

***Sermon: Choose Wisely - Asa: Half-Hearted Reformer***

*Pastor Terry Foester, Brandywine Valley Church, July 30, 2023*



***Theme Verse: 2 Chronicles 16:9a***

**2 Chronicles 16:9a (CSB)**

**For the eyes of the Lord roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him.**



*A lot of us come to Jesus because we're looking for truth. We're looking for answers, and we're trying to make sense of life. We are hungry for an intellectually defensible case for Christianity, and we find it in the Bible!*

***For me, even when my head is satisfied, my heart is reaching for something a little different.*** *I find logic in theology (which I absolutely love) - but when it comes to my heart — God moves me and teaches me in different ways.*

*I'm moved spiritually when I walk deep into the trees along the Brandywine Valley, and other times I'm moved into stillness when I see the expanse of the water and sky during a sunset at Bethany Beach.*

*I'm brought near to the heart of God through a good story or a great song.*

***Why do these experiences bring me close to God?*** *They speak to the heart.*

*Today - I want us to **lean into whole-hearted devotion.** What does it mean to you to love God with your whole heart?*

***King Asa was instructed by God to be wholeheartedly devoted to him. And for the most part, he's a good example!***

*We'll learn through the highs and lows of Asa's reign, that he tends to compartmentalize his faith at key moments.*

*King Asa is generally thought of as a reformer, and a "good" King. And yet, when we look at the events of his life...he drifts from the ways of God as he gets older.*

*And if we observe his actions...it seems his character and reliance on God seems to diminish over time. By the end, he limps into death with an apparent half-hearted devotion.*

*Who was King Asa?*

**Matthew 1:6-7**

**Jesse was the father of King David.**  
**David was the father of Solomon,**  
**whose mother had been Uriah's wife,**  
**Solomon the father of Rehoboam,**  
**Rehoboam the father of Abijah,**  
**and Abijah the father of Asa**

- Asa
- Abijah (Father)
- Rehoboam (Grand Father)
- Solomon (His Great-Grandfather)
- And King David (His great-great grandfather)
- He's in the line of Jesus!



### ***Tell the Story of King Asa***

*Overall, he's one of the rare bright spots in the dark pattern of the Kings of Judah and Israel. But his wholehearted devotion drifts into what I'm calling "a half-hearted ending".*

- His reign begins in 10 years of Peace, where he cleanses the house of idolatry and begins fortify the city of Jerusalem.
- *How did he break the chain of poor decision making?*
- Next, he faces war with a foreign nation, and the odds are stacked against him. He turns out to be the underdog who sought the Lord, and experiences a Godly victory.
- This leads into an amazing season of **Reform** — renewing the covenant & invigorating temple worship; tearing down idolatry; bringing the people to unified worship in the temple

But there's a half-hearted shift toward the end of his reign:

- He ends up causing more civil war with his brothers in Israel - he makes an Alliance with a foreign King and strips the temple of its silver to pay for it.

- And he has a strange end — he dies of a foot disease - he didn't seek the Lord

***Why does he seem to have a half-hearted end? Why does he drift?***

Let's go back through the Highs & Lows of his Kingship, according to the scriptures, and we'll observe both the amazing ways he seeks God, and we'll see the obvious drift at the end.

As I read over these passages, I was struck by the number of times the idea of **seeking the Lord was referenced.**

The text wants us to **connect the idea of seeking to what it means to have whole-hearted devotion.**

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**Asa Leads Judah against a Foreign Nation**

**2 Chronicles 14:8**

Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men.

**2 Chronicles 14:9-10**

Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with an army of thousands upon thousands and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah.

**2 Chronicles 14:11**

Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, **for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army.** Lord, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you."



The Lord struck down the Cushites & they fled.

*This victory leads King Asa into a time of reform, rededication & worship.*

### **2 Chronicles 15:1-2**

The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. 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. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.**"

### **2 Chronicles 15:8**

When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet, he took courage. He removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hills of Ephraim. **He repaired the altar of the Lord** that was in front of the portico of the Lord's temple.

King Asa gathered all the people of Judah, and the people of some of the other tribes of Israel who had joined them. He gathered them at the Altar that was rebuilt...and they had a renewed moment of worship! Listen to the scale of their worship:

### **2 Chronicles 15:11**

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.

### **2 Chronicles 15:12**

They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul.

### **2 Chronicles 15:14-15**

They took an oath to the Lord with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns. All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side.



*This is the peak of Asa's reign!*

*He doesn't end well.*

### **Asa's Last Years - filled with War & Sickness**

Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah

Asa took the silver & gold from the temple...and went to a foreign King... bribing him to break his treaty with King Baasha of Israel.

It worked, and King Baasha retreated.

But his behavior doesn't align with the covenant that he just led his people into...we pick it up in verse 7, when Hanani the seer comes to visit Asa:

#### **2 Chronicles 16:7**

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."

Hanani continues...

#### **2 Chronicles 16:9**

"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."

*How does Asa respond at this correction?*

#### **2 Chronicles 16:10**

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's End:

**2 Chronicles 16:12**

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.



*After these amazing times of rest, and reform, of leading the people through battle and leading them back into covenant relationship...*

*... he drifts at the end. I would say he ends half-hearted.*



***Application:******What do we learn from King Asa?*****2 Chronicles 16:9a (CSB)****For the eyes of the Lord roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are **wholeheartedly devoted** to him.***Let's lock in on the theme verse, that comes at a time he was foolish:**What stood in the way of King Asa's whole-heartedness?**At two key moments, he compartmentalized his faith and left God out of the decision making. He tried to remove God from the scene. But God was still there.***We Tend to  
COMPARTMENTALIZE  
Our Lives*****We face this same challenge of half-hearted moments:****What is Compartmentalization?**It's when we create a **compartment** or pocket of our life and we try to leave God out of that part, or we restrict his access.****Story:*** *Compartmentalization — "I thought to myself, when have I experienced compartmentalization in life? — it reminded me of a story that's kind of embracing..."*

**Quote:**

**“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised.”**



**“But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to?”**

**The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards.”**

**“You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”**

**C.S. Lewis - Mere Christianity**



*We need to seek a life where Jesus is at home in all aspects and areas.*

## **STOP COMPARTMENTALIZING BE WHOLEHEARTED**

*What is WHOLEHEARTED devotion?*

**WHOLEHEARTED** devotion  
is inviting Jesus into every 'room';  
even the **ordinary** and **difficult** ones,  
and yielding to **His Rule** and **His Way**

*John 7:38 — Jesus said that whoever believes in him, out of their heart will flow rivers of living water.*

*We need to acknowledge that we're not always going to get it right. At times*

## **How do we live with WHOLEHEARTED devotion?**

*we're going to fall back into compartmentalization.*

### ***The Invitation:***

*Invite Jesus into the your life as savior... (the Gospel)*

*The Gospel is good news - that humanity can be saved from the penalty of their sin and receive adoption into the family of God, as a redeemed child, and experience eternal life through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Identify a Room in your heart, a chamber, a compartment, where Jesus isn't yet King, and begin the process of inviting him into that room and allowing him to demo and rebuild the room in his way.*

***Guided Prayer:***

*Tell God what you love about him:*

*Ask God to help you identify the room of your heart that needs his attention...and would you invite him in?*

*Now ask God what he wants you to do today or this week to further deepen your wholehearted devotion to him:*