

Session 1

July 21, 2019

PURSUE GODLINESS

2 Chronicles 14:1-8

Israel as a whole had only three kings. Saul was first; then came David; then came Solomon. At the death of Solomon, conflict arose that divided Israel into two kingdoms. The northern territory was known as Israel, and the southern was called Judah. Between the two, more than forty kings (as well as one queen) ruled the lands. Some ruled for more than 50 years; others only lasted for a week or so. The vast majority were evil, but a handful were good and godly men who sought to lead their people to obey the Lord. Young king Asa was one of the good ones, who told the people of Judah to “seek the Lord God” and to “obey His commands” (v. 4). Two lessons from this text stand out.

King Asa broke things (vv. 2-8). Over and over God’s word condemned the kings of both Israel and Judah for “doing evil in the sight of the Lord.” How refreshing to read of one who saw the errors of his predecessors and intentionally led his people into prosperity! First, Asa *broke* things. A godly lifestyle requires that we “lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us” (Heb. 12:1). In our personal lives, that means getting rid of those obstacles that not only trip us up, but that hold us back. In Judah’s case, the constant presence of pagan idols and the continual worship of the false gods they represented were the first things to go. This was no quiet, secret task. Rather, it was open and public. King Asa *removed* the altars and the “high places.” These were the most prominent places of pagan worship. He *shattered* the sacred pillars, the stone statues that represented the false gods. He *chopped down* the Asherah poles. The word *Asherah* refers to a type of tree that may have been planted around these altars, or the type of wood that was carved into idols. Either way, they marked the sites of pagan worship. The addition of the phrase “from all the cities of Judah” in verse 5 demonstrates the extent of Asa’s purge. This was not an isolated crackdown, but rather a nationwide cleansing. The result? A ten-year era of peace and prosperity.

The lesson? Godly living requires us to remove certain obstacles that get in our way, trip us up, or hold us back.

King Asa built things (vv. 6-7). It was Aristotle who said, “Nature abhors a vacuum.” It’s not enough to remove the bad things; you need to fill up the void with good things. And that’s exactly what king Asa did. Building on the momentum of his successful purge of pagan worship, Asa initiated a massive building campaign. Two main factors moved the king in his decision. First, there was *peace* (v. 6). Without the distractions that come with war, the nation could focus its attention on its own interests. Second, there was God’s *promise*. “The land is still ours,” Asa told the people, “because we sought the Lord our God” (v. 7). The result of their obedience? “Rest on every side.” With peace comes prosperity. While Asa could have spent the time planting vineyards and storing up treasures, he chose rather to fortify the nation. Cities were restored; walls were repaired and strengthened; lookout towers were added; gates and windows were fortified against future attack (v. 7). His people apparently responded with enthusiasm, for “they built...and succeeded.” Beyond rebuilding and strengthening their cities, Asa replenished and refitted his military force. To protect the land and assure continued peace, he raised an army

of 300,000 foot soldiers backed by 280,000 archers. The final words of verse 7 speak of the quality of this fighting force: “All these were brave warriors.”

The lesson? It's not enough to remove harmful obstacles from our lives. Godly living requires us to intentionally strengthen our defenses.