

# FINISHING STRONG:

## THE RISE AND FALL OF KING ASA

2 Chronicles 15,16; 1 Kings 15:9-24  
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The revival took place in the southern Kingdom of Judah, during the reign of King Asa.

The first king of Israel was Saul. This map shows the extent of land he ruled.

United Kingdom of Israel under Kings David and Solomon  
Background Information—The United Monarchy

The reigns of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon are traditionally dated between 1047 B.C. and 930 B.C. With the succession of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, around 930 B.C., the country split into two kingdoms [1 Kings 12:1-20](#); [2 Chronicles 10:1-19](#)).

- ▶ The Kingdom of Israel in the north
- ▶ The Kingdom of Judah in the south



The southern kingdom of Judah was ruled by the descendants of David and was made up of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. The northern Kingdom of Israel was made up of the remaining ten tribes of Israel: Simeon, Reuben, Gad, Ephraim, Issachar, Naphtali, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Dan.





### **Condition of the Nation when King Asa Came to the Throne**

King Asa was preceded by three kings who grew increasingly wicked, leading the Kingdom of Judah further and further away from God.

#### **1. Solomon**

*The Lord was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the Lord ([1 Kings 11:8-10](#)).*

#### **2. Rehoboam**

*Rehoboam...abandoned the Law of the Lord, and all Israel followed him in this sin ([2 Chronicles 12:1](#)).*

#### **3. Abijah**

*He committed the same sins as his father before him ([1 Kings 15:3](#)).*

The spiritual condition of the nation when Asa came to the throne left him with many challenges.

- ▶ Idolatry was rampant.
- ▶ Perversity had filled the land, with idolatrous practices involving male and female prostitutes.

### **King Asa's First Revival**

During the first ten years of Asa's reign he enjoyed relative peace, and he used that time to bring the nation back to God ([2 Chronicles 14:1](#)).

- ▶ Going from town to town, he removed all altars and high places of worship dedicated to foreign gods ([1 Kings 15:12](#); [2 Chronicles 14:3](#)).

### **Wisdom Exercised during Times of Peace**

As Asa took these dramatic steps spiritually, God blessed him with peace. This peace enabled him to invest time in strengthening his kingdom ([2 Chronicles 14:7](#)).

- ▶ He fortified the land ([2 Chronicles 14:7](#)).
- ▶ He built up his army to 580,000 ([2 Chronicles 14:8](#)).

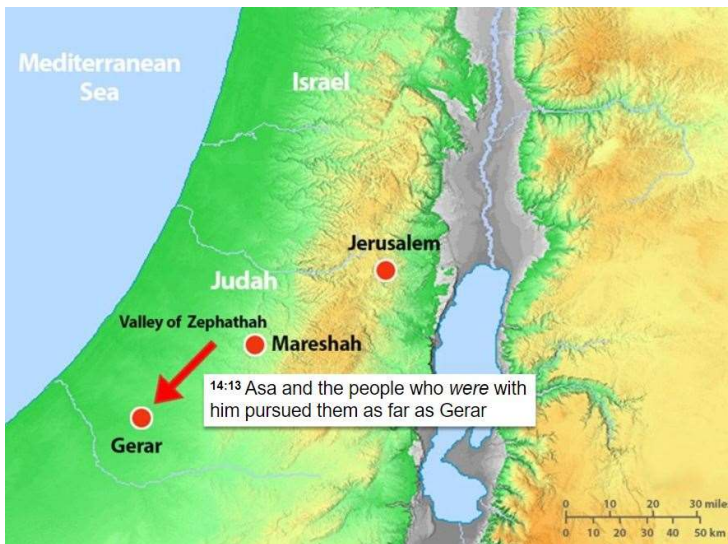


### Path the Ethiopians took on their route to attack Judah

#### Military Victory at Mareshah

When an Ethiopian army marched against Judah, with 1,000,000 soldiers and 300 chariots—a force close to twice as large as Judah’s—Asa called out to God for help, and victory was given ([2 Chronicles 14:9-15](#)).

- ▶ The Ethiopians were chased all the way to Gerar ([2 Chronicles 14:13](#)).
- ▶ The Philistine cities surrounding Gerar were also destroyed, allowing the army of Judah to capture and carry “off a vast amount of plunder” ([2 Chronicles 14:14-15](#)).



Map shows Mareshah and Gerar

**King Asa's Second Revival**  
When the army returned from the victory at [Mareshah](#), the prophet Azariah greeted Asa and all the people, and reminded them that this success was from the Lord ([2 Chronicles 15:1-2](#)). Azariah also reminded them of the days under the previous kings,

when “dark times” covered the land ([2 Chronicles 15:3-6](#)). And he ended with an encouraging word, that if they remain faithful, their “work will be rewarded” ([2 Chronicles 15:7](#)).

Asa took Azariah’s advice and for 5 years he doubled his efforts in removing idols and immoral practices throughout the land and cleaned out and restored worship in the Lord’s Temple ([2 Chronicles 15:8](#)).

### **Covenant with the Lord Reconfirmed**

During Asa’s 15th year of ruling Judah, he gathered all the people to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the Lord and to enter into a covenant with Him ([2 Chronicles 15:9-14](#)). This covenant added more force to his efforts, and as the law of Moses was drawn upon, there was a threat made to carry out those laws, and they involved capital punishment for anyone who maintained their pagan practices ([Deuteronomy 17:2-5](#); [Exodus 22:18](#)).

Due to this renewed dedication, Judah experienced peace for 20 more years.

*Then they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. They agreed that anyone who refused to seek the Lord, the God of Israel, would be put to death—whether young or old, man or woman. They shouted out their oath of loyalty to the Lord with trumpets blaring and rams’ horns sounding. All in Judah were happy about this covenant, for they had entered into it with all their heart. They earnestly sought after God, and they found him. And the Lord gave them rest from their enemies on every side. ([2 Chronicles 15:12-15](#)).*

### **Additional Purification Steps of King Asa**

► He banished from the land all the male and female prostitutes that were connected with idolatrous practices ([1 Kings 15:12](#)).

► He removed his grandmother from her position as the queen mother.

*King Asa even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made an obscene Asherah pole. He cut down her obscene pole, broke it up, and burned it in the Kidron Valley ([1 Kings 15:13](#); [2 Chronicles 15:16](#)).*

► He remained completely faithful to the Lord throughout his life ([1 Kings 15:14](#)).

► He was faithful with finances, giving to God that which belonged to Him ([1 Kings 15:15](#); [2 Chronicles 15:18](#)).





*Prophet Hanani, tied up and led away to prison after rebuking King Asa*

### **King Asa's Good but Not Perfect Record**

For the first 36 years of King Asa's reign he sought God. During his last 5 years he had some shortcomings.

- ▶ When a military conflict developed between Judah and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Asa placed his trust in an alliance with the king of Aram ([2 Chronicles 16:1-6](#)).
- ▶ The prophet Hanani rebuked King Asa for placing his trust in the king of Aram and not in God. Angered by that rebuke, King Asa put Hanani in prison. In addition, Asa began oppressing some of his people ([2 Chronicles 16:7-10](#)).

In the 39th year of King Asa's reign he developed a serious foot disease.

- ▶ Instead of seeking the Lord's help, he turned to physicians (who possibly used incantations and magical remedies).

### **Good Report from Elijah the Prophet**

A number of years after the death of King Asa, the prophet Elijah rebuked Asa's grandson, [King Jehoram of Judah](#), because he "had abandoned the Lord," and "led the people of Jerusalem and Judah to give themselves to pagan gods and to go astray" ([2 Chronicles 21:10-11](#)). Elijah then honored King Asa by saying this to Jehoram:

*You have not followed the good example of your father, Jehoshaphat, or your grandfather King Asa of Judah ([2 Chronicles 21:12](#)).*

So even though King Asa did not have a perfect record, he was remembered by one of the most renowned prophets, Elijah, as having presented a good example for others to follow.

There are, therefore, both positive and negative leadership lessons to learn from Asa's life.

## 6 Lessons from the Life of King Asa

### 1. The Odds Do Not Matter with God

God was pleased with Asa's reliance on him when his faith was tested. Like Abraham, by grace Asa passed this first test. Asa had prayed for and had received divine help. He could say with the psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (*Ps. 46:1-3, 11*).

After 10 years of peace, Asa had an army of 580,000 men. That sounds wonderful BUT Zerah, the Ethiopian, came out against him with an army of ONE MILLION men! How could Asa win this battle? It was humanly impossible.

Asa was hugely outnumbered!

**Asa cried to the Lord** his God, "O Lord, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. **Help us**, O Lord our God, **for we rely on you**, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." <sup>12</sup> **So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians** before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. **2 Chronicles 14:11-12**

This battle seemed impossible, so Asa cried out to the Lord for help and told God "**we rely on you**". And God gave them victory!

But with God, all things are possible. If the infinite, almighty God is for us and with us, who can be against us? So we read, "*This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours but God's'*" (**2 Chron. 20:15**). God is speaking the same thing to us today. If we are afraid and discouraged, take heart. The battle is the Lord's, and our God is for us.

***Numbers do not matter to God. He can do anything! And when we rely on God – he is there!***

### 2. Have a positive influence on others.

Leadership is influence. Good leadership is a positive influence. Asa had a positive influence on his subjects. He told his people to seek the Lord God of their father and to do the laws and the commandment. He led them to rebuild

the city of Judah. *“Therefore he said to Judah, ‘Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.’ So they built and prospered” (2 Chronicles 14:7-8 NKJV).*

He also led the people to enter into a covenant to seek the LORD. *“Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. Then they took an oath before the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams’ horns. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around” (2 Chronicles 15:12-15 NKJV).* That was leadership for good and for God which every leader should imbibe and deliver always.

### **3. Stay Close to God**

Right after King Asa’s victory, the Spirit of God came upon Azariah and he said these words to Asa:

***The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. 2 Chronicles 15:2, Matt 12:30***

Azariah wanted Asa to know that he could not experience that kind of victory again if he did not stay close to God.

***We must remain close to the Lord if we want to see God at work in our lives. If we choose to walk away from God, then we can expect consequences for that decision. Seek the Lord and prosper. Seek the Lord and be blessed. Reform your ways and prosper. Pray and prosper. Do what is right in the eyes of the Lord and prosper. In all your ways acknowledge our covenant Lord, and be blessed. Obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings curse.***

### **4. Do what is right – even when it comes to family.**

God comes in second place to no one. Asa sought to honor God with all of his heart and soul and so when he saw his mother – the Queen – doing detestable things, he did not cave to family pressure or expectations. Instead, he sought to honor the Lord and had her removed from being queen.

***Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed her from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her***



*image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron. But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days. 2 Chronicles 15:16-17*

***It can be so hard to stand up to family. Life can be difficult when our family does not understand our faith. But Asa was brave and in front of everyone, he did what was right, even when it came to his family. He loved God more than his family.***

***Jesus said, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37)***

### **5. When God gives you blessings – do not rely more on the blessing than God.**

God had blessed King Asa greatly with riches from winning his battles. As a result, instead of relying on God, he relied on his riches. Asa used his silver and gold to get Syria to help him and it worked! But this displeased God greatly.

Do not use methods not approved by God even if it works. By the standard of God, what makes something right is not that the thing is working. It may work but it may not be right. God questions results!

The ark of God must never be carried in a cart, not even in a new cart (**2 Samuel 6:3**). It must always be carried by the Levites on their shoulders (**1 Chronicles 15:13**). That was the error David made the first time he tried to bring the ark of God in a procession from Baalah of Judah (Kiriath-jearim) into Jerusalem, and a tragedy, Uzzah’s death, aborted the procession. Carrying the ark of God in a new cart was using the method of the Philistines (**1 Samuel 6:7-11**). It might be right for the Philistines but it wasn’t right for the Israelites.

It turned out that Asa had learned nothing from history. Now he chose to lean onto his money and his own understanding. He needed God twenty years earlier when he was weak and without money. Now he had money, he had his palace, and he had his children. Everything was going right. Asa did not need God.

***“Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. <sup>8</sup> Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, he gave them into your hand. 2 Chronicles 15:7-8***

***Sometimes when we are in the midst of a peaceful time in our lives — when things are going right– it can be easy to ignore God and find more joy in our***

***blessings, than in God. God wants us to continually rely on him in both the good and bad times.***

## **6. Resist the temptation to get prideful with old age.**

King Asa became quite difficult in his old age. He put a seer in prison for giving him instructions that he did not like. As a result of his pride, God told him from then on, he would experience war.

***Hanani told Asa,***

***Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars.” 2 Chronicles 16:7-9***

*But Asa refused to pay heed to the rebuke. What about you? Do you receive the rebuke and correction that comes to you from your pastor or parents or others? They rebuke us because they care for us.*

*Paul writes, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). He also said, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2)*

***As we grow older, we grow wiser. We gain life experience. Since we have experienced so much, we can begin to feel confident that we can handle our challenges on our own. We think - “I’ve been here before - I know the solution” - rather than thinking - “let’s pray”.***

***For the Bible says, “Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it” (Ps. 141:5).***

## **7. End Well.**

We must desire to finish well. King Asa had a sad ending. He did not end well.

***In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought***

*help from physicians. <sup>13</sup> And Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the forty-first year of his reign. **2 Chronicles 16:12-13***

Asa refused to repent and follow the biblical solution found in **2 Chronicles 7:14**. He refused to humble himself and pray and seek God's face and turn from his wicked ways. He refused to seek any help from God. He was, in essence, saying, "I don't need God!" So he sought help from pagan physicians. But no doctor could help him. If God is against us, who can be for us?

Medical help should not be despised but it has limitations. Doctors care but it's only God who heals. If God refuses to heal you, who will? If you must go to the hospital, go with faith in God, go having prayed that God will direct you, will help the health caregivers so that they will do the right thing. There are cases of wrong diagnosis, wrong prescription, and all forms of human error. So the best hospital is not a perfect system.

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. (**Heb. 10:26-27**).

God is a compassionate God. God will forgive anyone, including any leader, who sincerely repents and confesses his sins. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:9-10 NKJV).*

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

Asa did not live a consistent spiritual life. Towards the end of his life, he fell from his first love. He abandoned God and refused to trust in him. Instead, he trusted in his money, violating the biblical counsel that says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (**Prov. 3:5-6**).

### **Never allow the fire to go down in your life.**

Asa's love for God waxed cold in the last years of his life. The fire of love for God started going down in his thirty-sixth year on the throne as we have seen. Like the Church at Ephesus, he apparently left his first love (**Revelation 2:1-4**).

Prior to that, it had been said that he did what was right in the sight of the LORD (**1 Kings 15:11**). He backslid, so to speak. He spent forty-one years on the throne, but the last four years messed up his thirty-five years of a good record.

Every leader should watch his walk with God. **1 Corinthians 10:12** says, **“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (NKJV)**. Keep the spiritual fire in your life burning. Don’t become lukewarm like the church of the Laodiceans. God hates Luke warmness. **“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Rev 3:15-17 NKJV)**. Be diligent, not slothful; be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (**Romans 12:11**).

How we finish is as important as how we begin.