

1 Kings 12:1 – 15:24; 2 Chronicles 10-16

Rehoboam, Abijam (Abijah), and Asa

Lesson 6

Key Verse

Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to* the right hand or *to* the left.

—Joshua 23:6

Key Verse Thought: Read today’s Key Verse. In this verse, **courageous** means “to be firm; be strong; to retain, hold fast, or keep.” What are we to be strong doing? We are to do all that is written in God’s Word. Notice especially the addendum: “**that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.**” There is no allowance for variance – one must adhere directly to God’s Word and hold fast to it with all of our might. In this lesson, we will learn of three kings. Rehoboam, who was not courageous to do all written in the book of the law; Abijam (Abijah), who walked in the sins of his father, and a king (Asa) who, after being very courageous, turned aside at the end of his life.

Emphasis: In this lesson, we are to understand that God wants to show Himself mighty to His people (Christians). We are also to recognize the importance of **remaining** courageous – obeying God and His Word all throughout our lives – never failing as King Asa did toward the end of his life.

Lesson Summary: In the last quarter, we learned about Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and how they were carried captive. In this lesson, we will begin our study of Judah, the Southern Kingdom.

We will begin by remembering King Rehoboam’s reign and what happened to cause the nation to divide into two separate kingdoms. King Rehoboam was considered a bad king because he forsook God. When Rehoboam died, his son, Abijam (Abijah), became the king of Judah. He “... **walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father**” (1 Kings 15:3). Abijam (Abijah) was also considered a bad king. Little is recorded about him in First Kings, so we will focus on information in Second Chronicles. He only reigned for three years, and although God used him to do good things for Judah (King Abijam had the right reasons for fighting King Jeroboam), God knew King Abijam’s (Abijah’s) heart.

When King Abijam (Abijah) died, his son, Asa, became king. Asa reigned for 41 years in Jerusalem, “*And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father*” (1 Kings 15:11). He was a good king and it was during his reign that he made many great reforms, and the people of Judah turned their hearts back to God. King Asa knew to cry out to God when the enemy came against Judah, and God was able to show himself mighty before the people. When God sent His prophet to speak to King Asa, he listened. He was told to be strong and seek God, continually. He took courage, and removed the idol worship and broke down the false places of worship. The people recognized God was with King Asa. He even removed his grandmother as queen because she worshiped an idol. He also destroyed her idol. Nevertheless, toward the end of King Asa’s reign, King Baasha of Israel came against a city in Judah. King Asa sought the help of an enemy nation. Although they gained the city back, Asa had failed to seek the Lord. God sent his prophet with a message, but King Asa rejected the message. After this, King Asa was diseased in his feet, but he sought the physicians and never sought God. He died of the disease in his feet.

Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson

- Monday: 1 Kings 12-13
- Tuesday: 1 Kings 14-15
- Wednesday: 2 Chronicles 10-11
- Thursday: 2 Chronicles 12-13
- Friday: 2 Chronicles 14-15
- Saturday: 2 Chronicles 16

1 Kings 12:1 – 15:24; 2 Chronicles 10-16

Rehoboam, Abijah (Abijam), and Asa

1. King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12-14; 2 Chronicles 10-12)
 - Israel’s rebellion against Rehoboam
 - Rehoboam’s Reforms
 - Rehoboam’s Failings
2. King Abijam (Abijah) (1 Kings 15:1-8; 2 Chronicles 13)
 - The challenge
 - The war
3. King Asa (1 Kings 15:9-24; 2 Chronicles 14-16)
 - King Asa’s reforms; God’s deliverance
 - More reforms; Entering into a covenant with God
 - King Asa’s failings

Note: During King David's reign, Israel ruled more land, and during King Solomon's reign, Israel contained more wealth than at any time in history – ever. Nevertheless, we must remember what was *not* recorded in Second Chronicles to understand the division of the kingdom we will look at today. Solomon did fail in a few areas of his life. (Specifically: he heaped up horses, he took many wives, allowed his heart to be turned to idol worship – building many high places of worship to those idols, and so on. Read 1 Kings 11:1-13 to remember these events.) To understand one reason why God did not record these sins again, we are to remember that God is a forgiving God – One who removes our sin as far as the east from the west and casts them into the deepest sea.

1. King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12-14; 2 Chronicles 10-11)

In this lesson, we remember the reign of King Rehoboam. “**And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel come to make him king**” (2 Chronicles 10:1). Since we have studied Rehoboam's reign before, you should remember some events in King Rehoboam's reign (also found in 1 Kings 12:1-19). Try to recall as many details as possible (and reread the events to help you remember).

In example:

- Jeroboam and all of Israel approached Rehoboam asking for the burden to be lightened.
- Rehoboam told them to return in three days for an answer.
- Rehoboam sought counsel – from the old men who had counseled Solomon and his friends (young men).
- See the old men's counsel: “... **If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever**” (2 Chronicles 10:7).
- Young men's counsel: “**10. ... Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you with scorpions***” (2 Chronicles 10:10-11).
- Jeroboam and all of Israel returned on the third day: “**13. And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, 14. And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I**

will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (2 Chronicles 10:13-14).

- King Rehoboam did not listen to the wise counselors or the people. Instead, he took his friends’ counsel.
- Also, note that Jeroboam was instrumental in the revolt of the people.

When King Rehoboam refused to listen to the people, all of Israel left him except for the children of Israel that dwelt in Judah. “And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day” (2 Chronicles 10:19).

When Israel revolted, Rehoboam gathered an army together to go after them, to bring together again the kingdom. However, God spoke to the prophet, Shemaiah, to give a message to Rehoboam and all of the people of Judah and Benjamin (remember these are the only two tribes that remained with Rehoboam after the revolt). “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” (2 Chronicles 11:4). They were not to go against or fight those who left, because this was God’s plan. “So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word ...” (2 Chronicles 10:15). Notice that Rehoboam and the people obeyed God.

Note: From this point on, as we previously learned, there are two separate kingdoms: The Northern Kingdom, Israel, and The Southern Kingdom, Judah. Also, remember that the king of the Northern Kingdom was Jeroboam, and the king of the Southern Kingdom was Rehoboam. Keep in mind, God had promised that the One who would be the King of Kings, ruling and reigning forever, would come through the lineage of David. The descendants of David ruled over Judah, The Southern Kingdom.

Since God told Rehoboam to let the ten tribes go, and for Rehoboam to remain with the two who had stayed with him, see what he does. “And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah” (2 Chronicles 11:5). He built and repaired many cities in Judah. He also fortified the strong holds, placed captains with supplies in cities, and strengthened the cities by storing shields and spears in them.

At this time, we also learn something else. “13. And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. 14. For the Levites left their suburbs and their

possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD” (2 Chronicles 11:13-14). Jeroboam, king of Israel, had cast all of the priests and Levites out of the land (of The Northern Kingdom, Israel), sending them to The Southern Kingdom, Judah. That information will help us understand one of the reasons that Jeroboam made the basest of the people in Israel the priests in the house of the golden calves in Dan and Bethel – for he had removed all of the true priests. Remember what Jeroboam did. “And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made” (2 Chronicles 11:15). Jeroboam had removed all of the true priests from the land, establishing a false religion of idol practice from which Israel never recovered. That is why there was never a good king in Israel.

Read another interesting note about the priests having been rejected from Israel, but accepted in Judah, that we find in Second Chronicles that we do not read in the books of the kings. “And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers” (2 Chronicles 11:16). Not only were the priests and Levites expelled from Israel, but also all of the people, who wanted to continue worshiping the one true God, moved to Judah. (Remember that Jeroboam was afraid of the people leaving in 1 Kings 12:26-27 – that was his reasoning behind removing the true priests and making the golden calves.) Obviously, according to 2 Chronicles 11:16, there were people who left the Northern Kingdom, moving to the Southern Kingdom, for that very reason. Because the priests and Levites, and even the people who left the Northern Kingdom, were accepted into Judah, read what happened to Rehoboam’s kingdom. “So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon” (2 Chronicles 11:17). For three years, Judah walked with God.

A sad piece of information comes to us in II Chronicles 12:1: “And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.” Up to this point, we have read of God’s blessing upon Rehoboam’s kingdom. However, we now learn that there was a turning point – “he forsook the law of the LORD.” Notice that when the king turned from the law of the Lord, all of the kingdom did as well. For that, see what God allowed. “And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed

against the LORD” (2 Chronicles 12:2). We can understand that God allowed this to happen because the people had sinned against Him (to remember the sin of the people, read 1 Kings 14:22-24). In Second Chronicles, we only see God recognized the great sin and allowed the enemy to come in and invade the land. Remember: when you sin, punishment will come. Read the following verse to help you understand this concept. “5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:5-6).

God did not allow the enemy to come against His people without telling them why. “Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak” (2 Chronicles 12:5). How did they respond? “Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous” (2 Chronicles 12:6). What did God recognize? “7. And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries” (2 Chronicles 12:7-8). Although they humbled themselves before the Lord, there would still be a price to pay for their disregard of God’s Law.

2 Chronicles 12:9:

- “So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem,
- and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD,
- and the treasures of the king's house;
- he took all:
- he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.”

When the shields of gold were stolen, Rehoboam made shields of brass to replace them. Recognize this as one diminishment of the wealth of King Solomon’s reign.

See why God spared Rehoboam and Judah. “And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy *him* altogether: and also in Judah things went well” (2 Chronicles 12:12).

Rehoboam focused upon Jerusalem from this point forward. (Remember: beforehand, he had built up the cities of all of Judah.) We then begin to read the conclusion of the recordings of his kingdom summed up briefly. “So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam *was* one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there ...” (2 Chronicles 12:13). If you recall, we just read that he served the Lord for three years, forsook the Lord, and in the fifth year of his reign, God allowed the enemy to come in to invade the land. We read nothing here about the last twelve years of his reign, except for the note we read next. “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD” (2 Chronicles 12:14). **Prepared** here means “make ready; be steadfast and faithful; actual preparation for a future event, especially spiritual preparation.” He did not prepare himself, much less the nation of Judah, to walk with God faithfully. We will see the results of this in our next king.

After reading again about Rehoboam, we can understand why he was considered a bad king in Judah. He began to reign when he was 41 years old and reigned 17 years in Jerusalem “... the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there” (1 Kings 14:21). Moreover, Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord. They continued worshiping idols. Not only that, but they also built high places, images, groves on every high hill, and “... they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel” (1 Kings 14:24b). See the turmoil that pervaded his reign. “... And *there were* wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually” (2 Chronicles 12:15b).

“And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead” (2 Chronicles 12:16).

A Deeper Path: Read again the encouraging words that David gave his son, Solomon – words that have been recorded for future generations to read and remember. “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (1 Chronicles 28:9).

See what else we can read. “6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7. 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” (Isaiah 55:6-7). Each person is encouraged to seek the Lord, forsake his way, for God will abundantly pardon. We read today that some of the people from The Northern Kingdom, Israel, did just that. They moved to The Southern Kingdom, Judah, where the people were allowed to seek the one true God.

God gave Moses instructions to write down for the future when God would give his people a king. Read some of the things God wanted them to remember and obey, and recognize that Rehoboam failed in these areas. “14. When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me ... 18. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: 19. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20. That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:14, 18-20). We never read that Rehoboam wrote a copy of the Law, much less read it. If one does not read God’s Word often, one will forget what is written therein and fail to do what God’s Word teaches. Rehoboam forsook the Law of the Lord (2 Chronicles 12:1), and it caused him to not only be a bad king, but the enemy was allowed to defeat Judah in battle. Remember also what David, Rehoboam’s grandfather, understood and recorded for all generations to read (See Psalms 119:1-11).

2. King Abijam (Abijah) (1 Kings 15:1-8; 2 Chronicles 13)

When Abijam became king, we read that he “... walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father” (1 Kings 15:3). However, read God’s promise. “Nevertheless for David’s sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem” (1 Kings 15:4). God kept His promise that He made to King David. Why? “Because

David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5). Abijah reigned over Judah for three years, “... And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam” (1 Kings 15:7b).

Remember again:

The Chronicles do not dwell upon the wrongdoings of the kings, but the good they accomplished for Judah.

Especially remember what else we have learned: “And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father” (1 Kings 15:3). Keep that in mind as we see many good things Abijah did for Judah. But keep in mind – God knows the heart.

See how much more is recorded about Abijah in Second Chronicles. We read he only reigned for three years, and that there was a war between Abijah (Judah) and Jeroboam (Israel). “2. He reigned three years in Jerusalem ... And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3. And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, *even* four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, *being* mighty men of valour” (2 Chronicles 13:2-3). Notice that the army of Abijah consisted of 400,000 valiant men and the army of Jeroboam consisted of 800,000 valiant men. Keep in mind that Israel consisted of ten tribes while Judah only had two tribes.

Read the declaration King Abijah made to King Jeroboam:

4. And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which *is* in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; 5. Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? 6. Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord. 7. And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them. (2 Chronicles 13:4-7)

Everything he said was correct. God had promised the kingdom would remain with David's descendants forever, and Jeroboam did revolt against Rehoboam, David's reigning grandson. Also, remember that when Jeroboam revolted, God had told King Rehoboam not to go up against that rebellion. Nevertheless, after reading *this* challenge, we understand that the intentions of this battle were right.

As Abijah continued, he pointed out several great errors that Jeroboam had made. "8. *And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods.* 9. *Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods*" (2 Chronicles 13:8-9). We already learned that Jeroboam made golden calves for the people to worship instead of God, and Jeroboam cast out all of the sons of Aaron and the Levites making the basest of men their priests. They had rejected God and the things of God.

Abijah made a declaration:

10. *But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business:* 11. *And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him.* 12. *And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper."* (2 Chronicles 13:10-12)

In Judah, they had not forsaken God, or the things of God. King Abijah understood that God was in control. He also understood that God declared the victory in battle. Yet even with this warning to Jeroboam: "But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them" (2 Chronicles 13:13). Jeroboam came

to fight anyway and surrounded Judah. What did Judah do? “14. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. 15. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah” (2 Chronicles 13:14-15). When they called out to God, God smote Jeroboam and all of Israel. “And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand” (2 Chronicles 13:16). Judah won the battle, and 500,000 men of Israel died that day. Why? “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” (2 Chronicles 13:18). Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took cities from him. See what else happened. “20. Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died. 21. But Abijah waxed mighty ...” (2 Chronicles 13:20-21).

“So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David ...” (2 Chronicles 14:1), and his son, Asa, reigned in his stead (see 1 Kings 15:8).

A Deeper Path: Recognize that Abijah was not afraid of Jeroboam or his army, and he knew to cry out to God, even though he did not fully live his life according to God’s Word. Remember that he walked in the ways of his father who had forsaken God’s Laws. “Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psalm 20:7). God is always faithful, even when man is faithless.

3. King Asa (1 Kings 15:9-24; 2 Chronicles 14-16)

After Abijah died, we learn that Asa reigned over Judah for 41 years in Jerusalem, “... and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years” (2 Chronicles 14:1b). Also, see he was a good king. “And Asa did *that which was right* in the eyes of the LORD, as *did David his father*” (1 Kings 15:11).

We learned little about Asa in First Kings, however we learn more about King Asa in the book of Second Chronicles. “And Asa did *that which was good and right* in the eyes of the LORD his God” (2 Chronicles 14:2). Read some of the good he did in 2 Chronicles 14:3-8:

- “3. For he took away the altars of the strange *gods*,
- and the high places,
- and brake down the images,

- and cut down the groves:
- 4. And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers,
- and to do the law and the commandment.
- 5. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.
- 6. And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest.
- 7. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about *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.
- 8. And Asa had an army *of men* that bare targets and spears ... all these *were* mighty men of valour.”

Notice that King Asa commanded the people to seek God, and God gave Judah rest. He recognized that God had given them rest because they had sought God.

When the enemy came against them, Judah entered into battle. Understand where Asa placed his trust. “And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee” (2 Chronicles 14:11).

Then read God’s answer:

12. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. 13. And Asa and the people that *were* with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil. 14. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them. 15. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away

sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.” (2 Chronicles 14:12-15)

Because King Asa called out to God, God allowed them to defeat the enemy mightily.

As King Asa and all of Judah’s army were returning, God sent His prophet, Azariah, with a message.

2. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD *is* with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. 3. Now for a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. 4. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 5. And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries. 6. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. 7. Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.” (2 Chronicles 15:2-7)

Remembering that God had just helped them win a mighty victory over their enemies when they called upon Him, understand how significant these words were. They had just endured two bad kings, kings whose hearts’ did not seek God. There had been a dearth in the land of seeking God and His Words (see this in 2 Chronicles 15:3). Nevertheless, King Asa was encouraged because he had done right in seeking God and calling out to Him in his trouble – and God allowed them to defeat their enemy. However, notice that this message also began with a warning – a warning not to forsake God, or God would forsake Asa (see this in 2 Chronicles 15:2).

What was King Asa’s response to God’s Words by the prophet, Oded? “*And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the*

LORD” (2 Chronicles 15:8). At this point, remember today’s key verse (“Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to the right hand or to the left*” Joshua 23:6). It takes great courage to follow God’s Words! King Asa had great courage, and when the people saw this, they recognized God was with him (see 2 Chronicles 15:9). Read Judah’s response to these events: “*And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 15. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about*” (2 Chronicles 15:12 & 15). Because the people made a covenant to seek God, God was found of them. God then gave them rest from their enemies.

Next, we read of something that must have been very difficult for King Asa to do. “*And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron*” (2 Chronicles 15:16). This was really his grandmother (mother can also mean grandmother). We know she was his grandmother because she was the favorite wife of his grandfather, King Rehoboam. Read the following verse to understand this: “*And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines ...)*” (2 Chronicles 11:21).

Read the next words we read about King Asa. “*17. But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days. 18. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19. And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa*” (2 Chronicles 15:17-19). His heart was right before God, he brought many treasures into the house of the Lord, and he had rest around for many years.

Even good kings fail sometimes. We are next reminded of the part of King Asa’s life where he failed. It was in his dealings with Baasha, king of Israel. “*In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah*” (2 Chronicles 16:1). Baasha took one of Judah’s cities and held the people captive. Do you remember how Asa had previously remembered to take courage and call out to God for help? Well, like most people, he forgot and tried to solve the problem himself. “*Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of*

the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria ...”(2 Chronicles 16:2). He offered a bribe to the king of Syria, Benhadad, to break the league he had with the king of Israel and instead make a league with him. Benhadad agreed and sent his army against Israel, defeating them, and King Baasha left. King Asa proceeded to take back his cities. Then, King Asa receives a message from God’s prophet. “And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand” (2 Chronicles 16:7). Asa blew it. Hanani continued by reminding him of the times that he had trusted God when the enemy had come. Finally, Hanani tells King Asa something he had obviously forgotten. “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” (2 Chronicles 16:9). Do you remember how God had previously showed himself strong in the presence of King Asa? God waits for His people to call out to Him – just so that He can *show* Himself to them. We understand that King Asa’s heart was *not* right because: “Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing* ...” (2 Chronicles 16:10). Instead of recognizing that he was wrong, Asa was angry with the messenger of the Lord, punishing that messenger.

It is after this that we read of his demise. “And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians” (2 Chronicles 16:12). His greatest failure was that he sought physicians but did not seek God. Instead, King Asa died with this disease in his feet. He reigned for forty-one years.

Jehoshaphat reigned in his stead.

A Deeper Path: Asa was a good king. He knew what to do when an enemy came up against Judah. “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalm 50:15). When he cried out to God, God delivered. Notice also that the enemy was not fearful of Judah, but of God “for the fear of the LORD came upon them” (2 Chronicles 14:14).

Asa knew God would hear when called upon, and He would deal with the enemy of God’s people, Judah. “15. The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are* open

unto their cry. 16. The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17. *The righteous cry*, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles” (Psalm 35:15-17).

Read the following verses that had been written before, encouraging the people to have courage and trust God – for He would not fail them:

- “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 31:6).
- “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Psalm 27:14).
- “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD” (Psalm 31:24).

1 Kings 12 – 15 at a Glance:

Chapter 12: Rehoboam became king, ten tribes revolted; Jeroboam reigned over ten tribes in the north

Chapter 13: Jeroboam’s hand dried up then restored after receiving a warning from a prophet; a lying prophet brought him back to eat & drink; on his way back to Judah, a lion killed him and left his carcass; he was buried

Chapter 14: Jeroboam wife saw the prophet because their son was sick; Jeroboam reigned 22 years and died; Rehoboam reigned 17 years; Shishak, king of Egypt, stole the treasures of the house of the Lord & the king’s house

Chapter 15: Abijam became king of Judah, Asa became king, Nadab became king of Israel after Jeroboam; Baasha became king of Israel after Nadab

2 Chronicles 10 – 16 at a Glance:

Chapter 10: Rehoboam became king; took the counsel of younger men; Israel rebelled against the house of David

Chapter 11: Rehoboam told not to fight Israel; built cities in Judah; all Levites moved to Judah; king took many wives

Chapter 12: Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord; Egypt came up against Judah; God’s warning and Judah humbled

Chapter 13: Abijah becomes king; challenged Jeroboam; war between Israel and Judah; God smote Jeroboam & Israel

Chapter 14: Abijah died & Asa became king (a good king); destroyed idol worship; God delivered Judah from Ethiopians

Chapter 15: Asa took courage & removed idols; Asa & Judah entered into a covenant to seek God; removed his Queen mother

Chapter 16: Asa's alliance with Benhadad against Baasha (of Israel); Hanani rebuked Asa; Asa diseased in his feet

Reinforcement: As we began our study today of the nation of Judah, we remembered Rehoboam and why the kingdom was divided.

As we learned about King Abijam (Abijah) and King Asa in this lesson, especially remember that King Abijam's (Abijah's) heart was never right before God. He was considered a bad king because he walked in the ways of his father. On the other hand, King Asa was considered a good king – for he did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. Both kings did good for the nation Judah, but only one of them took courage (**courage** means, “to be firm; be strong; to retain, hold fast, or keep”), putting away the false idols and serving God only. Only one king truly sought God. It takes more than doing the right thing. (Remember that King Abijah did the right thing by calling upon God to win the battle against King Jeroboam. But that isn't enough.) It takes a covenant with God. (Remember that King Asa not only called upon God to win the battle for them, but Judah and the king made a covenant with God and rebuilt the altar, renewing the worship of the one true God.) That made all of the difference.

We should take courage because even though King Asa failed (when he forgot God at the end of his life) God still reminded us that “... **nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days ...**” (2 Chronicles 15:17). Also remember the sad conclusion to King Asa's life – he died with a disease in his feet. We should keep this as a reminder to remain faithful, keep courage, and never forget God. Instead of forgetting God, we are to allow Him to show himself mighty through our lives – just as God was able to do in King Asa's earlier days.

Closing: It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today's lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will be courageous (obey God and His Words all throughout our lives) so that God can reveal Himself mightily through us. Pray we will not forget God as we grow older, but remain faithful throughout our lives.*