

Good kings, bad kings

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[0:00] So we're in 1 Kings 15 and working backwards, here are two questions at least which are answered by today's text.

To which the answer is no, that's actually what sin is like.

And you can see this in this chapter and actually in chapter 16 as well. The thing that's boring and colourless and repetitive and dull and uninteresting is life without God.

Life with God is the opposite. And here's another question about security. We were thinking about relying a bit earlier. Where is the place to find security in life?

And I dare say there are a number of people this morning who in their hearts are thinking, I wish I could find some security on whatever big issue or small issue.

[1:20] And is it to do with the sort of person who plans out your life? So I think Michael Heseltine, the former cabinet minister, had planned out at the age of 20 when he would become a cabinet minister, when he would become prime minister.

And he got it all mapped out. Is that the secret of security? I have to say Michael Heseltine's plan didn't work. Is it good education? Education is a good thing. But in some cultures education is the thing that you rely on to get you out of trouble and to give you a future life.

Is that the place to find security? Or is it in good financial planning? I've come to the age in life where my pension pot is a significant factor.

And is good financial planning the thing that gives us security? And the answer is none of the above. This text teaches us that we find our security in the promises of God.

That's where we find security. And some of those promises are vintage. They are old. They are long standing. They are tested by time.

[2:37] And those promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Savior. That's where we find our security. Well those are the questions that are answered as I hope now to show.

Let's look at these two chapters. Chapters 15 and 16 in an outline. So these two chapters in the Bible tell the story of the north kingdom, Israel.

And the southern kingdom, Judah. Remember there was a kingdom and it split. Click. So this is going to be a timeline as time will go on as we go down the page.

You may remember that Jeroboam took the north kingdom and embedded within it the principle that they would worship golden calves.

And he said to them, here are the golden calves. Behold your gods who brought you out of Egypt. And this huge but rather subtle mistake, this Jeroboam-ish religion, sealed the fate of the northern kingdom.

[3:57] It was a complete wrong thing to do. The southern kingdom worships the Lord. But even they don't do it right.

In chapter 14 verse 22 it says, Rehoboam who was king, it says, Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord by the sins they committed. They stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done.

They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land.

The people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. So the southern kingdom was on the wrong track too. And in the history that is before us, the north has seven kings up to chapter 17.

So if I click one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. There are seven kings up to including Ahab. We'll do the names of them in a minute.

[5:06] The south during that same period just has three kings like that. So let's do the names of them. So we start off with Solomon.

And in the south we have Rehoboam who reigns for 17 years. And when we have Abijah chapter 15 verse 2, he reigns for, anybody like to tell us verse 2?

How many years? Three. So a little short box for Abijah. And then he's followed by Asa who reigns for, verse 10?

41 years. So a nice long box for Asa. So just got those three kings stretching over a nice period of time. Father, son, grandson. A nice straightforward succession.

In the north kingdom, it's much more complicated. So following Solomon, we have Jeroboam, who's the chap who taught them how to sin. And he reigns for 28 years.

[6:19] He has a son called Abijah, which is complicated because there's another king called Abijah as well. So this is why this history gets confusing because some of the names are used twice.

He has a son, Nadab, who's in chapter 15 verse 25. And he reigns, 1 Kings 15, 25, how long does he reign for?

Two years. It's a short box for him. And the next king is Baasha. And if you look at it, he is not actually the grandson of Jeroboam or the son of Nadab.

He assassinates that family and becomes king himself. So Baasha reigns for 24 years, verse 33. So I've given him a 24, that sort of size box. He's followed by Elah in chapter 16, verse 8.

[7:28] How long does he reign for? Chapter 16, verse 8? Two years. And then he gets assassinated. Am I right?

By Zimri, who reigns for... Anybody spot that? I didn't write it down. This is the guy who reigns for seven days, isn't it?

Or am I getting it wrong? Give me a... 16, 15. He reigned for seven days.

So he's got a very, very tiny little box. And then following him is Omri, who has assassinated... Or not assassinated, but he's a new family now.

Zimri dies. And we now have Omri, who reigns for 12 years. Which verse is that? 23.

[8:27] And then he's followed by Ahab. King Ahab. In verse 29. Chapter 16, verse 29. So there's the succession of kings.

And it's worth noticing that on this side, it's nice and straightforward. Father, son, grandson. They have quite long reigns. But on this side, it's very chaotic. You get assassinations.

People reigning for very short amounts of time. It gets very chaotic. And as we shall see next time, it's rather repetitive. Because they do evil.

They do evil. They do evil. They do evil. They do evil. They do evil. Just, you know, you can tell what's going to happen next. Because it just follows that same formula. So the north is a history of sin.

Jeroboam starts them off with this sin. And it just gets worse. So 16.25 says, Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him.

[9:36] He walked in the ways of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols.

But he did it more than anybody else. So it just gets worse. And then with Ahab, which is in the chapter that we haven't read yet, it's even worse.

So Ahab, and it says in verse 31, Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him.

He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel, daughter of Ephbaal, king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him, which is awful.

So this northern kingdom just gets worse and worse and worse. Just a horrible thing.

[10:36] It's repetitive. It's boring. It's chaotic and violent. There's no stability. People get assassinated or die within seven days.

And it just goes on and on and on. We're going to look at that another time. But it's testimony to the nature of sin.

That's what a kingdom ruled by sin is like. It's not admirable. It's not inviting. It's not wholesome. It's not the sort of place that you'd like to go and spend some time.

It's not original. It's not lively. It's not creative. Satan says sin is that, doesn't he? Do you remember back in the garden with the fruit, whatever it was, and the woman saw that it was, what was it, desirable?

Was it attractive, desirable for making one wise? Satan says that about sin. You'll be better off if you sin. You'll be free if you sin. There's a sort of vitality about the life of sin.

[11:46] And these chapters just say, that's rubbish. That's not what sin is about. Sin is not, it's unoriginal. If I can put it that way.

It's deathly. It's destructive. And hopefully we can come and look at that in some more detail next time. Let's look at the south.

Rehoboam is the king who follows on from Solomon. Then Abijah, who reigns for two years. He's at the beginning of chapter 15. And then Asa, who reigns for 41 years.

And that's what we're going to look at today. So I've just given you a little bit of the history. And I've got three things to say as we look in particular at the southern kingdom. So that's what we'll look at for the next few minutes, the southern kingdom.

So the first thing I want us to look at is in chapter 15. Take a look at what it says. In the 18th year of the reign of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah.

[12:52] He reigned in Jerusalem for three years. His mother's name was Ma'akah, daughter of Abishalom. He committed all the sins his father had done before him.

His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God. As the heart of David, his forefather had been. Nevertheless.

Nevertheless. It's an interesting word. Nevertheless. For David's sake. The Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem.

By raising up a son to succeed him. And by making Jerusalem strong. For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

And had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life. Except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. I'd like us to stop and think about that. Point here.

[13:54] This chap, Abijah. Committed the same sins as his father. So. So. There is nothing.

Deserving. About him. Apart from he deserves to be kicked out. But God doesn't do that. The sins of his father.

Were the paganism of the high places. The male shrine prostitutes. And awful things. So the question is.

Why. Was. This king. And this kingdom. Not. Wiped out. And the answer is.

Because of the promise. The Lord had made to David. It's there in 15 verse 4. Nevertheless. For David's sake. The Lord.

[14:55] Raised up a son. Gave a lamp. Made. Jerusalem. Stand. And the more I thought about this.

Let's imagine you're digging in the garden. And you're digging away. And you find a little bit of. Metal. And you think. Oh what's this. It could be two things.

Couldn't it. It could be. It could be loads of things. But it could be. A rusty tin can. That is of no use to anybody. Or it could be. A treasure hoard.

Of. Extraordinary wealth. And magnificence. And you've just hit the top of it. And there's a load more underneath. Okay. Now I think that this verse.

Is not the rusty tin can. I think we've actually hit on something. Which is a huge. Hoard of treasure. And if we dig a bit further. We'll find out how magnificent it is.

[15:53] So let's follow up on this. This matter of the promise to David. It's there in 15.4. Because of David. And I think that's shorthand for saying. Because of David.

And the promise God had made. And everything to do with that. If you look back at 11.36. If you had been digging there. You'd hit the same thing.

11.36. This is what's being said. In connection with Solomon and Jeroboam.

11.36. God says. I will give one tribe. To Solomon's son. So that David. My servant. Will always.

Have a lamp. Before me in Jerusalem. The city where I chose. To put my name. So the prompt. This issue of David. Comes up there.

[16:51] And if you go even further back. To chapter 9. Verse 4. This is to Solomon himself. The Lord says.

As for you. If you walk before me. In integrity of heart. And uprightness. As David your father did. And do all I command. And observe my decrees and laws. I will establish your royal throne. Over Israel forever.

As I promised David your father. When I said. You shall never fail. To have a man. On the throne of David. That's the promise.

Is repeated. And it's a strong promise. And I'd like to. Spend a few minutes. Just testing out. How strong this promise is.

Because some God's promises. Are sort of conditional. And. If. The human side of it. Is not kept. Then the promise. Fails. Doesn't happen.

[17:48] But I. Want to suggest. This morning. That this particular promise. Is stronger than that. And it's a promise. That God says. I'll do this. Whether human beings.

Fail. Or not. I will ensure. That this promise. Stands. Forever. Forever. Now that's quite a statement. Isn't it. I'm saying that this. Thing that we've. Dug up. Is of it. An eternal promise. That God says. This is one of my.

Promises. For this world. That you can count on. Forever. Forever. How strong.

And how deep. I think this promise. Is as. So strong. As to be. Unbreakable. And so deep.

[18:47] As. The universe itself. That you could say. The universe itself. Will fail. Before. This promise fails.

No. You might. Think I'm overstating it. Don't think I am. I'd like us to. Explore it together. In the Bible. There are a number of promises.

That have this quality. For example. In the Garden of Eden. It's said. About the seed of the woman. He will crush the serpent's head.

The serpent will bruise. Will. Help me on this. His heel. What does he do with his heel? Strike his heel. But the serpent crusher.

Will crush the serpent's head. I think we rightly see that. As a promise. Which stretches. Throughout the. The course of history. That's. The history of the human race.

[19:44] The destiny of the human race. In one sentence. The serpent crusher. Will crush the. The evil one. And you get another promise. Bit like that. To Abraham. In you.

Will all the families of the earth. Be blessed. And the Bible says. That's one of those promises. That is. It describes God's work. Throughout history. He's keeping the promise.

To Abraham. Jesus Christ. Comes. As fulfillment. Of the promise. To Abraham. And I want to say. That this promise to David. Is up there. With those other two. And.

Can I point us. To Isaiah 55. Would you like to turn to that. As one piece of evidence. So Isaiah 55. Is a.

People will use this. As a. A real. Gospel chapter. Isaiah 55. And I quoted this right at the beginning. It's. Saying.

[20:42] To. Men and women. The invitation. Of God. The good news. And it says. Come. All you who are thirsty. Come to the waters.

You who have no money. Come. Buy. And eat. Come. Buy. Wine. And milk. Without money. And without cost. Why spend money. On what is not bread. And your labor.

On what does not satisfy. Listen. Listen to me. Eat what is good. And your soul. Will delight. In the richest affair. Give ear. And come to me.

Hear me. That your soul may live. Fantastic. Gospel. Invitation. And see what it links to. I will make. An everlasting covenant. With you. My faithful love. Promised to David. Now you see. That. That. Fantastic invitation.

[21:38] Is hand. In hand. With the promises to David. It's interesting. Isn't it. It's a. The. The. Adjective is.

Davidic. Like. Slav. Slavic. David. Davidic. It's a Davidic promise. The gospel. Is the gospel. Of the kingdom. And the kingdom.

Of David. Of all things. I think. We're. Sort of. Striking some gold here. Let's. Go on. The promise. Made to David. Let's look at what the promise. Said. Back in the original. To Samuel. Seven. This is when. David. Had. Offered. To make. The Lord. A house. And in. To Samuel. Seven. The Lord. Replies. [22:33] Back to David. To Samuel. Seven. Verse. Twelve. When your days. Are over. And you rest. With your fathers. I will raise up. Your offspring. To succeed you. Who will come. From your own body. And I will. Establish. His kingdom. He is the one. Who will build a house. For my name. And I will establish. The throne. Of his kingdom. Forever. That's quite a strong promise. Isn't it? I'm going to build. His kingdom. And there's a sort of. Indestructibility. About it. Isn't it? I will establish. The throne. Of his kingdom. Forever. And then it talks about. The possibility. Of sons. Who are. Who are. Deficient. I will be his father. He will be my son. [23:28] When he does wrong. I will punish him. With the rod of men. With floggings. Inflicted by men. So. Yeah. That. There are going to be. Kings who are duds. But. My love. Will never be taken. Away from him. As I took it away. From Saul. Whom I removed. From before you. In other words. This isn't. Human sin. Is not going to stop. This promise. Your house. And your kingdom. Shall endure. Forever. Before me. Your throne. Shall be established. Forever. See. I think this is a very. Strong. Promise. Of a king. In the line of David. Of whom. We can say. He. Reigns. Forever. His. Kingdom. Is. Established. He. Is. The king. Of kings. And lord. Of lords. [24:25] Now. Wouldn't that be great. To belong. To that kingdom. To have that. King. As our king. So I ask. Again. Did. Did David. Invent this. No. It was God's initiative. Did David. Actually deserve this. No. He was a sinner. He did fail. He failed. In the matter. Of Raya. The Hittite. So it's not. The fact. That he. So impressed. God. That God said. Well I owe you this. It was the other way around. Did David receive it? Yes he did. He said to the lord. This is amazing. Thank you. For such a promise. To me. What have I done. To deserve this? I was a shepherd. You took me from. Looking after sheep. And you made me a king. Is this your usual way. Of dealing with people? That's what David said. And you might actually. Think the same thing. Yourself. About God's. Surprising. Grace. And generosity. In our own. [25:20] Sort of small way. You might say. Well I was a. Whatever I was. I was a. Whatever I was. And you. Lifted me up. You took me. You brought me. Into your kingdom. You've forgiven my sins. You've enriched me. You've given me a hope. And a future. And a promise. Is this your usual way. Of dealing with people. Because I never deserved it. You might be thinking that. I don't know. You might not. I'm thinking that. So let's. Just follow this promise. A little bit further. And we'll come. To the texts. That are often. Well. They're always used at Christmas. Aren't they? But. Just bring it into contact. With the rest of the Bible. Here's the angel. Speaking to Mary. About her baby. He will be great. And will be called. The son of the most high. The Lord God. Will give him. [26:16] The throne of his father. David. And he will reign. Over the house of Jacob. Forever. His kingdom. Will never end. That's Jesus. That's exactly. Who Jesus is. He is the forever king. The son of David. Who inherits. The promises. To David. And rules. The kingdom of David. Which has gone. Ballistically wide. And isn't just. Ethnic. And national. But includes. The whole world. And includes. Even. People from. Such bizarre nations. As the one that we. We belong to. And God is saying. I will have a king. You. Earthling creatures. I. The God of heaven. Will have a king. Of. Of the same species. As you. A human king. And he will have a kingdom. And he will have a city.

[27:10] Which can never fail. And never fall. The city of God. And what a privilege. To belong to that king. And that kingdom.

Because if our king is secure. For. Then we are secure too. Because he looks after us. That's his job. There's a wonderful catechism question.

Which I can't quite remember. All the answer to. But it says. Wherein doth Christ. Execute the office of a king. In other words. What does he do as a king? And it says. To subdue.

Us. And our enemies. To his rule. Or something like that. It's worth looking up. But what does he do? He rules. He rules over his enemies.

And he rules over us. And he takes us into his kingdom. And he says. Right. These are my people. I'm truly well going to look after them. It's a great thing. Isn't it? Are you a member.

[28:05] Of the kingdom. Of David. Of the kingdom. Of the son of David. Do you belong to King Jesus? Old Abijah. In our chapter.

Didn't really. Know. Why he was being protected. But he was. But if we belong to King Jesus. We can say. I can see it now. Do you know.

He looks after me. Not because of how good I am. Or how bad I am. But because of a promise.

That was made actually. Thousands of years ago. To another king.

But that was God's determination. I think we. Dig down. We hit a. A seam of gold there. In this verse. On these verses. Let's move on then.

So. One Kings 15. Let's go now. To Asa. The. The. The king. Who follows on. Afterwards.

[29:04] So. Excuse me. In the 20th year. Of Jeroboam. King of Israel. This is verse 9. Asa became. King of Judah. He reigned. In Jerusalem. For 41 years. His grandmother's name.

Was Ma'akar. Daughter of Abishalom. Same. No. That's his grandmother. Abijah's. Mother.

Was Ma'akar. She was. What should we say she was. I'm inclined to say. She was a nasty piece of work. But. That might not be entirely fair to her.

But she was no good at all. For the kingdom. She was no good at all. For the kingdom. And. Asa becomes king. And you think. How did he become king?

It says. Verse 11. He did right. In the eyes of the Lord. As his father David had done. Well where did that come from? Because his grandmother was terrible. Had to get rid of her.

[29:57] And here. In this southern kingdom. You suddenly find. Woo. Where did that arise from? Out of the blue. His family gave him no help. But here is a king.

Who does right. In the eyes of the Lord. I think it's God's grace. You know. Who. Who brought this chap. Into the equation. Well I think God did. Just God said. Right. I'm going to have a. A king.

For my people. He did what was right. In the eyes of the Lord. Let's look for a minute. About what doing right. In the eyes of the Lord. Looked like. In Asa's case.

There's a little. Word play. On the word. To turn aside. So if you were a superhero. And you. If I were a superhero.

And you fired arrows at me. I would just. Turn them aside. You know. Like a ninja. Turn. These arrows get turned aside.

[30:51] I'm not going to do it. Please don't try. Because. It's well. Well. Well above my pay scale. To do that sort of thing. But. There's. There's turning aside. It says.

That. In verse three. David. Had not. Turned aside. From keeping. Any of the Lord's commandments. He hadn't deviated. He hadn't. Gone off. But.

It says. Here. In verse 11. He turned aside. The male prostitutes. From the land. And he. Turned aside. All the idols.

His fathers had made. And even. Turned aside. His own grandmother. From her position. As queen mother. So. He turned aside.

The male shrine prostitutes. So. Well done. Getting rid of those. Horrible people. He got rid of the idols. We probably ought to spend more time.

[31:45] Thinking about idolatry. Because it's such an important thing. But. Today. We'll just say. He got rid of the idols. There's a Christian song. Which says. The dearest idol.

I have known. Whatever that idol be. May I tear it from. Its throne. And worship only thee. Something like that. No.

We have to be careful. Little children. Keep yourselves from idols. Keep yourselves from things. That come in. And are so precious. And loom so large. And become so central.

That they push God out of the way. Even good things can do that. Good things can do that. You know. Money can do that. That's fairly obvious.

Family can do that. Family's good. But if family becomes the thing. You know. Whatever I do. That's got. That's. It's become an idol.

[32:41] Having a clean sitting room. Can become an idol. You can have big idols. And small idols. You can have. Sort of huge idols. And little tiny idols. Anyway. He got rid of the idols.

Which is. Something we should keep on doing. Like weeding a garden. Getting rid of the idols. He even got rid of his own grandmother. Because she'd made a repulsive.

Asherah pole. And there's a word there. Which is. You know. Appalling. Awful. Terrible. Repulsive. I'll just pause to say. In our day and age.

As Christians. We are. We live in a world. We live in a culture. In which you're not allowed. To say anything's repellent. Repulsive. Apart from extremism.

Pedophilia. What else? Not much. Everything we have to tolerate. Everything we have to say. You know.

[33:39] That's their way. This is our way. That's okay. But here. The Bible is quite. Clear to say. That was abhorrent. It was appalling.

I just want to put in a plea. That we should. As Christians. Retain. The ability. To say. Spiritually. That is appalling. I don't want to go. Anywhere near that.

And I suspect. We get. That is. Constantly eroded. Anyway. He got rid of his own. It says. He didn't get rid of the high places. Verse 14.

He did not remove the high places. Well. He didn't do. Everything that he could have done. But he did a lot. And he goes down. As somebody whose heart. Was in the right place. His heart.

Was. Where are we? Verse 14. Asa's heart. Was fully committed. To the Lord. All his life. The word is. Is a sort of. Peace word. He was in a peace relationship.

[34:35] With God. All his life. It's a good place to be. Isn't it? Walking. With the Lord. And there's a thing. About holiness.

Verse 15. The word. Holy. Appears in there. And it's difficult. To bring that out. In English translation. But it's something like. He holy. It says. He brought into the temple.

The silver and gold. And the. Articles. That he and his father. Had dedicated. And if you did a very clunky translation. You'd say. He holy. Fied the holy things.

That his father. Had holy. Fied. It's three times. It says. He. Brought in holy things. He offered. In a holy way. And in that way.

He's an example. To follow. You can compare. To the Christian life. That there are things. That we should get rid of. We should be getting rid of things. Romans 8.13 says.

[35:31] If. By the spirit. Of God. You kill. You get rid of. The deeds of the flesh. You shall live. So the Christian life.

Contains within it. One dimension of it. Is. A killing dimension. We kill off. We strangle. We mortify. The sins.

Of. Our flesh. So. Can I just remind us. That we're supposed to be doing that. We're not meant to just coast along. Patting ourselves on the back. And allowing ourselves.

Everything that we feel. That we might. Want to do. There are some things. That we should be actively. Killing off. You know. Covetousness. Greed. Gossip.

Unbelief. Complaining. You know. Make a list yourself. And. We should also. Simultaneously. Be making holy offerings.

[36:27] And the Bible talks about this. Present your bodies. As a living sacrifice. Which is. Your. Your reasonable worship. Holy and pleasing to God.

We should be constantly making holy offerings. Get a similar text in Hebrews. About. Praise. And hospitality. And good deeds.

With such. Offerings. God is well pleased. So. We're looking then. Secondly. At Asa. And there's some good things. About Asa. And he gives us a model.

Of. Walking with God. But. But. So. He's. In some ways. He's a. A reasonable model.

But. He is certainly not. The savior. Savior. So. You remember this promise to David. It says that somebody's going to come. And be the king.

[37:20] Forever. And we might be thinking. Asa. You're the man. You're going to rule. You're going to be the savior. The Bible is going to be quite short. Because the rest of it.

The rest of the Old Testament. That's not. Not going to happen. Because we've now got the savior already. Unfortunately not. God. Because the next part of the chapter. Tells us about.

Him being a dud. A dud. A failure. Not the real thing. So let's look at. A little bit. At this.

Dud. Factor. So verse. Sixteen. There was war between Asa and Baasha. King of Israel.

Throughout their reigns. Baasha. King of Israel.

Went up against Judah. And fortified Ramah. To prevent. Sorry. To prevent anyone leaving or entering the territory of Asa. King of Judah. I haven't done a map. But you could imagine it.

[38:13] There's a border. So let's imagine a border. Asa. And a road going north south. And Baasha. Plants. A city. Right on the border. Sort of looking across.

If they had guns in those days. Which they didn't. The guns would have been pointing right across the border. And threatening. The southern kingdom. So what.

Is Asa to do? Now that's the big question. So we could have a little. Thing which said. What would you have done. If you had been Asa.

And you might have a little thing. Around your wrist. Which said. What would Asa have done? Well what did Asa do? It's cutting a long story short.

Maybe he had a cabinet meeting. Maybe he. Consulted. People. I don't know. But this is what he ended up doing. Verse 18. He took all the silver and gold.

[39:10] That was left in the treasuries of the Lord's temple. And of his own palace. He entrusted it to his officials. And sent them to Ben-Hadad. King of Aram.

So again. I haven't done you a map. But if this is Judah down here. Israel there. Then Syria. Aram. Is further north. Next kingdom.

Up. And what he says is. To the king of Aram. Verse 19. Let there be a treaty between me and you. As there was between my father and your father.

See I'm sending you a gift of silver and gold. The word gift there. Is almost always translated bribe. So let's be honest. I'm sending you a bribe.

Of silver and gold. Break your treaty with Baashar. King of Israel. So that he will withdraw from me. So you've already got a treaty. Between you in the far north.

[40:07] And then the north kingdom. I want you to break that treaty. And I want you Baashar. To attack him in the north. And then he'll stop building this city in the south.

And send all his troops up north. And he won't have time. To be building this city near my borders. With the guns facing across to me. And that's of course exactly what happened. Verse 20.

Ben had agreed with King Asa. Sent the commanders of his forces. Against the towns of Israel. So he attacks up in the north. Place where Jesus was later going to live. Naphtali.

Kinnereth. Round there. When Baashar heard this. He suddenly gets a text. They're attacking us up in the north. He says right.

Quick. We'll send all the troops up north. To defend that. And while he does that. Asa says to all his guys. And he sends out a mass email to them.

[41:04] You're all going to come. While Baashar is up in the north. You're going to come to Ramah. We'll knock it all down. Take the stones and the wood. We'll build our own fortresses.

Looking over across at them. And everybody says great idea. And off they go and do it. Verse 22. King Asa issued an order to all Judah. No one was exempt.

They carried away from Ramah. The stones and the timber. Baashar had been using there. And with them King Asa built up. Geba in Benjamin. And Mizpah. So that's what he did.

And it worked. And you might well say. Good on you. You might well say. If I'd been him. If I'd thought of it. I would have done that too. Seems like a good scheme. To make allies of Syria up in the north.

[42:04] Well didn't David do that? He made a. Didn't he make a treaty with Hiram of Tyre? And they built the temple? I mean. What's not to like?

Using holy things from the temple. As a bribe. I don't know. I thought they were holy things. I thought we've just spent.

A long time building them up. And offering them to the Lord. I didn't realize they were negotiable. I didn't realize you could take those holy things. And use them as a bribe.

I didn't realize you could do that. And Asa says. Well come on. Get real. This is. You know. This is real life. Should holiness be part of a negotiation? Should.

The Davidic king. Be. Encouraging. Other people to break their covenants.

[43:03] In the Bible. A covenant is a very important thing. And even if it's made with a bad person. You really have to think twice. Before you break a covenant. So I think that the writer of kings.

Is flagging up to us. This was not actually as good a move. As it looked like. And if you were to go to 2 Chronicles 16. Would you come with me to 2 Chronicles 16.

So you need to go a little bit further forward. So the writer of Chronicles. So the writer of Chronicles. Is much less diplomatic. In his description of.

These events. In 2 Chronicles 16. Verse 7. Same thing. Told again in another story. Another book of the Bible.

At that time. Hanani the seer. Came to Asa king of Judah. And said to him. Because you relied on the king of Aram. And not on the Lord your God.

[44:06] The army of the king of Aram. Has escaped your hand. And then in verse 9. It says. For the eyes of the Lord. Range throughout the earth.

To strengthen those whose hearts. Are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing. And from now on. You will be at war. And it's interesting.

In Chronicles. It says. Let's not beat about the bush. Asa. That was a stupid thing to do. It was not a right thing to do.

It was very shrewd. And it actually worked. But it was not the right way. For a king of Israel. To behave. You should have.

Relied on the Lord. But you relied on your strategy. You relied on perhaps your counsellors. You relied on the fact. That you could control this process.

[45:01] And you could see how it would work. And it did work. But you shouldn't have done it. It was a foolish thing to do. You did not rely on the Lord. So our very simple point.

With the boys and girls. Actually turns out to be a very profound point. For this king. And it's. And the matter of the. The disease.

In verse 12. It says. Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Although his disease was severe. Even in his illness. He did not seek help from the Lord. But only from the physicians.

The Bible doesn't say. Don't go to a doctor. But it says. If you go to a doctor. Don't. Imagine. That. The Lord looks after some things.

But doesn't look after other things. You have to trust. Doctors to do that. The Lord looks after the whole thing. And you must rely on the Lord.

[45:58] That must be your reliance. And sadly. Asa. Seems to have forgotten that. So some. Observations.

Asa. You were a good king. And you did good things. Over a long time. But something. Went wrong. Later on. In your career. We never get to the point.

Of maturity. That we can ever afford. To stop living by faith. So when you're a young person. People say.

Well you need to trust the Lord. Over. You know. Big things like. Who you decide to marry. Where you decide to live. What career you decide to have. You need to trust those things.

To the Lord. And as you go on in life. Most of those. Sorts of things. Are probably sorted. But you've still got to trust in the Lord. You've got to trust in the Lord.

[46:56] Now. Today. Whatever age you are. We live by faith. Don't ever stop thinking. That you live. In some other way.

No matter how senior you have become. No matter how competent you are. No matter how much experience you've had. No matter how big your pension pot. You must still. Trust.

In the Lord. God. And we also learn. That things can look like success. Because. Asa's plan worked. And everybody cheered him.

Well done Asa. Saved us. You've saved us. Things can look like success. But actually be a failure. Even churches. Can look successful.

But fail. Revelation 3.1. Says to that church. You have a reputation. Of being a big. Important. Successful church. But I know you're actually dead. On the inside.

[47:51] That's a. It's an important point. Isn't it? We're to live by faith. Whether we've got a full. Building. Or an empty one.

Whether we've got new. Carpets. And new chairs. Or whether we. Had the floorboards. We've still got to live by faith. As a church. That's. The way.

Otherwise we're foolish. And there are some boundaries. That faith ought. To refuse to cross. Like Daniel and the food. He had a boundary there.

Do you remember Daniel? We're not going to eat that. Stuff. Just give us vegetables. He put a boundary. He said. Beyond this.

I will not go. That's a helpful thing. In the Christian life. You know. We need to have some boundaries. Don't we? That I will not do. I'm ever so glad.

[48:46] I wasn't Asa. If you'd been Asa. What would you have done? What would you have done? I think that's why.

The Lord told us. To pray that prayer. Lead us not into temptation. Lord please. Please don't put me in a position. Where the choices will be so difficult. And you know what I'm like.

That I'd make the wrong choice. In a big way. Don't lead us into temptation. It's a good prayer to pray. Well what do we learn from these chapters? Well at least the following.

The north teaches us. That God can be very patient. With stupid stubborn people. And that sin is repetitive. And unoriginal. And destructive.

And we'll see more about that. God willing. Next time. But from the south. We learn about this promise to David. That's the key. To their survival. A promise.

[49:43] Which. When you dig down. Stretches throughout. This history. Into eternity. And it's a promise. Fulfilled in Jesus.

That's the place for us to be secure. It's a promise to be received. By faith. From beginning to end. And a promise.

Where responsive people. Get rid of stuff. In their lives. And keep on doing that. And. Have holy things. That they dedicate to the Lord.

In their lives. And we learn that Jesus. Is the key to all this. As he always is. The perfect king. Jesus. Is the name we honor.

Jesus. Is the name we trust. Majestic name above all other names. Let's sing together.

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