

THE SPIRIT OF ASA
September 18, 2016 morning service
II Chronicles 15:1-2; 16:11-14

Take your Bible this morning and let's go to the book of II Chronicles over in the Old Testament and we're going to look at a little known personality. You know Saul and you know David and you know Solomon but Solomon's great grandson, his name was Asa, A-S-A. You know that Solomon, at the end of his reign, things were on a spiritual decline. Then came the transfer of the reign to a new king and another and finally as the kingdom was divided in Judah and Israel, that the king of Judah was Asa. He's given three chapters in the Chronicles, 14, 15, and 16. We're going to look at his life because I believe that Asa's life is a parable, is a picture of many of us individually, of churches like us and denominations like ours and nations like Israel as well as America. The spirit of Asa.

I hope you'll read all three of those chapters, look at them, and learn from them. Let's look in the word of God in II Chronicles 15, the middle chapter. Fourteen tells us about his early days and good things that went on there. As a matter of fact, chapter 14 and verse 2 says that Asa did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God. Then in chapter 15 we find these words in verses 1 and 2.

Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."¹

It reminds us of the words of two of these songs that Jon led this morning, that we are to seek Him, to be completely His. It reminds me of Jeremiah 29 and verse 13 that, "You will seek and find Me when you search for Me with what"? All of your heart. Asa started well but he ended in failure. Look in chapter 16 and verse 11.

Now, the acts of Asa from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even [don't miss this, even] in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians [he turned to the doctors but he wouldn't ask God to help him]. So Asa slept with his fathers, having died in the forty-first year of his reign. They buried him in his own tomb which he had cut out for himself in the city of David, and they laid him in the resting place which he had filled with spices of various kinds blended by the perfumers' art; and they made a very great fire for him.

It doesn't mean he was cremated. It meant they burnt the spices in a great way for Asa. Now let's think for a moment here together. Two things I want you to see

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about Asa. Number one. I want us to look at the faithfulness, the faithfulness of Asa and then we will conclude with the foolishness of Asa.

Do you ever think back when you became a Christian, some of you many years ago like me when I was a 10-year-old boy. Now I'm a 62-year-old man. Do you ever think that as you grew up as a youngster and as a teenager and you sought God and cried out after Him? I remember my first sermon. I never prayed so hard in all my life. One of our young men tonight in the church where he serves as a youth pastor up in Auburn is preaching his first sermon tonight and he sent me a word. He said, "Pastor, would you please pray for me?" Well first of all I laughed at him and then I prayed for him, alright? Because I know he's going to get better but he probably will never get more reliant on God than he is tonight. He's scared to death. Let me tell you, if he's not scared he's in trouble. Amen. He's just starting with such purity and honesty and saying, "O God, I can't but you can."

That's where Asa was. This is the great grandson of Solomon and they're in a downspout. Who taught this young man to love God? We don't know. Who influenced him? We don't know. Who raised him up and disciplined him? We don't know. Who told him to love God with all his heart? We don't know. All we know is chapter 14 and 15 tells us that Asa started strong and he did what was good and what was right in the sight of God. When he did what was good and right then four actions came to his life. Now listen to me. If you're going to continue to do what's good and right in the sight of God, these four actions are good actions for you. Let's look at them.

Number one. The first thing we have is in verse 3 of chapter 14. We find that he tore down some things. If you're ever going to have revival in your life personally, in our church collectively, in our nation we're going to have to tear down some things. Revival always involves the removal of some things from your life before God brings other things into your life.

Look in verse number 3 where it says: *for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherim.* Now what in the world does all that mean? Foreign altars, that meant that false gods came in. Last night in New York City there were explosions. We don't know all that happened there but in Minnesota a man wielding a machete-like knife cut people and he cried out in the name of Allah, "Is anyone here not a Muslim?" and those were the people he went after. He's brought a false god into America. Does that mean you don't love Muslims? Certainly not. Does that mean we don't have them as friends? No. We know them, we love them, but we acknowledge that there is but one true God, His name is Jehovah, and we must always lift up the name that's above every name. If you're offended by that, please don't leave today because I'm going to offend you some more.

You see, all these gods are not equal. There's but one God. Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life and no man gets to God but that he comes through Me." It's the exclusivity and that's where Asa came to. He said, "There's just one God so the foreign altars, they have to come down." The high places, these were the places where

they worshipped these false gods. He said, "They have to come down." He tore down the sacred pillars and the Asherim. The Asherim were pillars, columns that had been carved with pornographic, sensual, sexuality that went back to the false god of Baal, the god of fertility, and they set up these places of sexual perversion and pictures. Now America doesn't know anything about that, thank God. We don't call it Asherim but it's on your television and it's on your iPhone. It's on your iPad. It's everywhere you look.

Hear me, church, if you're going to have revival you've got to tear down the high places, the sensual, that that grabs your mind and your soul and takes you away from your passionate following of the living Christ. Asa. What do you need to remove? Love of money. Love of self. Pride. When God brings revival to a church, first of all, there's a tearing down and Asa did that in his nation.

Not only did he tear down, but he cried out. Look in verse number 11 of chapter 14. *Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one besides You [look at that narrow-minded man, no one besides You] to help in the battle [What is the battle? Well the Ethiopians have come against him. In verse 9 we find that Zerah, the Ethiopian had come out and they were fighting against him with an army of one million men and Asa didn't believe he could win the war and in verse number 11 he called out and said, "Lord, there's no God but you. Help us in the battle"] between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in You, and in Your name have come against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; let not man prevail against You."*

If you're going to have revival, you've got to tear down. Secondly, you've got to cry out. That's what we tried to do last Sunday night. Gatherings of 5 and 6 and 10,000 people are grand. They're wonderful and we ought to do it again but revival doesn't come when thousands get together. Revival begins to come when there are small pockets of two or three or four that get together on a consistent, regular basis. Your home, my home. Your office, my office. A third place like Starbucks. God knows they need prayer at Starbucks. It wouldn't hurt them at Waffle House either so just find you a place. Men and women are getting together in these small groups and begin to cry out.

I'm telling you, that is what – when our congressman, Jeff Miller, I love Brother Jeff. It's okay. I can be a little political because he hasn't run for reelection. He's on the way out and we understand that. He's not running anymore but he took me all over, Jon, all over the Capitol. We walked out on the balcony. They're getting ready in 50 some odd days. They are building now the stands for the inauguration of the next President of the United States. They're building that. Somebody's going to get elected and they're going to walk out there and make a speech and then they're going to put their hand up and put their hand on the Bible and they're going to say, "So help me God." You've got to know somebody that knows somebody to get to walk out on that balcony where we walked. It's just like going to heaven. It's who knows you. I'm telling you. Amen. And if Jesus doesn't know you, you're going to hell when you die but if you know Him, you're going to heaven.

Well we knew Jeff who knew this guy who knew this other guy. So we walked right out there and we just stood there like – I looked over at Jon. I said, “There’s not many people from Pisgah, Alabama that gets to come stand right here.” I called my momma. I said, “You ain’t going to believe right where I am. I’m looking right down the mall, old Washington monument standing way down there at the other end.” We were in high cotton. Do you know what they need in high cotton? They need to repent in high cotton. Congressman Miller took us there and we looked but he took us in several places. Washington’s prayer room. There’s a little chapel. There’s a beautiful window in there. He said, “There are many times, pastor, we slip off the floor and we come right in here and we get on our knees and we cry out, ‘O God, give us wisdom.’” This place and that place.

You’d be amazed how much prayer goes on. I was so encouraged because there are people there praying. There are chaplains that work and pray. I wrote the chaplain of the Congress this week after I got back. There’s another man there, Dan Cummings, who’s the chaplain of the Jefferson gathering who convened that deal Wednesday and introduced me to preach. Do you know where he preached his first sermon? He preached his first sermon as a kid preacher at Orchard Hills Baptist Church where I pastored before coming here. He said, “You know Ron and Liz Taylor?” I said, “She was my secretary in Garland.” He said, “Ron was my RA leader.” I said, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” I said, “Let’s take a picture.” We sent it to them.

You never know. That’s why we’ve got to do youth ministry here. You never know who God’s raising up. That’s what Blackout was about this weekend. That’s why we’re starting this Impact deal on Sunday night and we’re continuing to raise up. We must raise up these kids because you never know that somebody’s – I walked in to the congressional dining room with Jeff Miller and there sat the senator from Oklahoma. When I saw him he got up and he came walking over, “Pastor.” He has the deepest voice. He has a deeper voice than Adrian Rogers ever thought about having. Senator Lankford came to me, hugged me. He said, “We must make a picture.” I said, “Okay, sir.” We made a selfie. He said, “I must send this to my mother,” because when Senator Lankford was a student at Baylor University, his mother was a member at Orchard Hills in Garland. He came home very summer and listened to me preach three summers at Orchard Hills Baptist Church. Then ran Falls Creek Baptist Camp in Oklahoma. Then ran for the senate and is now a new senator in the United States Senate from Oklahoma. I said, “Here’s my number.” He flipped in and he said, “I’ve already got your number in my phone.” He sent me that picture.

What I’m telling you, church, is stay right with God. You never know who’s walking in here. You never know who we’re going to raise up. You never know who you’re going to disciple. They may one day sit in high places but more than likely they’re going to sit in low places and make a high difference. Be found faithful to cry out. Cry out, “O God, help us. We cannot overcome this Ethiopian but You can. You can.” Do not let man prevail against you.

What did Asa do? He tore down. He cried out. Number three, in chapter 15 and verse 8 I want you to look at this. He restored the altar. Look at this. Chapter 15, verse 8. *Now when Asa heard these words* [because those words we read, when the old prophet came to him and told him, “If you seek God you can find Him. If you ignore Him, God’ll ignore you.” Then Asa heard these words] *and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded the prophet spoke, he took courage and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then restored the altar of the Lord which was in front of the porch of the Lord.*

The altar was broken down. There was no worship going on. You’ve got to remove some things. You’ve got to cry out. Then you’ve got to build up and you restore the altar of God. It’s when you come here, it’s when we kneel, when we get on our face and we build an altar.

One of our young deacons, it’s his sixth anniversary. I did their wedding down at Christ Church six years ago today. They didn’t think they could have children. Finally they had a baby after many ups and downs and misses. He put on Facebook this morning a picture of his wife. He’s really smart. It was her face, his back. I typed in there. I said, “There’s a deacon that should be in the altar at Olive Baptist Church giving thanks today.” In the altar. Of course, I was just digging him a little bit but – do you have an altar? Do you have an altar where you pray? You say, “Preacher, I can’t come to church.” You don’t have to come to church to have an altar. You don’t need me to pray for you. You don’t need a priest to pray for you. There is one and His name is Jesus. The Bible says He is the High Priest. He is the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. You can pray on your own.

I love my Catholic friends. They come to me and often they call me father and they want me to pray for them. I say, “Well I’m not your father. I’m your brother. I will pray for you but you don’t have to go through me to get there. We have a High Priest. His name is Jesus and we cry out unto Him.” Do you have an altar? You see, what happens when revival comes, we tear some things down. Then we cry but then we restore the altars of worship. That’s what Asa did. The altar had been decimated and he rebuilt the altar of worship.

He tore down. He cried out. He restored the altar. Then number four, this is in chapter 15, verse 16. This probably is the hardest part. He had family purity. Now if you think Asa wasn’t sold out, I want you to look in chapter 15 and verse 16. *He also removed Maacah* [Who is she? Look at the next line.], *the mother of King Asa, from the position of queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah, and Asa cut down her horrid image, crushed it and burned it at the brook Kidron.*

Let me tell you, you’re sold out to Jesus when you’ll tell your momma that you’d rather serve the King as her. What did Jesus say? “I came to bring a sword sometimes to set a man against his brother.” You see, King Jesus is more important than your very blood family. If they won’t serve God you’ve got to serve God even without them. He

took his mother off the seat of being the queen mother. You think that cost Him? Yes, sir. Was it hard? Yes, sir. Dear friend, you cannot elevate your family above God. You must bring God above family to have family purity.

There is a dear family in this church that years ago had young children and they came to me and part of the family they had married into wanted to have their children baptized as infants. They said, "Pastor, we know we baptize believers at Olive. What should we do?" So we prayed and we know that baptism is for a believer and we don't throw rocks at that. We dedicate children here and I understand that baptismal commitment time. They took a gentle but firm stand and said, "We're going to let our kids wait until they trust Christ to be baptized." The family was not pleased. It was hard but they said, "It was amazing how they respected us when we said, 'This is not our opinion but God's opinion.'" We came to understand from scripture and when they said, "We were bowing to God rather than to family," they said great respect came. Not always agreement but they honored.

Dear friend, for some of you, you'll have to make a hard family decision if you're going to follow God and Asa did it with family purity. Some of you need to begin to pray with your wife. Some of you need to love on your kids. Some of you need to call your family to accountability, to family purity. Yes, indeed we do.

Well Asa was a man of faithfulness and that was the first ten years of his life. Then almost a little over 20 more years go by before we get into chapter 16. Twenty years of silence go by and something changed. Something changed. Asa became apathetic. His heart used to be hot but now it was cold. The Ethiopians had come against him and he'd cried out to God and God had helped him. But now the Israelites came against. He's in Judah there in Israel. In chapter 16 we find that Baasha, the king of Israel came up against Judah and rather than pray he had enough money to buy himself out. So he hired Ben-hadad, the king of Aram and he took care of it. They're all up there having a party and, "Hallelujah, we figured this out," and a preacher showed up. "O God help us." As you get down to verse 7 and Hanani the seer came and he said to him: *"Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand."*

When your heart gets cold, even though you've had great days before, when you walk into foolishness there's some things that happen. Number one, you become foolish when you trust men more than you trust God. Now that's what he did right here. He began to trust Ben-hadad rather than the Lord God who'd given him victory. Now they got victory. They won the battle but they won it the wrong way. So many times I'll hear in people's lives, "You know, it worked." Dear friend, it's not important only that it works. It's only important if it's right. Sometimes when it's right you don't think it works but let me tell you, it works the best for longevity when it's right. He trusted God. No he didn't. He trusted men more than he trusted God and he was taking the Lord for granted.

Not only did he trust men more than he trusted God in verse 1 of chapter 16, secondly, in verse 7 he ignored the prophetic teaching. In verse 7: *Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand."* In verse 9, he says, "Listen to me, King Asa, listen." Here's what the preacher said: *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."* [Listen to me. God is looking down today across Canada and America and Mexico and Europe and Asia and Africa and His eyes are going to and fro and if He finds somebody whose heart is completely His, He'll find you in the pew at Olive and if your heart is His, He's going to show Himself strong. But Asa,] *You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."* When God was looking He saw unbelief. He saw no faith. He saw a man trusting man rather than God and He saw a man that was ignoring prophetic teaching.

I want you to listen to your pastor. Not every preacher in the world is a prophet or truthful. There are a lot of us that are false prophets and all of us bungle it at times but this church has been based on this book and it is our job to expose this book to you and expose you to this book. When the word of God comes preached from this stand as the old timers used to call it, you need to give heed to the word of God and when we ignore scripture, God ignores us. That's what He said. If your heart's full of His, His will be toward you. If you forsake Him, He forsakes you. I'm not talking about losing your salvation. We believe in being saved once and saved forever but in this life when God turns His head and ignores you, you're in a bad way when He just gives you over to yourself and lets you go your own way.

Asa was a fool because he trusted men more than he trusted God. He was a fool because he ignored prophetic teaching but now watch this in verse number 10. He was a fool because he displayed anger not repentance. Look in verse 10. *Then Asa [after he heard from this prophet] was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.*

Then in that last text that we read, God cursed him and he got neuropathy in his feet. He was sick in his feet and he couldn't walk and he still trusted doctors instead of trusting God and he died and they buried him.

Verse 10 is where America is today. I have never seen people so mad in all my life. Angry. They get angry if you blow the horn. There are angry drivers. I was getting off the plane coming from D.C. this week. There was an angry man behind me. There was a fellow that was kind of crippled and moving slow and that guy said, "Excuse me!" He just kind of ran over that guy. He couldn't hardly move. We got outside the plane, the jet way, and I looked up to get my next flight and he came running by me and said, "Excuse me!" I just pushed my deal out in front of him. I just turned around and I said, "Sir, there's two lanes here. There's no need hollering at me. I ain't moving." I'm amazed how angry people are. I'm not talking about the guy on the plane now, alright?

Mad people. I'm amazed how angry people are in church when they don't get their way. Just quit. Just get angry. We haven't even moved into the racial tension in our world yet. Oh my Lord. You can't even go to the ballgame now and sing the national anthem. People get mad. It's amazing days we live in. You see, there's just an anger that seethes. It's underneath and it just bubbles and boils. Half the time people don't even know what they're mad about. They're just angry people. I'm going to tell you why they're angry. They've turned their back on God. They've not sought the altar. They've sought their own goal. They've sought their own God. They've not built a place to know the Lord and when you leave man to himself he just gets to brooding and he gets mad and some of you don't like me right now. I can tell by looking at you and I've been here long enough I don't give a rip. Now I really do. I like you but I'm not going to change because I don't like you that much. Now if I offend I'm going to say I'm sorry if in my action but, you see, we've got to move past this anger business. When they heard the man of God speak the truth of God away and say, "He got mad," God said, "That's alright, I'll just let you get angry but you're done."

It's where we are nationally. America just seems to say, "We don't need God anymore." We're mad about a bunch of stuff so we vote against God. We make laws against God. I've said this here before and you've heard me on this. The ruling of the Supreme Court on same sex marriage is – when we've redefined marriage we're not any longer on a slippery slope. We've jumped off a cliff because you can make anything now. You can make any law now. All logic is out the door. It just is. You can make anything that you feel like is right. Just make it the law of the land. So that's where we've gone down to.

We ate – I found it very interesting – Jon and I ate at the same little place twice right across from the Capitol. It's where John Boehner, I've been told, ate every day when he was in congress. Pete's Diner. It's not as big as this choir loft. Boy, the food was great. We finished up. Before we left I stepped back to the restroom right there in D.C. next to the Capitol. There were two bathrooms and both of them had a sign on it, men or women. It had a little man sign and a woman, you know with the dress and the guy, and a dress and a guy. So you could just use either one of them. So I did. I went in this one and then went in that one. Because I went two days. I was there twice. I just thought, well that's the sign of our times. This is where we are.

When are you going to stop having men and women's 100 yard dash and just have a 100 yard dash? The fastest human wins. Isn't that where that takes us? No, because it's stupid. Men are faster collectively than women. They're collectively stronger. I know women that can whip half the men in this room but that is the minority report. A couple are members of this church that I'm glad they're on my side.

You see, we've just, we've lost our mind. Romans says something about, "I will just give you up to yourself." That's where we are nationally. We get there ecclesiastically. When we trust money more than we do the Master. It's easy at Olive. You know, there was a day when we really worried and the day could come again when we'd really worry but we don't worry so much about the budget anymore because

people are faithful and I think do a pretty good job raising. You know, we can move forward and do good but, you know, it's easy just to say, "We can just keep going. We don't even need God."

Let me tell you, down there last Sunday night, I needed God. I prayed over that offering. I was on the hook for that. Joey Rogers and myself, we had to pay that and I knew he didn't have nothing. I knew him well enough he wasn't going to pay. God did a good work.

You see, if we're not careful we'll trust our own might rather than the strength of God. We're there individually when you ignore the proclamation of truth for manmade remedies.

Asa, faithful and foolish. So which one are you? Faithful or foolish? You're one of the two. Brother Jon, I want you to come and we're going to close a little different today. While Jon plays I want us just to pray for a minute. I'll give you direction and we'll be gone. Would you just, without anybody moving around or opening a door or any of that, would you just with a friend pray? Just one of you pray. Like Kim and Greg on the front row, they'll be together and one of them can just say, "Okay, my turn." You pray. You say, "Pastor, what do I pray?" I want you to pray for faithfulness to reign in your own life. Help me not be foolish. Teach me, Lord, how to be faithful. So one of them will pray. Heidi's here with his family. Hey, Adam. Good to see you, buddy. You have a friend with you today. Bring her to see me after church. I just saw you there. Keith and David will pray here. That'll be good. Amen.

We'll just pray. One of you pray. Just one person and pray that God would make you faithful. Just let faithfulness rule. In a moment I'll collectively lead us. Build an altar. Do it right now.