

ASA — THE GOOD KING

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Lessons: *I Kings 15:9-24*

You have just heard the story of Asa, King of Judah. Asa was a good king. He was good because he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He followed in the footsteps of his father, David.

But what did Asa do to be a good king? In the story we just heard we learn the answer. Asa got rid of the worship of false gods. He broke down the false idol that his grandmother had made. And he also got rid of the perverted people who were in the land, turning the good people of the kingdom of Judah back to true worship. Asa did this not simply by telling them what to do, but by turning to true worship himself. Asa looked to the Lord throughout his life for guidance, and he tried very hard to do that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He set a good example for his people.

This quality of trying to do what is right, of setting a good example for people, is a very, very important quality for all who would govern other people. It is necessary in kings. It is necessary in all leaders of countries. In fact, it is necessary in all people who lead other people. You, yourself, if you are given a position of responsibility, need to remember this important part of being a leader. In order to lead other people, you need to set an example by the way you behave which will show other people how to behave well, too.

It's not always easy to set a good example. It wasn't easy for Asa to break down the idols, or to do away with those people who were not following the Lord. But it was necessary. It is also necessary for anyone who seeks to be a good ruler to set a good example for his people.

What else did Asa do that made him a good king? The story goes on to talk about a terrible war that was taking place at the time of Asa.

If you remember King Solomon, you remember how he established the kingdom of Israel as a wonderful, powerful kingdom in the ancient world. Solomon was a wise king, and he was able to lead his people to a position of power and greatness in the world around him. But when Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam, did not follow the example of his father. Instead he tried to take from the people rather than serve them, rather than help them, rather than set a good example for them. It is not surprising that more than half of his people rebelled against him and formed a whole new kingdom, the kingdom of Israel. Rehoboam was left with but a small kingdom, the kingdom of Judah.

Unfortunately, the kings who led the new Kingdom of Israel were not good kings. They were selfish. They sought to take from others rather than give to others. Baasha, the king of Israel, declared war on the king of Judah. He wanted to take the land of Judah as his own. Asa, the good king, protected his people. He did not let the king of Israel succeed in his war. It cost him dearly. He had to give very precious things to Ben Hadad, king of Syria, in order to protect his people. Ben Hadad attacked the kingdom of Israel in its northern parts and forced Baasha, the king of Israel, to stop attacking Judah in the south, to go to defend his northern lands from the Syrians.

For a time, then, Asa saved the people of Judah. But the war went on, and it lasted for the next several hundred years, until at last the kingdom of Israel was thoroughly destroyed. It disappeared from the face of the earth as the Assyrians took the people away as captives. None of the kings of Israel were good, and this was their punishment: their kingdom was destroyed. But Asa and a few other kings in Judah were good. It was from the kings of Judah, from good kings such as Asa, that the inheritance of the Lord was established. There remained an unbroken line from King David through the other kings of Judah down to Mary, the Lord's mother.

What was the good that Asa did for his people? He protected his people from attack. He did not allow his people to suffer Israel's invasion. Instead, he secured for them their freedom. This, too, is an important quality of leadership. If we are to lead people, we not only must set examples for them, but we also need to protect them—to protect them both from attacks from others, and also to protect them from their own selfishness. These two things—setting an example and protecting his people—were the qualities of the good king Asa.

We, too, can be leaders. We, too, can follow the example of Asa. We can place ourselves under the Lord's spiritual laws, obeying His commandments and doing what we know is right. And as we do these things we set an example for those around us, an example of a true leader—one who seeks to protect people by serving them, by helping them, and by doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord.