

# ATTAINING SPIRITUAL COMPLETION: THE LIFE OF ASA PART II

## 2 Chronicles 15:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Then the Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded, <sup>2</sup>and he went out to meet King Asa as he was returning from the battle. "Listen to me, Asa!" he shouted. "Listen, all you people of Judah and Benjamin! The LORD will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you. <sup>3</sup>For a long time, Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without God's law. <sup>4</sup>But whenever you were in distress and turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him out, you found him. <sup>5</sup>During those dark times, it was not safe to travel. Problems troubled the nation on every hand. <sup>6</sup>Nation fought against nation, and city against city, for God was troubling you with every kind of problem. <sup>7</sup>And now, you men of Judah, be strong and courageous, for your work will be rewarded."

<sup>8</sup>When Asa heard this message from Azariah the prophet, he took courage and removed all the idols in the land of Judah and Benjamin and in the towns he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, which stood in front of the foyer of the LORD's Temple.

A funny thing happens when life is good; we seem to stop trying to accomplish and we end up coasting along through life. I received exceptional grades when I was in high school. Your rewards for achieving such a feat are awards from the school, praises from your teachers, and being spoiled by your parents. Life was tremendously good for me, so much so that I thought my college life would be the same thing. In fact, I was so confident that I would be as successful in college as I was in high school that I coasted along my first quarter in school. I did not work hard or study at all. I really believed I would pass all of my classes easily since that is exactly what happened in high school.

Well, you can guess what happened to me next. I failed my chemistry class and my GPA was a measly 1.23. I lost my scholarship and almost got kicked out of school. "How could this happen?" I repeatedly asked myself. I tried to come up with every excuse possible, but in the end I knew that it was my fault: I became so arrogant in terms of my ability to perform that instead of trying my best, I stopped working at all. I just glided carelessly at school and I was punished for my negligence.

I am sure all of us have a similar story to tell. When life is going well, we become less focused in our responsibilities. We become less attentive in what is going on around us; we just coast along in life and lose any significant experiences that come our way.

Sad to say, this attitude of coasting in life has bitten the behinds of many followers of the Christian faith. We have become so spoiled with the blessings of God that instead of continuing his work with passion, we stop caring about bringing his mission to completion. In a recent article in *The Atlantic Monthly* entitled "Let It Be", the writer observes that people are becoming more and more "at ease" with their religious faith. Life is good for many of us because we can come to church and be connected with a like-minded community and culture. But, that comfortableness hurts our faith in the long run because we become less and less sensitized to what is going on around us. We like to enjoy God's blessings in our

own little world, but in the meantime, we fail to complete the purpose of God in our lives. The writer even jokes that his Christian friends do not even care that he is, in his words, "an unrepentantly atheistic Jewish homosexual." We seem not to care about people's lack of relationship with God anymore. (Jonathan Rauch, "Let It Be," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 2003)

When King Asa committed his life and kingly reign to serve the Lord, God blessed his life and the kingdom of Judah for ten years. (2 Chronicles 14) Asa commanded all his people to worship the Lord God only and to follow his laws. Asa himself went all over Judah to destroy any idols, shrines or altars used to worship false gods. Because of Asa's faithful obedience, God brought peace to the land of Judah for ten years. In those ten years, the land was able to rest from the scars of war. Asa and the people of Judah used this time of calm to fortify and rebuild all the towns all throughout the landscape. You can say that life was good for Asa and his kingdom during this time.

But, just because things are going well does not mean that we have the luxury to postpone fulfilling the plans of God in our lives. God desires for us to enjoy his blessings, but not at the expense of achieving his purpose in our lives. We continue to attain spiritual completion, that is, fulfilling God's calling in our lives, whether life is good or not. Asa and the kingdom of Judah were enjoying a time of prosperity. But, this is not the time to drop everything and to forget the mission. Completing God's purpose must still go on. We learn this invaluable lesson in 2 Chronicles 15:1-8.

Asa is returning from a victorious battle against Zerah and his Ethiopian army. (2 Chronicles 14:9-15; 15:2) Everything is going well for Judah at this point. Surely, Asa and the nation could enjoy a few days off from work and enjoy their good fortunes. Yet, God does not allow Asa to slow down from attaining spiritual completion. Here is where we learn our first point:

1. Even when times are good, God will **continually awaken us** to complete his mission.

As Asa returns from battle, he is immediately greeted by the prophet Azariah, who gives a word of caution to Asa and the people. (vv. 1-7) Azariah shouts out that the Lord will stay with the people so long as the people continue to stay with God. If this condition is met, the Lord will always be with them. But, if the people choose to abandon God, God will also abandon them. (vv. 1-3)

- ✿ Many times we stumble when things are going well, which makes us too comfortable and too confident.

When we get too comfortable with our good fortunes, we forget to seek God out. But, God does not want us to forget him, even in good times. Even in peaceful circumstances, God wants us to continue to seek after him and to commit to finishing up his plans here on earth.

Therefore God reminds us that:

- ✿ His existence with us is *directly dependent upon* our devotion to him alone. (v. 2)
- ✿ He guarantees that when we search for him, we *will* find him. (v. 2)
- ✿ But, if you choose to abandon him, he *will* leave you. (v. 2)

In Asa's case, God reminds him through the prophet Azariah that Asa must remain connected with God, even in times of celebration. Asa cannot let his guards down. Asa must continue to be fully devoted to the Lord, even when the land is at peace and after a victorious combat over his enemy.

Azariah is sent by God to teach the people an important lesson, which is seen here in point number 2:

2. If we can trust in God during the best of times, we can also **commit to him** in the most difficult of times.

If Asa and the people can witness God pull through for them during the best of times, they can trust that God will also come through for them during the most difficult of times. That is why Azariah reminds the people how Israel was like when they were far away from the Lord. In times of sin, Israel was completely separated from God, nobody was teaching the word of God to them, and nobody was following the laws of God. (v. 3) Yet, in the midst of such pitiful spiritual conditions (vv. 5-6), when the people sincerely turned back to the Lord, God was there to be found. (v. 4)

- ✿ Imagine moments in your life when it seems like God is invisible... (v. 3)
- ✿ Imagine times in life when the world around you is crumbling to the ground... (vv. 5-6)
- ✿ Yet, when you turn to the Lord and seek him out, you will find him! (v. 4)

But, you must:

- a. Search for God *honestly and sincerely*, allowing him to do what he needs to accomplish in your life.
- b. Continue *to attain spiritual completion* even during times of emptiness and worthlessness.

God does not want Asa to take it easy spiritually just because things are going well. God does not want Asa to become apathetic just because life is going great. Asa still has to accomplish God's purpose in all times, whether good or bad. This leads us to the third point:

3. Even in good spiritual times, **God wants us to be transformed** so that we could complete his purpose in our lives.

Asa takes courage when he hears the word of the Lord through Azariah. Because the times were joyful and triumphant, Asa could have easily forgotten his mission in life. God reminds him that there is still work to be done. Asa needs to continue to destroy the idols all over Judah and Benjamin. Notice as well that Ephraim, an area newly captured by Asa, must also submit to the laws of God. (v. 8) God blesses Asa for his faithfulness; Asa's rewards include conquered lands and people. But, Asa is responsible for the spiritual welfare of his new territories. Times of celebration should never prevent Asa from fulfilling his spiritual duties as king of Judah and servant of God.

- ✿ Part of being transformed is we must be open to hearing the truth of God's word. (v. 8)
- ✿ We must also act in response to God's word. (v. 8)
- ✿ Make sure every area of your life, including the territories that God has given to you in blessing, must be free of sin. (v. 8)
- ✿ Make sure your whole life is involved in the work of the Lord. (v. 8)
- ✿ When we are strong and courageous in the Lord and are able to attain spiritual completion, we will be rewarded by God. (v. 7)

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