it. We continue to carry the burden, and that's what wears us out. Having called upon God for His help, then we need to take the second step and just rest in God. I've placed it in the hands of God, and I'm just trusting Him to take care of it.

Now it'll drive your friends crazy! "Well what are you doing about it?" "Oh, I'm just trusting the Lord, just resting in Him." "Well now come on! God helps those that help themselves! You've gotta do something! You know, you just can't sit there!" And it drives, ha ha, well, we used to sing of course, "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart", and then there was a verse to that, "I've got the happy hope that

heckles heathens, down in my heart". And when you're resting in the Lord, it can really heckle the heathen! I mean they just don't understand why you're not in a frenzy! They don't understand how you can sleep, with those problems that you're facing. "How can you just sit there? Don't you really, you don't care! That's it! You don't care!" "I've placed it in the hands of the Lord, I'm resting in Him."

Years ago, when my wife and I were in Corona pastoring a small little church, our first Sunday we started out with about fifty people, after two years of hard effort, putting our best into it. We had seventeen people, and five of them were our own family. Things were tough, things were hard! We were living in a house, a rented house on South Bell St. Kay is very inventive and artistic and with nothing, you know just a little bit of cheap fabric, she can make a house look great. She has that kind of artistic ability. So we went in, and of course, I have the capacity to do the things that she feels needs to be done. So we make a good team! So we had all the "honey-do's", and when the honey was through, the house was very attractive. We did a lot of painting, we did a lot of fixing up, and so when the lady came to collect the rent, she saw how nice the house looked, and she decided she'd move back into the house herself! So she gave us an eviction notice.

Well, Kay was expecting our third child, and the house was reasonable, rent wise, and to find another house that we could afford, was tough. Because all we could afford was fifty dollars a month. So the lady had given us the notice, and so two weeks before we were to move, she called up, and asked how plans were going for our move, and we said, "Well, they're going fine". She said, "Well do you have a house yet?", we said, "No". She said, "Well you know I've given you notice, you're gonna have to get out of there, because I'm gonna live...", we said, "Yes. We're gonna move. Don't worry. We'll be out on the date that you want it". "But why don't you have a house yet?" I said, "We've been looking. We look every night, we follow the paper, we look at the ads, and we're looking." A week before we were to move, she called up again! "Do you have a house yet?" "No, we don't." She just about had apoplexy, I thought for awhile you know, her blood pressure would go so high, she'd kick, and we wouldn't have to move. But uh, I really didn't know how the Lord was gonna work it out. But uh, I assured her that we would be out. "We'll move."

Every day that week, she called to see if we found a place yet, because we were to move on Saturday. I said, "Mam, I've already got the truck ordered. It's coming Saturday, we're gonna move". "But where are you gonna move?" I said, "I don't know yet. I don't know yet." Saturday came, we didn't have a place. But we did have some, we had rented a trailer actually, not a truck, we could move everything in a trailer in those days, and some people in the church said, "We have a garage. You can just move your stuff in the garage until you can find a house".

My parents lived in Santa Ana, so we figured we'd just move in with my parents. You know parents are so convenient. They're just really great that way! "We'll just move down with my parents until we can find a rental out there that we can afford. In the meantime, we'll move our stuff into these people's garage. Our furniture and all, we'll just move in the garage."

So, Saturday came, we rented the trailer, we moved everything in their garage, and we came down to Santa Ana. We were eating dinner at my folk's house, and the phone rang, and the people whose house we had placed the furniture in their garage, were on the phone. They said, "This afternoon, a moving van came to the little house next door to us here, and the people were moving out, and we asked them if the place was rented yet, and they said, 'No.', and we said, we know some people that will rent it, how much is it?" And they said, "Fifty five dollars". They said, "We've got friends. We'll take it". So they, that very evening, well they, Cory was saying, we didn't even have to rent a trailer, we could move it right out of their garage into the house!

It was a cuter house than the other one! I didn't have nearly as much work, just a new tile floor in the bath, and a few other things, but we were able to fix that up, and it was just, just ideal! But the fact that we weren't all upset, and fighting the eviction, and everything else, and of course this is what she figured! She, this woman, was afraid that we'd go to the court with Kay, big with child, great with child, and we would lay this sob story on the judge, and he'd see our, you know, we'd go in with our two little children, and Kay's pregnant with the third, and the judge would say, "My! Cruel woman, give these kids more time!". She was really afraid of that. That we were gonna pull some kind of a deal like that, and was just totally upset with us, though we kept assuring, "We're gonna move out".

But we had that wrapped. We knew that it's all in the hands of the Lord. "Lord, we rest in thee." It's wonderful to have that rest in the Lord, even when we don't know how God is going to work out the circumstances. I'm not sure what God is gonna do. He's gonna do something, that I know, and what He does will be right! So, why worry about it! "Lord, we rest in thee." Then, he goes on to say, "And in thy name, we go out against this multitude". I like that, it's not, "Lord, please get on our side", it's, "Lord, we're getting on your side! In your name, we're gonna go out against this multitude. We're out numbered, we're out armed, but in your name, we're just gonna go out against them!" Then he throws in the little hooker.

Lord, don't let man prevail against you (14:11).

"You know, they're not gonna prevail against us, we're on your side. Don't let them prevail against you Lord. Take care of them." That's a neat position to be. To know that, "I have placed myself in the hands of the Lord, He is fighting my battles, He's taking care of me. Man can't prevail against me, nor can they ever prevail against my God." So that glorious position of strength. The Proverbs read, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous runneth into it, and are saved". How many times we've fled into that tower. The name of the Lord, the name of Jesus, has been that tower of strength, where we have fled, where we have found the peace, where we have found the refuge. Many times, it's just the breathing of the name, "Oh Jesus", and, and that strength that comes! The tower of strength that is there, for those who trust in Him. Now, what happened?

So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar; and the Ethiopians were overthrown, they could not recover themselves: for they were destroyed before the Lord, and before his host; and the children of Judah carried away much spoil. And they smote the cities around Gerar; for the fear of the Lord had come upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away the sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem (14:12-15).

I mean, God did a real number on the enemy, and they were the ones that collected the loot. And the, the uh, spoils of war.

Chapter 15

And so the spirit of God came upon Azariah [the prophet] the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and he said unto him, Hear me, Asa, and all of Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while you be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you (15:1-2).

Basic, basic truth. Underline it, take it to heart. What was said to Asa, Judah, and Benjamin, is true of us today. "The Lord is with you, if you will be with him; and if you will seek him, you will find him; and if you forsake him, he will forsake you." Oh this message ought to be carried to Congress, and to the Senate. "The Lord is with you, if you will be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you." It should be carried to the nation! Oh that a prophet of God could speak to the nation, as this prophet Azariah spoke to that nation! Giving them the warning, "You're blessed with victory. You're coming back with spoils of war. You have prospered, you've defeated the enemy, and the Lord did it for you, and He'll be with you as long as you're with Him, and when you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you turn and forsake Him, the Lord will forsake you."

And now for a long season [he declares] Israel has been without a true God, [And talking probably of the northern kingdom, for they had forsaken God, and had turned to idolatry. The northern kingdom was referred to as "Israel".] and they had been without a teaching priest, and without the law (15:3).

Because they had expelled all of the priests out of the north.

But when in their trouble they turned to Jehovah God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. [God is always gracious, you turn to God, and you will find Him.] And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor him that came in, but great vexations were upon the inhabitants of the countries. And the nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong therefore, let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded (15:4-7).

"So take the example of Israel, and you be strong, and don't be weak. Your work will be rewarded." There's a fascinating verse of scripture in I Corinthians, the last chapter, that says, "Your labor for the Lord

is not in vain". Now there are a lot of things that we can put a lot of time and effort and money into, that turn out to be in vain. You can work for years on a project, and just have the thing scrapped, and all of the labor was in vain. But know this, whenever you do something for the Lord, it is never in vain! God will reward you and bless you for what you have done.

The great thing about serving the Lord, it is straight salary, not commission. You don't get paid for just those you get on the dotted line. The Lord tells you to witness, and He rewards you for witnessing, not for how many came to Christ. I think a lot of times, we get this conception of you know, you're paid for results. So we hesitate going out, because I witnessed to five people, no one accepted the Lord, and here a guy comes in and says, "Oh I witnessed to ten people yesterday, they all ten came to the Lord". I think, "Oh!", but one plants, one waters, God gives the increase. He who plants is nothing, he who waters is nothing, it is the Lord who gives the increase.

So you're not really paid for those that you get signed. You're just paid to be a witness. That's where God rewards you. You're faithful in your witness, the Lord, the Lord rewards you, you know, and it's not for how many come to the Lord. You don't have to worry about that. I like that. I like just being a witness for Christ. The rest is in His hands. And I rest in Him, I go out and do the work, and I just rest in the Lord to bring the person to Himself.

I had a drunk stagger up to me one time and say, "You converted me!", you know. And, I thought, "That's your problem!". I can't convert anybody! Only the Lord can do a work of conversion. I can share with a person what the Lord can do for them. I can share the power of God and the love of Jesus Christ, but I can't convert. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. I think a lot of times, we get sort of mixed up here, and we think that you know, we've got to convert them! We get all, you know, pressed towards that conversion, and that's in the hands of the Lord. I have to witness, that's what God holds me responsible for. So, "Be strong, don't let your hands be weak. You will be rewarded, your work, or your labor, shall be rewarded".

So when Asa heard these words, the prophecy of the son of Oded, he took courage, [And it was a further reform. Remember in the beginning, there was sort of a surface reform. Now there is further reform, more complete.] he put away the abominable idols out of the land of Judah and Benjamin, out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, he renewed the altar of Jehovah, that was before the porch of Jehovah. [The altar had become sort of, decayed. He renewed it, he rebuilt it.] He gathered all of Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw Jehovah his God was with him (15:8-9).

In the prosperity now of Judah, the kingdom of Judah, those that were in the northern kingdom of Israel, many of them, an abundant number of people from the northern kingdom, from the tribes of Simeon, and Ephraim, and Manasseh. Seeing God's hand, and God's blessing there on the southern kingdom, a great number of them moved south, to be under a kingdom where the people really honored God.

I wish many times, that there was a place where we could move, where people were really committed to serving the Lord in a national way. I'm really disturbed, deeply disturbed about our nation, and about the spiritual conditions of our nation, in general. I'm deeply concerned about the, the school systems, and the attitudes of so many of the children in the schools, concerning drinking, concerning pre-marital sex, concerning drugs. I'm concerned about the kind of music that they are listening to, that actually encourages pre-marital sex, or in sensuous relationships, or encourages suicide, or these things. The way our nation is being corrupted! I'm very concerned about a lot of legislation, that is taking away our liberties, our religious freedoms. I am troubled by these things!

I wish there were a nation, that was just honoring God, where I could just say, "Oh come on! Let's move down there where the nation's really serving the Lord, and the people are honoring God, and, and they still believe in morality, and righteousness and, and living godly lives". As a nation they would stand up for those things, and would establish laws that would protect us from the filthy drug-crazed minds, that are producing the music, and the lyrics to the music, and producing the films that are, all of them destroying our nation from a moral strength, and a position of moral strength.

Our nation is being undermined today. The movies, the, the, everything it seems is slanted towards the destruction! So much of the music comes out of drug-crazed minds. They get high on their drugs, and then

they start writing all of this weird kind of music, and then they said the things that the radios are playing, they said things the kids are listening to. Their minds become filled with all of this satanically inspired junk. It's just ripping our kids off.

Our government isn't putting up any protections against pornography or these things, just letting it go. But they are protecting the children from any Bible being taught in the school, or the ten commandments being posted, or anything that has a moral base that would come from a biblical standpoint. They're very happy to protect the kids from that kind of evil. Now something's wrong, seriously wrong!

I only wish there was a place that we could move, and just establish a community, a kingdom, where God would be honored and we could protect the children from the filth of this world in which we live.

So there were many that saw the nation, God's blessing them. "Look, they're honoring the Lord. They're cleaning things up. God is working, God is blessing! Let's go down and let's move down there, and live under that kind of environment, rather than all the crud that's going on up here!" They saw the Lord, his God was with him.

So they gathered themselves to Jerusalem in the third month, [That would've been in the feast of Pentecost. So at the feast of Pentecost, a great multitude of people from the north, came down to join in with this happy celebration. "In the third month,"] the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they offered unto the Lord the same time, the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen, seven thousand sheep. And they entered into a covenant (15:12),

This is glorious to me! They said, "We're gonna make a covenant to seek the Lord. We're gonna covenant with ourselves. We're gonna seek...". Oh what a covenant that we should be making. We ought to just covenant together, "We're gonna seek the Lord! We're gonna pray! We're gonna work until we see God working again in our nation, in our community!" And, make that covenant, "As for me and my house, we're gonna serve the Lord, we're gonna seek the Lord!" If father's would stand up, and clean house, and not allow a lot of this junk to be taking place. If you have cable TV, and they've got MTV, and all, get rid of it! Don't let your children be exposed to that corruption!

You see it begins with the parents. As long as the children are under your roof, we used to say to our kids, "Look, as long as your living under our roof, you're gonna follow our rules. The minute you think you're big enough not to follow our rules, then you're out! You think you don't have to abide by our rules, then you're big enough to be on your own. You can get out, at that point! But as long as you're under this house, under this roof, you're gonna follow the rules that we've established for this house, and dad's in control. And, dad lays down the rules." And, they knew it. But we need to just go through the albums that the kids have. Do a house cleaning. Get rid of a lot of this perverted stuff that is destroying their whole value system! "So they made a covenant to seek Jehovah God of their fathers." *] with all their heart and with all their soul (15:12);*

Oh glory! God help us! Let's seek the Lord with all of our hearts, and with all of our souls! Let's get serious with God! Let's get involved in the prayer meetings, in the women's intercessory prayer group, and those ladies that gather to pray for the school. With the men who gather to pray for the church! Let's seek the Lord with all of our heart, and with all of our soul, for the prophet promised, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you". That is always the glorious truth. Jesus said, "Seek, and ye shall find".

And the covenant was that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, [Well that's a pretty heavy covenant!] whether small or great, whether man of woman. [I mean, "Hey, we're gonna start living it, and we're gonna tow the mark, and if you don't want to, alright"!] *And they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets (15:13-14).*

It was really a moving kind of a gathering as they made this covenant, as they realized the importance of keeping God at the heart of the nation. Thus this covenant to seek Him with all of their hearts. Then the, the oath unto the Lord, with their loud voices, with the shouting, with the trumpets, with the coronets.

And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and they sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them (15:15):

Glorious time of spiritual reformation, and revival! Now there have been periods of great revival in the United States. It is encouraging to read of the meetings that Finney held in the United States, in the earlier

years. And the tremendous revival that came during Finney's time. Where five years, after his meetings, in a city, there were no open bars in the city, because there were no customers. Where people would just fall down on the street, crying out to God for mercy, the conviction was so heavy! "Now Lord, it is nothing for thee to help, whether with little, or with great." It's nothing for God to send a revival, but it takes a commitment of God's people. It takes for us to resolve to serve the Lord, to seek the Lord, with all of our heart and with all of our soul, to get serious.

You see the biggest problem, is that we are living in extremely desperate days, but the church is not yet desperate. They say that if you put a frog in cold water, and turn the heat on under the pan, that the frog will just continue to swim in that water as it is heating up, until it gets to boiling, and he'll die. Because it's just a gradual heating of the water. But if you take and throw a frog into a pan of hot water, he'll hop out immediately. I think that this is somewhat the way it has happened in the world in which we live. Satan is very clever, it's just been a slow decaying.

If we were just thrust into this society in just a moment, we would be horrified at what was going on! If we say from, well not all of you, but if we went from where we were forty years ago, and suddenly we're thrust into this society today, we would be absolutely horrified! But Satan's just turned the fire up, and just, and so here we are swimming around in this boiling water, and suffocating, and wondering what's gone wrong.

We're not desperate. We've been anesthetized. We just aren't really desperate today. But it's time that God's people, called by His name, it's time that they humbled themselves, and pray, and seek His face, until we see a revival. So, "They sought Him with their whole desire. He was found of them,"

for the Lord gave them rest all around. [The result of it.] So, also concerning this Maachah who was the mother of Asa the king, [That is, she was the grandmother actually, but as I said, they don't have the term grandchild, or grandparent, so Maachah who was the daughter of um, Absalom's son, Uriah.] he removed her [This woman was still there with a wicked influence, and he removed her.] from being queen, because she had made an idol to the Ashore: [The female goddess of sex.] and Asa cut down her idol, and he stomped it, and he burned it in the Kidron brook. But [it wasn't totally complete] the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was complete all of his days. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and he himself had dedicated, the silver, and the gold, and the vessels. [So they began to replenish the treasure within the temple.] And there was no more war unto the thirty fifth year of the reign of Asa (15:15-19).

Next week we'll get into chapter sixteen, and you think, "Wow! This is so great! Marvelous! Go on forever!" But, unfortunately, no. Tragically, during the time of the prosperity and peace, there came a spiritual laxness over a period of time, and we see the tragic consequences in the next chapter.

May God's Spirit really challenge our hearts to seeking the Lord. For the promise is, "If you seek Him with all your heart, He will be found of you". So let's covenant together to really seek the Lord this week. Let's seek the Lord for His work in the Good Friday service. In the Easter services. A time when always there are many people who gather with us, just because of the season. People who are two-timers, Christmas, and Easter. But, let's pray that this will be the year that God will really get hold of their hearts, and challenge them to really commit their lives to following and serving Jesus Christ. Let's spend time in prayer, individually, corporately. Join with us for the prayer times this week, and let's seek the Lord, that we might find Him, and that we might see His work in our midst. God bless you and keep you in His love, fill you to overflowing with His Spirit. Know this, your labor in the Lord is never in vain.