

ATTAINING SPIRITUAL COMPLETION: THE LIFE OF ASA PART I

2 Chronicles 14:1-15

¹When Abijah died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Asa became the next king. There was peace in the land for ten years, ²for Asa did what was pleasing and good in the sight of the LORD his God. ³He removed the pagan altars and the shrines. He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles. ⁴He commanded the people of Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his law and his commands. ⁵Asa also removed the pagan shrines, as well as the incense altars from every one of Judah's towns. So Asa's kingdom enjoyed a period of peace. ⁶During those peaceful years, he was able to build up the fortified cities throughout Judah. No one tried to make war against him at this time, for the LORD was giving him rest from his enemies. ⁷Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the LORD our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion.

⁸King Asa had an army of 300,000 warriors from the tribe of Judah, armed with large shields and spears. He also had an army of 280,000 warriors from the tribe of Benjamin, armed with small shields and bows. Both armies were composed of courageous fighting men.

⁹Once an Ethiopian named Zerah attacked Judah with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots. They advanced to the city of Mareshah, ¹⁰so Asa deployed his armies for battle in the valley north of Mareshah. ¹¹Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God, "O LORD, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O LORD, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"

¹²So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians in the presence of Asa and the army of Judah, and the enemy fled. ¹³Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar, and so many Ethiopians fell that they were unable to rally. They were destroyed by the LORD and his army, and the army of Judah carried off vast quantities of plunder. ¹⁴While they were at Gerar, they attacked all the towns in that area, and terror from the LORD came upon the people there. As a result, vast quantities of plunder were taken from these towns, too. ¹⁵They also attacked the camps of herdsmen and captured many sheep and camels before finally returning to Jerusalem.

Could you imagine what life would look like if we fail to complete our responsibilities? What will happen if your car needed all four tires replaced, but the mechanic only changed three of them? What might your boss do to you if you only perform eighty percent of your responsibilities at work? What if a runner only runs a half-mile in a one mile race?

The point is obvious here. We function well as a society when each of us completes our responsibilities in life. When our tasks are done half-heartedly, the very structure that holds society together falls apart and we get hurt. If you always under-perform at work, you will get fired. If you fail to run a mile in a one-mile

race, your coach will boot you off the team. If your mechanic fails to change all the tires, there is a great chance you will be involved in a tire accident.

The principle of *completion* is a common-sensical idea. Much success in life greatly depends on things being completed. We depend on one another to get things done. We even use the principle of *completion* to explain imprecise ideas such as love. One of the greatest lines in the movie *Jerry Maguire* is when Tom Cruise, in expressing his love to Renee Zellweger, says to her: "You complete me."

If completion plays an important role in life, why is it not more significant when it comes to our spiritual life? It is very evident in the Bible that God desires all believers to attain spiritual completion because to be complete means we have finished fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. Our calling in life is to worship our Lord in all his splendor and glory through our love towards him and our love towards his people. And as we continue in this process of fulfilling God's purpose, we attain more and more a spiritual completion that testifies to that fulfillment.

2 Chronicles 14—16 records the reign of Asa, king of Judah. Just in these two chapters we learn a lot about what it takes to attain spiritual completion and the importance of fully carrying out God's purpose in our lives. We will also discover the consequences that come about when we fail to completely achieve what God has called us to do. Let us start by looking at 2 Chronicles 14:1-15. (see the text above)

How do we know we are being made complete? One way is we will experience God's peace in our lives. In a general sense, *peace* includes well-being in various areas of life: physical health, emotional stability, financial security, etc. But in a more significant spiritual sense, *peace* embraces righteousness that comes about only through a restoration from God for us. That is why *peace* and *salvation* have a similar relationship. When we surrender our lives to God, God imparts his perfect righteousness to us that keeps us secure in him. Such a spiritual stability will naturally lead to a peace that will help us attain spiritual completion in life, that is, to be able to finish well everything that God intended each of us to fulfill in life.

Therefore, part of attaining spiritual completion is to grasp the peace of God in our lives. In order to discover and experience God's peace, a requirement is to do **what is pleasurable** in the eyes of God. That is what Asa did for the first ten years of his kingly reign. He obeyed the laws of the Lord and did everything that was good in God's eyes.

There was peace in the land for ten years, for Asa did what was pleasing and good in the sight of the LORD his God. (2 Chronicles 14:1-2, NLT)

Note what happened when Asa followed the ways of the Lord; peace overflowed onto the land and the kingdom of Judah was protected from her enemies. In fact, it was God who prevented Judah's enemies from laying a hold upon Asa and his people. The peace that Judah experienced in these ten years allowed them to recuperate from the scars of battle and heal from their wounds. And during this time of calm, Judah was able to fortify and reinforce her strength under the sovereignty of their Lord God.

During those peaceful years, he was able to build up the fortified cities throughout Judah. No one tried to make war against him at this time, for the LORD was giving him rest from his enemies. (2 Chronicles 14:6, NLT)

Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the LORD our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." (2 Chronicles 14:7, NLT)

This same principle is true for us as well. One ingredient to attain spiritual completion is to do what is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. That means we must obediently follow God in all of his ways. When our lifestyles please the Lord, he will provide his peace to us.

Having God's peace does not mean that we will no longer have problems in life. What it does signify is that God's peace will bring you comfort and joy when you face trials of all sorts in life. You no longer have to live in fear; God's peace allows you to continue to accomplish his purpose in your life with wisdom and boldness.

And when you experience God's peace in your life continually, that is a sign that you are fulfilling God's will in your life, which leads to you attaining spiritual completion. If you choose not to accomplish God's purpose in your life, God will withdraw his peace from you. But, if you obediently follow God's commands and do what is pleasing in his sight, God will make sure that his peace is given to you so that you could be nourished, be strengthened, and be rested in him alone.

Now, what are some things we can do that will draw God's peace into our lives?

First, we must **actively identify** what causes us to separate from God and then **aggressively put an end** to these sinful practices.

Look at what King Asa had to do to receive God's peace for his kingdom. First, he actively identified the various things that dragged people away from worshiping God. More specifically, Asa distinguished all the false idols, shrines and altars in his land. After identifying all that is weak and sinful, Asa made sure these things were completely destroyed forever. All of this Asa accomplished in the first ten years of his reign; this led to the whole land of Judah to follow God wholeheartedly.

He removed the pagan altars and the shrines. He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles. (2 Chronicles 14:3, NLT)

Asa also removed the pagan shrines, as well as the incense altars from every one of Judah's towns. (2 Chronicles 14:5, NLT)

For us to have the peace of God that will allow us to attain spiritual completion, we need to identify the very things that cause us to separate from God, and we need to *actively* identify them. It is our responsibility to do so. So many times we fail to arrive at spiritual completion because we do not vigorously search for the idols and shrines in our lives that take the place of God. And just like Asa, when we discover these sinful things, we must aggressively end these things in our lives! Again, we are responsible for this. Part of spiritual maturity is being responsible for our walk with God. To choose God means to choose *not* to follow anyone or anything else! When we fail to remove these false idols from our lives, we fail to complete what God has started in our lives. Let us do what Asa did, identify what is not from God and then remove them from our lives.

The second way we can draw God's peace into our lives and thus attain spiritual completion is that we must **continually instruct one another** to abide in the ways of the Lord.

It is apparent why this is true when it comes to spiritual completion. The only way we can stay away from sinful activities and worship is when we challenge each other to remain faithful to God in obeying him fully. That is what Asa did for his people. He commanded everybody to always seek the Lord and to live a life of submission to God alone.

He commanded the people of Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his law and his commands. (2 Chronicles 14:4, NLT)

But in order to challenge others to follow God's commands, we must be pursuing after God first in our lives! Asa could not have commanded his people to obey God if he was not doing the same thing. Each of us must submit to God in obedience first and then we could instruct one another to do the same. When we are solidly grounded and rooted in God's ways, we will be granted God's wisdom to know what is right and wrong. We will then have God's strength to separate ourselves from our sinfulness and be able to attain spiritual completion with the peace of God guiding and protecting us every step of the way. You see how everything is neatly tied together?

Now what are the results if we faithfully live out the purpose of God to completion?

Well, in the context of 2 Chronicles 14, one result in attaining spiritual completion is that obedience to God leads to **prosperity**.

Asa faithfully followed the Lord. Asa also was responsible for identifying the sins of his land and to destroy them. Asa also commanded his people to walk in the ways of the Lord in obedience to God's commands. The result is that God granted his peace over Judah, gave the land for Judah to govern, protected Judah from her enemies, and Judah was strengthened by fortifying her towns and cities. All of this was brought to *completion*.

Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the LORD our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion. (2 Chronicles 14:7, NLT)

Expect prosperity from the Lord when you continually attain spiritual completion. As you serve God wholeheartedly, God will naturally respond back in blessings. God's prosperity can come in different shapes and sizes. Prosperity allows you to appreciate how great God is and for his desire to bless you when you choose to follow him.

How exactly does attaining spiritual completion practically look like in one's life? Well, let us continue reading about King Asa in verses 8-15.

Judah was once attacked by Zerah and his Ethiopian army. Asa only had 580,000 fighting men while Zerah had an army of a million men! (verse 8-9) Asa's circumstances seem *hopeless*...

But, this situation did not prevent Asa from giving up. Why? Because Asa had witnessed the acts of God upon his life in the past. He had received God's peace and blessings when he followed the Lord faithfully. Asa knew the Lord will come through for him again against Zerah. Thus, Asa positioned his small army for battle against the Ethiopians. (verse 10) Asa understood that God was with him, and therefore, he must move forward and fight the battles of life...

Because of God's work in the past, Asa knew the source of victory only comes from the Lord. (verse 11). So, in humility, Asa approached God for victory. In humility, Asa claimed God's power in obedience...

Again, the Lord does not disappoint his people. His people have been faithful to him; he will remain faithful to them. Asa and the whole of Judah witnessed God destroy the whole army of Zerah. (verses 12-13)

God's purpose has been fulfilled in Asa's life again. (verse 13) God, again, is victorious, and so are the people of God who chose to submit to God's power and authority. Because of their obedience to God, the people of Judah were blessed by God and everything they plundered they were able to keep for themselves. (verses 13-15)

So, how can we tie the life to Asa to our lives today in relation to attaining spiritual completion?

- ✚ Your circumstances might *seem* hopeless... (verses 8-9)
- ✚ But, you still move forward and fight your battles... (verse 10)
- ✚ Why? Because the source of victory comes from God *alone*... (verse 11)
- ✚ Therefore, in humility, you claim God's power... (verse 11)
- ✚ Then, you witness God conquer in triumph... (verses 12-13)
- ✚ God's purpose has been fulfilled and completed in your life... (verse 13)
- ✚ You encounter the blessings of God... (verses 13-15)

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