Message uploaded

                                      Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord

1 Kings 15:1-34

Key Verse 15:11

“Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done.”

When I was in high school there were two bibles in my house although no one in my house was a believer. We even despised Christians at that time.

One bible was given when my present brother-in-law had a romance with my older sister who was 6 years older than I. I still vividly remember what he wrote to my sister in the bible. Another one is what my older brother who was 3 years older than I bought. From time to time my older brother said to me, “I want to believe.” I had no idea what he was talking about. Now he has become a pastor and I understand what it means.

From time to time I also looked at the bible and opened it out of pure curiosity, and I do not know how I ended up paying attention to Romans chapter 7. Although I was spiritually completely blind what he said in Romans chapter 7 really made sense to me. At that time my main concern and problem was how to do well in my school studies. So what Paul said, “I do not do what I want to do but I keep on doing what I hate to do” comes to me, “I do not study hard but goofing around and wasting my time.” I also unconsciously suffered from anger problems. I fought with my brother many times out of anger. So I wanted to know the solution. As I read it more my eyes caught Romans 8:2. It was written at that time something along the line, “The law of the Spirit that gives life set me from the law of sin and death.” In today’s version it read, ‘set you’ free instead of ‘me’. The word “me” caught my attention. I did not know who wrote the Romans. But the word “me” caught me because I realized the person who wrote it finally got the solution. Even after I was born again from time to time I read those verses and I was wondering why I do not experience salvation from the Lord described in the book of Romans. I know I have been born again and was saved. But I was not enjoying salvation from Jesus fully. I suffered from all kinds of sins such as lust, anger, fear, powerlessness just to name a few. In a way I lived a double life as a Christian.

Now after 50 years of my high school when I started to read Romans chapter 7 and it made perfect sense to as a student at that time, I know something more than I knew at that time.

How can we do what is right in the eyes of the Lord? As students, how can we study properly without wasting our time? How can we not fight with our siblings? As Christians how can we experience true freedom and salvation in Jesus Christ? That is what I am trying to answer through today’s message. Like all of you, I want to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord as Asa and David did.

My message has two parts.

Part I. Abijah and Asa, kings of Judah (v.1-24)

Part II. Nadab and Baasha, king of Israel (v.25-34)

Part I. Abijah and Asa, kings of Judah (v.1-24)

**Abijah king of Judah (v.1-8)**

**Verses 1-5.**

**In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah, 2 and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother’s name was Maakah daughter of Abishalom.**

**3 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. 4 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. 5 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 case of Uriah the Hittite.**

Abijah became king of Judah in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat in the northern kingdom. Jeroboam ruled for twenty-two years. So Abijah became king of Judah 5 years before Jeroboam’s death.

But his reign was short, only three years. He died before Jeroboam died.

The name of Abijah’s mother was Maakah daughter of Abishalom. Probably Abishalom may refer to Absalom who was a son of David.

Now 3 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.

Abijah committed all the sins his father had done before him. His father refers to Rehoboam.

Rehoboam set up high places, sacred stones, and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. He allowed male shrine prostitutes in the lands, and under his leadership people of Israel practiced all kinds of idol worshipping of the nations who lived there. They sinned more than all the unbelieving pagans who lived there before them. (1 Kings 14:22-24)

**1 King 14:22-24 22 Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than those who were before them had done. 23 They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. 24 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.**

And Abjjah committed all the sins his father had done before him. He did not miss any sin his father Rehoboam had done. His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. Abjiah both worshipped the Lord, the God of Israel, but at the same time he worshipped idols. His heart was always divided. When he was in the Lord’s temple, he worshiped the Lord. But for the rest of the time his heart was devoted to idols.

But verse 4 says, “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.**”**

Nevertheless for David’s sake the Lord gave him a lamp in Jerusalem. The Lord did by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong.

The reason the Lord works for David’s sake is explained in verse 5.

5 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 case of Uriah the Hittite.

That is the description of David from the Lord. His obedience for the Lord’s commands is emphasized by double negatives, ‘had not failed to keep any of the Lord’s commands’.

As we read kings, we find the description of David as the man who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying his decrees and commands. David was used as the standard measure for all other kings. In other words, “Doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying his commands” is the key standard to judge all the kings.

“Doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord”. Here the key point is “In the eyes of the Lord.” We all do most things without thinking about “Is what I say and do right in the eyes of the Lord?”

However, the Lord measures all of what we say and do according to “What is right before his eyes.” So it is a wonderful practice to check whenever we say or do “Is what I say or do right in the eyes of the Lord?” Then we will grow spiritually and experience salvation in Jesus Christ all the more which means ‘freedom’ from sin.

Now obviously Abijah, king of Judah, did evil in the eyes of the Lord following his father Rehoboam’s terrible sins. But the Lord showed great mercy on him for David’s sake. When David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying his commands, his descendants experienced the Lord’s mercy. This is encouraging for all parents who want the best things for their children. If we do what is right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying his commands, our children can experience the mercy of the Lord even when they make mistakes.

Now the Lord raised up a son for David’s sake because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying his commands. When Jesus came he did the same thing.

**John 14:30-31**

**30 I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, 31 but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. “Come now; let us leave.**

Jesus did what was right in the eyes of his Father by obeying exactly what his Father has commanded him. What did his Father command him? It was to be crucified.

**1 Peter 2:24**

**24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”**

When Jesus did what was right in the eyes of his Father by obeying his commands, salvation was given to all people.

**Verses 6-8**

**6 There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam throughout Abijah’s lifetime. 7 As for the other events of Abijah’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 8 And Abijah rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Asa his son succeeded him as king.**

2           Chronicles show Abijah’s victory against Jeroboam in a war because he relied on the Lord. Abijah reigned in only three years and rested with his ancestors.

**Asa king of Judah (v.9-15)**

**Verses 9-15**

**9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, 10 and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother’s name was Maakah daughter of Abishalom.**

**11 Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done. 12 He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made. 13 He even deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down and burned it in the Kidron Valley. 14 Although he did not remove the high places, Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life. 15 He brought into the temple of the Lord the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.**

Here Asa’s reformation is described. The main job he did was to remove all idols. He did not remove the high places probably because they were used to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.

Asa expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land, and got rid of all idols his ancestors had made. He even deposed his own grandmother for his idol worship. Although Asa did not remove the high places, his heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life. He also brought into the temple the silver and gold and the articles which he and his father had dedicated.

The highlight of his reformation happened in the 15th year of Asa’s reign according to 2 Chronicles.

**2 Chronicles 15:10-14.**

**10 They assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa’s reign. 11 At that time they sacrificed to the Lord seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from the plunder they had brought back. 12 They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. 13 All who would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. 14 They took an oath to the Lord with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns.**

Now look at verses 16-22.

**Verses 16-22**

**16 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns. 17 Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah.**

**18 Asa then took all the silver and gold 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 son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. 19 “Let there be a treaty between me and you,” he said, “as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me.”**

**20 Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maakah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. 21 When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah. 22 Then King Asa issued an order to all Judah—no one was exempt—and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using there. With them King Asa built up Geba in Benjamin, and also Mizpah.**

The war of Asa with Baasha happened at the 36th year of reign of king Asa. Asa ruled 41 years. Until 35th years, Asa did a fantastic job. But something happened in his 36th year. It was a war with Baasha.

There are more stories right after verse 22 in today’s passage in 2 Chronicles. They are recorded in 2Chr 16:7-10.

**2 Chronicles 16:7-10**

**7 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, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. 8 Were not the Cushites[ and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. 9 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.” 10 Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people.**

Asa was a great king. But like David and us, he also made a critical mistake. Why is relying on  the king of Aram through silver and gold such a huge issue in the eyes of the Lord? When we rely on money rather than the Lord to solve our problems, what is so wrong with it?

It is a serious problem because relying on money means making money as our idols.

Everything and anything and any person on whom we rely on other than God himself can be our idols. Especially many times we rely on ourselves, thus making ourselves as our own idols.

For money becoming our idols

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24 “24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.**

When Asa relied on silver and gold instead of the Lord, the silver and gold became his idols. He became an idol worshipper in that way.

There is one more reason why Asa relied on silver and gold. It is because relying on silver and gold is the easy way. We all know money talks. We all know the power of money. So to rely on silver and gold is easy. Asa just needed to issue a command to collect silver and gold and send it to the king of Aram.

But to rely on the Lord comes with pain and suffering. In order to rely on the Lord he needed to pray and even fast. Is prayer or fasting easy? No, not at all. At the same time relying on the Lord comes with spiritual battles with fear and doubts. Fear and doubts will attack Asa when he wants to rely on the Lord. For example, many thoughts of fear and doubts will try to enter his mind such as “What if the Lord does not answer your prayer? Look at the bible. The Lord may not answer your prayer this time as if he did not answer the prayers of many people for some unknown reason. But you will be doomed if the Lord does not answer your prayer.”

But to send silver and gold Asa did not need to go through all those troubles and self-denial and prayer.

Now let us think about Asa’s anger. Asa was angry with the seer. He was so enraged that he put him in prison.

Where does his anger come from? His judgment on what Hanani said. Asa judged what Hanani said was wrong. So he became angry. We can clearly see anger which comes from his passing judgment on what Hanani said was the starting point of his downfall.

Why did Asa fail to control his anger? Why did Asa fail to obey the Lord’s command “Do not judge”?

From his example, let us think about how we can do what is right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying his commands. There are four things we need to learn.

First, we need to know that one of the functions of the commandments of God. They were given to maintain our salvation in the Lord. We know we cannot be saved by obeying the commands of God. But the commands of God were given to maintain our salvation which we received through faith in Jesus.

It is because sin comes into our minds again when we disobey the commands of God after we are saved from sins through faith in Jesus. Sin is lawlessness. Sin is disobedience of God’s commands.

Second, we need to reject sins such as anger when it tries to enter into our mind and thoughts. In order to do so, we need to know those sins do not belong to our true self. They belong to our sin which is not our true self. What is our true self? Our true self is Jesus Christ because we are united with him in his death and resurrection when we are born again.

Knowing that our sins such as anger do not belong to our true self is very important. It makes it so easy for us to reject it once we know it does not belong to us.

Too many times we think sins such as anger are a part of ourselves and it is very difficult to overcome it.

I believe there are bible verses that show what I am trying to say.

Apostle Paul said in **Romans 7:15-20**

**15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.**

These verses sound complicated but they talk about very simple real life experiences. If you are a student, you want to study hard using all your available time. But sometimes you waste your time watching YouTube. You want to be kind to your siblings but many times you fight and argue. You want to overcome your addictions such as drugs or anger but you periodically fall into it.

In these verses twice Paul says it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. In the past these verses confused me. I was saying, “So, am I not responsible for my sinning because it is not I who does it but the sin living in me that does it?”

But now I see one reason what the Lord is trying to say through these verses.

It is to recognize our sin such as anger as sin instead of part of our true selves. What I mean is that to recognize that our sin does not come from our true self is the very important step for our victory against our sin.

I will try to show one example to deliver my point. During a pandemic many unusual things happened. One thing I experienced is that I was not able to return the table bike chair even after I was refunded. (show a picture)

It happened around last summer. I ordered a desk bike chair from Amazon, and it was worth around $350.00. This table comes with a desk and a chair with a bicycle. The idea is you can work at your table and you can also exercise, bicycling. After I received it through Fedex, I soon found that I did not need it. It was too heavy and too bulky in my living room. So I tried to return it. In the course of doing it, I got refunded. But I had trouble returning it because I was not able to find out the return address. I tried to contact the company by email but there was no response whatsoever. There was no address of the sending company, just its name on the label. So, I went to the internet and searched the address of the company based on its name. But there was no company address available. Still I tried to send it back. I told one Fedex guy, “Just take it away. You brought it. So you just track the record of your company where you picked it up and drop it in the place where you pick it up.” He said, “If you do, it will be delivered to your door again because that is the address the label has”.

After trying several times, finally the Fedex guy told me, “Just take it as a gift. Or if you want you can donate it. These companies make tons of money these days.” So I could not return it although I tried. So it is in my garage. If anyone wants to try, I will give it to you.

Now

Now why was I trying to return the table so many times? I did it because that was not mine. Now that is my point. We need to treat our sins in the same way. We need to return to the sender because they do not belong to our true selves.

When we are angry with someone because we judge the person, we need to know our anger or judgment does not belong to our true self. Where do they belong? They belong to our sin and our enemy.

As if I tried to return the desk bike chair because that is not mine, we should try to return our anger that tries to come into our minds because they do not belong to our true self. We should reject it.

To recognize our sin as our sin and knowing that it does not come from our true self is a very important step of our spiritual victory against our sin. Then who is our true self? Our true self is in Jesus Christ because we are united with Christ when we are born again. That is why his death becomes our death and his resurrection becomes our resurrection.

Third, there is one more thing that we need to reject. We need to reject others’ words and actions that do not come from their true self, that is Christ. Knowing those hurtful words and actions do not come from our neighbor’s true heart makes it so easy for us to reject it.

You know we are sinners and we sin. We make mistakes in our words and actions. When others say and do what is contrary to the character of Christ, we just reject them. We need to reject them because they are not from their true self. They are just the mistakes of our neighbors. We should not take their hurtful words of actions personally and be wounded. In doing so we can truly love our neighbors and love one another and bear each other’s weaknesses.

If we do not understand this, our life is full of troubles. Sometimes we want to go to all our neighbors and correct their hurtful words and actions. We have difficulty changing ourselves. How much more challenging it is when we want to correct all our neighbors? The better way is to protect ourselves from our neighbor’s hurtful words and actions, understanding they come from their enemies instead of their true heart.

Four, we need to believe in the power of the Lord. Rejecting our sins is not enough. We need to go to Christ who has the power to deliver us from our sins. To believe the authority of the Lord and his power was given to us is the most important part of our spiritual warfare, and this is where our enemy attacks the most through deception.

That is why Paul said in **Romans 7:24-25a “24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**

Jesus Christ is our Lord. The word, “Lord” means the one who has all authority and power in heaven and on earth. His power is infinitely greater than all the power of our sin and death including the power of anger. The faith in the power of our Lord Jesus is what we need the most. We must believe the Lord has given us his power through his Spirit.

Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the world of sin because they do not believe in me. Unbelief in Jesus is the greatest sin because it opened the floodgates of all other sins.

Asa could have rejected his anger and rely on the Lord who has raised him up and given him the victories for the last 35 years, but he failed this time.

 But he did not come to the Lord and asked his help. But he became a prisoner of his anger when he imprisoned Hanani and brutally oppressed some people.

**2 Chronicles 16:12-13**

**12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians. 13 Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his ancestors.**

This is the account of Asa’s last days. He got a disease in his feet three years after he imprisoned Hanani. Although his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians.

We may not seek the Lord when everything goes well with us. But we seek the Lord’s help when our disease is severe. But Ada did not do so. Why? Because he was still so mad at God. Then he died two years later after the disease.

His failure shows the importance of our response when we are corrected. We should make every effort not to sin. But we all make mistakes and sins. Even such great men of God like David sinned and Asa sinned. But our proper response is so important when we are corrected.

Both David and Asa sinned, and we know David’s sin was far worse. But both of them responded totally differently when they were corrected.

When prophet Nathan corrected David’s sin he humbly accepted his sin and repented. But Asa only became angry. Since we all sin and make mistakes we want to follow the good example of David rather than Asa.

**Verses 23-24**

**23 As for all the other events of Asa’s reign, all his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? In his old age, however, his feet became diseased. 24 Then Asa rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of his father David. And Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king.**

Part II. Nadab and Baasha, king of Israel (v.25-34)

**Nadab king of Israel (v.25-26)**

**Verses 25-26**

**25 Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. 26 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the ways of his father and committing the same sin his father had caused Israel to commit.**

Nadab was the son of Jeroboam. He only ruled for two years. But in fact, just over a year. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord following his father’s ways and committing the same sin. That was worshipping the golden calf, consecrating priests from all sorts of people, having feast on their own time.

**Baasha king of Israel (v.27-34)**

**27 Baasha son of Ahijah from the tribe of Issachar plotted against him, and he struck him down at Gibbethon, a Philistine town, while Nadab and all Israel were besieging it. 28 Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa king of Judah and succeeded him as king.**

**29 As soon as he began to reign, he killed Jeroboam’s whole family. He did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed, but destroyed them all, according to the word of the Lord given through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite. 30 This happened because of the sins Jeroboam had committed and had caused Israel to commit, and because he aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel.**

Baasha killed Nadab in the third year when Nadab and all Israel were besieging at Gibbethon. Obviously, there was a battle between Philistines and Nadab. During the war, Baasha operated a military coup and killed Nadab. As soon as he began to reign he killed Jeroboam’s whole family, not leaving anyone that breathed.

The Lord promised Jeroboam a dynasty as enduring as the one he built for David. It means 400 or 500 years of dynasty. But Jeroboam’s dynasty ended about one year after his death. It lasted only 23 years, 22 years of his reign and 1 more year for his son. And anyone that breathed, men, women, children, infants, were killed, and his house was wiped out from the face of the earth. They were completely destroyed. The Lord is patient. But when we keep rebelling against him, his judgment is for sure, and his judgment is thorough.

**Verses 31-34**

**31 As for the other events of Nadab’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? 32 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns.**

**33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king of all Israel in Tirzah, and he reigned twenty-four years. 34 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.**

Today, we learned how we can do what is right in the eyes of the Lord by obeying the commands of God. First, we need to understand that the commands of God are given to us not to save us but to maintain our salvation in Jesus Christ. It is because sin comes into our minds again when we disobey the commands of God. Sin is breaking the commands of God. Secondly, we need to reject and return to the sender when the sin is trying to enter into our minds. It is because our true self is united with Christ.

Thirdly, we need to reject the words and actions of our neighbors when they do not come from the Lord. They are just their mistakes. In doing so we can truly love our neighbors and bear each other’s weaknesses. Lastly, we need to rely on the Lord’s power who has all authority and power over all the powers of our sins and death.

Our proper response when we are corrected is very important for our victory over our sins when we see Asa’s mistake.

One word:  Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord