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Have You Ever Heard of Asa?

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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One of the wonderful things about reading God's Word is its utter honesty. It never paints a picture of human nature as anything less than it is, and it never portrays God's children as any more perfect than they are. On the plus side, that means that we can be encouraged by the fact that even Joseph and Abraham and Moses and David had their weak moments, and yet God still blessed them and used them and honored them in Scripture.

On the other side of the coin, however, is the inherent danger that we will see so many of their faults that we will assume wrongfully that no one really is expected to live life from God's perspective, and we will tend a bit to cynicism and even begin to justify our own behavior based on the fact that, after all, not even the heroes of the faith did it all right. It's a dangerous course to follow.

So every so often, our loving God seems to sprinkle the Scriptures with portraits of men and women who did it His way. He pulls back the curtain and reveals the miracle of obedience and the blessings that accompany that obedience. Today's story is such a story. From the dark recesses of our study of Solomon's later years and of Rehoboam's immaturity and rebellion, there comes a stream of light casting its glow upon the pages of the Word, illuminating the life of a man who understood what godly leadership was all about. Perfect? No. But godly? Yes.

Chances are, you haven't studied a lot about this man. In fact, you may not even recognize his name. But to God, he represents something far more special than many of the characters in Scripture who are much more widely spoken of. To God this man represents obedience. And may I remind you one more time that what He is looking for is not talent, not intellect, not power but obedience. The title for this lesson is: "Have You Ever Heard of Asa?"

Our outline looks like this:

- I- Have you ever heard of Asa?
- II- No one besides Thee
- III- When the battle rages

Have You Ever Heard of Asa?

I- HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ASA?

Now tell me, have you ever heard of Asa? Is his name a household word around your place? Do you have evening devotionals about David and Goliath, Moses, Abraham, and Asa? Probably not. Chances are, he's not an everyday topic of conversation at dinnertime. But maybe he should be. Maybe we need to teach more about the lesser-known heroes of Scripture who achieved little acclaim, but found real greatness in the heart of God. Maybe we need to do that. Today we will. Our lesson will be found in II Chronicles, chapter 14.

In our last excursion through the Book, we took a look at a man named Rehoboam, and we watched him fail to achieve any measure of greatness because, as the Scripture records, "He did not set his heart," that is, he vacillated in his commitment to his God, and thus, "he did evil". He never gave God the freedom to fulfill His plan for his life. We cannot cover every Old Testament character, so we will pass over Rehoboam's son, Abija, the subject of chapter thirteen. Suffice it to say that he reigned only three years, and during those three years fought one major battle with Jeroboam, a battle in which God miraculously delivered him and gave his army the victory. Thus chapter 14 opens like this:

So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David, and his son Asa became king in his place. The land was undisturbed for ten years during his days.

And Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God, for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherim,

and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment.

He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him.

And he built fortified cities in Judah, since the land was undisturbed, and there was no one at war with him during those years, because the LORD had given him rest.

For he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.

(II Chronicles 14:1-7 NASB)

Have You Ever Heard of Asa?

Now you've heard of Asa. He was the great-grandson of Solomon, the grandson of Rehoboam and the son of Abijah. He follows then a long line of kings who were not necessarily noted for their unswerving obedience. But nevertheless, it came to pass one day that he was sworn in as the ruling monarch of Judah, and a nervous remnant of a nation must have sighed and wondered what would happen next.

What happened next was wonderful. A man finally rose to the throne whose heart's desire was to do the will of God. He hadn't had a good pattern to follow, that's true. But he had the Word of God. And that's all the pattern any of us need to understand God's perspective of leadership.

I wish God could say of me what he was able to say of Asa. I believe that this statement is of more value than all of the accomplishments a man or woman can make in this life. Listen,

And Asa did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God.
(II Chronicles 14:2 NASB)

He did it God's way. He realized it wasn't his kingdom, it was God's. And so he humbled himself before God, and he stood tall before men and did what had to be done. What had to be done was not easy, either...

for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherim,
and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment.

He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. (II Chronicles 14:3-5 NASB)

The whole countryside was covered with an ocean of idols. Everywhere you went there were altars, sacred places, and temples of worship to demonic beings. Virtually every commandment regarding the sacredness of the worship of God was being flagrantly violated. But the tough part, from Asa's perspective, was that wherever there were idols, there were idol worshippers. And these idol worshippers were the king's subjects. So he stood to alienate an entire nation, if he did what was right in the sight of God. It would be much the same as if a new President were elected in the United States, and his first act as Chief Executive was to outlaw most of the existing churches. Even people who never went to church would rise up in rebellion. So Asa was not out to win a popularity contest. What he had to do was tough.

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The first thing he did was to invoke an ordinance that forbade the worship of idols. To facilitate that order, he simply destroyed all of the sacred pillars, temples, and figures that dotted the landscape. Then, having removed Satan's tools of worship, he called a meeting of the whole nation to remind the people that they were children of the Living God, His chosen ones, and he commanded them to seek the Lord their God to observe the Law and Commandments. So you have the first two steps of spiritual leadership. Tear down the enemy's strongholds, then teach the people how to worship the Living God. The third thing he did was to build again the fortified cities, surrounding them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. They were enjoying peace, mind you. But they did not accept that peace as a license to lay down the armor, but rather as a call to put it on. They had rest on every side, but they never forgot who the enemy was and where he was likely to strike next. So they honored God by doing what they had to do to keep the enemy from barging in and taking over again.

That's wise counsel, as well, for dealing with spiritual warfare, as Christians. First, you must tear down any false idols that you have erected in your life. You have to *eliminate the very presence of those things that draw you to worship anything or anyone but God*. Then you have to return to that level of surrender to your Lord that once typified total commitment. And then you begin the process of putting on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Finally, you must never forget where the peace comes from. In verse 7, Asa said to the entire nation:

The land is still ours, because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.
(II Chronicles 14:7 NASB)

So they built and prospered.

You have just seen a godly man take a nation crippled by idolatry and crushed by strife and in a matter of weeks turn the people's hearts back to God. And you have seen a formula for dealing with the devil that is second to none. You have just heard of Asa.

II- NO ONE BESIDES THEE

Now you can just imagine what happened next. Here was a man who believed that God was who He said He was and could do what He said He could. He had called an entire nation to

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repentance. The enemy won't take that sitting down. And so Asa's call to commitment was followed, as usual, by a call to battle. It reads like this:

Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows, all of them were valiant warriors.

Now Zerah, the Ethiopian, came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and he came to Mareshah.

So Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up in battle formation in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

Then Asa called to the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, there is no one besides Thee to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength, so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy Name have come against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee."

So the LORD routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

And Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and so many Ethiopians fell that they could not recover, for they were scattered before the LORD, and before His army. And they carried away very much plunder.

And they destroyed all the cities around Gerar, for the dread of the LORD had fallen on them, and they despoiled all the cities, for there was much plunder in them.

They also struck down those who owned livestock, and they carried away large numbers of sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem. (II Chronicles 14:8-15 NASB)

Here is how God's man or woman faces the inevitable warfare of the Christian life. Here is how you and I are supposed to deal with the enemy when the odds are against us and there seems to be no hope, when there seems to be no answer to the crushing defeats in your marriage, when there seems to be no hope for that failing business, when there seems to be no rescuing that wayward child, when there seems to be no cure for that pain or that suffering and Satan whispers in your ear, "Why not just do it my way? God's not going to deliver you. This thing is bigger than God." My friend, you turn to Satan and ask him one question, ask him, "*Hey, guy, have you ever heard of Asa?*"

When your children begin to doubt that it pays to serve the

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Living God and begin to wrestle with the compromises of their generation, ask them, “*Beloved, have you ever heard of Asa?*” Have you ever heard of a man who inherited a kingdom riddled with division and stifled by idolatry? A man who right from the start pitched his tent in God’s camp and struck straight at the enemy’s strongholds and ripped them to shreds, just inviting an invasion? Then tell them what happened to Asa when the invasion occurred.

Here’s what happened. He took all that he had (God expects that). And he lined it up before God. He had a total of 580,000 men who could fight. That sounds convincing until you realize that the enemy had over a million men and 300 chariots fresh off the assembly line of Jerusalem General Motors. It is like Podunk Tech University being challenged by the Dallas Cowboys. And here they came, all million of them, down to Mareshah. Dum-de-dum-dum. (Music, please, maestro!)

So what did Asa do? Cut and run? Call a high-level meeting and prepare for surrender? No, of course not. God’s man isn’t called to surrender or compromise in the light of the impossible. He’s called to rejoice in the light of the impossible. Only then can a God who delights in *doing the impossible* be really free to demonstrate His power.

And if that’s where you are today. I simply must ask you, “Have you ever heard of Asa?” Let’s tune in station L-O-R-D and watch the festivities on television (or the massacre as it would appear it’s going to be). Look! Asa is moving directly towards Mareshah as though the enemy didn’t even exist. His face looks radiant. He looks relaxed. Wait a minute. He’s stopping. He’s talking to someone. He’s talking to...God! Let’s listen. He’s saying:

Lord, there is no one but You who can help me now. Here we are, in one corner, the power of the world is amassed against us. In our corner, there is nothing but weakness; we are those who have no strength. Help us, Lord...You are our God...we trust You...we believe You are who You say You are...and it is in Your Name that we come against this problem, against this enemy, against this seemingly immovable obstacle. Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee.

My friend, if you’ve never heard of Asa, hear him now. He is coming against the same kinds of enemies you and I wrestle

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with, for we're not wrestling against flesh and blood, and neither was he. Oh, there were real armies with real chariots, but the battle was against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. The battle wasn't between Asa and Zerah. They were the players on the field, but the battle was between Satan and God. It wouldn't be determined by how strong Asa was, but rather by how strong Asa believed God was. And the battle you are fighting is the same. What *appears to be the battleground*—your marriage, your business, your job, your home, your finances, your health—is only the surface on which the battle is to be played. The issues are spiritual. And the outcome will be spiritual victory or spiritual defeat, depending on whether or not you understand the principles of spiritual warfare.

Look at them fresh from the lips of Asa. You have heard of Asa, haven't you? Yes, you have. Look at how he handled the biggest battle of his life:

1- He had already dealt with the enemy strongholds in his life and among his people, so he was ready for battle. He had removed every idol that stood between them and God and they now enjoyed the power of God that no one embracing compromise can experience.

2- He confronted the issue directly. He didn't pretend that life had no problems and curl up in a make-believe world of spiritual clichés and meaningless phrases and expect the enemy to go away. Warfare involves facing the enemy, not ignoring the enemy. He set his face like flint to the battlefield because *he knew that God would be on the battlefield when he got there*. And so do you.

3- He didn't assume that he could almost win the battle but God would be needed to finish the enemy off. He rather assumed that, apart from God, the only words that could characterize his people were *those who had no strength*. In other words, he realized his helplessness and his hopelessness apart from God. And, Beloved, that was the reason for this whole conflict. God had allowed an enemy to invade his beloved's life so his child could be reminded that all power belongs to God...all power...all power...all power.

4- He didn't assume that God was one possible alternative to victory. He said, "There is no one besides Thee." God, I can't depend on my banker *plus You*. God, I can't depend on my family

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plus You. God, I can't depend on my resourcefulness *plus You.* God, the hope I have is YOU. There is no one besides Thee that can help. Now that puts the responsibility where it belongs.

5- He openly declared it a battle between the enemy and God, and declared God solely responsible for the outcome. He said, "In Your name we have come against the enemy, O Lord let not man prevail against You!"

That's all God was waiting for. He routed the Ethiopians, and Asa and his people went in and experienced the spoils and accepted the blessings that accompany victory. They weren't timid in the midst of their triumph. They returned to Jerusalem with a herd of livestock bigger than Texas, and a heart full of God bigger than eternity. They had faced an impossible enemy and enjoyed an incredible victory. Because a man named Asa (you have heard of Asa, haven't you), a man named Asa believed that his God wanted nothing better than to take the very conflict that appeared to spell doom to His people and turn it into a celebration of Grace that would leave its mark on the pages of the Living Legends of Scripture from that moment until now.

III- WHEN THE BATTLE RAGES

So the issue is no longer "Have we ever heard of Asa?" The issue now is: "Have we ever discovered the power of Asa's God?" Have we ever discovered the secret of Asa's victory? Because some of us, even right now, are engaged in horrendous personal struggles. Our worlds are crumbling. We feel outnumbered. We look up there toward Mareshah, and all we see are battalions of enemy forces descending through the hills, coming our way.

The form they take is inconsequential. The reality of it all is that they are *not the real enemy*, and the things pressuring us on the surface are not the real problems. Oh, they're real. But far, far, up there in the heavenlies, there is a conflict waging so intense that to call it a life-or-death struggle seems inadequate.

The principalities and powers of the satanic host are garrisoned about your life and mine searching for strongholds to invade, seeking to establish a beachhead on the hill of discouragement or the mountain of weariness, seeking to destroy that fortress of faith and cause us to doubt.

Or they may be subtly drawing us into a spirit of self-confidence, assuming that apart from God we can do something.

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Down, down through the annals of time, our great God, who has painted on the canvas of eternity golden threads of Living Legends, whispers to us in our moment of truth. As we behold the enemy in all his power descending, and the fear of the flesh begins to encompass us, He whispers, "Have you ever heard of Asa? Child, that's how I want you to confront this crisis that envelops your life."

"I want you to deal with any strongholds the enemy may have established in your life. Tear down those idols, no matter what they may be. You know what yours are. Then confront the issues directly. The things that appear on the surface to be your battleground, in all likelihood are only the shadows cast on the mountainside; they are but reflections of activities in the heavenlies. Satan is out to destroy your testimony, to weaken your faith, to remove your dependence on God." The thing God is allowing in your life right now is only there because He wants to see how you will trust Him when there's no place else to turn. He wants you to come to the end of yourself. He wants you to reach that place where it is no longer you and anything... or you and anyone...or God and anything. He wants you to reach the place where you can pray with Asa:

"...LORD, there is no one besides thee to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength, so help us, O LORD, our God, for we trust in Thee. And in Thy name, have come against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee."

(II Chronicles 14:11 NASB)

Satan will whisper, "No one besides God?" Answer emphatically, "No one!"

Memorize that passage from II Chronicles 14:11, Beloved. It is God's answer when a million enemies descend upon your life, and you are outnumbered and without hope. It is God's answer when the pressures of life seem too heavy to bear, and you just want to give up. It is God's answer when your strength is gone, and the weariness from the day-to-day battles just seems to build and build until it's all you can do to get up in the morning. Throw yourself on the mercy of God. Cry out in abandonment and admit, "Lord there is no one besides Thee." Consciously confess, "We have no strength, LORD, in Thy name we come against this multitude, O LORD, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee."

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A stillness will settle on your spirit. The weariness and weakness that have encompassed your soul will give way to an inner strength that rises up within you, and the very immovable object that was standing before you like a stone wall will suddenly be transformed into a series of stepping stones that will lead you gently to a more perfect walk with God. You will have removed the mantle of self-righteousness that prevented God from being God in you, and in an act of surrender, will have given the Commander-in-Chief the full right to do in this battle whatever He deems necessary.

Will the problems go away? Perhaps. But not usually. It all depends on *why the battle was raging in the first place*. It all depends on why your loving God released the heavenly cords that bound the enemy from access to your soul. If a miracle is in order, the sun may stand still. The waters may part, or a flood may issue forth from the heart of a rock. But if it better meets the need of your life, the dry, parched sun may still beat down upon you. The heavens may yet *appear* to be silent for a season. But it won't matter. For the peace that now envelops you will sustain you, and *the real reason for Satan's onslaught will be over...* and he will flee. And as he hastens his departure and leaves you standing in the throes of victory, he will, in his anger hear you whisper beneath your breath, "Hey, Satan, have you ever heard of Asa?" He won't bother to answer.

Have You Ever Heard of Asa?

A Project for Learning the Lessons of Asa

1- Read II Chronicles 14 again, substituting your name for Asa's and the conditions around your business or your home for Asa's warfare. Personalize the entire scenario. Now consider your *natural response* in the same situation.

2- What steps do we need to take that can be likened to Asa's convictions to tear down the idols that had captivated the people and turned their hearts from God?

3- What are some of the "altars" you need to tear down in your own life? How long will you put it off? If Asa had procrastinated, what would have become of his kingdom? Why was it essential that he take a stand at the outset of his reign?

4- Using a concordance, see if you can attach a deeper meaning to the phrase, "Asa did good and right in the sight of the Lord". Can you visualize a king commanding the whole nation to worship God? What risk was he taking? Why was he not afraid?

5- If Asa knew of God's strength, why do you think he had to take his 580,000 warriors at all? Why not just call fire down from heaven? Can you think of two reasons why God wanted the men there?

6- What deep battles are you fighting in your life right now? Do you realize what the real battle is all about? How can you remind yourself of that fact?

7- Memorize II Chronicles 14:11. Meditate on it throughout the next week.

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