

# **PLEASE, PAY ATTENTION!**

## **2nd CHRONICLES**

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assemblies Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "What the Bible Teaches, 2nd Chronicles, by Walter Gustafson. John Ritchie Ltd.
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

### **2nd Chronicles 1**

#### **PAY ATTENTION WHEN MAKING CHOICES**

Ezra the scribe in his God-inspired desire to unify the Israelites who returned to the promised land from captivity in Babylon, continued to recount the ways of God with His people in the past. Lessons from history are important, but unless people pay attention to those lessons, they will have to experience the consequences of failure and sin themselves. The book of 1st Chronicles gave them lessons and illustrations from the life of David to bring about national revival. At the very end of 1st Chronicles and now in the beginning of 2nd Chronicles this saga of divine dealings with God's people in the past begins with an account of the "glory-days" of Solomon. From there to the end of the book the departure of the people of God, mainly those in Judah, continues through the reigns of various kings to the taking away to Babylon.

How often we hear people say, "That's just old history. What does that have to do with us now?" In the passing of time, if we are not maintaining fellowship with God and continuing to follow the word of God, we will find ourselves powerless, in a state of departure, and having to go through the same difficulties, and maybe even more, than others before us because we did not pay attention. The lessons of history, if learned, can preserve God's people today from turning to the idolatrous worship of money, success and pleasure.

The book of 2nd Chronicles is not just a recounting of the failures of government and a political history. It is written from a religious perspective, a priestly perspective if you will, by a spiritual leader. Beginning with the high point of Solomon's ascendancy to the throne of David, and his good start personally, the scribe recounts the building of the temple and various revivals in the nation. Peace, prayer and public worship are all addressed as a reminder of the faithfulness of God to unfaithful people. Even when leaders failed miserably God was patiently waiting for repentance and revival. Short revivals came and went because the people of God didn't stay focused on Him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." Failure came and the patience of God was tried to the place where He knew the fulfillment of His warning of captivity was allowed to happen.

In our day in nations, businesses, families and assemblies of God's people, if lessons are not learned, if we do not pay attention to warnings, if we forsake the assembling of ourselves together, if we ignore that which we know is right, we soon are lost as a testimony to the grace of God. Many religious groups began because an earnest desire for the truth of God moved people to turn to the word of God for guidance, and they acted on that guidance. In a few generations, a historical drift sets in and those truths which were so precious, and for which first generation Christians paid a high cost, now have been compromised. Truth and error have become so blended, that compromise is accepted, and the truth itself is ignored and soon lost. When truth has been bought for a price, "Buy the truth and sell it not," the Lord's people are strong in faith. They have a high motivation to pass truth on to those around. Those who take biblical spiritual things for granted, find it quite easy to walk away from the truth and "sell" it to be acceptable to the world system around us.

Solomon began with a good desire. He went to the brazen altar in Gibeon to make contact with God, and he took with him those who were leaders among God's people. One man with a sincere desire for God can have a big impact on a lot of people. In his enthusiasm Solomon did not hold back from making plain to the people where he stood in relation to the Lord. They knew and God knew his commitment to God. One thousand burnt offerings would have left a huge impression on those who watched that smoke and smell ascend to God. Not only was it evident to the people that their new king was conscious of the authority of God and devoted to Him, but in days to come they would have been benefitted by the unprecedented offer God gave Solomon.

The principle remains today. "God resists the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." When we have a choice to make, there are consequences to accept - good and bad. By asking for wisdom and knowledge so

he could rule the people of God well, he got that, plus riches, wealth and honor. That was indeed a wonderful choice with great significance both to him and those over whom he was to rule. But one wise choice and its lasting benefits does not mean that all our choices are right, nor does it mean God is obligated to us in any way. The choice to make a solemn offering at Gibeon had a great effect on himself, those with him who help lead the people, and on the people themselves. The whole nation was made aware of the fact that the great God of the universe was the God of Israel. His choice for wisdom had a good effect on Solomon and was a temporal benefit to wealth of the nation. Then for some strange reason, Solomon made a choice that was against the word of God.

By getting 12,000 horses mainly from Egypt which had been forbidden, he took matters into his own hands. The chariots and horses he brought were probably a business enterprise, that in some ways would give him some leverage over the nations around him which he could use to his advantage. They would have to buy their armaments from him because he controlled the trade routes of the Middle East. The affinity he would have had with the Egyptians in business led him to actually marrying an Egyptian princess, which in turn started him on a downward course away from obedience to the word of the Lord. The world has an effect on believers that may not be that obvious or significant at first. It may start as "only business," but soon leads to friendship politically, socially, personally and then spiritually. All the perceived benefits are nothing when its costs lead us away from God and making decisions according to His will and word.

The accumulation of wealth also has a dangerous fallout in our day, the same as it did in the time of the reign of Solomon. When riches increase, we are not to "set our hearts upon them." Wealth does not bring happiness. Covetousness is never satisfied. When the people of God become "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," reality fades into a form of idolatry in which it is more important to make more money and accumulate more things, than it is to be with God's people in worship, remembrance, prayer and testimony. One professed believer said, "I haven't got time for 'church' when I can make time and a half in overtime pay."

Poor rich Solomon! He didn't pay attention to what was written in the scriptures and began to drift away from the mind and will of God. We need to pay earnest attention to that which has been taught us, and what has happened to those who have gone before us and failed in faith. We need to listen, learn and act on what is right in every choice we make - not just on one or two highlights in life.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 1:3.** *"So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the Lord has made in the wilderness."*

### **THERE WAS THE TABERNACLE.**

There it sits where it had been for four hundred years and more.  
Sitting at the high place in Gibeon where others had come before.  
There was something though, that was missing, the ark had been taken away.  
The new king came to the altar there, seeking God to bring in a new day.

Sure enough, he met God there after a thousand offerings were burnt.  
In the night God appeared to him there, and from God great wisdom he learned.  
His humility was impressive and he had the right thing in his heart.  
When he left that brazen altar, he truly had made a good start.

It is possible today to meet God in some very unusual places.  
There is the gathering center where we come together and he blesses.  
But like the ark, though in a different place, God meets us where we are.  
The thoughts and intents of our hearts; He reads them all from afar.

Even then we remember God willingly draws near to us when we meet.  
There is a special gathering center, to which we come as one to seek  
The mind and will of God about the things that affect His people.  
At that place we are known as the children of God; there we are all treated as equal.

The tabernacle was old, it had weathered the years, but the altar was still intact.  
Some might have thought God couldn't be there, for the ark had never been taken back.  
But the altar of sacrifice where God received the burnt offerings still had a fire lit -  
And when the offering to God was given, God knew the motives for it.

We have kept coming year after year although we are only a few.  
Others looked on with eyes askance, "They don't know when they are through!"  
But the Lord is there when together we come and from us true worship ascends.

The size of the company, loud music and cheer, are not things on which worship depends.

Men look on the outward appearance, God still looks on the heart.  
He can still meet us outside the camp, while in the big city sits the ark.

I would not dare to try to limit God to just the places I would go.

There is plenty of evidence that God meets with His own when they His Lordship own.

**“O Lord God, in this room this morning, I know Thy presence is here. If there is some kind of barrier that needs to be removed between me and others, please help me to do that. I long for unbroken fellowship with Thee. I am sorry, O God, that for some reason I could not connect with the people last night. Forgive me I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 2**

### **FOR THE NAME**

Why would a building be made for the name of the Lord when the "heaven of heavens" can't contain Him? Before Solomon was born it was in the heart of David to build a house for the Lord - a temple. A place for "The Name" is so that those who know and love the Lord would come together to that place in perpetual worship and praise to the Lord. In that unique place sacrifices would be made to the Lord. As each sacrifice was brought by individuals to that place, it would be joined with the sacrifices of others as a united whole. God is not limited in location to "temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath and all things." It was for the sake of the people the temple was built so that there would be a visible, unifying center.

"Gather My saints together unto Me" is still a desire of the Lord for His people. However, now we do not need a magnificent edifice to represent God's presence among us. Now the people of the Lord are members of His body. He is the Head; we are parts that comprise the body of which every child of God is a unique piece. Because the dispensational church is presently scattered over the 21 centuries since the day it began at the feast of Pentecost, and in different parts of earth and heaven, local assemblies are a testimony to the reality of the body of Christ to the world, angels and men.

When God's people come together following the scriptural pattern our Lord has given, every person in that local fellowship has a role to fill and a responsibility to assume. "We are members one of another," and we are "body of Christ" in character and composition that can be seen visibly. We are in that fellowship all the time whether we are meeting together or are apart fulfilling the tasks of daily living. Everything I do individually is a reflection on the testimony of that body of believers, and the One to whom we gather. As the gathering center we meet with Jesus in our midst.

The temple is not a type of Christ here like the tabernacle was. It is rather a testimony to the name of the Lord now and in particular, in the millennium when we gather to Him in person. The point of the temple in Israel was to be the place where the worship of God was to be carried on continually. The magnificence of the structure was to impress the Lord's people and all strangers who would look at it that our Great God is worthy of all honor and glory that could ever be ascribed to Him by mere mortal man. The visible extravagance of the material, and the glory of the building could not begin to display the actual glory of God. It could only show that those who know Him, love Him and serve Him, know He deserves the very best that we can have and can give. At best, our best is only a shadow compared to the reality of His divine glory and holiness.

The desire of David became the desire and duty of his son Solomon. The temple in its magnificence because of who the Lord is, was to be a solid and permanent testimony to God along with the best possible material that could be found with which to build it. That material by its nature and composition would last a long time. Carefully cut stones, well crafted wood known for its durability, skilled craftsmen guided by the expertise of one gifted man, all made an impressive edifice that cannot be described in words. One person said when she saw it and all the pomp surrounding it said, "The half hath not been told."

Those of us who are part of a scripturally gathered assembly of saints may not realize the impact of doing God's work according to His will, in His way and according to His word, has on spiritual observers. Angels who have seen the glories of heaven look on and see in the divine order of headship, the purpose of God and remember that many angels lost their position because of being lifted up in pride. Even believers who look on as observers can see the value and power of divine order in comparison to a man-made hierarchy. The most impressive garments religious leaders wear, the most ornate grandeur of man-made buildings and man-made traditions does not have the spiritual impact on the soul and spirit of a spiritual believer that

spiritual simplicity has on their heart. "This is of God," one said. "Now I know what Jesus meant when He said, 'Remember Me,'" another observer said.

The cost of the temple was measured in the sense in thousands of tons of food and thousands of gallons of drink. This would help to sustain the thousands of laborers who spent thousands of hours preparing material for the temple so it could be built in a measure of silence without the sound of tools. But to put the cost of the temple all together and the cost of all the labor added, it pales into insignificance compared to the cost of that "which He hath purchased with His own blood." Believers in the assembly at Corinth were reminded that they were not their own, they "were bought with a price." Because of that fact they were to "glorify God" in their bodies and spirits which were His at an infinite cost. That truth is the same for us as it was in the past.

An onlooker from a different country recognized from what he saw and knew of David and Solomon, that God loved His people Israel. He knew God had raised up Solomon to be the king of Israel and he also knew Solomon was a wise man. The house of God today is His people who gather to His name, and He loves them. In His wisdom He "raises up" those who He makes capable to leading and guiding the people of God. He gives them wisdom and understanding to establish and maintain His house according to His plans for His purposes. God's work can move ahead when those who are older prepare the way for those who are younger and will soon carry on the work of the Lord.

It is up to us to take what God has given and make it a reality. The buildings in which we meet are only structures to use and help us to maintain our focus on God. The place we meet is only that, no matter how impressive or simple it may be. The foreigners who worked for Solomon only knew one small part of the whole project in which they were participating. Spiritual discernment is not common among many of God's people. Most believers of this age will never see or understand the moral and spiritual value and beauty of "the house of God." They only know they are part of a great work that will someday be completed. However, they miss the joy of personal participation in the testimony of a scripturally gathered assembly in this church age.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 2:5.** *"And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods."*

#### **GREAT IS OUR GOD.**

The very best that man can do is simple compared to what God has done.  
If we were to take all the edifices made and from them make a single one -  
It could not compare in size or grandeur to what God has made all around.  
Put all the music man ever made together, and next to nature it is a discordant sound.

But in a gracious act God condescends to meet with mere mortal man -  
And accepts whatever we offer Him when we give Him the best we can.  
A word of praise, a gift of love, and act of kindness in Jesus' name -  
Is very small compared to what God gave, when to the cross the Lord Jesus came.

However, because God is so great, He understands the motives behind the act.  
The desire one has to bring honor to Him, He accepts that as an actual fact.  
He is willing to come and accepts our praise, even promises to dwell with us.  
How great is our God who the universe can't contain, and yet He reveals Himself thus.

The silence of the mountains so majestic and great often fills our minds with awe.  
We ask ourselves, "Is this made by the God who promises to hear me when I call?"  
The raging waves of the sea are such that man has no way to control -  
God who controls them - His voice louder than the ocean's noise - still can speak peace to  
my soul.

The labor spent to build a house for God is not labor spent in vain.  
He is the One who instructed us to build a special place for His great name.  
It may be a small and quiet location where God meets His people there.  
The point of meeting isn't just a building; it is for the people, who His grace do share.

The greatness of God is not only seen in things of impressive and great size.  
Evidence of His greatness can be hidden in small things not seen by natural eyes.  
Whether large or small, physical things give impressive evidence of the fact of the  
greatness of God.  
But more than all of those things around us; is the greatness of Jesus our Lord.

The real greatness that affects every person is that God has given us life.  
He maintains a personal interest in us; it was for our peace He paid such a great price

Of redeeming us by the great work of salvation when for us Jesus died.  
God's greatest work impacts forever those who into His kingdom are led.

**“O Great, Almighty Lord God: I am brought to a place where I have nothing to say when I am faced with Thy greatness! Amen.”**

### **2nd Chronicles 3**

#### **BEYOND EYESIGHT**

How can we describe in words the glory, the honor and the worth of that which is beyond human experience? We are limited by our humanity to looking at things and thinking in terms of things that have left us with a sense of awe. As children of God our devotion and desire to express the thoughts of our hearts may go beyond the boundaries of our limitations. Unfortunately, some earnest people practice speaking in tongues thinking that making unintelligible sounds is translated into worship and praise. But that does not do anything to enhance the worship of God. It only brings that which is holy down to a place we can define it to our satisfaction. It does not make it real. All it does is seek to convince people that they have gone beyond human limitations to a heavenly language or the language of angels. This deceives people into thinking they have risen to a higher condition of holiness that will keep them from sin or in some way make them more acceptable to God. We need to always remember that our acceptance with our righteous, holy God is only because we are "accepted in the Beloved" – accepted, because when He saved us, we have been placed in Christ.

The building of the temple, from the place where it was built, the value of it, the visible splendor of it and even the size of it was to remind the people of that which was beyond their ability to express. Glory by its very nature, defies a complete definition and description. There is a sense in which our minds do take us beyond our ability to perceive so that all we can do is bow ourselves in humble adoration and silence. The temple represented the awesome glory and presence of God that must have been breath-taking. However, we know that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands," to the temple must have had a higher and more significant purpose. True, both in the tabernacle and temple there was evidence of God with His people, but He is not limited in any way to time or space. The best and most ornate work that man could produce with his hands, the most beautiful structure human minds can conceive, still falls short of the visible expression of the fullness of divine glory.

Raised in silence on Mount Moriah, this awesome structure rose up before the eyes of onlookers and participants like a living growing thing. There was no way the whole could be observed at once but the impact on the soul would have been powerful and humbling as those who looked at it would hopefully realize their own personal insignificance. Abraham hundreds of years before had likely been in that place when he offered his son Isaac to God. It was there he heard the voice of God and the word of the Lord became meaningful to him. It was in that place Jacob prayed. It was in that place David heard the word of the Lord and in that place, he built an altar. That was the place determined by God to be the place of His name where He would meet with His people.

The grandeur of the temple is long since gone because of its physical limitations to resist the ravages of time and human beings. But God still has a place where He meets with His people. Such a place is not designated by the size or beauty of the building, but by the presence of God Himself when those who "have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice," come to meet Him. The kind or size of the building not what automatically makes it a meeting place with God. It is where people pray in fellowship with God. It is where important decisions made are carried out and public testimony is raised on a spiritual altar where worship ascends as a "burnt offering" to God. The gathering center of the Lord's people today is "where two or three are gathered together in My name."

The value of that place is that it represents God Himself as the One who is Supreme among His people. When those who are "willing to take [His] yoke upon [them] and learn of Me," that desire, that spiritual inclination opens the way for divine instruction from God Himself like Solomon got when building the temple. Angels look on from close proximity like those two large gold covered cherubim whose wing tips touch both sides of that holy place where the ark was to sit. When and where God's people meet, there is an impact that is not limited to an earthly spot, but angels do watch, and wonder and learn. "For this cause a woman hath power on her head because of the angels."

Even though we are not aware of all the "families" in this universe apart from the human family, those who are unseen beings apparently seek to understand the value and results of faith as they look on what happens in "the place of His name." To see beyond eyesight is to live and act with unshakeable faith in the word of God. We may not understand the value of all we do, but to a certain degree we can understand

some things if we choose to read the scriptures and obey what we read. We look beyond the bread and cup at the Lord's Supper and see Jesus in His humanity and deity. We see and remember His life and death. We see by faith the cross, the resurrection and the empty tomb. We see heaven and earth coming together under His glorious rule and reign. We see ourselves as God sees us in Christ - crucified, buried and raised with Him "to walk in newness of life."

The veil separating the holiest of all indicates a separation of the casual observer and casual participant of religious forms from those who have "entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Even the two big visible pillars - Jachin and Boaz, testified to public testimony established by God and strengthened by His strength to go beyond our eyesight to our spiritual understanding. For all its glory, the glory of the temple was not lasting. But that which is beyond our eyesight, the glory of God, the honor of His name, the respect and eternal praises of which He is worthy is permanent and strong and it will last forever,

All of the gold covering the prime wood and ornate carvings, the artwork and intricacies of design that would create a sense of awe because of its beauty, cannot describe the holiness of God's house today. Each member like a shaped piece of wood covered with gold, has been given the divine nature. To a certain extent we can look at the world through God's eyes when we see the "house of God" for what it is. Even though we are limited in what we do, just by being where God intends us to be gives us the privilege of representing Him.

The temple teaching is certainly in relation to the coming millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ when in righteousness, glory and splendor He will be seated on the throne of David. To think that we will be "with Him and like Him" gives great importance to the fact that we are being formed, molded, engraved upon during this time of training we call "the Christian life." By this means we are being made ready to reign with Him and display His glory in a way we cannot do now. Those who returned from exile in Babylon we given a lesson by Ezra to remind them of who they were and why the present work of rebuilding they we engaged in had significant. The temple they built was not like Solomon's temple but it was what they we called upon to make for the very same reason Solomon built the temple of his day. We may not realize the importance of the building process going on in the house of God in which are a part, but later on well will see and be satisfied that we did what we were told by our Lord.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 3:1.** *"The Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite."*

#### **MORIAH MOUNT**

There once was an altar on this mountain that was built out of natural stone.  
A man and his son came to offer here, but Abraham wasn't the only one  
Who knew the value of the sacrifice was worth more than all of the world's gold -  
When he laid Isaac upon that altar, it was worth more to him than his own soul.

The gold-covered boards, the golden nails, the majesty of the house being built,  
Were less in value for all their worth than the blood of the ram that was spilt  
In that place where the voice of God was heard and the sinless substitute was made.  
And looking on were a father and his son watching the flames burn where the son had laid.

Now on Mount Moriah there rises in unusual quiet a beautiful edifice.  
Huge stones are being laid in order, each formed earlier to fit in its place.  
Skilled workmen ply their trades to making a building to represent Deity -  
The material, the skill, the ornate handiwork would have been marvelous to see.

A temple is being raised again, one made out of living stones.  
Each stone formed silently by grace; each one by Christ's blood atoned.  
Each one made to size by the Master-Builder to fit in the temple of God.  
Each one given a divine nature to bring honor to the Savior and Lord.

There are differences too in this great temple that God builds -  
The hand of God has made each one unique - a gifted role to fill.  
Interestingly, the Chief Corner Stone is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself -  
From Him are laid apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers - even helps.

An important feature of this new temple is that it never can be destroyed.  
No man can tear it down, or in covetousness melt the gold from its boards.  
This gold is divine in its nature, the skilled handiwork done by God.

The carved stones that have been hewn out of rock will never underfoot be trod.

Mount Moriah has been the scene of many important events -  
But there is coming yet another that will transcend all before or since.  
A King is coming; a throne will be set and on Moriah the King of Kings,  
Will dwell with His people and from there the final proclamation of peace will ring.

**“Perhaps a sacrifice of praise is in order right now, Father God. What glory has been brought to Thee from that mountain! What majesty was seen there! What glory will yet emanate from that place where so many have walked in unbelief! What great honors will yet be seen given to Thee! I do praise Thee here this morning - in faith and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 4**

### **BEAUTIFUL SHADOWS**

Everything in the temple from the altar to the cherubim in the holiest were much larger than those things in the tabernacle. Large numbers of people would be involved in coming to the temple so the increase in size was considered necessary. In every work for the Lord we need to carefully follow the instructions He gives. He who knows the end of every matter expects us to do what He says in order to bring out the best outcome. Artistic and creative people do not have the authority to add to the word of God for any reason in order to make spiritual worship more appealing to the people, no matter how dramatic and beautiful their art may be.

The brass altar was many times larger than the brazen altar in the courtyard of the tabernacle and would have provided room for a number of priests and a much larger number of sacrifices. The location of the brass altar and the holiest where the ark sat was the same height and in the same line. That which speaks of the righteous judgment of God by the sacrifice on the altar, and the perfect holiness of God are equal in importance. God is not more righteous than glorious, nor is He more glorious than holy. The character of God is such that His every attribute is infinite.

Man-made altars in church buildings or altars in any place is not what the point of an altar is. Material used to build a beautiful altar at the front of an auditorium, or materialism in worship have no place where our Great High Priest ministers on our behalf. Jesus "suffered without the gate" and we are to go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.

The Sea was a huge basin that held around 20,000 gallons of water from which priests could wash before going in to serve in the Lord in the temple. This was sitting on 12 brass bulls signifying the best possible animal that could be offered as a sacrifice. Because of the sacrifice of the choicest of all sacrifice, our Lord Jesus Christ, we are not only cleansed from our sin by His sacrifice, but that cleansing opens the way into the presence of God for us as believers. We are able to move in to worship when we have been sanctified by the cleansing of water by the word of God and the Holy Spirit. Priests who worshipped in the temple had bare feet and hands and would need cleansing each time they were engaged in spiritual service. We have been cleansed from sin and its consequences by "the precious blood of Christ" so need no more sacrifice for sin. But in our daily walk and service we need the practical sanctification of the word of God and the Holy Spirit to keep from defiling that which is holy. Even the artwork on the brass sea is a reminder of how important purity of life and spirit are when we draw near to our God for any purpose. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." A pure conscience does not happen by chance but by choice when we apply the word of God with its sanctifying results.

10 lavers were smaller basins that were used to wash the pieces of the burnt offerings with water that they might be representative of the perfect sinlessness God demands. Those who come to worship Him are to do so in the spirit of holiness and "in spirit and in truth." Outward and inward purity is a testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because He died in our place, our Lord has made us free forever by virtue of what He accomplish for us.

A lampstand is different from a candlestick because light in a lamp comes from the oil placed in it, but a candle burns on itself until it consumes itself. The 10 gold lampstands in the temple, each one with seven lamps would make the inside of the temple well lit. The one lampstand in the tabernacle was enough for it. The larger temple needed more light. Now as the type of the temple looks ahead to the millennium, we are reminded of a kingdom of light that increases as the blessings of God multiply and a greater responsibility makes more light necessary. Each assembly of God's people is a lampstand for God today to shine brightly as the truth of God is proclaimed in dark places. Every time we have sat down with the Lord's people to the

Lord's Supper for the first time in a new work, we are reminded of the light that is spreading all over the world. During the millennium there be shining light everywhere.

Fellowship at the table of remembrance indicates the reality of fellowship with God and with His people is important both to Him and to us. The tables were covered with gold as a testimony to the deity of divine Persons who meet together. Inside the temple deity is emphasized everywhere one would look who entered the inner parts of the temple. Even things like spoons, basins and the doors - including the hinges, were a testimony to a recognition of deity in spiritual service. The outer doors were covered with brass, but when judgment is passed because of the sacrifice made, now He who has "entered the holiest with His own blood" once for all, has opened the way for us through doors covered with gold who have received the divine nature.

The clay in which the brass was molded formed that which ultimately came forth in brightness having an image that was formed while it was in the earthen clay. From the dust of the ground comes those who were "made in the image of God," and now have new characteristics that shine. The righteous judgments of God are satisfied fully in Him who was "found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Whether Solomon used his God-given wisdom to form the gold articles with his own hands is not clear. What is plain is the fact that God considered them made by Solomon. The golden altar, the ten gold covered tables, the golden lampstands and the gold covered doors were all formed by the person of the highest authority. Our Lord Jesus Christ has provided for us by virtue of His Person and work, that we might have everything we need to approach God. From the small things to the largest, He takes each issue personally and makes what we have to give God acceptable. The tongs, snuffer, spoons, censers and basins all had their reason for being made and used.

Our access to God begins with His just judgment being satisfied. Then we are able to enter into God's presence without fear. The returned exiles who were soon to be called upon to rebuild that which had been destroyed, could have been daunted by the descriptions of the original temple and its magnificence. Even the furnishings of gold were beyond the ability of those ex-slaves. By recounting those things Ezra would have been able to impart some sense of the importance of what they were called upon to do. Even though its magnificence could not be duplicated, the purpose of the temple was the same as the one they would build. Believers and unbelievers alike need to know the value and awesomeness of the presence of God among His people. Even though He is not seen, the shadows of His presence give weight and authority to all we do in our lives and in the assemblies of God's people.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 4:17.** *"In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredathah."*

#### **THE CLAY GROUND.**

The beauty of the golden work - candlesticks, basins, tongs and doors -  
The great amount of brass in the laver with flowers that did it adorn -  
All these magnificent pieces of furniture and art had something in common as one -  
Each had been formed in the clay ground.

Without the clay they couldn't have been molded or shaped as they were -  
The malleable clay could be carefully worked before the precious metal was poured.  
In the clay changes could be made or mistakes corrected not seen before -  
The final product could be seen first in the clay ground.

We were not much to look at when we were still the hole of the pit.  
It took the hand of the Master Artist to make each stone to fit -  
No one else but the One who could see the end product would make sense out of it -  
But He knew what could be done with the clay ground.

The place was far away from where the temple would be raised.  
There was only a plain and dirt when the shovel was once placed.  
But from that obscure location came the results that could be praised -  
The beauty was first seen in the clay ground.

Day after day it was shoveled, scraped, carved, molded and cut.  
Until just the right final motion was done and then it was sealed shut  
So the precious metal could be poured and then from out of it -  
Would come evidence of the worth of clay ground.

No one would probably consider when they came to worship at God's house -

That before the amazing beauty could be seen, someone had to search out  
And find a fundamental material about which no one would ever shout -  
He had to look for and find the clay ground.

I don't know what the final result will look like when the Church is finally done.  
I don't know what the angels will sing when the Church is finally at home.  
I do know there is One there who knows all - it's God the Son -  
He's the One who formed me out of the clay ground.

**"O Lord God, in this house of clay I live. May I be pliable and useable enough that You can form from this clay something that can display Thy glory. May the pressure of divine hands reveal the character of God in some way through this clay ground. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 5**

### **THE GLORY OF THE LORD**

In recounting historical events to the generations that follow the original event, emphasis has to be placed on those things that make the greatest impact on our lives presently. The knowledge of history has a reason in that it can preserve the present generation from making the same mistakes their forefathers did, or to enlighten us as to what is still important to us today. The building of the temple, its magnificence and dedication being written to the people returning from Babylon, and for us today, gives us a look into the future when "the King of glory shall come in." Our Lord is not finished with the world yet. He has given us a foreshadowing of the glory of the Lord yet to come that will be seen, not only in the temple in Jerusalem, but throughout the whole world.

By emphasizing the temple built by Solomon we are taught the fact of divine authority we submit to when we worship and serve our Lord. God is holy and the evidence of that is on display when we meet as His people and worship together in the way of His choosing. His new covenant with us is not based on that which appeals to us nor what we are "comfortable with," but on the word of God. God's word was followed in the building of the temple and is to be followed in "the house of God" today. By nature, we are not able to approach God, but in grace He has made it possible for us to "draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." Forgiveness is possible because of the value of the innocent Substitute who "offered Himself without spot to God" and died in our place. The way is now open for us to enter into the presence of God because of Him who has opened this "new and living way."

By faith we enter through the veil today. In the future, typified by the temple Solomon built, the glory of the Lord will be seen and experienced in a way that is obvious to all who look on. That will not be a more real experience than that which we have now by faith. Faith is not wishful thinking but a positive assurance of all we have because our faith is in the Lord Himself. We can experience in that way the glory of the Lord now. People in the past went to the temple to pray. The throne of grace to which we approach is open and available to us at all times and in any place because by being "in Christ" we are actually part of the dwelling place of God.

The temple was completed as far as the building itself was concerned and the things David had dedicated to the Lord were placed there, but that didn't bring the glory of the Lord to fill the temple. The magnificence of the building was not diminished in any way by the passing of nearly a year since its completion, but the glory of the Lord was not there. At the most appropriate time for the nation, the feast of tabernacles in which they celebrated God's protection in the wilderness journey to the promised land, and in which their commitment to God was renewed, the ark was to be brought up to the temple. The tabernacle at Gibeon was brought up and all that was in it - the gold covered boards, the curtains, the furniture, the pins - everything - and was stored in the temple. The evidence of past glory and all the antiquities associated with that was placed in the temple, but they did not bring the glory of the Lord with them.

The priests who were Levites went down to Mount Zion and brought "the ark of the covenant of the Lord" up to the higher part of the mount where the temple was built. Sacrifices were made continually as it was carried up to the temple. Likely they were peace offerings which the people, the priests and the Lord all shared. When the ark was carried into the holiest, it had finally come, after 129 years away to where it should be, to the place where it could testify to the Lord's presence with His people in the way most appropriate. The manna had been removed and Aaron's rod that budded was also not in the ark, but the tables of stone on which the word of God was engraved was there. "The word of the Lord endureth forever." The "hidden manna" and the tree in which there is life is restored in a spiritual sense to those who overcome in this church age in the assemblies of God's people in which they are a part. That which nourishes God's people and the Gospel they present to others are real and available.

After the ark was in place, and the ancient artifacts of the tabernacle were stored away; after the thousands of sacrifices were made; after the priests had consecrated themselves - still the glory of the Lord did not appear. Those physical and ceremonial things, impressive as they were, were not evidences of faith in a living God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." But then - by the east gate facing the brazen altar and the temple beyond the altar where the ark of the covenant of the Lord now rested, the testimony of faith began. The testimony of song began rising from the hearts and voices of the singers and the 120 priest-trumpeters sounded their music which could have been heard all over that mountain by the ears of thousands of God's people who had gathered there. The singers were singing in unison with the musicians putting into words the testimony of faith in the Lord Himself. When all this happened and the people of the Lord were looking beyond the beautiful building and all it contained, and they were declaring the faith in the Lord and praise to the Lord - the temple was filled with the cloud of God's presence. That presence was so complete that there was no room for the priests to do anything. Everything of man's labor ceased as God moved in to dwell in His house in the midst of His people.

Such glory was physical but it was evidence of the reality of the Presence of God Himself who was hidden from the eyes of men. There was no question about it. God was there. What a wonder! What a cause for joy! "God is in you of a truth" can be said of those who follow divine order in worship and service in the gatherings of assemblies of God's people today. When God is honored and His presence is acknowledged even though he is unseen, worship begins and testimony flourishes. We speak of His love and His great grace when we worship. We sing of His mercy and His faithfulness. We respond to Him with hearts filled with praise. The glory of the Lord and the praise of His people go together. "Unseen we love Thee, dear Thy name..." are true words as we meet together to "worship the King, all glorious is He."

The glory that filled the temple did not stay when the people of God began taking God for granted and sought after the pleasures of sin and the world. As Ezra, or whoever else wrote these Chronicles of Israel, the new generation who did know the value of the ways of God with His people in the past, would have been made conscious of who they were and of what they were now called upon to do. The work before them would have become important, as they realized the heritage they were continuing, even though it was not as glorious as in the past. Even though things in this present day are different from that of our forefathers, we must live in the present and apply ourselves to that which God calls upon us to do now. It is useless for us to mourn for what has been lost. It is important to act upon that which is our responsibility in the present. God's glory is not limited and He is able and willing to allow us to "glorify Him," "give Him glory," and we can experience the glory of His presence by faith when He gathers us to Him and says, "There am I in the midst of them."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 5:14.** *"So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."*

#### **THE CLOUD.**

The final act of the work was done. The lamps were lit and the door was hung.  
The basins, the tables, the bread, the tongs, the spoons - everything was done.  
The animals for the sacrifices, the offerors who brought them were all in the right place.  
Then the priests brought the ark into the holiest and there left the staves.  
Under the cherubim with their wings spreading from wall to wall -  
The ark was set before the oracle, never again to be seen by all.  
The music was started, hymns and psalms sung to praise the Lord.  
The curtain swung back into place, and then the house was filled with the cloud.

The presence of the Lord is not very hard to discern.  
Here is evidence of it in almost everywhere I turn.  
It can be seen in the light that shines from the face of a saint  
Who gets a glimpse of God's glory before their final faint.  
When a soul is saved and realizes the extent of God's grace -  
There is an inner brightness that is seen in their face.  
When the Word of God is read with feeling and reverence -  
Those who listen to the words feel a sense of God's presence.

A large company of God's people raise their voices together to sing.  
As their voices are heard in praise, their songs make the heavens ring  
With angelic "Hallelujahs" as those listeners stop to hear  
The people of God sing in the cloud of His presence knowing God is near.  
The one accord of fellowship and joy in the worship and praise they share -  
Gives to them awareness that the cloud of God's presence fills the air.  
He is unseen, yet they are conscious of His presence when they meet;

Knowing God hears all that comes from our hearts to Him at the mercy-seat.

**“O Lord God, there was a sense of Thy presence among Thy people when we gathered. But I am not sure they all realized the blessing they were able to share. May my thoughts and the words of this day and in the meeting tonight, be acceptable to Thee and a blessing to those who attend. May we all get the assurance that Thou art in our midst. May we give Thee the reverence that is due to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 6**

### **RESPECT, REVERENCE, REPENTANCE, RESTORATION**

The scene is set: God's presence is in the thick cloud that fills the temple. Awestruck people gather looking on in the quietness of reverence and godly fear. The king speaks in response to the presence of God's glory in that place and expresses the desire for the presence of the Lord to remain among His people in His dwelling place. The king then turns to face the watching people and speaks to the people about the promise of God among them and the visible evidence of His presence. God is here. He is among us as He promised. He chose us; His promises never fail; He performs what He promises; He keeps the covenant He made with His people. He put His name there and His glory is evident. May we never lose the wonder of the fact that the God of eternity, the God of the universe dwells among His people. Let us always show the appropriate respect and reverence for Him and His holy name.

The brass platform is in place: It is the same height as the altar. The king mounts the raised platform and is now easily seen by the watching crowd. Then he kneels down before God in a reverential position and the attitude of submission to an authority higher than his. To physically kneel before another person reveals one's estimation of one's self and the exalted position and personhood of another. The divine presence of the Lord was there in the temple. It was also in our Lord Jesus Christ even in His manhood where He was here on earth, "found in fashion as a man." Now a most wondrous thing is true: not only is "God for us," and "God with us," in the Person of the Holy Spirit, God is in us. How careful and conscious we must be when we realize divine Persons have chosen to be where we are.

As Solomon prayed, he began with praise to the Lord. Our Lord in His teaching prayer did the same. "Hallowed be Thy name." Petitions come second. There are some principles of prayer as well that are important. Sincerity in prayer is not in "vain repetitions." Sincerity is evident when there is spontaneity and openness of thought and expression. Confidence in prayer is demonstrated when in faith all aspects of prayer including adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplications are made. Submission to the authority of the Lord is evident when His name is used with respect and reverence rather than a casual familiarity without dignity nor integrity. An awareness of the accessibility of the throne of grace makes us conscious of how near the Lord is to those who "call upon Him with a pure heart." Honesty as a principle in prayer does not let us avoid facing sin and its consequences and confessing it, and forsaking it. It also accepts by faith the promise of forgiveness from our Gracious Father.

If we compare the same prayer when it was first made and then when it was recounted for the sake of the people who came back from Babylon many generations later, we will see some differences. It is the same in all situations when different people look at the same thing, hear the same words or report the same event. There are differences but not contradictions. Those differences may be because of one's location and how they see the same thing from a different perspective. The same thing may be reviewed for different reasons by different people. Any seeming discrepancy in an account needs to be evaluated with that understanding. The scripture does not contain contradictions but rather a different emphasis is placed on the same thing or event. The writer of Chronicles was wanting this later generation to remember their relationship with their ancient leaders and how they were now called upon to adapt the promises of God to their day and age. So he emphasized the relationship of David the king to them and what they would do with the word of God and His work.

In Solomon's prayer he recognized the fact that God is not limited to the confines of a temple no matter how magnificent the building may be. God is infinite in His being, eternal in His existence, unsurpassed in authority and power - and yet hears and answers the prayers of both individuals and nations. God is ready to hear the call of His people. He is ready to forgive the sins of the truly repentant sinner or nation when they confess and forsake their sin. He is ready to restore His people when they turn to Him and follow Him. For us as Christians, He does not just overlook our sin and show mercy to us, nor does He take a casual look at any sin to see if it is important or insignificant. He is rather, legally faithful to His word, and just to His righteous character, and has provided a basis for forgiveness on the fact that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The requests Solomon made that day cover all the areas of national responsibility we may face. The situations relating to crime, enemy attacks, lack of rain and food, immigration, war and refusing to obey God's word were all addressed. He knew God hears from heaven and mentioned that fact eight times. The only answer to any of the problems that arise is to turn to God and put our faith in Him alone. How often we try to come up with our own solutions and find them only temporary or a failure.

Crime seems to be increasing in our day and our new laws do not work to curb the injustice. God alone can maintain justice when we follow His laws and submit to His standards of righteousness. He judges without partiality and can vindicate the innocent. He also expects the guilty to be punished righteously. When we lose in war and the enemies attack, national sin has to be faced and judged and repented of. Then God can bring His people back to where they should be. Drought was a chastening process whereby people were made to face their inability to even meet their own basic needs. In such times as a prolonged lack of rain and the disaster and famine that follows, restoration can take place when disobedience gives way to obedience to God. He shows them the "good way," the right way and forgives and deals with each person according to the attitude of his heart.

Immigration into a country can be for various reasons. Some may come with evil intent and some come with a desire for God and association with His great name and the blessings connected with that name. God recognizes what we cannot. Solomon understood the need of God who knows everything, to make real to both citizens and foreigners the genuine motivation behind their coming into the land of Israel.

When there are just causes to be maintained and it seems that warfare is imminent or unavoidable, we have only God to turn to. "When our cause it is just, then this be our motto, 'In God is our trust.'" But when we refuse to listen to and obey God, God's people have to face the consequences of their sin. In the case of Israel, it led to exile. When real repentance and forsaking of sin actually takes place so that people truly turn to God in faith, "Then hear Thou from heaven, even from Thy dwelling place, their prayer and supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive Thy people which have sinned against Thee."

The conclusion of Solomon's prayer is full of anticipation for an on-going fellowship with God. The ark, the holy garments of the priests, the joy of God's people, the promises to the king - all focus on that which will bring glory to God and assurance to God's people.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 6:41-42.** *"Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in thy goodness. O Lord God, turn not away from the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant."*

### **THY RESTING PLACE.**

The building is finished - everything is placed in its designated position - orderly.  
The spiritual leaders and servant are clothed with modesty - appropriately.  
The people are gathered, now they rise to stand before the Lord - reverently.  
The king mounts the scaffold high above the people - then kneels - humbly.  
He raises his hands toward God and prays asking for grace - from Deity.  
Expressing the failures of men and our need of forgiveness - specifically.

Now there is a place for God among His people to rest.  
And the people of God come to that place to be blessed.  
A connection is made between the Holy God and man.  
When people have failed, there is a place they can  
Return to and find forgiveness when their sin they forsake -  
And the All-Wise God who dwells there does His judgment make.  
His verdict is right and His forgiveness is complete -  
When His people in repentance come to the chosen mercy-seat.

The house of God moves together to the meeting place - regularly  
Each living stone conscious that God is in the midst of His people - personally  
We join our voices in praise and testimony to Him - in harmony  
Our prayers of intercession, supplication and thanksgiving are made - in unity  
God's Word is opened and the words are explained - reverently  
We have come to hear Him, speak and sing to Him and we leave - rejoicingly.

In God's resting place we come and our hearts and voices blend.  
We wait and wonder what exactly is God going to send -  
To heal our sickness and the weakness we all feel.  
Is there some way God is going to come among us and heal

The weakness of our testimony and sometimes our lack of faith?  
Is God willing and able to work among us to reveal again His saving grace?  
May He render and answer, that we may maintain His righteous cause -  
May our testimony be a resting place for God, and may He be able to trust in us.

**“The place where Thy people gather Father, is a very precious place to me. The evidence of truth and grace is being maintained. The faithfulness of the saints is a joy to me. May all that we do as a company of Thine own, be a joy to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 7**

### **CONFIRMATION**

At any large gathering of people there are very differing opinions of things that happened because it affects people in different ways. The whole congregation of Israel was standing before the temple, each one likely seeking a good position where they could best see what was going on. Solomon mounted a scaffold or platform from which he could be seen as he prayed. Priests had moved out of the temple because they could not see to do their work because of the cloud of God's glory. Beyond the platform where Solomon was finishing his prayer, beyond the altar where many sacrifices were waiting to be offered, the magnificent temple was shining in its new splendor. As Solomon finished praying with the words, "O Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine anointed: remember the mercies of Thy servant David," fire fell from heaven and the sacrifices were all set aflame. Not one would have had a different description of that moment. Everyone in that huge company fell down in reverence and fear before the obvious, visible evidence of God in the fire and in the cloud.

The returned exiles from Babylon, when they read these words may have been able to identify with ancient Israel when they left their captivity in Egypt. The fire and the cloud of God's presence was with them in the wilderness. Now the same Lord God had been in the presence of His people hundreds of years later when Solomon was king. Their return by the promise of God would have brought them the hope that God would be with them also even though they had only ruins around them. We too, in this present day live in morally and spiritually dark days, but when we live and walk by faith, we also have the assurance of the presence of God with us. We do not need visible evidence of the fire and cloud to assure us that He is with us. We have the unfailing promise of His word, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Fire from heaven set a perpetual flame on that altar which would have given confidence to the people that God approved of the sacrifices which the fire consumed. The cloud that filled the temple would have been God's public, immediate answer that He approved of the temple and had moved in there to dwell with His people. There was no question as to what was the most important thing that took place that day. The temple and all its physical glory, the sacrifices and the order in which they were placed, the kneeling king - his prayer - these were all important features of that day of dedication. But of all the impressive events that happened, that which would have been indelibly implanted on the minds of the people would have been the fire which fell from heaven and consumed the offerings and sacrifices and the flame that continued to burn there, and also the sight of the impenetrable cloud which filled the temple.

When we are truly conscious of the presence of the Lord among us, all else fades into insignificance as we bow our hearts and heads before our Lord God and worship and praise Him. The thousands of sacrifices may have seemed an extravagant waste of property when the animals were brought, but when they were burned by holy fire, in a holy place, before a holy God - then people would realize the awful seriousness of sin, the great price of forgiveness and become a holy people set apart for God.

The felt presence of God unifies His people in a way that no ceremony, religious practice or traditional manmade convocation can. "All the children of Israel" saw the fire and the glory of the Lord, and all praised Him together - "For He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." "The king and all the people" offered sacrifices. "The king and all the people" dedicated the temple of God. the king and "all Israel" kept the feast of the Lord for seven days, and came together as one big assembly on the eighth day before they left for their homes. There is a unique, sanctifying effect on the people of God when we come together in fellowship with each other and at that time are instructed, comforted and challenged by the word of God presented to us. Often at the end of a conference of Christians, a prayer includes words similar to that which we read about the wise men who left the presence of the child Jesus. "They departed into their own country another way." To return home "merry (joyful) and glad in heart for the goodness the Lord showed," helps us to maintain a spiritual strength and testimony for many days. No wonder we are to "not forsake the assembling of yourselves together." The benefits have a positive effect on us and on others.

Several years had passed since Solomon had prayed before the people at the dedication of the temple. He had reigned as king for over twenty years and was still ruling the Lord's people in the way the Lord intended. But it seems possible to get used to the glory of the Lord and the wonders of fellowship with God and His people. Solomon's departure did not start its downward course until after this meeting with the Lord - perhaps this was a theophany. God knows the heart of every man and chose His own time to respond to Solomon's prayer. If we are not careful, we too will expect God to answer our prayers in the time-frame of our choosing similar to our expected answer to an email or a text message. In His infinite wisdom God does things "in His time."

In this nighttime meeting with Solomon, the Lord confirmed the covenant He had made with Israel and with David. He describes and establishes the provisions for His people to return to covenant practices when they sin. He knows us. He remembers we are but dust. Yet He has set His love upon His people and in grace provides "a way back to God from the dark paths of sin." Sin has consequences to expect, and restoration has conditions to be met. There has to be an honest evaluation of ourselves before a holy God, and an honest evaluation of sin. In all ages of God's dealing with human beings are the same when it comes to sin: "The wages of sin is death (separation from God)."

God does hear the prayers of His people of whatever kind they are - from adoration to confession. God does have a place where we can meet Him and in which He chooses to dwell with His people. At that throne of grace, He accepts their sacrifices of praise, worship, thanksgiving and all the sacrifices and offerings His people bring today. "Acceptable sacrifices" that we can bring to our High Priest [Heb.8:3] include the sacrifice of a consecrated body [Rom.12:1]; the sacrifice of audible praise [Heb.13:15] and the sacrifice of our temporal goods [Heb.13:16]. There are also the sacrifices of gifts to the Lord's servants [Phil.4:8]; of thanksgiving to God [Ps.107:22]; and the sacrifice of joy for God's mercies [Ps.27:6]. The sacrifices of contrition [Ps.51:7]; of righteousness before the watching world [Ps.4:5]; of one's self physically [2Tim.4:6] are all of great significance. The sacrifice of obedience [1Sam.15:22] stands out above the others because of the One who is our Lord.

The consequences of sin are to be expected when we choose to allow it a place in our lives. When there is dearth in the land there is a cause. When there is dryness in our hearts something is missing. If we are unwilling to obey God's word and walk in ways according to His standards, then we must stop and face our guilt. True repentance means we humble ourselves and confess our sins. There is no pride when confession of sin is real. Our prayer to God is in faith when we seek forgiveness. There is no place for false, pious, unfelt words in the prayer of faith and repentance. Earnest, urgent seeking of the face of God without distraction indicates the reality behind our actions. We must find Him! That happens when we seek for Him "with all [our] heart." Turning from sinful behavior by half-hearted changes is not what turning from "wicked ways" means. A complete rejection of that which is sinful allows for no compromise with the world, the flesh and the devil.

There are conditions to meet for the fellowship of the covenant to be renewed. We must commit ourselves to walk before God and to do all He commands. There is hope after sinning. Reconciliation is possible after separation. There are promises given with options. Disobedience gives way to obedience. Humble repentance brings promised forgiveness of sin. Restoration to fellowship with the Lord follows repentance. Healing from that which suffers the effects of sin follows repentance for sin. This is indeed the evidence of the grace of God given when grace is needed.

To ignore and/or reject that which God has decreed and commanded, results in the people of God being uprooted from where He has placed them. They will be rejected by Him no matter how majestic and glorious their "temple" may be. It will be ridiculed for what it has become rather than what it was once was. Such disaster accompanies the forsaking of the Lord and His word by His people. The reason behind God's divine favor upon Israel was because of His covenant with David, their forefather who in spite of his own sin and failures, never allowed a rival to God. He failed miserably but never turned to idolatry.

The serious consequences of idolatry cannot be overemphasized. Anything that takes the place of God in our hearts is an idol. If we allow anything or anybody to rival our allegiance to God, we have taken steps away from God and moved toward moral decay and spiritual departure that will end in disaster to an individual, an assembly or a nation. The glory of the beginning of the chapter does not take away the warnings referred to at the end of the chapter.

**2 Chronicles 7:14.** *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

### **MY PEOPLE.**

These are not just plain, old, ordinary people - they are "MY PEOPLE."  
These are not just patriots - though this nation has survived on the blood of patriots.  
These are not just citizens - honorable, taxpaying, hard-working citizens.  
These are "MY PEOPLE", says God.

There are ways to distinguish these people - beside "MY PEOPLE."  
They are followers of Christ - so "Christians" are "MY PEOPLE."  
They have trusted the Word of God by faith - so "believers" are "MY PEOPLE."  
They have been separated unto the Lord - so "saints" are "MY PEOPLE."

They have others that fellowship in the same way with God - so "brethren" are "MY PEOPLE."  
They choose to follow the same Master - so "disciples" are "MY PEOPLE."  
They all have a common bond though they don't know each other.  
They are going to the same place, though some are already there and others are not yet born.

But there is a tendency to pride - pride of their accomplishments in the family.  
And to such - the Lord says - "Humble themselves."  
There is a tendency to do things without asking before acting.  
And to such - the Lord says - "Pray."

There is a tendency to want to do my own thing, without looking to God.  
And to such - the Lord says - "seek My face."  
There is a tendency to go forward, doing what we know is wrong.  
And to such - the Lord says - "turn from their wicked ways."

When these things happen - the Lord says - "will I hear from heaven."  
When repentance is obvious and real - the Lord says - "I will forgive their sins."  
When appropriate actions follow the words - the Lord says - "I will heal their land."  
All this recovery can happen because God calls us - "MY PEOPLE."

**"I do pray Father, on behalf of myself and my people, we are down on our knees here. There is not much lower that we can go. The aged, the sick the discouraged are really hurting. If there are wicked ways in us, please reveal them to us. We want to know Thou art with us even though we are so weak. Help us we pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **2nd Chronicles 8**

#### **WORK, WORSHIP, WEALTH**

In the normal course of life each of us has a role to fill, a work to do, and responsibilities to God and His people. Not each person's life and calling is the same and therefore it is wrong to be critical if others do things differently from that which we expect. Leadership has a whole different emphasis than that which is practiced by most people. But in every person's life there is the need to use our minds in ways that are best suited to our needs. Wisdom in conducting personal, marriage and family life maintains a normality that is best for all concerned. Meaningful labor, whether we like the job we have or not is fundamental to human existence. "If any would not work, neither should he eat." There is also the need of a certain amount of wealth to keep a family fed. A wise person sets aside some of what he has "for a rainy day." Worship of God is an inborn need of human beings because we are conscious of all that is around us that is way beyond our capacity to make and control.

Solomon did not allow his wisdom, his work and his wealth to take away his responsibility to worship the Lord in these twenty plus years of his reign. He was conscious of the significance of the house of the Lord and how the spiritual part of his life affected every other aspect of his life. Apparently, the cities he had given as collateral to Hiram were not satisfactory to him (Hiram) and were given back to Solomon, although no lasting negative situation hindered their further association.

By making fortified cities on major highways, Solomon could store and trade goods in those places for the mutual benefit of those involved in trade deals. Work is honorable if we maintain an honest association with those whom we labor for or with. The increase of territory to the north was apparently the only military venture Solomon had during his reign. There are certain simple principles of living we should maintain in order to live successfully before God and men. When we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," success in other areas of life follow. When we "honor the Lord with [our] substance, and with the first-fruits of our increase," we gain that which is important.

In the kingdom of God, the way to get is to give. The way up is down. The way to win is to lose. The way to live is to die. When God comes first, His blessings flow out to us from His hand of grace. "He that begun a good work in you will perform it..." God makes things beneficial for His people when they worship and serve Him. Solomon's work was building, and his reign was peaceful between nations for the most part.

In spite of how skilled, educated and motivated a person may be, in order for the efforts and labor of life to be meaningful to us, we have to acknowledge that it is God who makes it possible for us to succeed. It was a concern to the writer of the Chronicles to keep the link between the ancient past of Moses' day and the reigns of David and Solomon, relevant and tied to the situation of those who had returned from captivity to Israel. That was a way to tie the work before them to the glory of Israel's past history.

Solomon kept those of the children of Israel in positions of responsibility in military and political responsibility and those descendants of the conquered tribes as laborers. Likely it was slave labor that had food, shelter and security for their families as the remuneration for their labor. Those the king felt could be trusted were used in strategic areas of national life. Just because people seem like they are believers does not mean we should give them responsibility in spiritual work.

Any area of life which has not been surrendered to the Lord, begins a downward trend that leads to spiritual downfall. This is especially true when it comes to establishing personal relationships. To compromise that which we know is right for any reason, will sometime lead to spiritual compromise, and that in turn is usually followed by deliberately turning away from that which we know is right - and that is apostasy.

Even though Solomon would not mix paganism with that which was holy, he made it possible for pagan worship to get a foothold. It began with marrying Pharaoh's daughter who was not a believer; she was not one of God's people. He then accommodated her by building a palace for her, separate from where God's people and the king himself would live. Apparently, he felt some guilt about marrying her and allowed himself to compromise what he knew was right in God's eyes with that which was right in his own eyes.

In order to keep peace between a believer and an unbeliever in a relationship, almost always the child of God is the one who makes the compromise for the sake of peaceful coexistence. That in turn leads to a divided household, and the children often follow the way that is most pleasing to their sinful nature. There is a very clear distinction between that which is holy and that which is not. Solomon blended this first in his personal life. He multiplied wives, and then in his business and political life he multiplied horses for his military and likely for trade. Both were forbidden by the law of Moses but he did it anyway.

Whether it was in sincerity or to assuage his growing sense of guilt, Solomon maintained the offerings commanded by Moses without any deviation. He understood the holiness of the ark and the temple, and did not allow any other religious forms or people to step out of line. He brought sacrifices to be offered and incense was burned demonstrating the fact he knew the value of temple worship. Apart from his attraction to women and horses, Solomon kept at his own work and was successful in it. He maintained his worship, and outwardly it seemed like he was doing it right. His wealth continued to accumulate and his joint ventures in business were very successful. In spite of his riches he knew he need God.

But there is a principle that affects all parts of our lives. "Man, looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." Solomon did not allow his wisdom, work, and wealth to interfere with his worship for the first twenty-some years of his reign. By making one step away from the path of God's leading, the way was opened for a gradual decline. We need to learn to guard every part of our lives. Any one area can start a downward course, but the one most serious and damaging is that of forming relationships. Never give sin a place to start. We must be conscious of God's will, and convicted of it so greatly that we resist any attraction to give sin an opening. By taking God at His word without seeking to spin it to our own advantage, we will avoid a long miserable life of compromise and its effects.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 8:11.** *"And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that her had built for her: for he said, my wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come."*

#### **THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH.**

All seems well; there is peace in the land  
The economy is maintained by the king's powerful hand.  
The people are all working, there seems to be plenty for all -  
The spiritual leaders are there in the house of the Lord so tall.

But there is one in the city who does not fit -  
The daughter of Pharaoh and her gods are not part of it.  
From this place she looks down on God's people with scorn -  
Her form of worship may be herself to adorn.

So, the king builds her a palace separate from all of the others.  
She would not consider God's people her sisters and brothers.  
Though her husband, the king, is one who belongs to the Lord -  
His wife worships differently - to the gods of this world

Unequal yokes have more than two people attached.  
They are like two different species neither of them do match.  
One wants the things of the Lord and regularly attends to them.  
The other is spiritually dead and secretly wants the gods of men.

When it comes to making decisions; one will seek God's will -  
But has to compromise or adapt to keep peace between them still.  
The motivation is different; she wants to do her own thing,  
And will not be satisfied until she can fully control him.

When it comes to having children, what will they do?  
One wants for them worldly success and worldly pleasures too -  
The other will seek their spiritual welfare for life and for death -  
And will try to instruct the children in what the Bible says.

Pharaoh's daughter may have been beautiful and politically astute.  
But the seeds of idolatry will ultimately bear some fruit.  
To go into an unequal yoke thinking you can keep its consequences outside  
Is only wishful thinking until you go out there to abide.

**“O Lord, preserve Thy people from the dangerous attractions of the unequal yoke.  
Give to Thy servant some way to warn them so they take the warnings seriously. In  
the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 9**

### **BEYOND THE WEALTH**

What is the point of one's lifetime spent in this world? How can we measure worth - of time, of truth, of intellect, of character, of one hour, of one's place in God's plan of things? When material things like gold and the great accumulation of assets begins to defy description, it helps to understand the difference between that which is human and that which is divine. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul," is an apt description of things through God's eyes. It would not be worth a billionaire's time to stop and pick up a \$1000 bill if he dropped it. He or she would have to spend more money every day than a middle-income worker would earn in a year to use up \$1 billion during their adult years. So, when we read descriptions of Solomon's wealth, we have a tendency to think only of unprecedented extravagance rather than the fact of God's promise.

As a young man he was concerned with the people of God he was called to lead, and his need of wisdom from God to lead well. By the time he was half way through the years of his reign he was extremely wealthy, but still conscious of God and the temple of God which was the center of national interest. By the end of his life, Solomon, the man, was the focus of his own attention. His fame, his splendor, his wealth, his wisdom, his palace, his throne were the objects of awe and wonder by the queen of Sheba who came to see if what she had heard could possibly be true.

The writer of the Chronicles copied nearly word for word the historical account from the book of Kings in his effort to emphasize the importance of the future, and the potential value of that which is ahead. Rather than grieve over all that was lost and taken from Israel to Babylon, and lament over that which could never be restored, he wrote a brief historical account of events that would impress the present generation of the worth of that which their forefathers had. He didn't recount their failures and the idolatry that Solomon made and condoned. To do that would have served no useful purpose for the present need.

Unless there is some real need or spiritual purpose to be learned, to dwell on the failures and faults of the Lord's people has no value. Usually when a person or persons do that, it is with the purpose of putting themselves in a good light by comparison. Self-exaltation in any form serves no purpose and probably is abhorrent to most people in the long run. If we chose to focus attention on that which is right and profitable, there can be positive results that come from positive choices made.

The visit of the queen of Sheba (Yemen) was referred to by our Lord when He was here, and He pointed out that it was Solomon's wisdom she came to hear. The wisdom of our Lord that is available to us is far greater than that of Solomon. Riches and honor, power and fame are transient and can be lost very quickly. Twenty-five tons of gold came into Solomon's hands in a year. And all that was taken away from the land of Israel in a much shorter time. Eternal things always take precedence over the temporal. Spiritual things take precedence over physical things.

The queen of Sheba left with more than she brought, but what really counted was the impression created by the witness of Solomon's wisdom, the happiness of those who served him, and the love of God for His people Israel. She understood God wanted that kingdom to remain and maintain justice and righteousness in the nation. We may hear people say, "God is among you in truth," but that may not mean they want to be a part of what they see. Unless a person can see beyond the external evidence of a gathering of God's people to the One whose witness we maintain, they will not want to pay the cost of "buying the truth and selling it not." It is not what is seen that is important, but He who is the object of our faith. We gather unto Him "whom having not seen, we love." The outward trappings cannot hold people to the truth. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ alone can do that.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 9:1.** *"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart."*

### **THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.**

It must have been impressive when the Queen of Sheba came.  
And when she opened up to him - admiring his wealth and fame -  
She reached that part in the male ego where the flattery we believe.  
And our focus is changed from heaven to earth and on the benefits we receive.

When one begins to attend to the blessings, not the Blessor, the world soon gets its way.  
And those who symbolize what man's treacherous heart craves soon has a powerful sway.  
Over one who has a tendency to judge success by "things" and attainments.  
The world comes in to cloud our view and we try to explain away God's commandments.

The questions they ask often seem so sincere where worldly people seek to test our faith.  
But they are coming from a different point of reference that gives to the flesh a prominent place.

"If it pleases me," the person of the world says, "Then it must be right."  
And right behind flesh, comes the lust of the eyes wanting everything in sight.

Perhaps more vulnerable and susceptible to flattery is the deceitful pride of life.  
When one is able to be adored by others, we love the attention not noticing the knife  
That is in the hand of the one whose smooth words flow like a rolling tide  
Over the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and pride itself - until the knife is thrust in one's side.

Then we start to believe the flattery; we pay attention to the world's chief aim.  
Before long we are caused to believe the sly words and forget more of God's main claim -  
That if we honor Him, He will honor us: not falling for the world's adulation.  
When we think the flattery, we get it true, we are only a step from God's condemnation.

The life of a Christian is not a success if he is only successful in business.  
Nor can we think we are the person God intends if people with words exalt us.  
In God's plan of things, the measure is made up of how much treasure we have in heaven.  
The things that please God, the worship, service and prayers; these have salt and light in them.

The world won't quit trying to conquer me as long as I live for the Lord.  
The cosmos has a way of distracting my intellect from seeking to attend to God's Word.  
It has ways and means to confront me constantly with things to make me dissatisfied.  
These things appeal to my fleshly nature, and for a price, promises to be mine.

But I have been made a new creation in Christ, and am able to find joy where God finds His.  
It is the work of the Holy Spirit within to make one from the world's attractions to desist.  
He lifts my eyes above the asphalt streets to where the streets are paved with gold.  
And when my attention is focused on Christ, truly, "The half has not been told."

**“O Gracious Father, I find in Thee the rest of heart and life, the people of the world are seeking. As I prepare my mind to seek the truth of Thy Word, may I not be distracted. Please keep me from paying attention to flattering word of men. Enable me to see all that is around me, and all that is going on, through Thy eyes. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

It appears from the writing of the Chronicles that the writer was aware of the fact that Solomon had set his heart upon his riches that were increasing. Even though he does not make written condemnation of the accumulation of gold and horse, of splendor and renown - he does compare his wealth with the lesser wealth and wisdom of "all the other kings of the earth." All they brought to him "year by year" may sound at first reading that they were gifts of appreciation. Really, those were forms of taxes being paid by those who were subjugated to the rule of Solomon. High taxes without anything to show for them except extravagance on the part of leaders, soon leads to discontent and rebellion.

Even though it did not serve the purpose of Ezra to condemn the actions of Solomon that ultimately turned him away from God, it is wise for us to consider the dangers to us. The desire for pleasure will never be satisfied. The gathering of wealth and all that goes with it will never be satiated. One's ambition for self-fulfillment will never stop unless something or someone of greater worth takes the place of supremacy. Outward trappings of our success will not impress others as much as we might think, and certainly not as much as they impress one's own ego. Often it will bring criticism and resentment to others. Foolish spending on trinkets serve no real purpose except to fill the pockets of traders and give us a temporary laugh. Excessive military spending will end up being used for military defense against those who want to take away what we have for themselves, or for our aggression in order to protect what we have.

The whole story of Solomon reads almost like an unreal story of one who had everything, but left nothing of real value behind to his family and children. A variety of people recorded events and things about Solomon and his reign for forty years. Forty years that came and went like a brief flash in the unfolding history of God's dealing with men. All that he did that was so good and right in the first twenty plus years of his reign, lost its real value by the time of his death. The golden buildings were still there when he died. Thousands of horses were still in their stalls needing to be fed. Huge numbers of government employees beside the cheap labor needed to maintain the extravagance he brought, were still working to maintain the outward appearance of Solomon's success. But underneath were the seeds and murmurs of discontent among the rank and file of God's people. The glamour of foreign dignitaries coming and going hid the resentment of extreme taxation. Religious forms and idolatry had surpassed the true worship of God by the king and those associated with him. Instead of worshipping "in spirit and in truth," it was in appearance only and in compromise with evil.

What started out good ended bad. What could have been a blessing if Solomon's mind had been "stayed on Thee," became a travesty and perversion of righteousness. Instead of "them that honor Me, I will honor," it ended in "they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." We need to understand, and accept what God says is right, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

**2Chronicles 9:6.** *“Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard.”*

#### **HALF HAS NOT BEEN TOLD.**

Two heads of state met together, to discuss the events of their day.  
There seemed to be a connection; each heard what the other had to say.  
Economy was not a problem; each apparently had peace in their land.  
They exchanged pleasantries and information; she put a great gift in his hand.

He in turn opened up to her questions, and to all that she asked - he replied.  
She held nothing back - and from his wisdom, he told her, it was on his God he relied.  
His wisdom and understanding were given by the Lord who he gratefully served -  
God from His storehouse so great - gave to him far more than he deserved.

His servants, and his leaders all seemed happy to be serving their king - and to hear  
All the teaching and instruction he could give them, and were glad responsibilities to bear.  
The Lord God who chose that little nation, and whose wisdom the king was able to share -  
Was delighted when this king as a servant, was not proud but the cloak of wisdom did  
wear.

From God, daily blessings we receive, and many, envy our peace of mind.

When people ask, we tell in conversation, it is in Christ satisfaction we find.  
 To try to explain to one who lives in the dark, what light looks like when the sun brightly  
 shines;  
 Is about what it's like to make plain salvation and grace, to one who is spiritually blind.  
 If I said it is like stepping out of the darkness of night, into the light of a bright summer's  
 day;  
 Or it is like building on a solid foundation of rock, instead of building a house on wet clay -  
 Or if I said it is like coming from a road-less desert, onto a good road and clearly marked  
 way;  
 The fact is - I haven't told half of the blessing and joy, even if I said all I could say.  
 For the character and work of the Person of Christ, far exceeds all I could ever think.  
 And the greatness of redemption He paid for with blood, has saved me from hell's awful  
 brink.  
 The gift of salvation He gave and I received, defies description by every pen and all ink.  
 No, the half has never - and will never be known, for His greatness surpasses everything.

**“O Great God and Heavenly Father: I am not attempting to describe the indescribable; I am simple worshipping at the thought of the greatness and majesty and the glory of Thy Person, and the immensity of all Thy work and power. I am in awe of Thee, yet am able to say, ‘Abba Father’ and not be out of place. I honor Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 10**

### **COUNSEL OF OLD MEN**

One who is passing on information should avoid too many distractions that would take away the point of his message. The writer of the Chronicles seemed to want to pass on spiritual principles to guide the coming generations rather than give an in-depth accounting of all that happened to the twelve tribes of Israel. So, he passed on information for their learning based on things that happened in Judah with brief references to the northern tribes of Israel only as events were linked with Judah. Those who returned from Babylon were mainly settled in Judah. In the interests of helping the next generation of God's children, it is valuable to take the time to prepare a precise and concise presentation of spiritual truth. Things are passed on in the modern day in "sound bites" and brief statements.

The training of young people today is quite different from that of years in the past. What would have been lectured in a classroom in the past, then discussed openly, then reviewed and ultimately tested, is now done in brief segments from five to fifteen minutes. Students now rely on hand-held devices that contain a whole lot of information about a whole lot of subjects. The human brain is not called upon to retain what has been passed on from others, but to seek to explore that which has not been considered previously.

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, seemed to be a weak and indecisive man who, though he had a whole book of Proverbs passed on to him from his father, did not pay much attention to what he had been instructed. During times of difficulty and change, one is wise to take the humble place of a learner and a listener so they will not lose that counsel that is so important. Arrogance and childish behavior in adults are foolish and despised by others. We need to remember that God is still at work in men and nations and there are consequences to the decisions we make that are irreversible.

Rehoboam made a wise decision to have his coronation at Shechem where the northern tribes could identify with him as a representative of them as well as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. There were already the seeds of division planted when Jeroboam in a premature attempt to overthrow Solomon failed and fled to Egypt. It was his tragic sin of opening the door to overt sin in having golden calves made for Israel's worship, "that made Israel to sin." Solomon on the other hand, started out good in the first half of his reign. But a man may do good in his early years and get used to success. He may even think the good he has done and his accomplishments are because of his own astuteness. The sad thing is, one can lose all he has accomplished, his reputation and his influence in old age. Solomon's wives and possessions, possessed him and he lost the balance of faith and wisdom.

The unified nation Rehoboam had sought to maintain at the beginning of his reign, was lost in three days because he listened to bad advice. The counsel of the old men was for him to be like David, his grandfather, and show kindness, mercy and empathy toward the people of God which was a condition for unity to be maintained. It is a wise person who listens to, and acts upon, the advice of those who know what is needed better than you because of their years of experience. Also, whenever we are called upon to make a decision, ask God for wisdom, understanding and needed grace to carry out a God-given task.

Peers often feel the same about a situation as we do, and we take their advice because it is what we want to hear. The problem with that is their view, and ours, may be very limited because of our inexperience in that particular matter. Experience is a good teacher and helps us see the big picture including both the issue at hand and the results that will follow. In Rehoboam's case, just after he became king, he succumbed to peer pressure. Self-importance and insolence overcame his insecurity, and led to a very foolish decision. It may seem like this has little spiritual application to it, but this new king ignored God. He did not ask for divine wisdom. He did not listen nor heed the advice of the old men who had seen the trend of the nation due to a failing leadership. He did pay attention to those ambitious people who lived just for the moment.

Solomon did not practice a balanced leadership. The outward trappings of success and glory do not make a solid infrastructure for a nation, an assembly, a family or one's own personal life. Trying to gain everything may lead to losing everything both for yourself and those who come behind you. Solomon could be harsh in his role as leader. He saw the common people only as a source of income rather than the people of God. As he got older, he saw his own life as the center of importance rather than the people of God who he had wanted to serve in his youth when he asked for wisdom from God. Selfishness and spiritual discernment are opposites.

By forsaking the counsel of the old men and acting on the advice of novices, immature counselors, who said he should tell the people he had greater power in his little finger and greater punishment by scorpions than Solomon had, they opened the door to the disaster of a divided kingdom and divided people. Rehoboam apparently saw leadership as a difficulty instead of an opportunity. Difficulties temper the causes of joy and satisfaction so the result is wisdom in action. Those who follow us learn by observation. Solomon had not left a good example to his son.

It is sad but true, sin affects us in serious negative ways, and it will do the same in those who follow us. Disobedience to God will bring disaster. God's ways and His will when acted upon, will bring positive results even when He uses difficulties to bring about His desired results. God's grace is demonstrated to His people even when they fail. He responds to humbling of pride and confession of sin by extending true forgiveness in an act of marvelous grace "that is greater than all our sin."

God also sent prophets during that time to instruct, guide, correct and warn His people. The ministry of the prophets began as an act of God's grace. However, one has written, "None is so blind as those who will not see." When Rehoboam's eyes were finally opened to the fact that the counsel of the old men was right, and the advice of his peers was terribly wrong, he was too late to stop the division. The sad consequences followed and remained. Perhaps the ones who returned from exile and saw the devastated land, the influx of immigrants who became known as Samaritans, and the changes that had occurred, could have been dismayed and discouraged.

We need to remember that no matter how different present reality is from what divine intention is, God does not change. He is gracious and full of mercy. He is ready and willing to forgive the repentant sinner. Our Lord Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 10:7-8.** *"And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him."*

#### **THE CLASH OF GENERATIONS.**

They gathered together at the king's command.  
Faces lined with the road-maps of years of experience,  
Watched the smooth-faced, spoiled young leader - and hoped.  
Hoped he had learned something from his father that would guide him.  
Hoped he would understand his limitations and needs;  
Hoped he would learn from them the lessons of history.  
Hoped he has some common sense and would avoid the nonsense  
Of a group of childhood friends who had not learned any lessons at all -  
Who had gotten all they wanted in times of prosperity and plenty -  
Who had never been made to act responsibly for any serious reason.  
Who had answers to problems they had never in their lives faced.  
Who thought they knew how to control the people of the older generation.  
Who thought life was measured by material possession and passing pleasure.

The older ones who knew the people of the older generation and had watched the antics  
of the new -

The older ones who had worked hard all their lives and paid huge taxes so the young could play -  
The older ones whose hands were calloused and whose backs were bent from hard labor -  
The older ones who had paid their own way through the good times and the hard times -  
The older ones who knew people and knew the value of genuine compassion -  
The older ones who appreciated what they were allowed to get and keep for themselves -  
The older ones who knew that words fitly spoken were like "apples of gold in pitchers of silver"-  
They hoped for a listening ear and acts of grace and kindness from the next generation.  
But what they got then, as now, was a deaf ear to their words of wisdom.  
A blind eye as to the results of unparalleled spending on credit -  
A hard heart as to the appeals of those who labored to bring peace and plenty -  
A sneering mouth, that without words, indicated the low esteem he felt for others -  
Harsh words that came from soft lips that always had their food handed to them -  
A clenched fist made from a soft hand that never had blisters or was dirty with honest labor -  
A kick from a hard-toed boot that covers sun-tanned feet that moved only for pleasure.

The generations are divided: who is at fault? The old: for not expecting more from the young?  
The young for not having faced life as it really is in their formative years?  
Both: for not having faced earlier the widening gap between their generations?  
Does this have to be repeated by every generation that comes - is their no hope?  
Only One: "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found," "Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth."

**"O God, there is no doubt a wide gap that exists between me and the next generation. They don't know yet, but there will be a wide one between them and their pleasure-taught children. They will soon face the dilemma of a jaded generation. Help me to keep the lines of communication open. O God, have mercy on us all! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 11**

### **FOR THREE YEARS**

The writer of the Chronicles was quite obviously concerned that the positive actions of the forbearers of the returned exiles be given as much credit as possible for doing what was right. Rehoboam acted on wrong advice at the time of his coronation by indicating to the people of Israel he was going to take full control over their lives and keep the power of the nation in his own hands. The result was division. His reaction was to gather his army and reunite the kingdom by force. Often there is the tendency to take some action without taking the time to think a matter through and consider what the outcome will be. To challenge our brethren, and perhaps defeat and subjugate them, only produces resentment and at a later time, retaliation.

Rehoboam wisely listened to the word of the Lord through Shemaiah, the prophet. This prophet was a man of courage who was willing to go against the plans of the king and popular thought of his counselors and men of war. By divine intervention which led to taking good advice, the children of Israel were saved from a lot of bloodshed. There will be times when our opinion differs from those of our brothers and sisters in Christ. To have a different opinion is not necessarily wrong, but to try to force that opinion on others claiming that it is a conviction, leads to division. Some people demand that everyone submits to their own personal opinion on a matter, and will take it right to the wall. That divisive attitude and long-lasting resentments will be held even after the initiator is gone, and a company of God's people never recover from the aftereffects of one's personal opinion.

Unity that lasts cannot be forced on God's people. Respect for a person, and particularly a leader, comes when the hearts of God's people are drawn towards him because of his meekness and obvious love for them. Meekness does not mean one is an easy pushover, but that one understands that power under control, motivated by Christian love and graceful words, can produce a more desired result than overwhelming force.

Loyalty and allegiance have to be won. When we have opportunity, "Do good unto all men, especially them who are of the household of faith." Those who serve the Lord by serving His people, need the character of servant-hood learned from our Lord, and from those who have been tried and proven by their lives of faith. It is doubtful that Rehoboam ever saw his role as king, as that of a servant of the people. But at least for three years he was a good administrator of that which remained in his hands of a divided kingdom.

He understood the necessity of guarding his southern border because the Egyptians would likely seek to take advantage of, and seek to conquer, that part of a divided nation. It was a wise move on his part to arm and maintain these fortified cities to the east, west and south as protection against invasion. In our commitment to the truth of God, both in assembly testimony and in Gospel testimony, we need to be consciously aware of those teachings and practices that are encroaching on the people of God, and have the potential of defeating us. It is God who preserves His people and He uses wise leaders to teach and strengthen His own people against the invasion of falsehood.

Perhaps Rehoboam left the northern border unprotected in hopes of bringing about the reunification of the whole kingdom. The actions of Jeroboam in making two golden calves and installing his own priesthood effectively hindered, and then completely stopped all hope of that from happening. Those who were committed to the Lord and His word, did not go along with the new, and wrong religious practices of the northern tribes. Rather than cooperating with that which is wrong and compromising, they moved to the south where the right practices continued in the temple at Jerusalem. It was more important to them to obey God in the spiritual part of their lives than to keep their homes and property. There is a price associated with doing that which is right when the majority chooses to go their own way. It may be the loss of jobs, loss of property, loss of finances and loss of prestige in order to do what is right. But when one person is willing to take such action, that example helps others to separate from evil and follow the word of God in faithful obedience. It is wrong to try to make the plain teaching of the word of God fit our own agenda for our own reasons.

There is no question that God hates division. He said so in His word. But unity at the expense of truth and obedience to the will of God is not something with which we can participate. Self-will, apostasy, false doctrine and willful rejection of our Lord, leads to division in the same sense as darkness and light are divided. When difficulties because of differing opinions arise in a church or a family, attempts at reconciliation are the first steps to take in resolving a matter. The priest, Levites and those "who set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel," did right when they moved to Jerusalem where they were able to sacrifice to the Lord God of their forefathers.

When we obey God rather than man, no matter how much charisma a person might have, we must preserve our integrity and spiritual discernment in spite of how persuasive that person may be. Biblical convictions may cost us friendships and favorable circumstances, but to be able "to live in all good conscience," is to maintain spiritual strength. Those who are prepared to obey God in spite of the cost, please God.

Rehoboam must have carefully planned to place family members in different locations throughout the southern kingdom. In that way he was able to control the political system and at the same time keep his family from plotting against each other. Through his twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters scattered to different places, he was able to avoid the kind of family dynamics that plagued David when he was king.

The mistakes we make early in life may not leave us entirely unscathed, and we may never be able to fully recover from their effects, but when we finally learn some lessons from others, and by experience, we may still have a productive life. However, a good start does not always mean a good finish. If we keep close to our Lord and remain committed to knowing and practicing His word, we can run a successful race.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 11:4.** *"Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the Lord, and returned from going against Jeroboam."*

#### **DIVISION.**

What is it about the fourth generation that makes them so dissatisfied?  
One cannot question their sincere appreciation of the Lord who for them died.  
But it seems like something comes over people like an insidious disease  
That makes them powerless to solve their problems - power they want to seize.

What should we do when divisions arise that divide the people of God?  
Both sides claim their actions are based upon the unchanging holy Word.  
But interpretation seems set aside and we get focused on application  
That makes it almost impossible for an assembly to work out their own salvation.

What is left for us to do when division has made us so small?  
Those who left us go farther to "the left" that they may appeal to all.  
Those on the "right" have an attitude that we are going down in defeat.  
That makes it hard to carry on in weakness when we feel we are less than complete.

But God has allowed division to come; He must have some purpose to fulfill.

In ancient time God's people became unholy, and division was allowed until  
One would come who would unite again His own and they truly would be one.  
To try to "cross-pollinate" what God allows divided, will only be when men are done.

There are those who want to bring together a divided people by compromise.  
They are really concerned with how assemblies look in the world's eyes.  
To try and unify what God allowed divided, without Him would be a futile plan.  
Our fellowship is through our risen Lord, not on the schemes of man.

What God has joined together, man should never put asunder -  
But there are those who divide anyway, and it makes some people wonder  
If God recognizes a division in a marriage, a country or a church;  
Or if He ignores the decisions of men as if everything stays the same as at the first.

In searching the scriptures, it is plain to see that God really hates division.  
But because He hates it doesn't mean He overlooks the reality of man's awful decisions.  
It seems to be that God lets continue the divisive decisions of man -  
And acknowledges the results that come from that act; though it does not come from His  
hand.

So, we have to live with the consequences of the actions of our bad choices.  
And it is not wise to act in our own way in response to all the plaintive voices.  
We need to carry on where God has placed us, doing the work He has called us to do.  
God will make right the wrongs that have come when this training time is through.

**"Lord God, this assembly is weak because of division in the past. There are marriages that have failed because of division. Our country and the world are hurting because of division. Please help me to promote biblical unity among the people of God and the assemblies of God. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 12**

### **INCONSISTENT**

It is important for each person as they come to maturity to realize I have this one life before me to use for the greatest possible objective They need to make sure their goals are consistent with those that please God. Successful living is not merely fulfilling one's personal ambitions, but living in such a way that other people are benefitted by what I have been able to do, and by glorifying and honoring God. Self-satisfaction and the pursuit of pleasure will never be attained. Satisfaction for work done right and with good results for God's glory, man's blessing and a sense of personal accomplishment, can be ours when we keep things in this right order.

After a bad start due to bad advice and a bad decision, Rehoboam made a few wise decisions for about three years. But when he had become established in his reign and had impressed himself with his importance, and apparently thought he "had it all together," he "forsook the law of the Lord." He responded to divine direction in hard times but abandoned the word of God when he felt he was in control and self-sufficient. Not only was he unfaithful to the Lord, but also, in his role as leader, others followed his leadership away from God. Inconsistency and expedience accompany self-sufficiency and personal pride in one's accomplishments. It is a fundamental failure of the natural man to want credit for that which seems to be success. It is a foolish person who ignores the supreme authority of God in all matters of life.

People quickly turn to God when things go bad, or difficulties arise that are beyond our control. A sick child or a bad report from a doctor moves people to turn to God and call on Him for help. If everything is going well, we take God for granted and claim our successes on our personal astuteness. When in danger in a storm, a battlefield, a potential accident of some kind, people have no hesitation to call, "O God, help me now." But if the wind is favorable, the land is peaceful, and the journey pleasant, we need to be alert and guard our faith lest we think, "We are doing just fine on our own, thank your very much! I don't need You now!"

The cities on the southern border of Judah didn't stop the Egyptians from invading Judah. The best laid plans of Rehoboam did not keep the enemies away from Jerusalem. The impressive view of the temple did not keep the invaders from taking away the treasures that were in the temple nor the extravagant treasures of the king's palace. All that we think is gain can be lost in a very short time when we become inconsistent.

To humble one's self and say the right thing, is always a good step to take. But sin is sin, and the damage done by sin may never be repaired no matter how sorry we may be or how sincere our words might be. Rehoboam and the princes of Judah humbled themselves. They gave God the credit for doing the right

things when they said, "The Lord is righteous." But the damage had been done. "All Israel" had been affected. The treasures were gone. The "world" had taken control and nothing would be the same again. "Some deliverance" made it possible for them to survive as an identifiable people, only because of God's grace. He was not destroyed altogether, and there was still some good going on in Judah.

God looks on the heart of man, and when one does not "set his heart to seek the Lord," evil is the inescapable result. Poor Rehoboam and those around him did humble themselves and confessed the Lord was righteous, but when God is left out, spiritual loss can never be fully restored. For some reason Rehoboam thought the missing gold shields could be replaced with bronze and it would be alright because they looked similar. This inconsistent man was more concerned with the outward appearances than with reality. When God has been left out of our lives, nothing we can do will measure up to that which has been lost. If reality doesn't come from within our heart and soul, religious appearances are only superficial and pleasing only to the natural man.

For people to be concerned only with how they look to others is to miss the whole point of a vital living faith. When we compare ourselves with other people, we are measuring ourselves by the wrong standard. There will always be those more successful, more intelligent, more capable than we are. But when we realize who we are before our Lord's eyes, we can live "quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty" without the need for fanfare and popularity. When we do what we do as "to the Lord," we may not excel like others, or be as successful, but we will be conscious of doing the will of God from the heart and leaving the results with Him. How gracious it is of God when evil is rampant to see "there was some good in Judah." When anything becomes more important than the central focus of life on the will of our Lord, pretty much all else in life is superficial.

A person may be raised in privileged circumstances and have a strong Christian heritage, but if one does not "seek the Lord" with the heart, life can all be wasted and nothing but our failure remembered. It may have been the influence of his mother that kept his heart on other things and how he and his work appeared externally. He was not a consistent person. Sometime it seemed maybe he would stick with that which was right, then also like it was on a whim, Rehoboam changed again. He went one way, then another, then back again because he was a man without convictions enough to be consistent. That same attitude is possible with anybody who does not know the Lord personally and lives without being committed to Him.

Another serious matter for us to consider: my children may observe my inconsistencies and be affected in the same way in their lives. Solomon didn't leave his son a very good example as far as his personal life was concerned. The exiles who came back to Jerusalem and were reading these Chronicles had heard through Jeremiah the prophet, "I will come to you and fulfill My good word to you ... for I know the thoughts I think toward you ... thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you hope and a future. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall pray to Me, and I will hearken to you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." When they, or we, make that search, we will find our Lord God near us to act in grace toward us, ready to forgive and restore us. It was too bad Rehoboam never really did that.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 12:8.** *"Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."*

#### **SERVANTS OF MEN.**

It didn't have to be, it wasn't God's intent,  
That those He chose would under the yoke be bent.  
But when self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction have their way,  
It will not be very long until independence has had its day.

The pride of position takes control and can often convince a man,  
That he can do just about anything any other person can.  
He compares himself with others and thinks he is much better -  
Not realizing his arrogance and independence are but binding fetters.

God is determined to bring the proud man down and the humble man up.  
It doesn't take the Ruler of the Universe long to bring independence to a stop.  
The service of God is a blessed bondage bringing freedom to the soul.  
To be the servant of men means where he tells me, always I must go.

The servant of men is under the control of others just like me.  
It limits my service to what pleases men, not what God intended me to be.  
My will is subject to his changing times and what he thinks is important.  
The conduct of my life and work only reflects man's human department.

To be the servant of men means broken fellowship with God.  
The dissension and broken fellowship can't be recovered with a nod.  
Alienation from God and His people, accompanies a servant of men.  
He is responsible to do what men want, and how, and where, and when.

Life becomes superficial when the service of man is imposed.  
The freedom of bond-service to Jesus Christ is what one should have chosen.  
Reflecting on the service of God compared to the service of men -  
One considers with deep remorse all that life might have been.

The humility of first love, a sense of dependence brings peace.  
The servant, who loves his Master, knows the joy of living by faith.  
There is a warmth and harmony that is seen in the servant's face -  
And he doesn't have to appear what he is not, when within he appreciates God's grace.

**“O Lord God, my Father: I don't want to put out brass shields where there were the gold ones of Thy presence. I don't want to have to be bound by mans' opinion and demands. I do want to be Thy faithful servant who walks and works in dependence on Thee. Help me this day as I speak to Thy people, to be truly Thy servant who loves Thy service. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 13**

### **HIGHLIGHT THE GOOD**

The Holy Spirit who used "holy men of old," kept the writer of the Chronicles focused on that which was important to the work of the returnees from Babylon. They had before them the great task of rebuilding that which had been broken because of the sins of their forefathers. It best suited the objective of Ezra to highlight the good that Abijah did, rather than review his failures. Much of what he did in his short reign was displeasing to God. He did the same sinful things his father did, even to multiplying wives. But that point had already been made in the Chronicles as a warning to the present generation. This one incident in the life of Abijah was of a positive nature and demonstrated that God is willing to use failing, sinful people when they acknowledge Him as the Supreme Authority and Power in the most difficult of circumstances.

In an attempt at reunification, Abijah confronted Jeroboam with 400,000 in his army. However, he hoped that by appealing to the people of Israel who would have still remembered the days when there was fellowship together at the temple, they could avoid a bloody conflict and return in unity to the God of their fathers. In Abijah's speech he identified the promise of God to David to establish his kingship over Israel. He confessed the failure of Rehoboam who paid heed to bad advice. He also pointed out the contrast between worshipping the gold idols that looked like calves, and the worship and promised presence of the living Lord. The more he spoke, the more he ignored Jeroboam in his appeal to the people. But sometimes attempts to right wrongs are too late.

The people of Israel had become used to carrying around the golden calves which gave them something physical they could see. Anything that claims our attention and interferes with our fellowship with God, is sin. The sin of idolatry is rejection of the Lord God. Physical objects that take the place of our faith in our Lord is the first thing forbidden in the ten commandments. Jeroboam's sin in making those idols caused the whole of the northern tribes of Israel to sin. Consequently, they lived under evil leadership until they were taken away 120 years before those who lived in Judah. The responsibility of good leadership was being reviewed for the sake of those who returned from Babylon lest they forgot the preeminence of the Lord in every part of life.

Abijah reminded the people of the significance of divine order in the priesthood. To set up a "priesthood" different from that which God has ordained is to accept a counterfeit in the place of divine appointment. That insulting practice is common today when the priesthood of all believers is counterfeited by man's ordination of those who the learning of people for instruction from God Himself. Some who take the place of a priesthood, or spiritual leaders of people, are not even saved. The ideas of men they have studied and taken as "their truth," has taken the place of the Holy Spirit as the True Teacher, and the One who is "The Truth."

Those who are called upon to represent the Lord in a public role, must learn and practice God's standards and doctrine, rather than pass on what they consider "my truth." Not only that, one's spiritual character and dedication to our Lord adds to their qualifications to speak for God. Priesthood practiced in public today is not limited to those who are highly educated, or who volunteer to take on that work, or who are influential because of their family background or spiritual heritage. The "kingdom of priests" is recognizable because they have new life from God, and live by God's standards as Christians.

Even though the army of Abijah was outnumbered 2 to 1 and was outmaneuvered by the army of Israel under Jeroboam, Judah was victorious because they "relied upon the Lord God of their fathers." "God delivered them into their hand, " and more than half of the army of Israel was either killed or wounded. This was evidence of God's righteous judgment because of Israel's idolatry - and it was just beginning. True faith in God is our strength because it takes our potential way beyond our weakness to the place God's grace is able to be "made perfect" on our behalf. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

There were a number of the kings of Judah who were good for at least part of the years in which they ruled. In contrast those in the north were notable for their wickedness. Idolatry not only is dishonoring to God, but it brings out the worst in human beings. From self-adulation to groveling in the dirt before images, there is only evil that is produced. There is no redeeming feature to the "up with man" culture that is becoming prevalent today. Judah had the temple, the right priesthood, the right altar for the right sacrifices, and they had loyal prophets. All of the evil and negative things Abijah did would not have any reason to be recounted for the benefit of the later generations. The evil associated with him had already been pointed out to the returned exiles by writing about the lives of David, Solomon and Rehoboam.

There is no good reason to belabor a point that has already been made. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." The writer of the Chronicles wisely looked ahead to the present situation and used this incident in the life of the nation many generations earlier, to remind them to not forsake the Lord our God and His place of meeting with His people nor His word. Also, they were reminded that in times of distress and danger, God delivers His people who have learned to rely on "the Lord God of their fathers." It is always a good practice when passing on truth, lessons to be learned, and historical accounts, to emphasize that which is good. Highlight the good even when having to reference that which is bad.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 13:18.** *"Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers."*

#### **RELIED UPON THE LORD.**

There is no avoiding the hard times, they are guaranteed to come.  
Some may come from failing health and age, others from Belial's sons.  
We need to face a basic fact, unless we depend on God -  
There is no way to conquer them without intervention from the Lord.

Abijah, the king in the ancient past wasn't really a very stellar man.  
God in mercy came to aid Judah with deliverance by His plan.  
All would have to admit victory came from the Highest Source -  
Or the battle would have led the nation down a very different course.

Often, we are confronted with things, and we don't know where to turn.  
When we rely on the Lord alone, some good lessons are there to learn.  
Many of these we would have missed if everything was smooth -  
God allows us to go through difficulties so what is important we don't lose.

There have been times when financially we had no place to look but up.  
Other times God has tested us with walking holding a very full cup.  
As stewards we had to learn what we have been given is to be held in trust.  
The God who gave can take away when He thinks it will benefit us.

When sickness and/or pain comes to test our will to live by faith alone -  
God, in His grace, gives assurance through His Word that He hears each feeble groan.  
His grace is sufficient so we rely on Him to bring good out of what we think is bad.  
And further down the road we'll look back and thank Him for leading us down that path.

Opposition comes sometimes from surprising sources, occasionally even brothers -  
Who think what we are doing is all wrong because it is different from the others  
Who have traditionally done things one way and insist our way is wrong.  
But God who guides us expects my reliance on Him as He leads us along.

To rely on the Lord means I fully trust Him, even when I don't know what's best.  
To rely on Him requires me to bless Him with my implicit trust.  
To rely on the Lord will take away the temptation to claim the victory.  
To rely on the Lord will bring a testimony that success depends on Deity.

**"O Holy Righteous God, I know every issue in life is known by Thee. The reasons, the course and the results of a matter are before Thee as an open book. When things**

**arise and I am unsure of what to do, and cannot visualize the conclusion - please give me the faith to take the next step, and go ahead in confidence in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 14**

### **WE REST ON THEE**

Asa was only young when God gave a great victory to his father Abijah. That may have been what motivated him as a young king to seek the Lord and live consciously aware of his need of God. Our children often remember certain remarkable events in their early lives that leaves a lasting impression for good - or bad. It is of great importance that we speak often to them of God's truth when we "rise up... walk in the way... and lie down." We need to take every opportunity to teach them about the power and results of faith, and why it is so important to "live by faith."

The forty-one years of Asa's reign as king of Judah are written about by the chronicler in three sections. There was the first period of ten years at the beginning in which he vigorously removed the idols, artifacts and symbols of idolatry that had been there since the time of his grandmother and great-grandmother. Solomon, Rehoboam and Abijah all had been influenced by those idolatrous women to have high places and other things associated with idol worship to be spread around the country even though the magnificent temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship for the Lord's people. It is possible for people to get so used to evil when it becomes common-place, that it just becomes another part of life in a deteriorating society. To remove that which is wrong, is as important as doing that which is right.

When two different philosophies become so mixed that there is a blending of thought to accommodate to each other with tolerance is really to "give place to the devil." We must "resist the devil and he will flee" from us. Any source of temptation and that which we know is offensive to God, must be taken away rather than be overlooked or ignored. It is important to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth," and it is also important to remove anything that can detract us from living by faith.

Asa's early years of peaceful reign were because he removed what was wrong, and also because he was realistic enough to know that there were steps to take to defend his country. There are steps we must take to promote that which is right, not just to concentrate on that which is wrong. He made sure every town in Judah had all vestiges of false gods removed, and that was good. To do half a job in cleansing is still to remain dirty. To only do part way in reform is not real reform. Partial obedience is not real obedience at all. True obedience to God on the part of Asa led to ten years of peace given by the Lord. During that time, he took away that which was evil, and built up the cities with walls as a defense against the inevitable attacks that would come. There will always be opposition to the truth in one form or another. Truth and righteousness cannot coexist nor "cross-pollinate" with that which is false and a compromise with the word of God. The god of this world does not go on vacations nor does he let the rest God's people enjoy go unchallenged.

Training time is not wasted time even if there does not seem to be serious difficulties at present. Alertness and skill go together. The consistent teaching of the word of God, the on-going work with children in the interest of seeing them saved, and the continual outreach of the Gospel may not seem to be producing any visible results at the moment. But it takes much longer to prepare for a harvest than to reap a harvest. There will come a time when we will see that all the effort that was put forth in peaceable times provided the security and promoted the skill needed when the enemy attacks. Much can be done in a short time when we are well prepared, especially in times of open opposition. It is in those times the power and saving grace of God is openly seen. A "time of visitation" often accompanies a time of fear and challenge.

Asa and his army were ready when they were needed. The men of Judah were trained in the use of heavy shields and long spears. The men of Benjamin were ready to use the small shields and bows and arrows because they had taken the time to learn how to do what they were taught. Even though a million-man army, a two-to-one foe, came against them, they didn't run and hide but went out to meet the enemy and defend what God had given them. We are responsible to do what we can do and what we are called upon to do, but in every situation, we need God. Asa was very conscious of the necessity of relying on God for victory. In spite of training and careful preparation, it is "God that worketh in you, to will and to do of His good pleasure." Again, and again it is proven that God's "strength is made perfect in weakness." The powerless against the mighty may seem like a very fearful position to be in, but when the power of God is manifested, there will be victory. "To God be all the glory!"

Decisions as to how to face the enemies of our souls need to be made well in advance, so that when temptations arise there has been preparation made as to how not to yield to temptation. There are reasons

for our Lord to give us times of peace and preparation. When we recognize and acknowledge our limitations, we are then in the place where we have learned to trust God in both the good times and the bad. Asa and his army had done what they could during the years of peace. Then in the name of the Lord they met the million-man army of the Ethiopians and the enemy was defeated. "If God be for us, who can be against us."

In some miraculous way, God struck down the Ethiopians and they were overthrown because they were "destroyed before the Lord." The crushing blow of divine power opened the way for Asa and his forces to pursue the enemy and become enriched because of all the enemy left behind. There are times when God allows enemies of the Lord's people to come against us to make us conscious of our need of God. Sometimes difficulties are allowed to make us realize that self-assurance is one of the ways pride is seen, and "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." It is then the "chastening of the Lord" is because of wrong on our part. There are also times when opposition arises and we wonder what we have done to bring this on us. In such times as that it may be that we have been given a time and opportunity to exercise faith, with that as its purpose. "In vain doth earth and hell oppose, for God is stronger than His foes." When we rely on God, even when we question the events and the reason for them, God is glorified. "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 14:7.** *"Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make them walls, 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 hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered."*

#### **BUILD AND PROSPER.**

A man who leads, yet knows his limitations and lives his life in God's sight -  
Is a man God can trust to lead His people and his obedience helps him do right!  
If he is committed to obey God's truth, he will set about to make right what is wrong.  
He will also recognize the need of the people of God to be strong.

He will do what needs to be done to bring about a biblical separation  
From those around us who do not think to God's Word they have any obligation -  
But want to open wide the gates so everyone who wants to can come in  
And be a part of the church society, but never have to face up to sin.

The cities need towers as well, where the watchmen who learn from the Word -  
Can look out over earth's scene and guard the truth in the name of the Lord.  
They will see the new trends as they come and set a watch to make sure we're safe  
From the subtle things as well as the bold, that wants entrance into the holy place.

The building project goes on and on, as the people learn what God has to teach.  
The protection this provides may seem miniscule if only you see what is done in a week.  
But the continuity of wise building will bring about results that will last -  
And the strength of God's people and the assembly will remain when others are past.

The secret of prospering, is building with care and concern put into each stone -  
So that a living stone doesn't think it is independent and can live and act alone.  
The walls, towers and gates that protect are those that are each made to fit  
Next to those around, so strength from others is gained when an attack is made against it.

When the enemy attacks, and it will, we have already taken defensive precaution -  
But at the same time, we know only the Lord can provide for our salvation.  
We need God in every step of building, that His work in our hands might prosper -  
And He alone can bring the final victory, and uses what we have to offer.

**"O Lord our God, I look to Thee to help us to deal with the march of old age and weakness that wants to defeat us. Hear our plea as we trust in Thee to give power to us to defeat discouragement, small numbers and the lack of men who can effectively participate publicly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 15**

#### **HE WILL BE FOUND**

The writer of the Chronicles knew the value of lessons learned by the good things practiced by the older generations as well as the lessons from their mistakes. God in His mercy sent a relatively unknown prophet named Azariah to meet Asa the king and give him a message of encouragement and instruction. That message was unmistakably clear. God wants to be with His people who seek Him. Those who forsake Him will find themselves abandoned by God. When someone makes a clear statement and an appeal that can be tested by the word of God, we need to pay attention. The writer of the Chronicles used these words from the past as an incentive to that present generation of returnees to live for God now. This is a principle that we

should practice constantly. Take counsel from godly people who have had experiences with God and are guided by the Spirit of God.

By keeping in contact with people who learn from God through His word, and who are committed to being guided by the Holy Spirit, we can be preserved from the evil and failures others have experienced. Discussion over the scriptures and spiritual insight from those who are willing to counsel us, gives us understanding as to how to deal with the issues of life and faith as they arise. What we learn will be able to be applied in appropriate ways to bring about the best results.

Jeroboam had abandoned the law of the Lord and the northern nation of Israel suffered the consequences. Eight kings had ruled in Israel during the forty-one years Asa ruled over Judah, and all eight of them were evil men. The prophet used the departure of Israel as an example of what happens to those who turn away from God and His word. The chronicler used that as a lesson to those who returned from exile, so they would not do the same thing. "The things that happened to them for ensamples: are written for our admonition..." Commitment to God and peace go together. Evil and conflict go together.

The charge to "be strong" was often given to the Lord's people lest in spiritual weakness all their "work" should be in vain. There are two areas of recognition and reward when one's work is done for God and His glory. Here on earth faithful service by a trustworthy person is often recognized by others who will be grateful for what you have done. Reward may be given in the sense of satisfaction for a job well done, or at times by some other means. In heaven in the future that recognition and reward will be of far greater importance when "Well done, good and faithful servant," comes from our Savior and Lord. Both of these are incentives for us to be faithful in any work because "your labor is not in vain in the Lord." If for some reason one feels unrecognized and unrewarded here, do not let that stumble nor trip you up. The best is yet to come.

The words of the prophet were incentive enough for Asa to get to work and do what needed to be done. For some reason he had left work undone in regard to the things that had to be destroyed and the things that had to be repaired. If we are not careful, we can leave things to another time and the result is a whole lot needs to be done at one time. Asa applied the principle of separation from evil first, and then he could get on with the repair work that needed to be done. Right away "he took courage" and did away with the "abominations" that had remained among God's people. Then he made the necessary repairs so that what was right was fully restored to carry out its intended purpose as in restoring the altar. There was apparently work that needed to be done to the altar. Let us never be careless about that which is right, nor lax when it comes to dealing with evil. One has well written, "The cost of truth never exceeds its value." A good example has a good effect."

When the Lord moves some of His people to go forward in faith in any endeavor for His glory and His name's sake, others who may be more timid, reticent or even afraid will catch some of that spiritual fire themselves and join in the work with enthusiasm. It happened in Asa's day when some people from the north had enough of wrong doctrine and practice. It can happen today when those who are faithful to God commit themselves to Him to do His will. God commits Himself to those people because He does not abandon the faithful. Other people of faith will find out there are those who remain true to our Lord, and will say, "God is with you of a truth."

Those who gathered together when "they saw that the Lord his God was with him," offered abundantly to the Lord in worship. "They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul." Detachment from that which is evil precedes doing that which is right. There can be no mixture. When there is no toleration of that which is wrong, then renewal and revival can begin. People today find it difficult to commit themselves seriously to that which is of God. Indecision, fear of failure, fear of personal cost and fear of responsibility hold people to mediocre living. To declare allegiance to God like those people did is public and decisive. They were wholehearted in their commitment to God, and because of that, peace came to the nation.

There is power in influence. If evil is allowed, there is a seriously negative impact even on that which is right. A personal attachment to that which is wrong makes it even more necessary to deal with the matter. Asa's grandmother had been a person of influence for years - bad influence. He knew it and he knew if he was going to have the Lord with him, she had to no longer be where she could influence anyone with her idols and sinful religious practices. Commitment to God and peace are definitely linked.

Even though Asa left some of the buildings and high places or some piece of ground untouched where there were sacrifices to idols made in the past, "the heart of Asa was perfect." That obviously did not mean

morally perfect but was in relation to his motivation to that which was right in practice. Doing what is right no matter what the cost and in spite of what people might say, is always of great importance. Being right has an even higher cost.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 15:12.** *“And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;”*

#### **MOTIVATION.**

An awareness of God's presence and pleasure -  
An assurance of God leading us in the past -  
A confidence in God's guidance in the future -  
This is motivation to go forward in faith!

A person who we know has a close relationship with God -  
Gives warnings of causes for failure and defeat -  
And gives encouragement for that has been accomplished -  
This is motivation to keep close to God!

Recognition of accomplishments that have been made -  
Rewards for gains that have been consolidated and remain -  
Real praise for what the saints have done for God's glory -  
This is motivation to stay the course!

Others who come to participate whether many or few -  
People who say they believe what is being done is right -  
Those who say they can sense God is in this place -  
This is motivation to continue on!

The faithful who keep coming back week after week -  
The facial expressions of joy, peace and contentment -  
The words of appreciation and gratitude for what is said -  
This is motivation to do things in God's way!

The rejoicing of those who rise from the table with thanks to God -  
The praise of voices that have praised God for years and still continue -  
The prayers of thanksgiving, intercession and supplication that are made -  
This is motivation to give God and His Word first place!

**“There is no doubt, Father God, that the few saints they gather here have been drawn by Thee. Their faithful continuance, their gratitude and appreciation of Thy Word, their voices raised together in praise make this small company a place of holy convocation to me. I trust it is acceptable to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 16**

### **LEST HE FALL**

A good beginning in the Christian life does not guarantee a good end. Asa started out his reign doing those things that were right. He continued through much of his reign with a heart for God and doing that which pleased God. But whatever happened, he fell to the place where he became a cynical, bitter, sick old man by the time he died. Faith in God has a power of its own because one does not trust themselves or other people to bring the desired result to a matter. It is not wrong to use human expertise and strength in a work for the Lord, but we must always realize it is God who bring a successful conclusion to a matter even though it maybe long after we are gone. "It is God that worketh in you..."

Truth mixed with error resents the clear testimony of unvarnished truth. When truth is acted upon there is a liberating power that comes from God because it is not tainted with man's sin. The evidence of truth in practice is not a complicated set of rules of a protocol set up by humans, but a simple understandable practice of righteousness that makes sense and is logical. When error arises, it is right to resist it and act to correct it. We should not allow the "leaven" of error to permeate the whole of Christian testimony. However, to react to error in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons, brings consequences that usually are costly.

To use that which belongs to God for wrong reasons is a denial of the faith we profess to uphold. To look to the world system as a way to deal with God's people is a denial of divine authority to which we are to submit. It was wrong for Baasha, ruler of the northern tribes to make a barrier between the north and south to keep the people from going back and forth, and it was wrong for Asa to hire the Syrians to go to war for the southern tribes. Even through there are differences, they were still kinfolks. God had delivered His people

from their enemies many times before and He could have done what was needed then. Perhaps Asa didn't want to be responsible for leading a war against those who had a common heritage.

Similarly, not everything that says it is "Christian" is truly Christian. "Christian music" is not always that which edifies. "Christian conduct" is not always a reflection of biblical truth and practice. "Christian churches" may be simply denominational organizations. The "Christian religion" may only be a contrast to atheism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam or any other form of religious persuasion. True Christianity is characterized by love for our Lord Jesus Christ, a knowledge of God, faith in God, accepting the fact that the Bible is God's word, faith as a practice in life and commitment to our Lord as personal Savior.

Human solutions alone to the difficulties that arise in personal and church life - life in general for that matter - reveal the condition of one's heart and soul. If ardor for God cools and faith in the daily practice of life is neglected, we know we are away from the Lord. A Christian away from God who refuses to confess and forsake sin, is in danger of being left alone without God's help in the hard times. If we think we can handle everything ourselves or can get the help we need only from people without divine assistance and power, we are mistaken. We always need God.

It is sin to trust men more than God. It is not necessarily wrong to look for help from wise counselors when problems arise because in "the multitude of counselors there is safety." Also, in "the multitude of counselors," purposes are established. But our need of God will ultimately bring either defeat, or a result that is so inferior to the divine intention that it will not bring lasting good.

For the prophet Hanani to face the king and rebuke him for "trusting in man" instead of God, took a lot of courage and landed him in prison. But he was responsible to tell him the consequences of his foolish actions, and that there would no longer be peace in the nation, but war. Even those Syrians he paid to fight Israel for him would turn against him. The outcome of a matter may seem to be successful even when we take matters into our own hands. However, the final results may be much more serious than we ever thought or imagined.

Just because a work in which we are engaged may be successful, doesn't make it right. A lost opportunity can never be found again. More than once in the scriptures we are reminded of those who despised and rejected God's messengers and nothing bad happened at the moment. Herod took John the Baptist's head off and seemed to get away with it. But when he finally met Jesus who he had wanted to see for a long time and see a miracle done before his eyes, Jesus did not speak one word to him. "No John? No Jesus!"

When in anger Asa imprisoned Hanani the prophet, that never changed the prophecy one bit. The spite, anger and bitterness of Asa simply revealed a deteriorating character in the man that grew increasingly worse in his old age. It is possible for us to lose our testimony, our reputation and our credibility very quickly. How sad it would be to lose our effectiveness as a representative of our Lord in old age and die that way. It is true that corrective teaching needs to be made with compassion and grace and given in love for those who hear. To give a message from God in the right way and have it received in the right way brings right results.

What a lesson it is for us to "take heed" to that which happens to us and to others "lest we fall." A potential fall is waiting when we least expect it. When we think we can do God's work our way or any way at all, we are in danger of a fall. When pride lifts up its head, a fall is bound to happen. When something arises in our life that is beyond our capability to deal with, and we seek only the help of men and ignore God, a fall will happen. Others could not help Asa when his feet became diseased. Still he did not seek the Lord and had to endure pain until he died a sick old man, away from God. Men honored him at his burial with a great fire that must have been impressive, but it didn't change the fact that in his old age he fell from faith and favor with God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 16:9.** *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."*

#### **GOOD START... BAD END.**

His trust in God to deliver him served him well in days gone by.  
When he recognized his need and prayed, God heard his earnest cry.  
But something has happened; now it seems he thinks he did it on his own.  
So, God was left out or forgotten, and God left him all alone.

When we look back to times when we were wanting to be saved,

The Holy Spirit in convicting power reminded us that Christ gave  
His life as a ransom for us and our hearts were deeply moved -  
And we trusted Him unreservedly filling us with love and gratitude.

It seems that now as years have passed some have forgotten how much it cost  
The God of heaven to redeem us, and the awfulness of being lost.  
So instead of remembering Him and showing His death, pleasure is more important.  
And the first place God had at the beginning, is sent down to the baggage compartment.

There was a time when every decision was only made after seeking God's will.  
And it was a matter of chief concern that the treasury of God was full.  
But then time passes and we've had more experiences that make us adept -  
And we think we can do things all on our own and God's portion for self have kept.

At the first of our life with God it was our joy to seek souls to win.  
And we were thrilled when a soul was saved - rejoicing with the angels in heaven.  
But now we are busy trying to set aside enough funds to carry us through old age -  
Our joy comes from a rising stock market rather than in a soul God saved.

There were times in the past when it made no difference if there were many or few.  
The praise of only a few voices with thanksgiving gave voice to our words that was true.  
It is possibly true now we think something is wrong if we don't draw a big crowd,  
And settle back in a comfortable pew and listen to music that is loud.

By God's grace, I want to be as fresh in my old age as I was when I was young.  
By His help may I always have a prayer of gratitude and a spiritual song to be sung.  
May I not make a mess of this journey of life as I'm getting in sight of the goal.  
May the joy of my youth keep me fresh in mind; may I not forsake the Lord when I'm old.

**"O God of all grace, I have learned a lesson here this morning. It is possible to be fruitful in youth and a failure in old age. O Lord God, keep me from being a stagnant pool that has no fresh water running through it. Keep me from the smell of money and success. Keep me with the freshness and joy of youth and the wisdom and compassion of old age. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 17**

### **THE FIRST WAYS**

By the time those who had returned to Judah from Babylon had read this far in the Chronicles, they would have been made very conscious of the fact that not everyone that starts well ends well. What made the difference was their commitment to God in everything. When we feel unable to do what God has put before us or allowed to happen to us, we are more than glad to call upon Him in our weakness. His strength and guidance is a conscious need. Some of what Asa did well rubbed off on his son Jehoshaphat and he started his reign with a positive view of that which was right.

It was good strategy to make sure the borders of Judah were secure. The kings of Israel to the north were a danger because they were following the worship of Baal and the depravity associated with that, as well as having the two golden calves. A downhill slide gets faster when people turn away from the truth of the scriptures. Substituting personal opinions, popular ideas and people-pleasing practices instead of the holy worship of the Lord is hard to stop once it gains momentum and takes hold of people. The tendency to take the path of least resistance is very common, so if the majority goes away from God, that is what people are likely to accommodate to.

"The first ways" of David were when he started out in his life in total dependence on God. That is true of most believers. We are motivated by a desire to show our appreciation for our Lord and His grace to us. In faith, we are willing to do things we thought we could never do. There was a genuine concern in Jehoshaphat for the things of God when he started out in his new responsible role. Likely He started his reign while his sick father, Asa, was still alive. His early concern brought beneficial results to all of the people of the nation.

Commitment to God and a mission to fulfill begins in our minds as we search for ways to serve our Lord. The first ways of David's life were demonstrations of the impact of faith in God on people and events. The same was true of the first ways of Jehoshaphat. The same should be true of each child of God. Saul of Tarsus said in his first response to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" As for Jehoshaphat, "...his heart was lifted up (a positive act in contrast to being lifted up in pride) in the ways of the Lord."

We have to know the will of God before we can actually do it, so for those who are biblically illiterate, there needs to be time taken to learn the will of God. Now, as then, this comes through time taken to read, hear, and obey the word of God. Asa understood the fact that all the people needed to know the law of God before they could submit to it with understanding. A teaching shepherd may be well taught himself but it is important that he teach truth to others in ways and words that they can understand. To expect new believers to grasp biblical truth they have never heard of before just by reading or hearing it for the first time is unrealistic. Teaching takes time, repetition, a willingness to make truth understood in relevant ways, and gracious words in presenting it.

Sixteen men were designated by Jehoshaphat to educate the people. They needed to know the law of God before they could live by it and act upon it. Apparently, the people had not taken time to listen to it, discuss it so they could understand God's will, and how by knowing His word could change them. By sending different teachers throughout the land to teach the people, there would be a variety that would meet the needs of a divergent people. One-man ministry does not meet the variety of needs in a company of God's people. A variety of gifts have been given to meet the variety of needs.

Ambition for the things of God and the work of God must be kept within biblical guidelines. These are "the ways of the Lord." When the minds of people begin to recognize the power, impact and change in one's life when we apply biblical precepts to our lives, we hopefully will become enthused about learning the truth of God. The most effective way of on-going Christian education is the way it is done in scripturally gathered assemblies of God's people. On the Lord's Day, worship, teaching, and preaching present the truth of God in a variety of way. Expository or subject teaching is given. The fundamentals of the faith are presented in Gospel preaching. Public participation by the priesthood of all believers impresses truth on the saints whether by silent or audible expressions of faith and worship. Then there are a few days to practice what we learn in daily living. In the middle of the week through prayer and expository study of the scriptures, more is learned. That is added to our understanding and then practiced for the rest of the week. This learning process goes on for a lifetime.

This type of teaching follows the style of apprenticeship. Our Lord Jesus Christ used this method. Paul used this method as well, and both produced effective teachers and preachers. By this method, teaching becomes practice under the wise guidance of shepherds. Then those who have been taught will "be able to teach others also." The king of Judah realized that people who knew God's command would likely be willing to take the steps necessary to carry out those commands. By carrying out those command, they would be living as they should. When they lived as they should, the nation would prosper and there would be peace.

Sure enough, it worked just the way it was intended. "The fear of the Lord" fell on the nations around so they did not challenge Jehoshaphat in war. There was generated a respect for Jehoshaphat as a king. Peace was in the land and both the king and the people prospered. "God is no man's debtor." "Them that honor Me I will honor." These promises and the principles of scripture that are followed will bring blessing to the people of God.

Even in the midst of a time of peace, Jehoshaphat prepared for emergencies that might arise. He built an effective army and maintained the "fenced cities." His army was likely similar to our National Guard or a form of militia that was trained and ready for battle should the need arise. One of those military leaders was Amasiah who "willingly offered himself to the Lord." That kind of man is one who we can trust. His allegiance to the Lord was higher than his allegiance to the king. He "loved the Lord [his] God," and all else was subservient to that devotion.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 17:9.** *"And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."*

#### **ITINERANT TEACHERS.**

He knew what was right; he had learned lessons from the past  
He knew what was wrong; that evil and good mixed cannot last.  
He knew the value of the Word of God; the commandments that establish a kingdom.  
He knew all the people would not know God's truth, unless someone would teach them.

He was established in the truth and had gone all the way back to the beginning,  
To set the course of his leadership so that there would be no mistaking  
The Lord was in control; it was God he was committed to serve each day -  
And he believed this so deeply, his heart was lifted up to follow God's way.

The king also knew a nation's blessings will not be maintained -  
Unless all of the people knew the message, God's Word contained.  
But he knew he could not reach all of the nation's people alone -  
So, he sent itinerant teachers to teach the people all God had done.

That practice is as necessary today as it was back then.  
There needs to be teachers who are known as faithful men -  
Who will be able to teach others, and they in turn will teach too;  
So, the people of God can be instructed in all God wants them to do.

Those ancient men went about the country and with them they always carried a book.  
The law was contained in it and when people saw them look  
Into that book and declared publicly the truths it contained,  
They would be convicted and convinced of the truth of God they claimed.

We need to show God's people from the pages of the Bible  
That what God expects of us, we are entirely capable  
Of doing and fulfilling so that wherever God's people are found -  
They know when committed to the scriptures of truth - they are on solid ground.

Itinerant teachers are needed who have a heart for God's people, and love  
To see them going on faithfully for God, and His teachings they'll prove  
By their conduct of life that is a reflection of God -  
They have learned from these teachers that brought them His Word.

**“There is a lack, O God, of teaching among the assemblies in Newfoundland and Labrador - particularly in the outports. Please send good men to help them along in the ways of biblical truth. If I am to spend more time among them than I have been in the past, please open the way that I may attend to their spiritual needs. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 18**

### **A BAD ALLIANCE**

The one who wrote the Chronicles would have included this event in the life and reign of Jehoshaphat to impress on the readers of his generation the serious consequences of unequal yokes and the need to listen to those who have been tried and proven in the service of God. There are those who rise to leadership, even as spiritual advisors who are false prophets and teachers. They want to lift themselves up as qualified leaders at the expense of those who have the real interests of God's people at heart. To be aware of those who are like this, we must read the scriptures ourselves and "try the spirits," (test the teaching) by that which we know to be right. There is also the need of discernment, and that takes time and careful observation to determine if one has the right motives behind what he says, and the right qualifications from God, not just from men.

Jehoshaphat was successful in his reign and yet for some reason his son Jehoram was married to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, who was evil, evil, evil - just like her father and mother. When believers and unbelievers are joined together in any form of an alliance or yoke, that inevitably leads to the believer's values being compromised, and then their spiritual life is compromised. There was no need for this alliance. Jehoshaphat had "riches and honor." He did not need "affinity" with Ahab. In every decision we make we need to consider the benefits that might occur, and the negative results that may occur. We know that an "unequal yoke" brings bad results. God cannot be to us as a father nor deal with us as sons and daughters. The choice Jehoshaphat made for this unequal yoke, led to a series of unequal yokes that ultimately led God's people into captivity.

A good man can do wrong. In a desire to be tolerant and "mend fences," mixing good and evil always ends in evil. Jehoshaphat almost lost his life; he was later rebuked by Jehu; a business venture failed and his family was almost eliminated by a murdering son. One wicked woman in a marriage of compromise brought evil on the whole nation. It is a principle: serious consequences follow bad choices. This bad alliance brought God's wrath on Jehoshaphat, Ahab and the generation to follow. The wicked daughter-in-law brought with her to the marriage the evil practices of Israel to Judah. Then she even seized the throne of the nation of a short time. One good man's bad choice, led to many bad results. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

The ambitions of the ungodly have a far different motive behind them than the blessing the godly want to see on the people of God. Four hundred false prophets who agree among themselves to deceive a king in order to advance their own agenda is a lot to stand up against even if you are true to God. True faith in

contrast with man's religion seems to the observer a weakness that should be ignored. To stand up against that kind of pressure and the pressure of an evil leader who wants his own way, takes a lot of personal courage and faith in God. To stand before a godly king who wants to help an ungodly king achieve his aim, and tell him to go home, takes God-given boldness. It is always wrong for the godly to help the ungodly achieve an ungodly aim. Subtle suggestions paid heed to, lead to serious consequences to suffer. "Keep thy heart with all diligence..."

Enquiring of the Lord is always important to a believer. Getting a biblical answer from the Lord and acting on it is more important. It is possible for us to be caught off guard by flattery, enticement, deviousness and being impressed by the world. But when we are uneasy about a matter - do not go any farther. When one's conscience is bothered - do not go any farther. When we sense we are acting too quick - do not go any farther. When we have misgivings about the outcome of an action - do not go any farther. Love for God does not just ask for directions, but follows the directions when they are given. Jehoshaphat was told by Micaiah to go home and he should have gone home. But instead he compromised and stayed.

Lying to make one's self look good does not help avoid evil consequences. Misleading the people of God is a serious offense against God. Misleading prophecies originate with Satan who is a deceiver and a liar, and who will use those who speak for him to deliberately mislead others who have a dark agenda for their own advantage. To be called upon with all the hosts of darkness arrayed against him could have been very daunting to Micaiah, but when he was called from prison and told what to say, he did so - but with a mocking tone of voice and a certain sarcasm that was unmistakable even to Ahab. Obeying God may provoke anger and bring hard results but it is always right. The mimicking words and the mocking tone of Micaiah was not a lie, but served to awaken the hearers to what was real and was to come to pass. "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie..."

Being ridiculed for being honest is a good sin of doing right. God used the lying predictions of the false prophets to bring judgment on Ahab. Advisers who want to please you are a danger to you, not a help. There comes a time in the lives of some people when they have gone too far to be recovered. When true prophecy (the true word of God) is rejected because it does not fit our own desire and condemns us, then we are in danger of having gone too far. When the message and the messenger are rejected, we are in danger of having gone too far. Micaiah told the truth and was imprisoned again because of his faithfulness, but he was willing to pay the cost of being faithful because he loved and feared God. Others may try to undermine or diminish truth, but truth does not change nor adapt to the will of man.

Ahab, even though angry with Micaiah's prophecy, feared that it might be true, so he disguised himself and set Jehoshaphat up as a target by having him dressed in his clothes. Foolishly Jehoshaphat went along with the plan of cowardly deception, but his life was spared by divine intervention. He called out in faith and God delivered him. Ahab on the other hand, died by an arrow from one who drew "a bow at a venture" (Naaman ? according to the Targum). Even when we fail and are in hard straits, we can still call upon God. God's deceived servant was spared by God's grace. Ahab died in his own deception because even deception does not have the ability to change the plans of God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 18:1.** *"Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab."*

#### **UNHOLY ALLIANCE.**

It may seem practical to plan ahead  
And do what seems to you alright.  
But it is much wiser to pray instead  
And take the time to get God's light.  
For even though God has led till now -  
Tomorrow is another day.  
It is so important to remember how  
He guides us in a scriptural way.

Plans made by men who are sorrowful  
Can easily be formed by secret pride.  
Our hearts and others too are so deceitful  
We think we're doing right by what we think inside.  
But there are principles we should not forget -  
And they guide our actions based on God's Word.  
So before we act we should always let  
The Spirit of God direct as He would.

To some, together with those whose actions  
Show they ignore the Word of God -  
And think we can bring these divergent factions  
Together in alliance without the Lord:  
Only bring troubles that will affect all  
Because light and dark are not a good mix -  
Put together they're like nightfall -  
And twilight is something men cannot fix.

A person may think this makes common sense -  
To plan for the future after we are long gone.  
But to interfere with the future coming hence  
Can easily lead us to do what is wrong.  
We may not feel the whole effect  
Of what we do - but our children will.  
The best we can do is teach them to respect  
What God says is right and to maintain it still.

**“Heavenly Father, I do thank Thee for those who have gone before us. They did what seemed to them to be right at the time. Whether that is the cause of our present weakness or not, I don't know. But I know Thou art God and can bring recovery and restoration to those who repent and return to Thee. I do acknowledge my criticisms and lack of urgent faithfulness. O God, return to us again and bring us back to a place there we can be used - if it will bring honor and glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 19**

### **RESTORING ORDER**

Those who are leaders may not realize it at the time, but when they step out of line or make bad or even inappropriate decisions, a lot of people are affected. The attempt at affinity with Ahab and Israel would have been felt all across Judah. Leaders cannot act independently without it having a ripple effect on the whole nation. Not only that, but it should never be taken for granted, that everything is going good, because there are no overt problems. When Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem "in peace" he may have thought that was all there was to his foolish actions in Israel. But it cannot be over-emphasized, there are consequences to accept for every bad decision.

When Jehu the prophet met Jehoshaphat, he did not mince words. He spoke boldly, clearly and there was no mistaking his rebuke of the king. He denounced the league Jehoshaphat made with Ahab with strong words relating to the fact of helping the ungodly. Whether we want to admit it or not, to assist the ungodly even in a small way, means we are responsible for our actions. How can we participate in an event or act that is done by those who hate God, and think we are not a part of it? Believers are to love what God loves, and hate what God hates. "Friendship with the world is enmity with God."

Jehu did not only condemn that which was wrong, but he also commended Jehoshaphat for the "good things found in thee." He had prepared his heart to seek God. It is wisdom when we have to make a correction or rebuke a person, to point out that which is commendable in their actions or even in themselves. The right approach when giving a rebuke is to make sure we have an understandable conclusion we expect to result. Whether it a change in behavior or correcting a mistake, or forsaking a practice that is unacceptable in a believer's life, the person being rebuked needs to know a solution is clearly given and a good result is expected. Things are not left up in the air to be speculated upon nor should one be left wondering what else needs to be done.

It is not easy to be rebuked, nor is it easy to not be resentful after a rebuke. The way I respond reveals what kind of a person I am. If I am defensive and try to excuse my behavior, that indicates I am not willing to accept responsibility for my own sin. That is a typical reaction of an unbeliever who does not think truth and righteousness are all that important. If a believer tries to justify his or her actions in spite of evidence to the contrary, that indicates they are away from the Lord and need to be further warned or, hopefully, accept wise counsel. In was commendable of Jehoshaphat that he did not reply or retaliate in any way, but realized he needed to take action to repair the damage he had created.

He did something that probably was not done by very many rulers of nations - he visited every place in the nation to bring them "back to the Lord God of your fathers." He took to heart the rebuke and immediately set about to right the wrong he had committed and the potential bad effects it would have had on his people. By

setting about to do what was needed to unite and maintain the people under divine authority, the reforms he made had a positive effect on everyone. True restoration brings blessing to many.

Without good, righteous laws, no nation can prosper but will ultimately collapse from within. It has happened to many nations in the past and can happen to our nation if we are not careful. There are times when reforms through a nation are needed to stabilize the people, the economy and the government. To promote righteousness in an unrighteous nation composed of citizens who have become used to sin, is a very difficult task. Laws are given to maintain standards of behavior, but when they are changed to suit the changing standards of people, there is no stopping the downward trend of the population into a cesspool of moral degradation. Leaders who walk with God can count on God being with them when they have to make decision that affect the people. Fairness, honesty, and impartiality in judges who do not take bribes, and are committed to upholding the law, are the key to a "quiet and peaceable life [lived] in all godliness and honesty" by the citizens.

Decisions made with reverential fear of God, and faithfulness to His word, are the ways laws are maintained and chaos is kept away from the normal life of the people. Jehoshaphat had judges who were appointed all through the land in the key cities, who were called upon to settle disputes and keep the peace. These judges were accountable to the standard of God's laws. Leadership responsibility means you are making decisions for God and in His name, or under His authority. Impartiality, honesty and faithfulness in the fear of God, but not fearing the people, is required in those who lead and make judgments that impact the whole population. We are accountable for the authority we have been given to carry it out as God intends.

A "supreme court" was in Jerusalem to deal with all sides of those matters that were brought before it. That court was composed of priests and Levites who would look at a matter from the moral and spiritual side, and chief fathers who looked at the same matter from the civil and secular side. When decisions are made by a balanced court the result will be approved by God. "The Lord who is with you in the judgment." God's wisdom was given to them when decision making was done God's way, in God's time and according to God's will. We are still able to have that divine wisdom in decisions we make in matters both small and large. It is of interest that Amariah the high priest was there to preside over the court to give the right decisions in religious matters, and Zebadiah had a similar position in the civil court. There is a difference between the "matters of the Lord" and the king's matters."

Balance in maintaining justice and righteousness in a society is necessary. It is not always easy to determine what is right. Therefore, more than one person is needed to be able to preserve the legal, moral and spiritual integrity of a nation and an assembly. When things are done in an orderly fashion, and are appropriate to the situation, then we can make decisions courageously and expect good results.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 19:6-7.** *"And said unto the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."*

### **JUDGES.**

There were teachers first who taught the truth of God,  
So the people of the Lord would know what was expected  
Of them in the daily course of life and how they should  
Live with others and not be conflicted.  
But humans, to a man, are prone to fail -  
Each wants the balances tipped in his favor.  
So, we need judges to hear each detail  
That each community a peaceful life can savor.

In order to pass judgment that is fair and right -  
A leader who judges must realize he is judging for God.  
The decisions he makes, he must make in the light  
Of the fact that he is held accountable before the Lord.  
That makes it serious enough to him so that when a decision he makes,  
He realizes he too will be judged by the Judge  
Who knows, not just the actions, but when judging, takes  
Into account the motives that make one do what he does.

It is important to remember; God looks on men's hearts -  
So those who judge others must make honest decisions.  
To do this we must review an incident that happened from the start

And consider the reasons behind this present situation.  
It is not always easy to be impartial to all -  
Some people we are inclined to favor for one reason or another.  
But a judge must remember before the verdict he calls -  
His decision must be impartial whether it's a stranger or a brother.

A faithful judge can be counted on to act out of the fear of God -  
No matter how much pressure is put on him by any man.  
We are not left without guidance; God has given His Word -  
And the Spirit of God guides us to do more than we naturally can.  
It would be wrong to avoid the responsibility God places  
On those who He has given wisdom to bring to conclusion  
An incident of wrong in the past, or to help one who faces  
A decision to be made, but is in a state of confusion.

**“O Lord God, I thank Thee for placing among the people of God in the assemblies, those who are able, by the guidance of the Spirit, to make sound decisions. I pray today for those brothers in Christ who are making decisions now that affect Thy people in those two assemblies, we have talked to Thee about. I know what I said to them was in the form of guidance and strong suggestion, but they have to act conclusively. Help them make the right decision I pray - in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 20**

### **FAITH IN THE TRIAL**

It would have been an event of great impact to those who read the account the chronicler wrote about the invading army, the concern of the people, the prayer of Jehoshaphat and the answer of the Lord through Jahaziel. This amazing account of God working for His people would have encouraged those who were beginning again the testimony of the nation, to seek the Lord themselves in every situation that seemed insurmountable. When we are faced with disaster and feel totally inadequate to meet the need: fasting, separating ourselves from the normal events of the day, devoting ourselves to that which God wants, and earnest prayer is what we should do. Fear and fasting go together. Believers often do much better in their walk of faith under opposition and stress than they do when the world is kind to us and shows us favor. Actually, when the world is favorable to us, we are in danger.

When Jehoshaphat was afraid of the invading armies, he knew his only hope was in God. If God worked for them and was favorable to His people, His power, and His alone, was able to deliver them. Prayer and fasting take the place of fear when we seek the Lord with a whole-hearted desire and true faith. By setting himself to seek the Lord, his influence spread through the whole nation of Judah who knew him because he had previously visited them all. It is a good principle of leadership to know the people well enough that they know you care for them sincerely and will respond to your exhortations when they are given in the fear of God. Men, women and children called a halt to normal daily living and fasted as a way of concentrating on the urgency of the moment and their collective awareness of their need of God.

The prayer of Jehoshaphat began with committing the situation to God knowing that only God could save them. He appealed to the sovereignty of God who knew the whole situation. By giving praise to God for His power, he emphasized their need of God because they were powerless to meet the enemy and prevail. He wisely sought the favor of God who gave them the promised land in the first place and is a covenant-keeping God. He appealed to God for the nation because they were God's people. It is well for us to remember who we are and to whom we belong when we pray. God is sovereign over every situation in life we face, and as His children it is only right that we earnestly supplicate our Gracious Father in our times of need.

The prayer of Jehoshaphat also included praise for God's glory and the comfort to be gotten from His promises. It is important that thanksgiving be given whenever prayer is made. In this prayer he professed complete dependence on God for deliverance by focusing entirely on God's power, not human ability or ingenuity. His prayer was an intelligent awareness that the God who gave them the land in the first place could preserve the land and protect it from the invaders who wanted to take it over. Knowing our limitations is an important part of intelligent prayer. When we do not know what to do, we can pray with confidence in an all-knowing God. Then we keep our eyes on Him for answers and the needed understanding of our responsibility in the matter. Expressions of confidence in God, thankfulness, trust even in times of despair are appropriate when earnest, fervent prayer is made. "We don't know what to do. Our eyes are on Thee."

God's answer came through a servant of longstanding reputation. The men women and children were standing waiting for an answer and it came immediately. Not all answers to prayer come immediately but

when the matter is urgent, we can expect our Father to give us the response that best suits His sovereign will. The Spirit of the Lord came and the answer was plain. "The battle is not yours, but God's." What a blessed relief it is when we are confident that this is what God wants, and we have no doubts about it. God was going to do what needed to be done but they were not to stay home and take it easy. There was an immediate responsibility they were to meet. It wasn't go home and get ready. It was. "Tomorrow, go ye down against them." Then they were to "set themselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you." God was identifying Himself with His people and He intended them to identify themselves with Him. It is not right for a believer to seek to remain incognito and still think that God is going to do for them what is needed.

The testimony of Jahaziel was plain, specific and it made perfectly clear what the responsibility of the people of God was. They were not to fear nor retain a sense of trepidation, but were "tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you." They did not know how victory was coming but they were to be part of the process. It is always right when God gives His answers to prayer, to bow, kneel, fall down before Him, worship and then stand up and praise Him. "Whoso offereth praise glorifies God." The outcome was assured but the way it was going to be accomplished was not. It is important for God's people to be in the right place, at the right time, in the right spiritual condition and be ready at all times to do the right thing as our God makes it plain to us.

When tomorrow came, they didn't linger but rose early in the morning and went. How good it was that Jehoshaphat their leader was there before them, and was ready to encourage them all with plain words: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." That principle has not changed at all for us. Our confidence is in God. Those who speak for Him must be trusted and their words accepted as authentic. Of special interest is the fact that the choir went before the army. The words of their hymn, would have struck a chord; maybe even of terror to those who heard the sound of singing coming towards them as that of "Songs of victory, songs of glory." Whatever was the ambush God used, it worked exactly as He had intended. Powerful singing and the sounds of a marching army, and God working for His people by some form of ambush, confused them to such an extent, they didn't know who their enemy was and attacked each other in fear that the one next to them was their enemy. "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

By the time the people of Judah arrived at the battlefield, the battle was over. "The battle is God's." Singing saints and the Lord God of hosts are a wonderful combination for success in the things of God. When God's people sing even in times of difficulty, there is a special power given to rise above the present distress. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" is still a fact for us in our times of extremity and weakness. When God fights for us to meet our need He takes responsibility for the whole matter. Our limitations and weakness demonstrate God strength and power, and the fact that His interests are in the same place as those who are in need.

Victory comes in ways most unexpected when it is God who is in control, not only of His own people, but the setting of the battle, the circumstances in which the enemy is found and the outcome. His people came out singing and returned with great joy and greatly enriched because of all the opposition left behind. Beside that, the other countries around were made to fear because "the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel." God gave rest to His people and they gave glory to God. But even though Jehoshaphat reigned twenty-five years doing right, the people he ruled had not prepared their hearts unto God. They had come to expect that God was working for them, which He was, but felt they had no responsibility to remove the high places because they probably were worshipping the Lord in their own way at the place (high place) for their choosing instead of where the Lord had placed His name. A similar practice is done today by those who may be Christians but want to worship God in their own way without accepting scriptural guidance.

There are times in the lives of some of God's people when there has been victory and blessing that obviously came from God, but the attraction of more of this world's goods become one's desire. Jehoshaphat entered into an unequal yoke business deal that failed. He apparently had not learned that alliances with the ungodly are bound to fail. He could have learned that from those who were before him, but he didn't. Unequal yokes are wrong because they are built on unequal foundations. Faith contrasted with works. When thinking about entering into a questionable business venture stop to think: What are my motives; what am I expecting to get out of this and what might I lose? What problems am I going to avoid by entering into this partnership? What problems can I expect? Is this partnership a quick fix or the best solution in the long run? Have I prayed to God and taken counsel from godly men? Are the goals of the partnership the same in both partners? Would I be willing to settle for less money in order to do God's will?

When faith is put to the test it usually involves trials that affect me emotionally, spiritually and physically. A trial will test my obedience to God, my commitment to truth, my responsibility to the assembly of the Lord's

people, my testimony before the world as a Christian, my family life and my personal devotional life. No financial profit that negatively effects my joy and testimony can compensate for what I will lose in an unequal yoke.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 20:17.** *“Ye need not to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you.”*

### **STAND...SEE.**

The sound of singing in the morning air is not usually associated with war.  
The disconcerting words of praise makes enemies more fearful than before.  
Because it indicates something greater than soldiers and their swords  
Are coming out to meet them - for the battle is the Lord's.

When our eyes are on God and His greatness, He takes away natural fears.  
Our prayers and supplication are made and we are confident He does hear.  
So, when our position is consistent with what He has made known to us -  
We are able to stand still and see His salvation - in Him alone we have put our trust.

There are things only God can do when in our weakness we look ahead -  
But by standing still and acknowledging Him we lose our fear and dread.  
We know we are among God's people and we know He knows the situation  
In faith we stop planning and scheming, waiting to see His acts of salvation.

Some things we must do ourselves, when confession and turning from sin are in order.  
Other things are beyond our ability so we confidently turn to our Father.  
The battle against evil is ultimately His; His strength is made perfect in our weakness.  
By prayerful trust, we stand still and see God do what is in His best interests.

He may use miraculous means that have no natural explanation.  
He may make nature to work for Him, for it is His by virtue of creation.  
He may choose to use us to do something for Him that is not ordinary.  
He may even just want the singers to sing, as His tune they are called to carry.

Whenever God works it is cause for rejoicing, we bow down and acknowledge His grace.  
We come in the joy of His work when we stand still, and see His work by faith.  
Others may not see what we see; to them His work may seem a failure.  
But when God does what He wants in His own way, He often acts above nature.

**“O God my Father, by the natural course of events, the work of this assembly doesn't seem like it can continue on too long. But if it would bring glory and honor to Thee if it is to maintain a testimony, then please, O Lord God, hear our songs of praise and worship; hear our prayers of thanksgiving and faith; give heed to our great need of Thee - and visit us with Thy salvation once again - both of precious souls and of the assembly itself. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 21**

### **A HOPELESS FAILURE**

None of us live without making some mistakes and yet, when the bent of a person's life is to please God and bless His people, they can die in peace. What a hope, what a blessing, what a joy the servant of God has when they are taken home! "Absent from the body and present with the Lord" is a comfort when near the "valley of death," both to the one leaving and the ones left behind. Jehoshaphat was a good ruler even though he made some serious blunders and the consequences remained behind him. He had given his sons wealth and responsibility in local authority. He must have known the kind of person Jehoram was and the kind of wife he had arranged for him to marry. Why he would designate such a person to lead God's people is hard to understand. It seemed to be only because Jehoram was the oldest son.

We all leave a legacy of some sort behind us. It is important for us to consider the objective of leadership, not just the person who will take the place as a leader. Not everyone is suited to lead even though it may seem culturally or socially correct. Jehoshaphat had the authority, as did David, to designate the leader who would take his place. He apparently did it without much thought or consultation with the Lord. He should have known his other sons were better men than Jehoram. The most suitable leader of the saints of God will be one who has a care for the Lord's people; understands the qualifications given in scripture of those who lead and does not ignore them; is raised up by the Holy Spirit so the people of God know he has been appointed by God and does not take the responsibility given him lightly or proudly.

It is likely Athaliah pushed Jehoram to kill his brothers who would have been considered potential rivals for his place as king. The consequences of an unequal yoke may not be obvious until a crisis time or there begins to be an undercurrent of dissatisfaction. The murder of all of Jehoshaphat's sons who were local administrators in various cities, would not have been taken well by the local citizens over who they had a measure of authority. A hidden resentment may not be known at first but the undercurrent of dissatisfaction will not easily go away. The royal line of David was preserved, but just barely.

A man often will yield to his wife in order to have domestic peace at the moment, rather than taking time to look ahead and considering the consequences of his actions. A quick, rash evil decision made by an ungodly man leads to ungodly actions that have results over which we have no control. It is to be expected that payday will come for evil actions as well as those that are good. Under the leadership of Jehoram all the good that had been done by those who ruled before him, was undone in a few short years. It resulted in Judah being no different than the northern tribes of Israel. Idolatry was encouraged and spiritual fornication and darkness descended on the nation. If we turn away from the Lord by either not doing what He wants us to do, or doing what He doesn't want us to do, we are already on a downward course that will lead us farther and farther away from God.

God removed His protection from Judah and they were exposed to their neighbors without divine power to call on nor the ability to protect themselves. God allowed the revolt of Edom and Libnah to be successful, and Jehoram and his leaders, and army barely escaped. "Because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers," he was left on his own. You would think he would have stopped to consider why, but instead he continued to promote wrong among the people. If he had any fear of God at all, God was still where He had always been. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and He will mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

instead of learning from his mistakes, Jehoram went farther, and took others with him. Punishment for sin may not happen immediately or dramatically, but it will come. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We will suffer the consequences of sin in one way or another. The letter from Elijah should have really shaken up Jehoram. It was plainly told him in condemning words that his evil ways would bring severe punishment both to the nation and to him personally. To link up with the world in an unequal yoke is bad. To promote evil and idolatry is worse even though it usually is inevitable when one is in an unequal yoke. That kind of friendship with the world, is "enmity with God." The omnipotence of God will remain unused even in desperate straits or disaster and disease.

Prophecies given by faithful prophets of God were as authoritative as the word of God. What they said will actually take place. God allowed the enemies around Judah to fulfill the prophecy Elijah gave. The nation was brought down to poverty spiritually and Jehoram had a long time of physical pain and suffering to consider the "wages of sin." A matter may not seem all that important to us when all around us people of the world engage in it without a blush. Some say, "Don't knock it until you try it," but that does not make a thing or an action right. When people are used to a thing long enough, it becomes acceptable. That can even happen with believers if we are not careful. Ecclesiastical sin is as real, and as wrong, as any other kind of sin.

When Jehoram died after a long siege of painful illness and a humiliating end, nobody really cared. They didn't have any national mourning for him. They did not have a fire in his honor. He died probably unloved, unneeded and unwanted. What an awful legacy to leave to one's family. Even his family was almost nonexistent, and would have been if his evil wife had her way. Never, ever let us forget the principle in the words of scripture, "Then that honor Me, I will honor, they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 21:6.** *"And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord."*

#### **JEZEBEL'S DAUGHTER.**

He is bent over in pain day after day -  
The food may taste sweet but there is a price to pay  
For making wrong choices when one is comparatively young.  
Now you have lost everything except your youngest son.

You were given the place of honor but that wasn't enough.  
You killed your own brothers and claimed all their stuff.  
What ever happened to you to make you so evil?  
It was marrying that woman when the yoke wasn't equal!

Many will not listen to common sense and reason.  
But deliberately do what is wrong thinking it is only for a season.  
A lifetime with the wrong person always has serious consequences.  
She will break down walls of separation and leave you defenseless.

Take time to consider before donning a life-yoke;  
Listen to those who are older and when they spoke  
To warn you for danger that you didn't know then,  
Would turn you from righteousness to the pathway of sin.

Now your family is gone except an evil wife and one son.  
You are living in pain as a consequence of what you have done.  
There is no one to blame; you made the decision -  
And your suffering is beyond the help of any physician.

Jezebel's daughter may have looked good to your eyes;  
But the consequences of that marriage are not a surprise.  
Living for self and not God can bring no good end.  
Unequal yokes always unhappy results will send.

Look at that poor man with his insides gushing out.  
Better than speeches his message does shout -  
"Start off right, determined to do what God says is best,  
Or you'll end up like me - hopeless and finding no rest!"

**"O God, I pray that the young people who are asking for some guidance as to who they should marry, will listen in time. Most have already made up their minds as to the person before they ask for some counsel. They hope counsel will make things work out well. Give me wisdom to help them in some way make wise decisions before they have gone too far down the wrong road. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 22**

### **NO POWER**

Occasionally there comes on to the page of history a person in a place of leadership who vacillates, is indecisive, finds it hard to know what to do, so looks for others to tell him what to do. In the case of this Ahaziah, his mother was his chief counselor. All his other counselors were more or less sycophants under her domination and so all the counsel he received was wicked and evil - really it seemed she was determined to rid the nation of any vestige of worship to the one true God. Her idolatrous heart ruled her evil mind to do, and promote evil. Perhaps Ahaziah was afraid to oppose her, or perhaps he had been taught so well by her that he accepted wicked counsel without hesitation. We have to be careful who we take counsel from. Not everyone is openly opposed to scriptural practices and principles, but time must be given to consider counsel given as to whether it is based on God's word or some other agenda that may be hidden.

A bad mother who was a bad parent who had bad parents herself cannot be counted on to give good counsel unless she has been born again by the Spirit of God. The influence of Ahab, long dead, still lived on and had expanded from Israel to Judah. A leader may have bad advisers who give bad counsel, but he is responsible for implementing any action by virtue of the position he is in. Each person is responsible for his or her own actions. No one can make me do what I know to be wrong. It is up to me to decide if I am willing to pay the price of doing right, or if I will act on bad advice "in order to keep the peace."

The affinity between the leaders of the northern and southern tribes was close enough that over time leaders had the same name - not at the same time, but indicating a significant affiliation. Ahaziah early in his reign also joined Jehoram of Israel in a war in which his uncle, Jehoram, was seriously wounded. In a visit to show interest and perhaps solidarity, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and they both died the same day in Samaria.

Just because one is from a God-fearing family in one's background, does not make him immune from the righteous justice of God upon him for his iniquity. Because one's grandfather was a good leader and had a good reputation among the people, does not mean we can avoid the consequences of our actions. Ahaziah had God-fearing forbearers, but he lived by the advice of a bad mother, who influenced other bad counselors from Samaria to give bad advice, and he died a violent death in Samaria one year into his reign.

Because of the respect people had for Jehoshaphat, his grandfather, Ahaziah was buried in Jerusalem. He was a powerless king who ruled for one year. It was unlikely that his subjects even knew him because he

had gone north and ultimately died there. Bad counselors lead to bad advice. Bad advice leads to bad decisions. Bad decisions lead to bad actions. Bad actions lead to bad results. The people didn't like his father Jehoram. They hardly knew him. Now they were "fair game" for an evil woman, Athaliah, the king's mother to take over leadership. And she did.

Her wickedness knew no bounds. She killed her own grandchildren and all family connections. She was controlled and manipulated by Satan to seek to stop the line of David through which our Lord Jesus Christ would come. There was one woman relative she did not kill who was married to the high priest. God had placed Jehoshabeath in the right place "for such a time as this." How good it is of God to not allow the wickedness of man to thwart His divine purposes of grace. God has His people all over the world in the place of His choosing, doing His will and waiting for His time to do what He wants in His time. Powerless men cannot stop the power of God as it reaches out to others through the Gospel of His grace.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 22:3-4.** *"He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction."*

#### **"THAT WOMAN!"**

Evil as she was, in her wicked plans she would never be satisfied  
Until she had her own way, no matter who in her family died.  
The seed of evil is deeply found when planted in the soul -  
Only the life God alone can give, will make such a sinner whole.

But her own daughter was well aware of that sinful mother;  
And managed to rescue by her own actions the son of her brother.  
How terrible the influence of evil is when it is left unchecked.  
Destruction is bound to come when a leader hardens his neck.

There is no way good and evil can or should coexist.  
There are no compromises or solutions to make so that sin finally be can be fixed.  
There is only one wage that can deal once for all with the problem of sin -  
And that is death itself - after that a new life can begin.

That woman is like the one we read of riding on the "beast's" back.  
There is only one way to face sin's consequences and restore what we lack  
The flesh with all its tentacles reaches to every part of life.  
It may start out with temptation, but will end in mortal strife.

The devil may stay hidden so that the world and the flesh -  
Working under his control will weave a fatal mesh -  
That captures the mind through the lust of the eyes focused in the wrong place,  
And the pride of life follows close behind the smile of a pretty face.

But deep in the soul of the world's attraction is the determination to bring down  
Anything that is of God or that will the Lord of glory crown.  
There is no way the one who wants to do what is right can ever hope to win  
Approval from God if he continues to insist that all that is in the world is not sin.

Learn the lessons of those who were followers of the counsel of evil men.  
Take some time to trace the generations who suffered because leaders followed them.  
Stop and consider that evil is stopped only when it is put to death.  
Repentance of sin and turning in faith to God is the start of righteousness.

**"Preserve Thy people O God, from the deliberate acts of the world, the flesh and the devil. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, have left this nation terribly undone. We have sinned as a people. The evil influences of compromise and the plans of world domination by men have caused us to turn from Thee. Hear my prayer, O God, and bring us again to our knees where men will seek the Lord. Preserve Thy people in this small assembly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 23**

#### **THE WATCH OF THE LORD**

It is not always easy to be patient and wait for the Lord's timing when things seem to be going from bad to worse. On the other hand, people of grace, or of a gracious nature, often do not want to confront that which is wrong until a lot of damage is done. The "watch of the Lord" is like a guard duty in which that which is not of God has to be kept out and that which is set aside for God is brought in. It is not arrogance nor an

uncaring attitude that refuses entry of unbelievers or those who do not have a commitment to the Lord of God as our source of information regarding church practice. It is rather a response to divine authority when we guard that which is holy, consistent to the word of our holy God.

The temple of God was a holy place, and order according to the word of God was to be maintained there. There was a variety of men responsible for "the watch of the Lord." Soldiers, Levites and priest were all involved in guarding that which was God's. Even in dark days when evil and idolatrous worship goes on all around us, God can preserve His testimony and His people who love Him and love the truth. For six years while the little child was growing in a secret place, Athaliah ruled while the majority of the people groaned under her wicked ways. She not only was an idol worshipper but she also promoted her religion. Perhaps we wonder what will become of us as a nation because of the anti-Christian attitude in schools, governments and society in general. The majority of the population now is committed to tolerance in almost everything except fundamental Christianity. They accused Bible-believing Christians of being intolerant as if that is a terrible thing. To tolerate immorality, covetousness, rioting in the name of some other religion or race is well accepted. To see Bibles in school, verses of scripture in public, the Ten Commandments in a courtroom, prayer at ball games or school events is cause for antagonism, scorn, law suits and even riots.

There comes a time when under divine direction, people of faith must take appropriate action in spite of the dangers and difficulties they may encounter, and the work involved in doing the right thing. We need to be prepared at all times for those openings that come obviously from God to promote that which we know to be according to His will. Jehoiada led other people in doing the right thing publicly when the child reached seven years of age and could stand before the people. His wife, Jehoshabeath, did the right thing when she took the child as an infant and kept him safe and prepared him for the day of coronation. She did her work in private. Her husband did his work in public and the result was blessing all around. Evil was put down and righteousness was promoted among the whole nation.

Resentment by the people against the evil woman, Athaliah, was an undercurrent for six long years. There was apparently a desire on the part of the people to return to the Lord and the spiritual worship of God. When Jehoiada knew the time was right, he realized he needed to "strengthen himself," before he could expect others to enter into "covenant with Him" and then "with the king in the house of God." To expect others to step out and do what we want, and seek to serve only in advisory capacity ourselves does not motivate the Lord's people to act in faith. By careful organization, the high priest arranged the whole event in such a way that there was safety for the child-king and at the same time visible evidence of solidarity on the part of priesthood, the Levites and the military leaders.

Covenants are binding agreements that are not to be entered into lightly. The three covenants the chronicler wrote about were plain. There was the covenant between the high priest and the military leaders. Then there was a covenant between the people and the king made in the house of God. Thirdly there was a covenant between Jehoiada the high priest, the people and the king with the Lord that they should be the "Lord's people." The changes being made had the potential for bloodshed, but Jehoiada made sure that nothing would make the temple unclean or defile it in any way. We need to commit ourselves to maintaining the holiness of God so that it will not be compromised in any way when we gather as His people in His name. It would be an awful thing if any action we might take would besmirch the testimony of an assembly because we became careless about divine things.

The safety of the young king was assured by strong men who were armed and ready for any contingency. The place and timing of his coronation was significant because it was similar that of David generations earlier. God's work is not dependent in any way on appeasement to the will of men or opinions of men. There was no way there could be any connection between the new king and those who were "the Lord's people" and the wicked queen, Athaliah. Therefore, no contact was made with her until she heard the sound of people running to toward the temple and praising God audibly. The whole plan and the carrying out of the plan had caught her by surprise. She still retained her defiant attitude toward God, His people and the new king (her grandson). Willful wickedness and defiance of the truth go together. There can be no mixing of that which is of God and that which is of Satan.

The writer of the chronicles seems to have made it plain to those of his time that this woman was a usurper of the throne and was not a recognized ruler of Judah. There will likely be times when some person or persons claim a position which they have no right to fill. When or if that happens, we need to be wise, even if we have to wait awhile, and then act under the authority of our Lord in dealing with that person, so the Lord's people can be assured that what is done is right. Some of the believers may be young and/or untaught, and still have the characteristic of the world of being tolerant of differences even when they are evil.

The reforms that began after the child Joash was crowned king, would have been under the guidance of the high priest Jehoiada who began with a covenant and then moved outward to destroying idols, stopping idolatry and restoring the worship of God as it was supposed to be. Under the guidance of the Lord and by His power, the course of that nation was changed in a day from the wrong way to the right way. "The watch of the Lord" worked as it was supposed to and the results were what God intended. That which is wrong among God's people must go, and then there can be the rejoicing of restored fellowship with God and His faithful people.

**2nd Chronicles 23:16.** *"And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the Lord's people."*

#### **DO WHAT IS RIGHT.**

It is possible for us at times to not do what God demands  
For a nation, a city or in an assembly He has given us His plans  
That includes decisive action against sin and those it does corrupt  
Lest the on-going practice of allowing evil, swallow the people up  
Until they get used to it and think that God doesn't know or care what is wrong  
And the righteousness that exalts a nation gets weak, and evil becomes so strong  
That God is left out and men start to think that God is just like one of them  
Godly order is abandoned, sin is exalted, and there is no fear of God among men.

Even when departure is so obvious that we wonder if God has abandoned us -  
There always have been a few people of faith who still believe "In God we trust."  
Often, we wait until we have no other choice but to stand up and be counted aloud -  
Thinking we are alone and then we are surprised that others are in the crowd  
Who want what is right, but were afraid to speak out thinking they were alone -  
Until one does what is right before God, and others who want something done  
Step out from the crowd: one here, another there - until those who stand together  
Are quite a number who are determined to do right, and the evil crowd begins to scatter.

Resisting the devil has a promise with it, God says when we do it, he will flee.  
It is encouraging when the days are dark, that the glimpses of light we see -  
One stands up here and another there, each with a desire to return  
To the ways of the Lord and will step away from those who His word still spurn.  
Acting in faith may at first bring fear but when we do what God says is right -  
He gives the strength to be the salt, and in the darkness - the light,  
And supports them with His indwelling Presence, helping them to know what to do,  
So, recovery to the covenant He made with us is accomplished before we are through.

**"To see that young king with Thy Word in his hand, must have given Thee pleasure, O Righteous God. He had nothing but trust in those who had learned before to trust Thee. Now it is like a glimmer of hope that when we do what is right, Thou art able to do what is needed through Thy people. We seemed like a few old and weak people last night Father God, but we did have the Word of the Covenant in our hands. And we did state our position of trust in Thee. Are there those in the multitude around that You can make do what is right? Hear us, O God, as we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **2nd Chronicles 24**

##### **WEAKNESS OF CHARACTER**

Our expectation when a child is young is that they will learn the lessons we teach them in their youth, and as the years pass, they will make those principles and truths we have taught their own in a personal way. Not every child from a good home and good upbringing, will consider those privileges a good thing. Some will even resent the pressure put on them by loving parents to be hardships because they could not do what they wanted. Some children from very underprivileged and dysfunctional homes, determine in their own mind that they are going to rise above the adversity they experienced and go forward to accomplish some meaningful objective. There really is no way to know which way a young person will go when they mature.

Joash had a good start under a godly man and his godly wife. Jehoiada the high priest, and Jehoshabeath his wife, raised the child from infancy and were able to impart to this orphaned boy high standards, moral principles and a spiritual perspective. It is possible to learn what is right and do what is right when one is young because that is all they have known in a godly home. Because of the faith of parents and the security of the Lord's people as friends, and experiencing the safety of a scriptural assembly, some young people appear to be committed Christians. We find great joy when we see them among us in the assembly, and as they live with us at home. We hope and pray that they will be saved and come into the fellowship of a local assembly, and live their life for God. But we cannot guarantee this, nor can we blame ourselves if we have

done what we believe the Lord wanted us to do, and they did not turn out as we had hoped. Each person has to make their own decisions, choices, and convictions. Then each one has to accept the consequences of their choices.

As he matured and became more responsible for the government of the country over which he was king, Joash did some good things. Not only was he able to raise the money for repairs of the temple without increasing taxes, but he was able to motivate the people to generosity by providing opportunity for free-will offerings. The Levites were slow in getting out among the people to collect what was needed, but when people could give what they wanted, the funds came. Generosity cannot be demanded. That comes from one's own heart. A slow response to a command is really a form of disobedience. When someone says, "I'll do it in my own good time," or "Yeah, I'll get to it when it is convenient for me," or "Don't push me, when I want to, I'll get around to it," that is not only disregarding the person who gave you the task, but when the task has the glory of God in view, that is disregarding God.

Those Levites underestimated the mind of the people and their desire for God. It is incumbent on leaders to know the people well enough to give them the proper motivation for spiritual things. God's people will respond generously and willingly if they know the work is for the right reason. Joash had "a mind to repair the temple." He knew his uncles had taken things from the temple and trashed the house of God to get what they could for the worship of Baal. To know what is right and do it is good. To engage other people in a good work is good. To do what a spiritual mentor advises is good, but none of that will keep you from evil if it is not done "as to the Lord." The influence of another does not make truth personal to me. There is a sense in which each person must in faith step out in personal confidence in God with personal convictions.

The funds received for the repair work were more than sufficient to do the repairs. They could also add some things that were useful in the temple. Those men who labored there were trustworthy workmen of honest character. Their integrity was not questioned because the results were obvious. The results were there to be seen. To be trusted with the financial affairs of an assembly, or for any purpose, is a great honor and responsibility. It is a wise person who does what he says, in the best way possible, and is careful lest there be any suggestion of any kind of impropriety when it comes to money.

Jehoiada "had done good in Israel" and all the people knew it. When he was buried, he was buried like a king. He had lived in bad times under bad leadership but had kept focused on that which was right in spite of what others did - and he did right. What a wonderful commendation to have from people, "He had done good." Faithfulness in times of departure; vision in time of complacency; righteousness in times of moral and spiritual decay are honorable qualities of a true servant of God. Unfortunately, "after the death of Jehoiada" it wasn't long until departure set in. "They left the house of the Lord God of their fathers." When things go well spiritually, it is well with the people of God and they are committed to the worship and service of God. But when prosperity comes in, it takes over the minds of the people. Prosperity can be good or bad; a blessing or a curse; as sign of God's grace or of man's covetousness. When we take God's goodness for granted, we can become proud and self-sufficient. Prosperity brings with it potential for spiritual and moral decline.

God is the source of every blessing. To abandon God after His great blessings to us, is evidence of arrogance and alienation from God, and turning to something else as more important. In the case of the people of Judah, they turned to idolatry again. For Joash to go against what he had been taught from his youth, and even practiced at the beginning of his reign, and then go against it all indicates a regrettable moral deficiency, and certainly weakness of his character. He began his downward course by "hearkening" to the wrong advice. Then "they left the house of the Lord God." Next "they would not give ear" to the warnings of the prophets. Then they "forsook the Lord." Poor Joash ended his life when "his own servants conspired against him."

God gives opportunity for repentance and restoration before judgment and punishment. He did not abandon Joash and the nation without a word from Him through His prophets. Zechariah warned him that "those who transgress cannot prosper." The awful crime of murder against the son of his mentor, Jehoiada, sets Joash apart as a despicable man at the end of his reign even though he started out good. When one sins, if they face their sin, if they repent of their sins, acknowledge their guilt, God will still show mercy when we turn to Him and follow Him. The whole nation was repeatedly warned of destruction that was ahead if they continued as they were. But the political and spiritual state became so bad they ignored the warnings and they lost everything. Justice will be served, and even though Zechariah was killed for telling the truth, that did not keep the consequences of sin from coming. Justice and judgment came and the people were so against Joash they wouldn't bury him as a king.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 24:2.** *“And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.”*

### **THE MENTOR.**

A man of vision, whom God raises up to give guidance and counsel to be a leader,  
Is a person of great value, to all the people who need the work of a teacher.  
He has learned from the past and learned directly from God what it is the people need.  
A nation and its leader will be greatly blessed if to such a mentor they heed.

He is a man who knows the need of the hour and is a man the Lord can trust.  
With truth and with faith he is able to pass on the things that are essential to us.  
He does more than speak, for he has been taught himself that actions speak louder than  
words.  
So he makes himself available to those younger than he, who needs to know the things he  
has learned.

He doesn't overlook youth for he can see the potential in the generation coming behind  
him.

He knows there will continue to be a falling away if someone's not willing to teach them.  
So he starts when they're young even though he can sense the weakness in their nature.  
In spite of that flaw he pours into their minds what is needed in leadership nomenclature.

It is an encouragement to him when he sees a response and one showing real initiative.  
As he backs off a bit and watches what is done, he is aware as to how much to give  
Advice that is needed and what is no longer wanted, he is sensitive to the role he fills.  
The mentor steps back into the shadows and waits to see if there is a need for him still.

It is not easy to step back and take your hands off the wheel, but you know others are not  
like you.  
And the mentor fears the changes others will make will lead to mistakes before they are  
through.  
But there is only so far, the mentor can go, he knows the learner has a mind of his own.  
And the mentor prays that the ones he has taught will not reject all they have been shown.

There are bound to be failures, personalities are different, the mentor can't make  
everything right.  
The best he can hope for is that God has instilled in the learner convictions based on the  
light  
Of the Word of God, the mentor has taught, and in a practical way, has tried to show  
The ones coming behind that God has a right to expect that we act righteously on all that  
we know.

**“Father God, if there are things that need yet to be taught to those who have come to us for guidance; please help me to be ready with biblical and practical teaching to meet those needs. I have waited in the past for men to come to me. If I am to approach them with the purpose of guidance, then please guide me to the right ones. If the brother I will be with in the month ahead wants to have some guidance and help, give to Thy servant the needed wisdom and guidance to pass on Thy truth in a proper way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 25**

### **GRUDGING COMPLIANCE**

I wonder what would be the assessment of me, my life and my work by people who know me? Would my reputation be of one who knows and does what is right but his heart is not in it? Would it be I do what I do and say what I say because I know it would please the people who hear me whether saved or unsaved? My hope is that what I am, do, and commit myself to, would obviously be the word and will of God. If my heart is not in the work of the Lord to which I am called, but I grudgingly comply with what is right, it won't be long until I am being attracted to those around who act independently rather than being accountable to those the Lord has designated to oversee and guide His work.

Half-hearted obedience is not obedience at all. To do what is right, "but not with a perfect heart," is not a good recommendation of a person's labors. Nothing is hidden from God including our attitude toward Him and His work. Even if people are thinking we are doing good, that does not overcome the grudging compliance of a person's life and labors. We normally would not accept that kind of attitude even in our own children, how much more in ourselves as children of God. Amaziah began fairly well in his reign of king of Judah. He didn't kill the children of those who killed his father, because the word of the Lord forbade making children die for the sins of their fathers.

But then things seemed to change in Amaziah. He acted on his own volition by hiring professional soldiers from Israel. A prophet came with a warning message regarding those soldiers who had come to mix with his soldiers. He hired men who "the Lord was not with." They were likely hoping to get rich from the spoils of war beside the salary they were getting, but the men were not worshippers of the Lord God of Israel. They had become idolaters and God did not want them among His own people. When the prophet told Amaziah of his mistake, he acted wisely, realizing the loss of money was not worth the ruin it would cause. With grudging compliance, Amaziah sent them home having lost a lot of money because of acting independently without God's guidance. But he had to later reap the consequences of what he had sown.

Then he acted on his own by going to battle with the Edomites. He was able to defeat the Edomites and those in the valley of salt, but that wasn't the end of the story. The mass killings of captured enemies seem to us very excessive, but to those in the Middle East who live a day or two's walk away from each other's country, that action was taken to preserve a nation from revenge and retaliation for at least a generation. The most awful result of the war with the Edomites was that Amaziah brought back with him idols of the false gods of the Edomites. And even worse, he "bowed down himself before them," and offered incense. How foolish it was to worship the false gods of a defeated nation. No wonder the Lord was angry with him. Amaziah went even further when he rejected the Lord God by rejecting the warnings of God's prophet.

Even though we may wonder at the bad decisions and practices of those of old times, we have similar situations today. The emptiness of the world and the sinful pleasures of the world still attracts people today - even the people of God. The way worldly attractions are presented and advertised makes even those who are committed to following the Lord, wonder if we are missing out on something good, even though in our hearts we know better. Convictions become our own when we realize God is in control and His word is "The man of our counsel and our guide." We can learn by faith, or by fatal mistakes and bad choices. Grudging compliance does not preserve us from the desire to do wrong.

If we are not careful and committed to our walk with God, arrogance and pride can make our ambition our downfall. Ability is not mine just because I think I have it. Amaziah thought he had all he needed in himself to defeat Joash, king of Israel, and his idolatrous people. Without God with us, we are powerless even if we have all kind of assets in which we are trusting. "Meddling" happens when one has deceived himself into thinking, "I can do anything if I just put my mind to it." To not listen (hear) to the counsel of those who speak for God, brings predictable results and consequences over which we have no control. God is not going to step back from righteous retribution when it is deserved.

After the defeat of Judah under Amaziah's leadership, he was not a well liked, nor accepted leader among the people of his nation. It appears that he must have shared leadership with his son Uzziah for a number of years. Even then the people of Jerusalem resented him that much that they plotted against him and he fled to Lachish. The people of Jerusalem had had enough of Amaziah, so they pursued him to Lachish and killed him there, and brought him back to Jerusalem for burial. What an ignominious death for one who began well. The final end of many people is so far removed from their potential, and their beginning. It is not over until it is over. How important it is to have the attitude of our Lord toward His Father and His people. "I have finished the work which thou gavest Me to do." "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 25:20.** *"But Amaziah would not hear; for it came of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom."*

### **WOULD NOT HEAR.**

Ambition can be a problem when it takes control of the mind.  
It has a tendency to think it can conquer all, and every mountain can climb.  
When it gets started on the wrong track it is very hard to stop -  
Because ambition is convinced in every battle it will come out on top.

Confidence too can bring one down, when it is confidence in one's self.  
We are sure our plans are right and we don't stop to ask for God's help.  
There is a plan laid out, and in our pride of self, we intend to get our own way -  
And forget that without faith, it is impossible to please God; there's a price we will have to pay.

When one has money, it makes us kind of deaf to warnings from other voices.  
The money influences us to trust in riches and on that basis make our choices.  
It is true that money has a way of influencing others so they'll do what we say.  
But those who pay attention to money's siren call live only for today.

Being impressed by what you see in the religious activities of the world -

Makes one not listen to God's still small voice, when popularity around you swirls.  
Loud music in the guise of praise to God and attractive programs that impress -  
Can make one deaf to salvation by grace alone, and think its great numbers God can bless.

Even when an enemy gives warnings that you are about to step way out of line -  
The one who will not hear and seems not to fear, shortly thereafter will find  
That we should not ignore signs of coming disaster that will fall on us when  
We only listen to the sounds in our head and don't listen to some other men.

It is a sad commentary on every Tom, Dick and Harry who turns a deaf ear to God -  
That they have ignored the voice of the Lord by not listening when they should.  
There is no way to win when we allow sin to turn us from the way that is right.  
To continue on that path will ensure God's wrath, and we will lose every battle we fight.

**"Lord God, I hear Thy voice. I really do: and I thank Thee for speaking on every page of the Bible. I thank Thee for giving applications based on Thy Word that come to my mind when I have to make decisions. I praise Thee for giving me ears to hear. Now I pray Thee to give me the will and understanding to act on Thy will. Please keep me in tune with the sound of Thy voice and the knowledge of Thy wisdom. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 26**

### **FAMOUS FALL**

Three generations of Judah's leaders started out in their years of leadership by "doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord." All of them failed as they became self-sufficient and self-opinionated, thinking they could do things their own way. Often when stepping into new areas of responsibility there is a sense of fear and trepidation because we are moving forward into "new territory." We don't know what to expect, and aren't quite sure whether we are capable enough to do what is expected. That is when we appreciate the counsel of those who are older and have experienced the "ups and downs" of leading people in some way. It is important for us to learn the lessons they teach us. There is a danger that can arise after awhile in that if we are not careful, we think we can handle everything ourselves. Uzziah started well and did well.

At sixteen years old Uzziah was made king by the people of Judah while his father Amaziah was still alive. Amaziah had become abhorrent to the people and had fled to Lachish, so they were both reigning together for some time. One's age is not a serious limitation as long as they understand their need of godly counsel from godly men. A spiritual counselor is a wonderful blessing in any person's life. Uzziah "sought God" when he was under the guidance of Zechariah, and for that reason "God made him to prosper." Prosperity is not bad if we "give God all the glory" and use the wealth and power wisely. If God has given us "things," be careful, and acknowledge that God has given this to us for a reason. The problem is, there is a tendency when one is successful to think, "I did it." Then pride in one's self, disdain for others, arrogance and a changed attitude toward God sets in like a fatal disease. "Pride goeth before destruction."

Because of the influence of a godly man or men of understanding, one can be successful in the things of God. Wisely Uzziah "sought God all the days of Zechariah." He did what needed to be done in relation to Judah's enemies "and God helped him." "His name spread abroad" because it was obvious that God had stepped in to do for him that which was needed. "He strengthened himself exceedingly," indicates he was aware of what was happening and realized opportunities had been given him by God to strengthen the city of Jerusalem with towers at the gates and corners of the wall. The outposts in the desert and the wells he dug would have been for the blessing of others as well as the expansion of agriculture.

No only was he concerned about local and national affairs; he was wisely concerned about foreign affairs. He trained a military force that was skilled in many areas of fighting and defense, in which his soldiers could not only be protected themselves, but could be more effective because of the devices that were invented. In all of these areas of his authority he was "helped" by God. In any activity for the Lord in which we are engaged, all credit and all glory for any success belong to the Lord. We know when we have been "marvelously helped." We should know that it is God's strength that is "made perfect in weakness" even though it may seem we are strong to others around.

"But when he was strong" is when problems begin, not in the results of our efforts and the things God has done when He helps us, but the problems are in us. When we begin to think we are successful in ourselves, then the downhill slide begins. Often, we begin to ignore the contributions of others, the advice of the wise men around us, the pricks of conscience within us. The "behind-the-scenes" people are often overlooked and not recognized for who they are and what they have done to bring success to a work. Divine

empowerment is taken for granted if we are not careful and so the "pride which God hates," becomes our downfall.

Perhaps Uzziah wanted to show outward appreciation for God personally, but he should have known better than to seek to by-pass those who had been appointed by God for the role of spiritual service. It would appear that he thought because of his exalted opinion of himself, that he was rising to a level that gave him the right to do what he wanted, where he wanted and when he wanted. Likely it was because of the things he had accomplished and the successes he now believed he had brought about, that made him so proud and headstrong that he wanted to offer incense himself. Azariah and eighty priests went in after him to withstand him and correct him. They understood it was his intention to offer incense on the altar and he had to be stopped. If he had accepted their correction, he could have likely been forgiven if he had acknowledged his sin. But he had become a stubborn, self-centered, proud, opinionated, rebellious and unreasonable man.

We may feel we have a right to be proud of our accomplishments, and in a sense that is true, but to look down on others who have been involved in the work with us, and ignore the divine power of God working on our behalf, is wrong. To think one is above the authority of the law is a grave mistake no matter how powerful one is or how high a position one might hold. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." That is a principle that has not changed. When one is willing to "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord," ... "He shall lift you up."

To think we are above the law is a grave mistake. The law of the land has consequences to levy against one who thinks they are above the law - and the law of the land can be changed. The law of God is unchanging. Its standards remain settled in heaven. Uzziah's great sin was in his anger against that which was God's law and God's chosen servants. His defiance was against God Himself. His anger against them precipitated the leprosy rising up in his forehead where it was visible to all. If he had been humble and accepted the correction of the priests and repented of his sin, the priest could have spoken for him in an appeal to God and he may have been spared. But his anger against God was a fatal choice. His last years were spent in obscurity, removed from contact with others even as he shared in a way in leadership with his son Jotham.

Uzziah did a lot of good things, but is well known for what he did wrong rather than what he did right. He was even buried in a field apart from his forbearers. One act of willful rebellion and pride, in effect cancelled out all that had been beneficial in his life as far as history is concerned. That is a lesson for us. To work for God and participate with Him in building His kingdom, is an unspeakable privilege. How gracious it is of God to allow us to have a part in a work that is eternal in nature. One single wrong act in the life of a believer can cancel out a whole life of positive labor. A person is remembered more for what they do wrong and a fall that happens, than for all the good they might have done.

**2nd Chronicles 26:5.** *"And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."*

### **HE SOUGHT GOD.**

The course of a nation is often set by those who are behind the scene.  
A wise man's counsel in spiritual things can to leaders, understanding bring.  
When a leader seeks the Lord there usually has been one God was able to use  
To help him grasp all the issues involved when he is called upon to choose.

God helps those who seek Him and opens ways that men would not have sought.  
When a person knows his limitations and accepts God's guidance, he'll be what he ought.  
He'll be able to see potential signs of danger and knows what to do.  
Both the leader and the followers will acknowledge God when the task is through.

When God works through a man who is available to Him, great things can be  
accomplished.  
For God makes the projects He knows need doing, to help His chosen ones be established.  
God knows the dangers and can make the weak strong when they look to Him in faith.  
He "marvelously helps" those who appreciate the Lord; those are the ones who find grace.

But there is a great danger that follows prosperity and power; the heart can get lifted up.  
And a person may think they have succeeded on their own, but are not able to handle a full  
cup.

Pride often follows close behind success and we experience great elation.  
Men tend to forget it was God who worked for us bringing us to this situation.

When that happens and instead of seeking God, we are convinced we did it on our own. The proud can quickly be humiliated; even a king can be deposed from his throne. If the time ever comes one thinks he is immune from the truth and its consequences - God can and does, remove that person until he can be brought to his senses.

Even when humbled there is a price to pay for whatever we sow we will reap. If one sows the cancerous seeds of pride, the results are planted deep. God is determined to bring the proud man down, though once he was humble in heart. It is better to lose all one ever gained, and get back to God like it was at the start.

To end in the scrap heap where the proud are dumped is to be forgotten as a successful man.

One will be remembered for what went wrong, more than all his successful plans.

A young man stood one day before God, his fear he could not hide - The turning point that came in Isaiah's life, was "In the year king Uzziah died."

**"O Righteous God, I am kind of scared here this morning. The fear of being lifted up in pride is real to me. I know I have nothing to be proud of, but if Thou art going to save souls in these coming meetings, I pray Thee to humble me and make me to publicly give Thee all the glory. I have this feeling in my stomach and legs that comes with fear and excitement when You work "marvelously." O God, guide me away from any and all danger of self-exaltation. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 27**

### **STEADFAST WAYS**

It likely was a great joy to poor leprous Uzziah, to see his twenty-five year old son, Jotham, taking hold of the leadership of the country and doing a good job of it. He had time to help his son learn the ways of leadership that pleased the Lord, and at the same time was a living example of what happens to a leader who takes things into his own hands and suffers the consequences of pride. It was a good thing for Jotham "to do right" as his father did, but not to follow his example in that which was wrong. He was a good learner. How important it is for us to be steadfast in following God no matter what others might do. Others are looking on and learning from us.

Each person is responsible to God for his own behavior and convictions that govern that behavior. To be a mere "copy-cat" follower and not make those things we are taught our own, will not keep us from going our own way when it is more convenient. Jotham was a good and successful king, but he could not make the people have his convictions. Good behavior is more often caught and taught at home rather than in public and under popular opinion. The mother of Jotham had a good spiritual upbringing that she could pass on to her son. Her behavior would have had a positive influence on Jotham when he was young. Uzziah was a good man and a good leader, so his son would have seen the projects Uzziah was working on and have learned from his father the reason for the building projects going on. Perhaps he even learned from what his father did the general principle of "them that honor Me, I will honor and they that despise Me will be lightly esteemed." He would also have learned from his father the consequences of improper behavior.

We can learn what to do from those who live for God, but we can also learn what not to do. My actions, attitudes and behavior are a reflection on those who taught me, and my willingness to obey that which is right and reject that which is wrong. In a general sense, good leadership sets the standards of conduct and belief before those who follow their lead. When that is clear and plain before the people, they have to "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." We can present the truth, practice the truth ourselves and seek to urge others to follow the Lord, but we cannot make them actually do it.

Jotham was successful because he did "that which was right in the sight of the Lord." He saw first-hand in his father the consequences of doing that which is right in our own opinion. Sometimes people don't think an action is so serious because we have a tendency to look at people, things and events in the eyes of the world around us instead of the holy eyes of God. Jotham also "prepared his way before the Lord his God." He established, or founded his work on the will of God. He took a stand and was steadfast in the way he knew would please the Lord his God. That is fundamental in any work or service we do. When a person is steadfast in heart, in his word, in hope in confidence and in the faith - they are on solid ground and are building on a firm foundation.

The work one does for the Lord in life often is a reflection of our attitude towards the things of God and the furtherance of His kingdom. Jotham had some times of conflict when he had to lead his people against the

rebellious Ammonites. But much of his legacy was in relation to the things he built. He followed on with the work his father had begun by building towers and castles in the forest. With the towers his father had built in the desert, and now these, there would have been quite an array of secure places. A gate, a wall and cities were all evidence of going forward and looking ahead to the future and what it might hold. A critical attitude toward what has been done, and the failures of the past, really has no value apart from learning what not to do. Even though the people we influence may not be people of faith, they will benefit from a steadfast leader's foresight, and hopefully the result will be they will come to know the Lord.

Jotham "became mighty" because he knew the Lord was his strength. He did not become a "prepared" or established leader because of the right things his father did. He had to assume responsibility for his own work and his own faith. When one is steadfast "before the Lord," and when one's life is personally lived in a consistent way, his "works will be established." Jotham was a faithful king and his leadership was one of accomplishment even though the people he led did not make his faith theirs. We cannot make people be what they are not, even though they might have the right outward appearance. It is up to us to commit ourselves unreservedly to following the Lord and living by faith with enthusiasm and vigor. A consistent life lived before God and the people, is probably the best way we have of creating interest in spiritual things on the part of those who look on skeptically in regards to Christianity.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 27:2.** *"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly."*

#### **WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?**

He made a choice to do what was right  
In most ways he was like his father.  
But he had also watched the awful blight  
That comes when you do what you ought not to.  
So in his own quiet way he started to build -  
He could see things that needed to be done.  
And he became mighty because the role he filled  
Was steadfast before God, even when he walked alone.

The people didn't follow his leadership -  
They continued in their corrupt practices.  
There are times when we can't have fellowship  
With people even when they appeal to us.  
Our actions and our guiding beliefs  
Are not based on what pleases others.  
Our goal is to obey and do what God says  
Even though the others are brothers.

There may not be very many  
Who our example will seek or chose.  
Even if there is not any -  
The goal in sight we will not loose.  
The sinfulness that is all around  
Is not excuse for me to stray.  
I must stay walking on higher ground  
Putting full trust in God each day.

I cannot always be successful  
In getting others to follow the Lord.  
But I can refrain from being deceitful  
When I govern myself by God's Word.  
The best I can hope for, I guess -  
Is there will be some example I leave.  
Perhaps someone yet God will bless -  
By some steadfast impression he sees.

**"Father, there are a lot of things happening around me that seem very successful. The large numbers that left us years ago seem to keep being profitable in what they do, and we are getting smaller. I believe we are on the marrow way of Thy choosing. I believe what we are teaching has the Bible as our basis. If there is some thing or things that we have neglected, please bring it to our attention that we may change. If what we are seeking to maintain is right, please gives us peace and help us to truly worship Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 28**

### **TOTAL DISASTER**

How quickly prosperity can turn into disaster! Sixteen years of prosperity under Jotham soon changed to sixteen years of rapid decline under Ahaz until there was hardly anything of God to be seen publicly among the children of Judah. Rampant idolatry, the smell of incense burnt to idols, the smell of children being burned, war in the north and south, humiliation, the house of the Lord closed down and idols on every corner of the capital city left the whole nation in essence - a ruin. Whatever happened? How did it happen so quickly? "Dearth in the land. Is there not a cause?"

It is hard to explain or even know why a godly father can be followed by a very wicked son who are even living at the same time. Many believers have children who are raised in the same home, taught the same things, gone to the same assembly meetings, attended the same school experienced the same family dynamics, and yet one turns out righteous and the other really evil. Parents often feel guilty thinking they have failed in some way in their parenting - and that may be true in some cases. But ultimately each individual makes moral and spiritual choices that have an effect on their whole life.

The two leaders, Jotham and Ahaz were totally different men even though they were father and son. The reign of each over the nation, each for sixteen years, was completely different. For some reason the character of Ahaz seemed to that of unrestrained wickedness. The righteousness and success of his father, and his consciousness of his need of God had no effect on Ahaz. His wickedness seemed to have no bounds. He thought wrong, he did wrong, he was given to idolatry, he deliberately forsook the Lord. Even as his life unfolded and his reign progressed, he increased in evil intentions and actions. As a father, as a king - as a person there was nothing good to be found in the man. It seems like he was actually committed to do evil.

When there is no consciousness of God, there are no limits to how far a person will go in the pursuit of pleasure and sin. Ahaz never showed any respect for God nor gratitude toward God. He ignored the warnings of the prophets. In his apostasy he "made molten images for Baalim" almost like a challenge to what he had been taught. The sacrifices in high places, the burning of incense to false gods were one serious evil. Then he went even farther to sacrificing his own children by burning them in fire to the gods of the Canaanites and others who the Lord God had wanted His people to eliminate. When he closed down the temple and the worship of God, he promoted idolatry and total disobedience to God even though the nation was falling apart.

A willfully disobedient man can wreak havoc on God's people and create problems from which there is no way back to normalcy. The messages of those who care for the people and have been called by God to preach His word need to be listened to and heed given to teaching and counsel they give when it is scriptural and appropriate to the need. One out-of-control man of influence, can negatively affect all of God's people when he has a personal agenda he is trying to promote.

Ahaz became ruler over a prosperous nation and in a short time spoiled it completely. War came from the north and the south. In both case they were defeated and there was a great slaughter of people, chaos followed. Failure marked his reign and military defeat ended with thousands of women and children taken into captivity. The prophets Isaiah and Oded made it plain to the leaders and the people why disaster had come upon them. There was a fierce rage that reached up to heaven and the fierce wrath of God came down upon them as an offended God judged them in view of correcting them and making them want to turn back to obedience to Him.

In this chapter there is a very remarkable message of mercy that came to the northern tribes what had captured so many people from Judah. In an act of grace and mercy, God intervened in the plans of the men of Israel even as He was judging the actions of the idolaters. How wonderful it was of God to not only bring judgment on the evil doers but to reverse the consequences of judgment on the captive women and children. Mercy in times of judgment always stands out in a remarkable way. The response of those Israelites to the message of the prophet Oded, and the need of the captives was a positive respond by showing grace. This is an example of "Christian grace" in which we seek to bring blessing to those in distress.

In spite of that, Ahaz appealed to the king of Assyria for help instead of calling upon the Lord for help. The Lord humbled the whole nation because of the defiance of Ahaz. He continued in his wickedness and as he went down, he took others with him. The whole nation suffered as a result of his arrogant stand against God. Spiritual collapse and troubles go together. Defiance against right and looking for help in the wrong places go together. How it must grieve and provoke our righteous God when we further our own willful ways and

ignore the tried and proven truth of God and the good results that follow. We cannot but pray earnestly for wisdom, grace, mercy and faith for those who lead God's people. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 28:23.** *"For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and all Israel."*

#### **THE RUIN OF HIM.**

Does a child have real rights or just those we choose to allow?  
Before a child leaves the mother's womb, does that child have a soul?  
Personhood seems to escape the minds of those who only want convenience -  
And the ashes of little bodies that have been burned will some day rise to haunt us.

The gods of the past motivated even leaders to ignore the value of a child's life.  
They thought then, as now, that if it pleases me, everything will be alright.  
To sacrifice what was made in God's image will bring a person to ruin.  
Those offerings made to the gods of this world will some day make us rue them.

To look around and form opinions on what other people think is okay -  
Has led some people who professed faith in Christ to ignore what God does say.  
One of the main problems that come from this is it affects many others too -  
Who will follow the popular mind-set of these times, and will be following you.

The result will be a whole generation will be lost because of wrong choices made.  
There will be those around who aren't wise who will remain spiritually dead.  
The one who should lead in the ways of the Lord will be responsible for them -  
In that he directed them along the broad road that is the ruin of him.

We are not free from guilt even if blood we've not spilt when we won't stand for right.  
The grace people need they overlook or don't heed seeing things through your eyesight.  
The terrible cost is their souls will be lost in hell and will suffer and burn  
As their consciences awake to the way you led them to take, leading them to ruin.

Enemies around never sleep very sound if there is a Christian to bring down.  
In this place where past blessings we trace, there's coming judgment on this town.  
People one time prayed here and many stayed faithful to the call of the Lord.  
But the majority have changed with values rearranged following the calling of the world.

It is always sad to me when departure I see from the ways God taught in the past.  
These new ideas of men lead to more open sin as people chase pleasure that don't last.  
Payday is coming and the time-clock is running as the ruin of men draws near.  
We may hope it won't come, but sin when it is done will bring the judgment of God right here.

**"I know Holy God, that the local abortion clinic and maybe even the hospitals near by are taking the lives of the unborn. People have decided that a person isn't a person until they say so. There are also those who assist those who are in pain to die. Have mercy on this town Father. We are going farther and farther away from Thee. Help us in our weak testimony to still shed some light here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 29**

#### **RECOVERY!!**

What a difference between a father and his son! The question naturally arises, "What made the difference?" The wife of Ahaz was a godly woman married to an ungodly man. What she had learned from her own father she would have been able to pass on to her son even during the terrible times Ahaz brought down on the country of Judah. More than one mother has been able to pass on truth and faith to her children even though her husband was neither supportive of her nor an example to his own children. Godly women have a responsible role in changing the course of a family, an assembly and in this case, a nation.

Character isn't necessarily passed on from one generation to another. Heredity may play a little part in giving a certain personality type to offspring but the outward expression of inward character comes mostly from what we have been taught, and even more, by that which we have really learned. Our environment doesn't make us what we really are. It usually is a reflection on those who are a generation before us. Each one of us is responsible for our own character development. What I think about, what I read, what I choose to accept or reject - everything I take in is what will form my character. From that will come the conduct and

convictions that will be evident to those around me. God is ready and willing to draw near to any who call upon Him.

Hezekiah recognized the grace of God and, even though young, responded gratefully to that grace. Prophets like Isaiah, Micah, Hosea and maybe some others were witnesses for the Lord in those bad times and he would have been made conscious of the word of God through them. He likely had learned from them and recognized the reality they represented rather than the spurious religion of idolatry. Influence from others beside our own kinfolds can create a strong motivation to seek the Lord and follow Him. It is part of our Christian privilege to seek to help young people we meet, find the path of God's leading in their lives and urge them to yield to our Lord in every part of our lives. We need to make sure we do not allow pressures from a worldly society and modern psychology to hinder or turn us aside from active and effective service for God. Do not neglect our responsibilities and duty to the Lord but look for opportunities for service, and listen to the advice of those who can be trusted with spiritual things.

Hezekiah came into leadership at a very low point in the nation. God was able to use him to recover that which had been lost. Through his leadership the nation was restored and able to remain intact as a national identity for another couple of generations. He trusted in the living God. Idols did not claim his mind nor did idolatry attract him. He knew God was the true and living God. It is quite remarkable that as a young man he was able to inspire others to seek God and trust Him also. He began the recovery in himself and then was able to influence the Levites and priests and urge them back into the service of God for which they had been chosen. The recovery of scriptural sacrifices and a recovery to carrying out the word of God followed. Soon after that there was a cleansing of the house of God and a recovery of the true worship of God.

The recovery of God's people to that for which they have been called following a time of lethargy and casual worship, will call for radical changes right away. There really isn't a slow recovery process, but a deliberate rejection of that which has been ignored or left undone, and a whole-hearted commitment to God first. Then we will find God is there ready to hear, bless and use us. The return of the nation under Hezekiah's leadership was much like that of David when he became king after the reign of Saul. He first "opened the door of the house of the Lord" that his own father had closed up. He didn't wait but began on the first day of his reign. Obviously, he had planned ahead as to what comes first and how to go about it. Victory over evil comes when one makes a public stand right away. To gradually ease into Christian conduct and practice from a worldly lifestyle really isn't what being converted means. There is a dramatic stand for righteousness that lets people know who you are, and to whom you belong.

There was no question in Hezekiah's mind as to who should do what in the recovery process. It was the priests and Levites work to clean up the house of God. Before they could clean anything, they had to be cleansed themselves and sanctified for the work ahead of them. They had to know what was filthy not just physically but also morally no matter what beauty the evidences of idolatry held. It all had to go out with the trash and be thrown in the brook Kidron. For over two weeks the garbage and dirt were carried out and the cleansing took place. Holiness and the fear of the Lord go together when cleansing takes place. There is an order to follow when recovery takes place. Everything that is wrong has to be dealt with first and dumped in the trash heap, no matter what it might be nor how sentimental or beautiful it might be.

Then when the hearts of the leaders are cleansed and they are restored, the hearts of others are affected. Hezekiah identified himself as one of the people when he called them "my sons." He reminded them of the fact they had been chosen by God to serve Him so they were to get on with their appointed tasks. When the servants' hearts were right, he pressed them to move forward and finish the work in their hands and get the house of the Lord in a condition that it could function in the way it was intended to. Cleansing isn't just getting rid of what is wrong. That only leaves it empty, swept and garnished. That which is right had to be initiated and functioning before they could begin the on-going practice of what is right.

There was a return to God and His word. Hezekiah acted quickly and responded well to the word of the Lord. Then he led others in the "right way." When all the uncleanness was gone, the house of God was fit for the presence of God to be with His people again. Holiness in the house of God requires a holy people, who in a holy way, bring into a holy place, holy sacrifices and offerings to Him. The cleansing began inside and by the time it reached the outside sixteen days later, the whole congregation was able to rejoice in being reconciled because the sin offering was made for "sin and uncleanness." The sin offering was made for forgiveness. Then the burnt offerings could begin and the singing expressing in words worship began. The trumpets of public testimony could be made so the whole congregation could be glad. Worship of the one true God was back in the place of His choosing.

The bullocks, rams and lambs all brought in this new day of recovery. Then the goats for the blood of atonement were brought out, the hands of the kings and others were laid on the heads of the goats testifying to the fact of reconciliation having been made by the blood of innocent victims. Temple order was back again started by qualified people who could represent the nation to our God of recovery and grace. I expect the gladness and joy of acceptance with God again would have been a blessing to those people who had suffered so much for the sixteen previous years. God works when repentance is genuine and His word is obeyed. When His people come back to Him in humility and in need of mercy, and He grants forgiveness, then we can "walk in the light as He is in the light, and restored fellowship with Him gives peace within.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 29:3.** *"He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them."*

### **REVIVAL.**

It began at the right time - there was no reason any longer to delay.  
Immediately is always the right time to hasten to do what God does say.  
The beginning of the year and the first month meant things were about to change.  
Anything that was right was renewed, and they removed everything that was strange.

When it comes to revival - the person who starts is as important as the time.  
We can never expect others to be different if there's no difference in this life of mine.  
To put one's self on the spot and commence to do what I know is right;  
I can expect others only will change when they see me shedding some light.

The first thing is to open closed doors that from the worship of God has been impaired.  
They won't work right until the locks and hinges with the oil of the Spirit has been repaired.  
Opened doors bring into darkness some light that shines on the Word of the Lord.  
They are opened to bring the freshness of revival, but are closed to the ways of the world.

When a leader's credibility is established, he is able to influence aright.  
Those who look on and wonder may sense revival is in sight.  
They too will lend their hands to the work and changes to be done.  
Revival when it is working right draws God's people together as one.

There is a cleansing that is needed before worship can truly take place.  
Revival of God's people leads to worship, and worship leads to seeking His face.  
And when worship and prayer together are working, the hands of God's people are then filled.  
Hands that are filled with service for God leads to voices that refuse to be stilled.

Then when the saints get back to God there is revival in the life and soul.  
A warmth, envelopes the people of God and there's a sense that we are now whole.  
Rejoicing in voice and in spirit, comes from hearts warmed again with love.  
And God gets again from His people of faith what He intended when them He did save.

**"Gracious Father, I feel like the people of God here are in a condition of revived spirits. They have a desire for praise and worship. Fellowship with each other seems important to them. I know there are some who are limited by age and health but there seems to be a spiritual joy. Are we able to be trusted with blessing from Thee? I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 30**

### **A BIT CLUMSEY, BUT GOOD**

When something important has been ignored for years by people, it takes a time or two and some practice to get back to what it should be like. Before the end of his first year as king, Hezekiah knew it was important that the Passover be celebrated again to unite the people of the Lord in a spiritual, but unforgettable way. So, an invitation was circulated "from Dan to Beersheba" to all twelve tribes of the Israelites. Likely motivated by a genuine desire for all of God's people to be reconciled to God, this young king moved in grace to get the people to "turn again to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel" so that He would "return to the remnant of you."

Hezekiah rose above the divisive spirit of all the Israelites to reach the hearts of God's people with one of the major things they had in common - the celebration of the Passover which began in Egypt the night in which they were all freed as a united group from bondage. The writer of the Chronicles was no doubt aware of the necessity of the recently freed captives to be united in every way to begin again the testimony of a nation of chosen people. But most importantly he would have been conscious of their need to have the

common bond of spiritual life in order to recover their unique identity and maintain it. In telling of this major event in the first year of Hezekiah's reign, he made sure that the spiritual commitment of God's people had the preeminent place in the narrative. He wrote the words of the invitation. Then told of the need of purification before the celebration could take place. Any true recovery to God will follow a similar path.

Devotion to God in a leader, and a desire for the spiritual well-being of all of the children of God will resonate with the people and they will usually be in hearty agreement with what this kind of leader or leaders will promote. There was obviously a deep-seated desire in the heart of this new leader, that initiated change in the lives and conduct of the people of God. When sincerity and reality are unmistakable in those who care for, and lead the flock of God, the saints of God who love the Lord will follow their lead.

Perhaps it was with a sense of optimism that Hezekiah and the princes wrote letters to go to every city through the whole of Israel from the north to the south urging all the twelve tribes to submit to the Lord and His word, and come together in fellowship to keep the Passover in Jerusalem as God intended. The letter of invitation was all inclusive rather than addressing a divided people. There was common ground when it came to the Passover, because all of them, despite their present division, had started out as one people who had been delivered from slavery in Egypt. The Passover was intended to be kept in the place where God had placed His name, not at a place of convenience for the people. That hope still exists among many Jewish people today - "Next year, Jerusalem!"

Stubbornness has the ability to stop people from doing what is right. It can stop further usefulness in the life of a believer, and can remove real joy from many because of one man's stubbornness. On the other hand, submission to the Lord of our mind, will, emotions, and body puts us in a condition to be guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth. God wants His people to come to Him. He does not want to have to turn away from them because of their stubborn attitude and rebellion against Him.

"What think ye of Christ, is the test,  
That tries both the state and the scheme.  
You cannot think right in the rest,  
Until you think rightly of Him."

It is not an uncommon reaction to those who seek to promote spiritual growth, repentance and forsaking of sin, renewal and recovery to be mocked and made fun of. Certain negative responses to true faith and the desire for revival are to be expected. But it is important for people who know God and have faith in Him, to stay the course, be strong and not be moved by those who have no interest in divine things. There may not be a lot who will rally to revival, but any is good, so we need to keep reaching out in the Gospel to sinners, and with sound biblical teaching to believers no matter how far they have strayed. Keep the invitation to come open.

Hezekiah's mind rose above the thinking of men, to thinking like God. Many from the northern tribes of Israel responded with mockery and scorn, while others in humility came to Jerusalem. They may have remembered the feast of the Passover that typified their redemption, and the feast of unleavened bread that was a type of the holiness of life that should follow. Consecration involves getting rid of all that pollutes or hinders spiritual life and growth. The enthusiasm and zeal of the people stirred the priests and Levites to act.

God's people need the vigor and vitality of some committed believers who are willing to venture out of their comfort zone and stir up others to significant action. United fellowship has a contagious effect. Contagious Christianity lived out is a way which moves others to listen to the Gospel. It also means preparation for remembrance involves cleansing from defilement and removal permanently of anything that would make worshipping inconsistent with the reality of one's Christian life. The obedience to all the word of God to come to the right place and sanctify ourselves in view of remembering the sacrifice made on our behalf, indicates a renewal of devotion to God.

At that Passover, defilement kept them from carrying out the feast on the fourteenth day of the first month. But there was a provision in the law that in some circumstances the Passover could be kept a month later. So Hezekiah did not act outside the bounds of the scripture when the feast was in the second month at the beginning of the second year of his reign. Even though some had not gone through the ceremonial cleansing that was required, they were there with the motive of getting back to God. Hezekiah's intercession to God on their behalf demonstrated his real trust in the Lord, and faith in God's word to meet the need of healing.

The Lord's people reading this account would have been impressed with the fact that trusting God with the heart and having an honest motive of devotion is more important than the outward forms of religion and

ritual. An exercise on the part of one of God's children for the welfare of the people of God that they might "turn again unto the Lord," is evidence of a spiritual person. "Great gladness" in believers is a result of obedience to God. Similarly, the gathering of God's people at a conference can be an encouragement to believers from all the places that attended. The lasting benefit of the time of fellowship and learning will be seen from one week to the next in the assemblies from which they came when because of a consistent walk with God and a testimony the is maintained,

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 30:26-27.** *"So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy place, even unto heaven."*

### **RESTORATION.**

Right behind revival comes restoration - a sense of God comes alive.  
Even though many have gone by the way - there is a good number of those who survive.  
The departure of years and generations have passed since holy things seemed so real.  
The time has come for the people to come together that our spiritual life can be healed.

We can't compromise the commands of God, those things can never be changed  
But our approach to our brothers and sisters can be sufficiently rearranged  
That we can come together in unity and submit to do things God's way.  
With an open Bible and the instructions read, it is only right to do what He does say.

What a wonder it would be if even a few from here and there would return to do what God  
said.

There would be humility and grace, compassion and faith, as by the Holy Spirit we're led.  
The "Passover Feast"- the remembrance kept alive and everyone would know  
That God was among us in restoration whenever the time came to go.

For two hundred years division had set in and such a Passover had not been kept.  
Bitterness of spirit reigned, each one determined his way was right, until the invitation was  
sent.

Some rose to come, others stayed home and mocked, missing the blessing to come.  
When just for two weeks after sudden revival, a restoration was finally begun.

Sacrifices we make and them God does take to the degree in which they are given.  
Prayer is made and praised are raised, both of which reached right into heaven.  
What a joy it would be if such restoration we could see as we all bend unto God's will.  
The common denominator is the Person who blesses, and the blessings that flow from  
Calvary's hill.

Is it possible today that such restoration could happen here if people return to the place of  
His name?

In that time long ago, it happened as a result when back to where they left, people came.  
Now I'm not thinking here of a geographical spot but if people would return to the Lord;  
They would find there would be a restoration that would be according to the truth of His  
Word.

In this place of contentment, I have no resentment against those who chose to leave.  
But it would bring great joy if some girl or boy who in time past in this place were saved  
Would return here to share in the blessings and cares of those who here keep the feast.  
If in faith they'd return, I know they would learn the wonder of enjoying His peace.

**"Is it possible Father God, that there are some who would be willing to return to what they left? I know it is quite unlikely, but I do believe in restoration and it would bring great joy if it happened here. Restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation. Restore us to sincere commitment to Thee and Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **2nd Chronicles 31**

#### **"GOOD AND RIGHT AND TRUTH"**

Those who had come together at the feast of Passover had a whole different understanding of things when they left that "conference." They knew what idolatry did to people and the people made a point of ridding the nation of Judah of the idols, groves, high places and all the was contrary to what God wanted. Idolatry claims thoughts, motivation, time, goods and wants supremacy in the lives of people. Modern day idolatry is as dangerous and wrong as idolatry was in the times of the writing of the Chronicles. The is only one way to deal with it. Destroy it, reject it and refuse to be anywhere it may be practiced.

Another positive result of the gathering of the people and the united fellowship that they experienced was the Lord's people began again to support those who were called to spiritual service - the priests and the Levites. A proportion of their income was set aside by all the people to meet the needs of those engaged in the service of God. The motivation behind these important changes came because Hezekiah led the people in the renewal of all the phases of national and religious life. He "did what was good and right" because : he remembered God's ongoing compassion to His people; he kept going in spite of being mocked and scorned by those who rejected his invitation to the feast; he removed the idols, high places and evil influences; he interceded for the people when they failed; he was open to worship from the heart; and he was a generous contributor to the Lord's servants.

Good leadership can stimulate interest, but in order for change to be implemented and maintained, the Lord's people have to respond, be a part of the work and know they have a significant role to fill in the work of the Lord. Then they will experience a sense of ownership in what is going on and will be committed to the work. Cleansing from defilement, celebration of the blessings of God, and continuation of the worship of God will keep the Lord's people with a sense of purpose personally and unitedly. There are many ways in which all can be involved. Needs are met with material goods, finances and time given voluntarily. The problem of any work is that there is initial enthusiasm, but that may wane as time passes, and instead of freewill offerings, there is grudging contributions that have no joy associated with them.

Faithfulness in leaders promotes faithfulness in those who follow the leaders. Generosity in giving on the part of some creates a generosity in others who find that "God loveth a cheerful giver." Because of the change in support, the priests were able to spend their time in their priestly work and maintaining the sacrificial system as God intended. The same was true of the Levites who were responsible for the upkeep of the temple, guarding the gates and providing the necessary backup for the worship of the people. They were also responsible for leading the singing and the public part of the worship and praise given to the Lord. Hezekiah reestablished the whole system of worship by returning to the word of God for guidance and carrying out the principles of order and decency in accordance with the scriptures.

The king took the lead in giving of his substance as did David and Solomon hundreds of years before him. The writer of the Chronicles passed all this on to the returnees so they would know what was expected of them and how things were to be done. Their response to the Lord was not just to rebuild, but to have order in the worship of God and the maintenance of those things that set them apart from other nations. A leader can verbalize his expectations to the rank and file, but it is his consistent example that make things happen.

Those engaged in new work and other forms of outreach beyond the local assemblies have greater financial needs that those who move as teachers and preachers from assembly to assembly. Accepting financial responsibility on the part of the Lord's people, is a great encouragement to those who are laborers in the great harvest field. Sometimes to review the history of those who have gone before us is the needed incentive to get the present generation to respond to the present need.

To begin a project like Hezekiah did "as soon as the commandment [became known]" will generate personal interest on the part of many of the Lord's people and they will want to be part of something positive that is going ahead. When God's people worship, they will want to contribute to the work as part of their worship and evidence of their gratitude to God. The Lord's people are most happy when they can see a meaningful work in which they have a part in one way or another, going forward successfully. The excess "heaps" were not wasted in any way. They were stored up against the time they would be needed. No one was ignored or forgotten who had a right to this bounty whether they were children or families - all who had the responsibility for divine things or were linked with those who did, were provided for.

The whole process of recovery included revival beginning in the king personally. One influential person can make a big difference in a lot of people. From that person's heart it extends outward to those around and soon revival takes place in many leading to recovery to the Lord. When one is committed with all his or her heart, there is no room for competing claims for allegiance by any other attraction. Following wholehearted commitment to God is contagious joy that is known by many.

Spiritual prosperity is a fundamental matter in a life of faith. A heart for God; obedience to God; commitment to God all lead to a full and meaningful life that has a positive effect. All who are influenced by one who loves "the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself," will find there are spiritual blessings that far exceed anything that can be found in any other way.

**2nd Chronicles 31:21.** *"And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with his heart, and prospered."*

### **WE HAVE ENOUGH**

He took the responsibility, that was his role.  
People know when there's a work in a leader's soul  
That changes things, makes them come alive.  
And life becomes a joy, not a struggle to survive.

There is a living example that everyone can see.  
The leader has a vision, he's not living just for "me."  
And it is obvious, God has claimed his heart.  
Each one then can see they also have a part.

What can I do? Do whatever you can!  
You are serving God when you are serving you fellowman.  
Remove all that is wrong, and then do what you know is right.  
You will find the burden God has given, is not heavy but light.

Things will come into your heart, your mind and your hand.  
All around are opportunities, take them while you can.  
You will find there is more than enough to go all around.  
And where you took what you gave, much more is there to be found.

Like one of old who did "good and right and truth,"  
You will find all around you treasures of matchless worth.  
When you give what you can, and then give a little bit more -  
You will find God adds more than enough from out of His boundless store.

**"Holy Father, how full are Thy storehouses! How plenteous are Thy mercies! How marvelous is Thy grace! How matchless is Thy love! May Thy servant never take these multiplied blessings for granted. I am thankful that these are there to draw one. I am thankful that I am not done yet. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **2nd Chronicles 32**

#### **ON EVERY SIDE**

It is important that we remember as the children of God, the fact that we are "strangers and pilgrims" who are passing through this world on our way to our home where our Father waits for us. There will be pressures, temptations and testing times from every side. Some will be the testing of opposition and how our courage and confidence in God will take us through without getting discouraged. There will be the tests of success in which our pride will want to take the supremacy. There will be the tests of flattery and deceit that will make us feel good about ourselves and our skillful "Christianity." Those who returned from exile were reminded by this account of the times of Hezekiah, that testing will come "on every side."

Assyrian might had spread all over the Middle East in the times of Hezekiah. Their purpose was to tax all the tribes from Assyria to Egypt and to prosper because of the tribute money and/or goods that came from those who were afraid of them or who they had conquered. They didn't want captives except for those who remained rebellious, because captives cost more money than what they would make. If a city had been destroyed and needed to be repopulated, the Assyrians would move captives into that place. When Hezekiah was confronted by the Assyrians, he did what he could to prepare a defense and the situation a siege would bring. The tunnel he had made to bring water into the city was quite a masterpiece of engineering. Two groups started at opposite ends of the tunnel and remarkably met without missing the opposite group of workers. When that was done Hezekiah could stop the water so that the Assyrians would be greatly disadvantaged, because water was scarce around Jerusalem. He raised the walls in height and built a second wall for double protection. However, he knew what he really needed was God and in his prayers it was plain that he trusted God to bring the right solution to the situation in which they were found.

There is a principle which we need to continually practice in our labors for the Lord. We must do what we can with vigor and enthusiasm seeking to make sure we have left nothing undone that is in our power to do. Then we can turn the whole matter to the Lord knowing that He alone can bring true victory. We fulfill our responsibility, take the whole matter to the Lord in prayer and in faith trust Him for the best possible result. Faith and courage, go well together. Doubt defeats. Testing times reveal what we really are in character and faith. The testing times are refining times that bring out the best in God's people. It is in those times our character is brought out into the open to be seen by all.

Tests are not to trick us or make us sin, but to show us who we really are and what our true attitude toward God and others is. It is not too difficult to live righteous lives when we are in easy times and success is being enjoyed. It is when we are under pressure, pain and trouble that what we really are is revealed. It is then our faith in God is demonstrated or our pride is exposed. Crisis times are to be expected by believers who live godly lives in an ungodly world and a sinful society. Adversity is normal in life because it in the tensions of life we become strong in Christ. Faithfulness, trust and truth go together. God allows testing times to make these real to us lest we become careless in living, indifferent to the evil around us and lifted up with pride. The eyes of faith look beyond opposition to the One who says, "Be strong and of good courage."

Threats and threatening speeches on the part of unbelievers are simply attempts to intimidate us, bring fear and embarrassment to us. People hope that we will not be so bold in our faith to make it attractive to those who are seeking for peace and meaning in life. Insults and defiance against God do not turn aside believers from trusting our Lord and our faith in Him. Foresight on the part of a child of God is not because of a lack of faith, but an evidence of the reality of who we are and why we have been called by God. The water system Hezekiah built was a necessity for survival and he could do that. The double wall was for security and he could do that. The tested workers provided leadership for safety. The words of the king to the people was for the quietness of spirit they needed in that testing time. The words, "Be strong and courageous" are words that came from God to Joshua many generations before Hezekiah, and they resonate down through the centuries to people of faith from then until now.

The contrast of the arm of the flesh to faith in God is stark and unmistakable. "With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battle," are words of faith on the part of the speaker and encouragement to those who hear them. The words of Isaiah became real and personal to Hezekiah. Nations rise and fall all down through history. Some rise quickly like Assyria. Others rise slowly like Babylon. The same is true when nations fall. Some are gone almost overnight. Others disintegrate from within like the Roman Empire, and we fear like our own country. But when we hear the voice of God speaking to us through His word and His servants, we find strength for our day - not from ourselves, but from our God. When that is real to us, we can encourage others.

Verbal attacks often intimidate Christians, so they keep quiet rather than respond. Actually, that is usually the best way to deal with verbal abuse from those who want to argue with the Bible and who resent the truth of God exposing their sin. The writer of the Chronicles for the returned exiles tells what is right. He did not write about Hezekiah's fears and lack of faith at the first of this crisis time. We need to be reminded from time to time that fear and failure does not always mean that we have gone beyond "redemption point." "God is still on His throne, and He will remember His own." Prayer and supplication to God are always a consolation to a person of faith, and answers to our prayers are a blessed resource for God's people who are in trouble.

When accusations and challenges are made against God and His people, silence in the face of rudeness has a way of putting things into proper perspective. Some think it is rude to not answer unfounded accusations, but to avoid the "he said, she said" kind of situation that is an argument looking for a place to happen, that is the best way to answer a baseless, foolish opinion. Insolence and ignorance often go together in an effort to intimidate other people and make their faith appear unfounded. A challenge to God's power and authority by puny, mortal men can be best dealt with by God Himself. Our responsibility is to be able to demonstrate our faith in Him, and not fail nor faint in our trust in our Lord.

God is able to defend His own honor when challenged and do it in His own way. In one night, He defeated the military might of the Assyrian empire and reduced the fame of Sennacherib to shame. We are able to rest in the sovereignty of God when we find ourselves in the straits of temptation, discouragement, despair and opposition. Personal testing times come when we alone are affected by situations in which God deals with us. Sickness, as in the case of Hezekiah, can be a severe testing time if we look only to "physicians and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." An earnest prayer for healing is in order. The answer may be healing, or a word like, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in weakness." This is a test of faith in God's sovereignty.

A more serious test may come when pride raises its ugly head and we do not give God ALL the glory for His mercy and deliverance. Even the best of men, fail at times in this regard as we claim credit for victories that have been given by divine grace. There is a principle we need to remember. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." We should be thankful when a "word in season" is ministered to us and we realize that was for us personally.

Perhaps the most difficult test of all is the test of success and wealth. "Riches and honor," "substance very much" and prosperity are good when they are spiritual, and are used for the reasons for which God has entrusted them to us. Hezekiah was noted for his "goodness." Kindness is never out of style and is a demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit. Flattery and the courting of favor by others, is a potential stumbling stone that is just ahead of every successful servant of God. We know our enemies when there is opposition. We don't know them when there is the subtle attraction of flattery.

Hezekiah was a man of honor in life, and was honored both in his life and death. Even though he failed in some ways and the Lord had to test him so that he could know his own weakness and frailty, those of his kingdom buried him in the "chiefest" tomb and "honored" him when they remembered him. He did deserve the honor given to him by the Lord's people. Failure does happen to the best of God's people. But it is important to give credit where credit is due, and honor where honor is due.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 32:20-21.** *"And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried unto heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the captains in the camp of the king of Assyria."*

#### **IN EVERY WORK.**

"Is it good" is a fundamental question to ask before taking an action.  
It will be if it can bless God and others, and not lead to some distraction.  
Good works are needed as a testimony that God's people are doing what is right.  
Good words are important, for people need to know the difference between darkness and light.  
Good thoughts are needed because they lead to actions and then words that are used to explain -  
What God's intention is when we labor and give, that others might believe on His name.

"Is it right" is a legitimate question to ask when decisions have to be made.  
It should be in our minds when we work, or travel or engage in our trade.  
Covetousness can raise its ugly head when opportunities before us arise -  
And we see the possibility of success or claiming some worldly prize.  
But God looks on, and so do others, many who do not know the Lord.  
Their opinion of God will be influenced by me, and if I do business as I should.

"Is it true" affects many because many half truths have hindered what God intends.  
To lie to another though it may seem so small, leads to very bad ends.  
People have a right to expect that one who is saved can be trusted to tell the truth.  
A man's message is valueless if people think his word has very little worth.  
Sometimes a simple word in season can produce a great benefit.  
There can be great value if my word can be trusted and people depend on it.

When we do with our heart what God has called us to do, there is a sense of reality.  
In every work we put our hand unto others have a right to see -  
We mean what we say, we are doing with our heart our work as to unto the Lord.  
The day is ahead when life's labor is finished, and then we'll receive the reward  
For not holding back even when we lack the skills that others have.  
God prospers those with spiritual blessings who use the gifts that He gave.

**"These lessons I learn Father, from those who rose to effective leadership in times when there was so much wrong, encourages me to not be careless or lax in what I have been called to. Keep me, I pray, from foolishness, carelessness and neglect. Help me to rise up to meet the needs I see and address myself to them rather than expect others to do them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 33**

#### **WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?!**

The writer of Chronicles had in mind, guided by the Holy Spirit, the danger of following generations to forget the lessons to be learned from those who lived before them. References are made from time to time of what "his father" had done and why. Manasseh (one who forgets; forgetting) had been sharing in leadership with his father, Hezekiah, for a number of years and had seen the value of being humbled before God happen right before his eyes. Probably during the last ten years of the fifteen years extension of Hezekiah's life, he had seen the way a repentant humbled man served God, and the people honored his father. In the arrogance of his heart, when his father was gone, Manasseh followed the example of his evil grandfather Ahaz, rather than the goodness of his father.

There is something strange about human beings in that it is not uncommon for us to want to change things to suit ourselves, rather than follow the tried and proven ways of godly people who in the simplicity of their faith, follow God. There are attempts to use verses of scripture from the Bible to justify evil intent, and by taking verses out of context, adapt them to one's own personal opinions. This attitude has led to an unusual, and evil, philosophy that says, "Your truth is truth for you, and my truth is truth for me." So, truth then is simply relative and is what each individual says it is. To many people, there is no absolute truth nor standard of righteousness. Ungodly attitudes and actions follow, and chaos in personal lives follows that. It is inevitable that when such an opinion becomes popular, whole societies and nations will disintegrate from within.

Under the morally and spiritually deteriorating reign of Manasseh, the downward trend towards the righteous judgment of God falling on His people because of Manasseh's sin and the sin of the people accelerated. A strange fascination with the occult, demons, sorcery and looking for omens in the stars became prevalent. It is similar to our day in which people put stock in horoscopes, reading tea leaves and the palms of peoples' hands to get what they think is some insight into their future. Even the games that children play on their computers have demonic figures seeking to kill the opposition and gain victories. Tattoos people put on their bodies depict skulls, demon faces and other forms that have dark connotations. Unfortunately, some believers think they increase their Christian testimony by putting tattoos of scripture, the cross and other so-called Christian symbols on their bodies. That only identifies them as part of the present culture.

We would abhor the thought of making "children pass through the fire," but in our day and country millions of children are aborted and burned before they have an opportunity to exercise their own rights, because parents don't want a child to interfere with their own personal lifestyle. The pain of a child's life being taken from them is not even considered by self-centered, pleasure-seeking adults. The attitudes and actions of Manasseh are being practiced now. Why is this so prevalent and acceptable by so many? It is because the moral and spiritual standards of those who lived before us are considered "old-fashioned and out of date" and so are rejected. The attitude now is, "Everyone is doing it except for a few old people and religious fanatics. If the majority accepts it and practices it, it can't be wrong. After all, the majority rules."

The sins of Manasseh were sickening. As a corrupt leader he was close to the top of the list. He not only did what was wrong and promoted the wrong by making idols, high places, and debased living, but he took steps to demean the worship of the True God and desecrate the house of God. He was not content with promoting evil. He wanted to remove what was righteous and holy. People who complain that everyone should be tolerant of everything and everyone, whether it be law breakers or religious activities, are very intolerant of Bible-believing Christians who hold to the standards of divine, God-given law. For us to hold to the standards of the commandments of God and preach them, angers many people. Guilt is something they want eliminated. By rejecting anything that produces guilt such as the Ten Commandments, the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of the Gospel, people think they can live free and happy.

When restraints are removed from a society, deterioration quickly sets in. It starts when restraints are removed in homes and children are allowed to do what they want. Then in schools there is very little respect demanded from students and hardly any consequences for their misbehavior. Parents even support their children when the evidence is there that they have done wrong. Soon they will practice unrestrained use of alcohol and drugs. And then they resort to criminal behavior in the community to support their lifestyle, even to rioting against the police and legal authority. In the workplace the limitations and expectations put on employers makes it very hard for a small businessman to maintain a profitable business.

In Manasseh's day warnings were given by prophets to the leaders and the people as to what was going to happen if they did not repent and turn from their sinful ways. But those warnings were either ignored or rejected. Prophets were killed, mocked, scourged and imprisoned. They became "destitute, afflicted, and tormented." The world was not worthy of such people. When we have done what we can to stem the tide of wickedness, we can only wait for God to act in His own way to bring judgment and justice. Manasseh's sins were great and the abominations he committed and instigated, had a bad effect on others so that they too rejected God's messengers - and then God Himself. The Assyrians who were the mighty power at that time, were moved by the Lord to capture and take Manasseh to Babylon for trial. He had a nose ring of humiliation and the shackles of bronze on his hands as he was led away from Jerusalem.

In mercy and grace, God brought Manasseh down to the bitterness of captivity and humiliation to the place of repentance and supplication before God. God heard his prayer and in God's own way, He brought him back to Jerusalem again, a better man. What a changed man he had become! He went from being an arrogant, evil ruler, to a captive in chains. But when he came back even though he was well up in years, he was a humbled and much wiser man. When God deals with us, it is our greatest wisdom to humbly wait

upon Him in faith, and if repentance for sin is in order, do not wait for a better time. "I now repent with bitter tears; Lord I'm coming home."

Manasseh had likely about ten years of sharing leadership with Hezekiah from the age of twelve to twenty-two. Then there was forty years approximately of wicked and ungodly leadership and the sickening actions of idolatry. The people were influenced by his leadership to practice what God opposed and to do that which was against God's word. They blended the worship of God with paganism which resulted then in confusion and sin and still does today. Even though Manasseh had about five years to rule after coming back from Babylon in which he brought about good reforms by rejecting what he had practiced previously, there were still the consequences of his previous actions which were not removed.

How wonderful it is of God to demonstrate His grace and mercy to one so vile and evil as Manasseh. We are able to encourage those in the bondage of sin that

"There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin.  
There's a door that is opened that all may go in.  
At Calvary's cross is where you begin,  
When you come as a sinner to Jesus."

For every believer we need to take our stand at the cross and glory only in the cross. "Jesus keep me near the cross," is a wonderful safeguard which will keep us humbled. Manasseh never forgot his humbling conversion experience, and must have felt unworthy of being buried with other kings, so was buried "in his own house."

His son Amon had only two years to reign and seemed determined to undo the reforms his father had made during the last years of his leadership. In two years of deliberate rejection, he did the same things his father did before he was humbled and converted. He knew what his father was like in earlier years and seemed fascinated by the evil his father had promoted. It is not good for those God saves from the dark side of life, and from the powers of darkness, to tell their children of their evil exploits in their unsaved days. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Amon's death by assassination at the hands of his own servants, testifies to what this young arrogant man of twenty-four was like. Those who knew him best wanted him dead. They saw the kind of man he was or had become, and recognized that under his leadership things would deteriorate "more and more." People are not dumb. They know when a leader has gone too far and what will happen to them when evil goes unchecked. The lack of humility in a leader may seem to be allowed for awhile, but "payday someday" always comes.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 33:12-13.** *"And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God."*

#### **REBELLION/REPENTANCE.**

It has often happened around the age of twelve -  
Resistance against parental guidance causes righteousness to be abandoned.  
The things that were taught him are put on the shelf -  
And a young person takes a course that ultimately condemns him.  
It seems tragic how far one will go -  
Often much farther than those who never learned better.  
The wickedness and evil they choose to do -  
Winds around them and binds them with cords like a fetter.

Who would have thought they would go so far -  
Idol worship and even burning their own children.  
The name of the Lord and family honor they mar -  
Every evil practice that arises seems to attract them.  
Can they not see what they have done?  
Have they gone beyond the extent of God's grace?  
Doesn't it bother them when they're alone?  
What hope have they got left without true faith?

But the God of all grace has a plan -  
He arranges for them to be captives in a far country.  
With suffering and pain, He brings a man -  
To such a pass that he is desperate and even hungry.  
Then in humility and repentant prayer -

He bows and seeks earnestly the God of his father.  
In that distant place he learns God is there -  
With the purpose of bringing change to free him from sin's fetter.

He is able to start over - doing what is right -  
For God often is the God of a "second chance."  
Instead of dark deeds he is shedding some light -  
His commitment to God can be seen at a glance.  
However, he has left behind a residue -  
Others who had followed him are doing right in wrong places.  
God has forgiven him it is true -  
But others were led wrong, a serious result from when he broke the traces.

**"O Lord God, how sad it is to see the strong years of young lives wasted in the pursuit of sin. How encouraging it is to see them brought to repentance by the hand of grace. Restore them I pray to usefulness for Thee. Help me to show interest in the young in early years. Give them a willingness to heed Thy Word and Thy ways. Keep them from following the ways of the sinful world. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **2nd Chronicles 34**

### **"I HAVE FOUND THE BOOK"**

We may often underestimate what young children take in especially if their parents are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ - or even in God for that matter. It is an encouragement to read about Josiah as an eight-year old boy who had obviously been positively influenced by teachers and/or mentors. By the time he was sixteen years old and was beginning to make serious choices for himself, he "began to seek after the God of David his father." Consistency in those who taught him had a greater impact on him than the evil actions of his own father. Christian youth work may not seem to be all that important at the moment, but good seed sown bears good results.

Age doesn't disqualify a person from serving God. Faith in God and obedience to His word, and consistency in one's life produces balance in character no matter what age a person is. As a child Josiah was likely afraid of the wicked ways of his father, so he sought the Lord at an early age. When he was sixteen it was obvious his professed faith in God was no childish or passing whim, and at twenty he took action to get rid of all that was wrong in his country. He was young it is true, but he had the authority to do something to stop evil and so he used it. He was old enough to know how spiritual darkness among the people of his nation negatively effected the life of the nation. He couldn't change the hearts of the people but he could remove the objects associated with idolatry. Removal of that which is sinful and that which attracts sinful behavior is very important. But in the long run it is that which comes from within that "defiles a man."

Getting rid of that which is bad by cleansing and purification of the vestiges of sin is right, but dealing with sin involves also being committed to doing that which is right in spite of the cost. The loss of popularity, friendship, finances and worldly success goes with cleansing. To just clean things up and go no further leaves one "empty, swept and garnished." That which is truth has to fill one's soul and life to fill up that vacuum. We do not live in a personal vacuum, even though society is in the midst of a "values vacuum." Our minds are going to be filled with that on which it feeds.

Repairs to the house of the Lord called for initiative on the part of Josiah in the same way one who sees the need to recover the work of an assembly. A return to plain Gospel preaching, understandable and relevant teaching, and participation on the part of the Lord's people in the work of the Lord gives purpose to us as a company of gathered out saints. It is not enough to know what should be done. The people of God need to be united in the work and have a sense of ownership and obligation that leads to responsibility to the work.

In a remarkable act of faith and unification, the Levites collected money from those who remained in the northern tribes after Israel had been conquered as a nation. The poor people who remained to till the land were included in sharing in the work of restoring the house of the Lord to its proper condition. There was unity in the repair work and "the men did the work faithfully." When God's people have a clearly stated objective, and a goal to reach, they focus their attention and efforts on that goal and can find from their meager supply something to give to assist in the work of the Lord.

It was because of the motivation to repair the house of the Lord and correct that which was wrong, that the book of the law (likely Deuteronomy) was found. To do one thing right often leads to further opportunities and spiritual blessings. By hearing the book of the law read, Josiah and those in leadership were made to realize how far the people of God had strayed from knowing and doing the will of God. Josiah did not take

the harm sin had caused lightly. Consciousness of sin brings godly sorrow. Godly sorrow brings repentance and repentance brings salvation. Repentance and humility bring change when we obey the living word of God. Josiah took the word of God personally and "rent his garments" in contrition.

Many people today "study the Bible," and know a lot of things about what it says. But when a person admits this is the word of God to me, that changes the whole thing from a volume to study, merely "a book," to a relevant message from God to me in "the book." This attitude toward the Bible removes all the confusion being taught by denominational bias, schools of theology and seminaries, to where one considers if they are a true "practitioner" of eternal life and submits to biblical authority no matter what others say or do.

When Josiah heard the words of "the book," they hit him hard in his heart and mind. "The work" of repairing the house of God, and the funding for that work, faded into the background as he was humbled before God in repentance and tears. One has well said, "The work of God in our hearts is far more important than the work of God in our hands." Not everyone responds to the word of God in the same way when they hear it read and explained. Two people can be from the same family, sitting on the same bench, listening to the same message at the same time and one is moved to tears and resolve, while the other looks over and thinks, "I wonder what's wrong with him?"

The traditions of men, the actions of one's life, the motivation and commitment to God all have an effect on how the word of God is received. Compromising the text and context to suit the desires of people can water down the truth of scripture until everyone "feels comfortable" with what is said. When that happens in one generation, all that has been tried and proven to work effectively in generations past is lost. When a person speaks for God the bad news has to be told as well as any possible encouraging words for strengthening their faith. In Josiah's day, God's people had gone so far away from God, that just judgment was inevitable. People temporarily changed outwardly depending on who was leading them, but the outward change did not indicate an inward change.

Josiah's repentance and grief for sin was real. God does look on the heart, and so Huldah's message gave him a little light as to his own personal future. When humility is real, it is obvious not only to God, but also to people. The word of God convicts the heart, and when the heart is changed, so is the person. When the word of God is received in its convicting power, and repentance brings faith, and faith brings change in our own personal life, then we want that to be experienced by others. Josiah wanted the Lord's people to know they were a covenant people. Truth has a power in itself and when it is received from God, we want others to have the same blessing we received.

The effect on people is not always the same. When it is "believed with all thine heart," the inward reality leads to real commitment. If it is received with only an intellectual consent, it will impact a person only until some other more attractive "doctrine of men" comes along. Josiah's insistence that everything that was wrong be removed and done away with in all Israel, was a great step of purification that affected a whole generation of people. The people did submit to his authority and were blessed because of their leader's own personal commitment to God and His word. He responded with "all his heart and with all his soul," and did that which was right because he knew God. The people gave assent to that which he insisted upon because of who he was, not because of their own personal commitment to God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 34:31**. *"And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book."*

#### **FOUND A BOOK.**

He was young and impressionable, but he was not incorrigible  
When he decided the course of his life.  
He saw moral and spiritual corruption, and came to the decision  
To not turn to the left or to the right.  
The result of that decision put him into the position  
Where he could do something to right all the wrongs.  
Because of the actions taken, the king and all the nation  
Turned to God when the book of the covenant was found.

A book unread is useless, and the message it contains is helpless  
To produce the change in life the Author intends.  
But when the dust is blown off it, and one begins to read and profit  
From its truth, the knees of honest people will then bend.  
When its message affects our heart, it is not long before we start  
To make the changes that brings people back to God.  
First will come conviction and soon followed by affliction

Of self-will that will humble us before the Lord.

The reading of the Bible, and the awareness that we are liable  
Before God to stop, and in repentance turn to Him.  
There's an awakening of the conscience, and abandoning of worldly nonsense  
And deliberate turning away from sin.  
The words of the book read in faith will mean actions soon take place  
That shows proof that positive changes now have come.  
Those who are the leaders and those who are the readers  
Will alike confess to the wrong that they have done.

Light when it begins to dawn, doesn't only show what's wrong  
But it reveals to all who care what is the right.  
When there is genuine change, it is not just passing strange  
That moral darkness soon gives way to light.  
The Lord looks on with pleasure, when the words of His book we treasure  
And act upon the truths that are therein.  
With the grace that He possesses, He then begins to bless us  
And with love He welcomes us to come back to Him.

**“Father God, I am so glad that You had these examples of recovery written in Thy Word. It gives me hope that there will yet be times of visitation after the revival and restoration of Thy people. We are waiting in our weakness to see Thy strength made perfect in these feeble lives of ours. I feel really helpless. Is there yet some way I can be used to bring about the change that is needed? I ask in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 35**

### **THE REST OF THE STORY**

There are some unforgettable events in life that seem to be indelibly imprinted on the history of nations as well as on the memories of the citizens of the country. Such an event took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign as king of Judah when they celebrated the great Passover in a way that surpassed the Passover under the reign of Hezekiah and Solomon. Five hundred years before when Samuel was judge in Israel, the Passover was held in this special way, and had not been held in such a way until Josiah's day. It happened the same year the temple was repaired and the book of the law was found. Josiah didn't wait to call on the nation to keep the Passover. The account of the Passover written by the scribe was to promote what was right in the spiritual service of the temple, the offerings and the feast days.

It may have been that the ark had been carried about as some form of a charm or talisman to bring about success to national ventures. It was a testimony to the fact that God was dwelling with His people, and so Josiah made sure the ark was brought by the priests to the place it belonged. This is the last mention of the ark and it was back in the place it should be. Because of the significance of the Passover and the fact that it had not been observed properly for some time Josiah made sure the Levites were doing what they were designated to do in the temple, the gates and their other responsibilities. They were anxious to do what was right and fulfill their duties. It seemed like the priests needed a little push and motivation by the king before they got moving to do their work. The Levite gatekeepers opened the gates to the temple each morning and guarded the entrances. They cleaned and prepared the sacrifices as well as taking care of the finances that were donated. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

The Passover feast was to remind the Jewish people of their deliverance from three hundred years of bondage in Egypt by the miraculous power of God. It was followed by seven days of the feast of Unleavened Bread like the bread the Israelites had when they left Egypt. It is important that God's things be done God's way. There should never be minimizing in any way the value of what Christ has done for us, nor any demeaning of the cross-work that has obtained eternal redemption for us. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." To leave the Lord's Supper unattended on a weekly basis, and to attend that remembrance only at our convenience is a form of an insult toward the One who paid for our salvation with His life. We remember the birthday of old presidents and the queen of England. How much more should we respond to our Lord who said, "This do in remembrance of Me."

The king, the leaders and the people gave joyfully to the Lord for the Passover, for the other offerings, and for the feast of Unleavened Bread. The preparations were extensive so that "the service was prepared." There was nothing haphazard about this feast of remembrance. All was done as it should be by the right people in the right place at the right time. The Holy Spirit in our gatherings is the One Person who knows exactly what should be done and said when the Lord's people gather in remembrance of "Christ our

Passover." He directs the priesthood of believers so that appropriate words, thoughts, hymns, silent and audible prayers are coordinated by Him to bring glory to God. The Divine Guide knows what should be done at any given moment and moves God's people to offer what they have brought in coordination with that which others have brought.

The just judgment of God was about to fall on Judah, so it was significant that this Great Passover was held shortly before the captivity of Judah came. The Passover in Hezekiah's day came shortly after the northern tribes were taken by the Assyrians as a reminder of what was lost by God's people because of their sin. For thirteen years after the great Passover all seemed well on the surface with the people of God. But nothing is said about those years. That probably was because the spiritual recovery of the people was only external. There had been no repentance on the part of the people like there had been with Josiah.

When Necho of Egypt wanted to join forces with the Assyrians against the rising power of Babylon, he wanted his armed forces to pass through Judah on their way to Carchemish. Josiah stepped out of character and tried to take matters into his own hands in spite of a warning from the Egyptian leader. It is possible for those are in the world and of the world to be used by God for His sovereign purposes. Assumptions and opinions, and even prejudice can make us ignore the fact that God can use whoever He wants to fulfill His purpose and even bring glory to Him.

Josiah had done so much that was right, and obeyed the Lord and the words of "the book," but he acted on his own in this case when he went out against the Egyptians and sought to stop them from passing through to join the Assyrians. It is possible for us to meddle in things that are none of our business, and it is possible to make an issue of a matter when the consequences are minimal. We need God's guidance in everything we do. Sometimes things arise between other people and we are asked what we think about one or the other. We must watch what we say and preferably say nothing when it is none of our concern. We cannot change the ways and sins of the world, but we are to present both sides with the claims of Christ on their soul. We have a certain amount of influence on individuals and should call them to repent of their sins and come to Christ personally. To be overly concerned with the politics and business of the world, and the world's pleasure is a detriment to the Lord's people. The kingdom of God is our first responsibility. It is to that kingdom we owe our concern and interest, and we are to promote its culture.

Our obligation to the nation is to "render into Caesar the things that are Caesar's." We are to recognize that "the powers that be are ordained of God." We are to "submit ourselves to every ordinance" and "pray for kings and those that are in authority."

Josiah failed in his strong point. It is not uncommon for us to be tested on our strongest characteristic, because that may also be our weakest point. Guile is not a good characteristic in any person, especially in a child of God. Whenever a message from God is given, we should pay heed to it no matter from whom it comes. A warning from an unbeliever to a believer to stay out of matters not pertaining to us and our life is good common sense. It is possible for a believer to limit God in their thinking to only do what we think is right. Our evaluation of a situation or solution to a problem may be much different than what God intends. It is foolish to ignore warnings as if they are no account because of who gives them.

A strong personal opinion can be a person's undoing. The end of Judah was inevitable because of the idolatry of the people and the sins of their forbearers, but Josiah likely accelerated that day of reckoning by his willful act of self-confidence. In spite of that, he was respected and lamented for his goodness even after he was killed by an arrow. Like the writer of the Chronicles, it is important for us to not focus our minds on that which is foolish and self-willed, but on that which will benefit those who learn from reading the history of those who lived in the past.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 35:2.** "And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the *house of the Lord,*"

**ENCOURAGED THEM.**

What a day that was! Those there will not forget  
The orderly worship and the rejoicing that it brought.  
What an impression there was made! What humbling of hearts!  
As the mind and will of God the people sought.

The king made great provision. There was plenty there for all!  
The offerings for the Passover were well prepared.  
Everyone who came had food there in abundance  
As that wonderful Passover they all shared.

One man who will encourage those who are around him,  
Can make a greater difference than he thinks.  
If he encourages those responsible to each do his part -  
Each person soon rises to his work like a chain with links.

Those who have much will give, if they see the need is there  
And provision is made from willing hearts.  
Down the line goes blessing as everyone does share  
In the benefits that grace itself imparts.

There may not be much one can do that seems to have effect -  
But encouragement is available to all  
To pass on to those who labor in the harvest fields today  
And assure them on their behalf to God we call.

Often there is some word that has come to you at night -  
That you feel can be a help to those who labor.  
Pass on that encouragement, it will help them in their fight  
Against the darkness that the world now seems to favor.

Some are watchmen and others are singers, others carry heavy loads;  
Each one given a task by their Supreme Lord.  
Encourage them with words and pass along some strength -  
That you yourself have gotten from God's Word.

**“Heavenly Father, we will be small today, but help me I pray to encourage in some way, those that are there. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **2nd Chronicles 36**

### **"BY HIS MESSENGERS"**

The books of 1st and 2nd Chronicles concluded the historical account of the Old Testament as far as the time line is concerned. Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Old Testament. This was followed by 400 years of darkness until our Lord came and the New Testament age began. It was during these final years of the kingdom of Judah that the warnings and prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and some other prophets were given to the people. To have been given messages from God and have them spurned, ignored and openly rejected must have been very discouraging to those to whom God had called to speak to the people for Him.

When those who preach the Gospel and/or teach the Lord's people see very little response to their message, the tendency is to say, "What is the use of continuing to do this. No one comes out. No one wants to listen. The people won't pay heed to the Bible itself, let alone what we say." We must remember our calling is to deliver the message in spite of opposition and obstacles. What people do with it is out of our control. God can bring about circumstances according to His own sovereign will that will make the results be what He has ordained. Our responsibility is to faithfully fulfill the commission we have been given to the best of our ability, and then leave the results to God.

Again, the readers of the Chronicles who came from Babylon were made aware of their more recent history and the reasons for the captivity, and consequences of the sins of their forbearers. The last four kings of Judah were briefly written about because they were puppet leaders over a nation that had been conquered and put under tribute to foreign governments. Over 200 million dollars worth of silver and gold had to be paid to the Egyptians. Then the Egyptian-Assyrian alliance lost the battle of Carchemish to the rising Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar. Consequently, Judah became subservient to Babylon and all the things of value were taken from the temple to Babylon. The land of Judah was destitute and ultimately decimated.

Of the four kings who followed the reign of Josiah, three were his own sons, none of whom had the character of their father. The other one was probably an uncle. The prophecies of Jeremiah to them seemed to fall on the deaf ears of morally and spiritually weak men. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin did evil in the eyes of God and their evil influence was linked with the evil of the chief priests and the people. When the priesthood "transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen and polluted the house of the Lord," there was nothing left to salvage of the nation.

Again, we are reminded, as were the exiles who read this account, that just because parents may do that which is right with enthusiasm, and serve the Lord well, does not mean that their children will follow them. The opposite may be true as well. Ungodly parents may have devout and faithful children who love the Lord and obey His word, in spite of the wickedness of a father and/or a mother. The warnings from God had

continued for generations as faithful prophets, servants of God, prophesied and called upon the leaders and the people to repent and turn from their wicked ways and call on the Lord for mercy. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

The words of grace from Isaiah and other prophets could not have been made plainer. But "that great cloud of witnesses" were ignored, despised, imprisoned and some killed for telling the truth to a hard-hearted people. It is true that Manasseh's evil brought down the just judgment of God on Judah, but also "the chief priests, and the people transgressed very much." Political and religious leaders have a serious responsibility when it comes to fulfilling the role they have been given. But the individual people also are held responsible for what they do and how they respond to warnings because of their sin.

After such warnings have been given and ignored, eventually the whole matter is beyond recovery. To sin deliberately after having been repeatedly warned, will bring judgment instead of mercy. When sin is repeated rather than repented of, brings righteous judgment in order to remove the contagious effect of continuing sin. In spite of the good effects of Josiah's reform, the hearts of the people had not changed and the removal of even the people as captives had to happen.

There were various times when captives were taken to Babylon. Some were taken early among which were likely Daniel and other young men who were to be trained in Babylonian leadership. The gradual carrying away of the Jews made it possible to still keep tribute going to Babylon. Those last kings were subservient in their rule to the authority of their Babylonian captors. Zedekiah was a weak-hearted man, but had a stubborn streak that kept him from humbling himself before the Lord. He rebelled against the Lord and rebelled against his captors by breaking his oath to them. This brought down serious revenge on this weak man and also on Jerusalem and all Judah.

The city of Jerusalem was decimated. The temple was torn down. All the treasures of the house of the Lord were taken away. The people were taken captive for seventy years giving the land the Sabbath-rest God had intended. The sons of Zedekiah were killed in a horrible way before his eyes, and then his own eyes were put out. All that makes a nation, a nation, was gone. The infrastructure, the capital city, the temple, the walls of the city, the leaders and most of the people were gone. Except for one thing - the promises of God. God had warned them of all that would happen if the nation forsook Him. It did - and he arranged that just judgment would fall on the nation. "The Lord shall scatter you among the nations."

But even the Babylonian empire with all its might and glory was subject to the sovereignty of God. "God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another." To our God, "the nations are as a drop in a bucket." When the Persians conquered Babylon, God had a man prepared to do His will. Cyrus was in the right place so that when the time was right according to God's plan, He had a man under His authority to do what was needed. "The Lord God of heaven ... hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem." We may think all is lost, but we still have God's word, God's Spirit and God's promises. God's will, is being done, even today. This would have given confidence and courage to those who had returned from captivity in Babylon to know what they should be doing. They were to build a new temple. Later they were to build again the walls and the gates. They were to restore the testimony of Israel, even though it wouldn't have the former glory Israel once had.

There will be yet a more glorious reign when "our Lord shall come in power and glory from on high." He will sit on David's throne and the whole world will know who is in authority over all the affairs of men. Even in assemblies of God's people today we hear people say it is not like it used to be among us. That is true, but we still have God with us and guiding us. It is up to us to keep pressing ahead with the commission we have been given, and trust God with all our hearts, and then leave the results to Him. God's voice and His promise, "I will hear... will forgive... will heal" is still valid.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:16.** *"But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."*

#### **THEY MOCKED.**

They started out well, these people God chose.  
Not because they were great; they had nothing to lose  
By following the plans God had laid out for them;  
They were to serve no other gods; only to serve Him.

The temple worship when it began was well organized.  
Everyone knew his role to fill; the Word of God was not despised.

But the early ones followed God's ways at the start -  
Obeying His will and serving Him from their hearts.

Now new generations have come and the fear of God is gone.  
What is important to these people is no longer what God has done -  
But what they can do - what brings pleasure to them -  
They want what is comfortable to them, even if it is sin.

Each passing generation seems to want to go farther.  
It is a thing to be mocked at; the way we gather -  
"The churches around do things in different ways,  
We would rather be like them, than do what the Bible says."

The messengers of God are mocked as they speak simple truth.  
People want a prosperity Gospel that says what they are worth,  
Rather than messages given that brings repentance and sorrow.  
They want to have more for themselves no matter what they borrow.

A life of faith seems childish; it is not up to date  
To pay as you go, and if you can't afford it, then wait.  
To go before the Lord and sing praises from your own heart,  
Is mocked by those who want harmony sung with all of the parts.

It may take awhile but it is bound to come to pass -  
Religious activity that follows the world, never can last.  
The time will come when what was once "In spirit and in truth"  
Becomes only a form of human pleasure without spiritual worth.

A whole generation of people, including leaders and all,  
Find themselves in Babylon; now they seem so small.  
And the mocking is directed at them that once they gave to others -  
When they chose to turn away from the path of the faith of their fathers.

**"I can see this happening around us Lord God. People who once stood for God, have turned away so they can be like Babylon. O Lord, please keep us in the way Thou hast chosen. I do want to be approved of Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**