A LESSON FROM THE LIFE OF KING ASA

NO. 1152

A SERMON
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"Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."
2 Chronicles 16:9

OUR text leads us to speak upon historical matters, and for this I shall by no means apologize, although I have sometimes heard very foolish professors speak slightingly of the historical part of Scripture. Remember that the historical books were almost the only Scripture possessed by the early saints, and from those they learned the mind of God.

David sang the blessedness of the man who delighted in the law of the Lord, yet he had only the first five books, and perhaps, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, all books of history, in which to meditate day and night. The psalmist himself spoke most lovingly of these books, which were the only statutes and testimonies of the Lord to him, with perhaps, the addition of the Book of Job. Other saints delighted in the histories of the word before the more spiritual books came in their way at all.

If rightly viewed, the histories of the Old Testament are full of instruction. They supply us both with warnings and examples in the realm of practical morals, and hidden within their letter, like pearls in oyster shells, lie grand spiritual truths couched in allegory and metaphor. I may say of the least important of all the books what our Lord said of children, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." To take away from Holy Writ involves a curse upon the daring deed, may we never incur the penalty!

All Scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable, be it ours to gain the profit. Let us see whether we cannot get a lesson from the life of King Asa. We will commence by noticing *who he was*, *and what he had done in his better days*, for this will help to understand more clearly the fault into which he fell. He was a man of whom it is said that his heart was perfect before God all his days. It is a great thing to have said of anyone, indeed it is the greatest commendation which can be pronounced upon mortal man.

When the heart, the intention, the master-affection is right, the man is reckoned a good man before the Lord, notwithstanding that there may be a thousand things which are not commendable—yea, and some things which are censurable in the man's outward career.

Asa is noticeable in the early part of his life for the fact that he set up the worship of God, and carried it out with great diligence, though his mother was an idolater, and his father, Abijah, was little better. He had enjoyed no training as a youth that could lead him aright, but quite the contrary. Yet he was very decided, even in the first days of his reign, for the Lord his God, and acted in all things with an earnest desire to glorify JEHOVAH, and to lead his people away from all idols to the worship of the true God.

Now, a life may begin well, and yet may be clouded ere its close. The verdure of earnestness may fade into the sere and yellow leaf of backsliding. We may have the grace of God in our earliest days, but unless we have day by day fresh help from on high, dead flies may pollute the ointment and spoil the sweet odor of our lives. We shall need to watch against temptation so long as we are in this wilderness of sin. Only in heaven are we out of gunshot of the devil. Though we may have been kept in the ways of the Lord, as Asa was, for fifty or sixty years, yet if left by the Master for a single moment we shall bring discredit upon His holy name.

In the middle of his reign Asa was put to the test by a very serious trial. He was attacked by the Ethiopians, and they came against him in mighty swarms. What a host to be arrayed against poor little Judah—an army of a million footmen and three hundred thousand chariots! All the host that Asa could

muster—and he did his best—was but small compared to this mighty band. And it appeared as if the whole land would be eaten up, for the people seemed sufficient to carry away Judea by handfuls. But Asa believed in God, and therefore when he had mustered his little band he committed the battle to the Lord his God.

Read attentively that earnest believing prayer which he offered. "And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee."

How grandly he threw all his burden upon God! He declared that he rested in the Most High, and believed that God could just as well achieve the victory by a few and feeble folk as by a vast army. After this prayer he marched to the battle with holy confidence, and God gave him the victory. The power of Ethiopia was broken before him and Judah's armies returned laden with spoil. You would not have thought that a man who could perform that grand action would become, a little after, full of unbelief. But the greatest faith of yesterday will not give us confidence for today, unless the fresh springs which are in God shall overflow again.

Even Abraham, who at one time staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet did stagger some time afterwards about a far less difficult matter. The greatest of God's servants, if their Lord hides His face, soon sink even below the least, all the strength of the strongest lies in Him.

After Asa had thus by divine strength won a great victory, he did not, as some do, grow proud of it, but he set to work, in obedience to a prophetic warning, to purge his country by a thorough reformation. He did it, and did it well. He did not show any partiality towards the rich and great in his country, who were guilty of the worship of false gods. For his own mother was a great fosterer of idolatry and she had a grove of her own with a temple in it, in which was her own peculiar idol.

But the king put her away from her eminent position, took her idol, and not merely broke it, but stamped upon it and burned it, with every sign of contempt, at the brook Kidron, into which ran the sewage of the temple, to let the people know that, whether in high places or amongst the poor, there should be nothing left to provoke the Lord throughout the land. This was well done.

Oh that such a reformation might happen in this land, for the country is beginning to be covered with idols and mass-houses! Everywhere they are setting up the altars of their breaden deity, shrines to the queen of heaven, the crucifix and the saints, while the spiritual worship of God is put aside to make room for vain shows and spiritual masquerades. The God of the Reformation—how much is He forgotten nowadays! Oh for a return of the days of Knox and his covenanting brethren!

Asa was for a root and branch reform, and he went through with it bravely. You would not have thought that a man so thorough—a man who, like Levi of old, knew not his own mother when it came to the matter of serving God, but made "through stitch" with it, as the old writers used to say—you would not have supposed that he would be the man who, when he came into another trial, would be running after an idolater and cringing before him and praying him to give him his help.

Alas, the best of men are men at the best! God, alone is unchangeable! He alone is good always, or indeed at all. "There is none good save one, that is God." We are only good as He makes us good. And if His hand be withdrawn, even for a moment, we start aside like a deceitful bow, or a broken bone which has been badly set. Alas, how soon are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war broken, if the Lord uphold not! Asa, who could do marvels, and who walked so well and thoroughly before his God, yet, nevertheless, came to do foolishly and bring upon himself lifelong chastisement.

I have thus brought before you his character because it was most fitting to start with this. It was due to his memory, and due to ourselves, for we must remember that whatever we shall have to say against him, he was assuredly a child of God.

His heart was right. He was a sincere, genuine, gracious believer. If any object that he had grievous faults, and therefore could not be a child of God, I shall be obliged to answer that they must first of all produce a faultless child of God this side heaven before they will have sufficient ground for such an

objection. I find that the holiest of men in Scripture had their imperfections, with the sole exception of our Master, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, in whom was no sin. His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them, but all His servants had their spots. He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, but we, with all the brightness His grace has given us, are poor dim lamps at best.

I make no exception even of those who claim perfection, for I have no more faith in their perfection than in the Pope's infallibility. There is enough of the earthen vessel left about the best of the Lord's servants to show that they are earthen, and that the excellency of the heavenly treasure of divine grace which is put within them may be clearly seen to be of God and not of them.

Now, we shall turn to notice the GRAVE ERROR INTO WHICH ASA FELL—the foolishness for which the prophet rebuked him. He was threatened by Baasha, the king of the neighboring territory of Israel. He was not directly assailed by war, but Baasha began to build a fortress which would command the passages between the two countries, and prevent the people of Israel from coming to settle in the land of Judah, or make their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

Now, one would naturally have expected, from Asa's former conduct, that he would either have thought very little of Baasha, or else that he would have taken the case before God, as he did before in the matter of the Ethiopians. But this was a smaller trouble altogether, and somehow, I fancy, it was because it was a smaller trouble Asa thought that he could manage it very well himself by the help of an arm of flesh.

In the case of the invasion by countless hordes of Ethiopians, Asa must have felt that it was of no use calling in Benhadad, the king of Syria, or asking any of the nations to help him, for with all their help he would not have been equal to the tremendous struggle. Therefore he was driven to God. But this being a smaller trial, he does not seem to have been so thoroughly divorced from confidence in man. But he looked about him and thought that Benhadad, the heathen king of Syria, might be led to attack the king of Israel, and so draw him away from building the new fort, divide his attention, cripple his resources, and give Judah a fine opportunity of attacking him.

Believers frequently behave worse in little trials than in great ones. I have known some children of God who have borne with equanimity the loss of almost everything they had, who have been disturbed and distracted and led into all sorts of doubt and mistrust by troubles that were scarcely worth the mentioning.

How is it that vessels which bear a hurricane may, nevertheless, be driven upon a sandbank when there is but a capful of wind—that ships which have navigated the broad ocean have yet foundered in a narrow stream? It only proves this, that it is not the severity of the trial, it is the having or not having of God's presence that is the main thing. For in the great trial with the Ethiopians God's grace gave Asa faith, but in the little trial about Baasha, king of Israel, Asa had no faith, and began to look about him for help from men.

Observe that Asa went off to Benhadad, the king of Syria, who was a worshipper of a false God, with whom he ought to have had no connection or alliance whatever. And what was worse, he induced Benhadad to break his league with Baasha.

Here was a child of God teaching the ungodly to be untrue—a man of God becoming an instructor for Satan, teaching a heathen to be false to his promise. This was policy. This is the kind of thing which the kings of the earth practice towards one another. They are always ready to break treaties, though bound by the most solemn pledges. They make but light of covenants. The great matter with ambassadors even nowadays is to see which can entangle the other, for, as a statesman once said, "An ambassador is a person who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country."

Oh, the tricks, plots, deceptions, equivocations, and intrigues of diplomacy! No chapter in human history shows up our fallen nature in more mournful colors. Asa, I have no doubt, thought that all was fair in war. He took the common rule, the common standard of mankind, and went upon that, whereas, as a child of God, he ought to have scorned anything that was dishonorable or untrue.

And as to saying to a heathen king, "Break thy league with Baasha, and make a league with me"—why, if he had been in a right state of heart, he would sooner have lost his tongue than have uttered such disgraceful words. But child of God as he was, when he once got off the plain simple way of believing in God, and taking his trouble to God, there was no telling what he would do.

When you set the helm of your vessel towards the point to which you mean to steer, and steer right on, whatever comes in your way, then your course will be well enough if you have a motive power within independent of wind and tide. But when you take to tacking this way, then you will have, in due time, to tack the other way, and when policy makes you do this wrong thing, policy will lead you to do another wrong thing, and so on, to a most lamentable degree.

When our walk is with the Lord, it is a safe, holy, honorable walk, but the way of the flesh is evil and ends in shame. If you follow the way of the world, though always a crowded way, it will turn out before long to be a miserable, pettifogging, cringing, humiliating, dishonorable, and wretched way, to the true-born heir of heaven.

Dust shall be the serpent's meat, and if we practice the crawling, twisting, slimy arts of the serpent, we shall have to eat the dust, too. Should a child of God degrade himself in that fashion? If he acts as he should act, he acts like a nobleman, nay, like a prince of the blood imperial of heaven, for is he not a son of God, one of heaven's true aristocracy? But when he degenerates to acting as worldlings do, then, alas! he stains his garments in the mire. I charge you, my dear brethren, to look well to this.

Perhaps I may be speaking as God's mouth to some of you who are now entering upon a testing time, a trouble in the family, a trial in business, or a difficulty in reference to a contemplated marriage, and you are asking, "What course shall I take?" You know what a man of the world would do, and it has been suggested to you that such a course is the right one for you to follow.

My dear brother, remember you are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, mind you act accordingly. If you are a worldly man and do as worldly men do, why, I must leave you, for them that are without God judgeth. But if you are a man of God and an heir of heaven, I beseech you, do not follow custom, or do a wrong thing because others would do it, or do a little evil for the sake of a great good, but in your confidence possess your soul and abide faithful to conscience and to the eternal law of rectitude. Let others do as they please, but as for you, set the Lord always before you, and let integrity and uprightness preserve you.

Ask the Lord to help you. Is it not written that He will with the temptation, make a way of escape? "Cast thy burden upon the LORD: he will sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Do not put forth your hand to iniquity. You may, in order to help yourself, do in five minutes what you cannot undo in fifty years. And you may bring upon yourself a lifelong series of trial by one single unbelieving action.

Beware of staying yourself on Egypt and sending for help to Assyria, for these will distress you, but help you not. Cry, "Lord, increase our faith!" That is what you greatly need in the trying hour, lest you should, like Asa, first of all turn from confidence in God, and then, looking to an arm of flesh, should be tempted to use illegitimate means in order to induce the creature to let you rely upon it.

Asa, having advanced so far in the wrong path, did worse still, if worse could be, for he took of the gold and silver which belonged to the house of the Lord, in order to purchase therewith the alliance of the Syrian monarch. I will say nothing about what belonged to his own house. He might do as he liked with that so long as he did not spend it upon sin, but he took of the treasure that belonged to the house of the Lord, and gave it to Ben-hadad to bribe him to break his league with Baasha, and be in league with himself. Thus God was robbed that the unbelieving king might find help in an arm of flesh. And "Will a man rob God?"

Yet a Christian never doubts God, and looks to the creature, without robbing Him. If you rob Him of nothing else, you rob Him of His honor. Shall a father find his child trusting a stranger rather than his own sire? Shall the husband see his wife putting confidence in his enemy? Will not that rob him of that which is far more precious than gold? Is it not a breach of that undivided affection, and that complete

confidence which ought to exist in the conjugal relationship? And shall I mistrust my heavenly Father, my almighty helper, and put confidence in a poor, broken reed? Shall I cast my burden upon a poor fellow sinner, and forget to rest in my Savior? Shall the Well-beloved of my soul be only trusted in fair weather? and shall I have such a sorry opinion of Him that, when it comes to a little storm, I run to someone else and ask him to be my refuge?

Beloved, let it not be so with us, or we shall surely grieve the Lord and bring ourselves into much perplexity. Have we not been guilty of this enough already? Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we bent upon grieving His Holy Spirit? Can we not take warning from Asa? Need we run upon this rock when we can see the wrecks of others all around? The Lord grant we may take heed, according to His Word!

So this good man, by his want of faith, fell into many sins. For I am compelled to add that he had to bear the blame of the consequences of his conduct, for when Benhadad, the king of Syria, came up and attacked Israel, he did not content himself with a battle or two, but he fell to plundering the Israelites and murdering them wholesale, so that great sorrows were brought upon the people of Israel. And who was to blame for these sorrows but the king of Judah, who had hired the Syrians for that very purpose?

He who ought to have been a brother to the Israelites became their destroyer, and every time the cruel sword of the Syrians slew the women and children of Israel, the poor afflicted people had Asa to thank for it. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of waters, none can foresee what devastation the floods may cause.

Brethren, we can never tell what may be the consequences of one wrong action. We may kindle a fire in the forest merely to warm our own hands, but where the sparks may fly, and how many leagues the conflagration may spread, an angel cannot prophesy. Let us jealously keep away from every doubtful deed lest we bring evil consequences upon others as well as ourselves. If we carry no matches, we shall cause no explosions.

Oh, for a holy jealousy, a deep conscientiousness, and above all, a solemn conscientiousness on the point of faith! To rest in the Lord—that is our business. To stay ourselves only upon Him—that is our sole concern. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." Unbelief is in itself idolatry. Unbelief leads us to look to the creature, which is folly, and to look to the creature is, in effect, to worship the creature, to put it into God's place and so to grieve God, and set up a rival in the holy place.

I want you to listen yet a little while longer to this story of Asa. It came to pass that Asa's hiring Benhadad turned out to be a fine thing for him, and in the judgment of everybody who looked on, I dare say it was said that it was a fortunate stroke of business. According to God's mind, the king's course was evil, but it did not turn out badly for him politically.

Now, many people in the world judge actions by their immediate results. If a Christian does a wrong thing and it prospers, then at once they conclude he was justified in doing it, but ah! brethren, this is a poor, blind way of judging the actions of men and the providence of God. Do you not know that there are devil's providences as well as God's providences?

I mean this. Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish to flee from God, and he went down to Joppa, and what? Why, he found a ship just going to Tarshish. What a providence! What a providence! Are you so foolish as to view it in that light? I do not think Jonah was of that mind when he cried unto God out of the deeps.

When the chief priests and Pharisees would take Jesus, they found Judas ready to betray Him. Was this also a providence? May not Satan have some hand in the arrangement which lays a weapon so near a murderer's hand, or renders robbery and fraud so easy? Do you think it an instance of divine goodness that the tares often grow plentifully when the wheat suffers from drought. Often have we observed people who wanted to do wrong, and things have just happened rightly to help them, and they have therefore said, "What a providence!"

Ah, but a providence that was meant to test and try, not a providence that was intended to aid and abet in the doing of a wrong thing: a providence not to rejoice in, but concerning which we are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." A wrong is a wrong, whatever comes of it.

If by uttering one falsehood you could become a rich man forever, it would not change the nature of the falsehood. If by doing one wrong transaction you could rid yourself from all liabilities in business, and be henceforth in competent circumstances, that would not, before God, take off the edge of the evil, nay, not a single jot. God was pleased, for wise reasons, to allow the policy of His erring servant Asa to prosper, but now you will see that Asa was put in a worse place than ever because of it.

The trial of Asa's spirit, the testing of his unswerving faithfulness, whether he would walk before God or not, became more severe than before, for God sent His servant the prophet to him, and he said to him, "When you came to God, and trusted him about the Ethiopians, did not God prosper you? Though there were so many of them, did not the LORD give you the victory? And now you have gone away from your faith, you have lost a great blessing by it. For if you had trusted in God, you would have gone to war against Baasha and Benhadad, and you would have beaten them both, and your own kingdom would have grown strong by the putting down of these rival kingdoms. But you have lost that. You have acted very foolishly, and God means to chasten you for it, for from this very day you will have no more peace, but you will have war so long as you are a king."

Now, observe, if king Asa had met with a trouble when he acted unjustifiably, he would have been humble, I have no doubt. Then he would have seen how wrong he was, and he would have repented. But inasmuch as what he had done did not bring disaster with it, and God did not chasten him, the king's heart grew proud and he said, "Who is this fellow that he should come to tell his king his duty? Does he think I do not know, as well as he can tell me, what is right and what is wrong? Put the arrogant intruder in prison."

When a prophet came to Rehoboam, who was a bad king, Rehoboam did not put him in prison, he respected and reverenced the word of the Lord. A bad man may do better than a good man on some one particular occasion, and so Rehoboam did better in that matter than Asa did.

But Asa was now all wrong, he was in a high hectoring spirit, and this was but what we might have expected, for whenever a man will cringe before his fellowmen, you may be sure he is beginning to walk proudly before God. In his haughtiness of heart he put the prophet in prison.

Instead of weeping and humbling himself for what he had done, he imprisoned his reprover. And then, being in an irritable temper and a domineering humor, he began to oppress certain of his people. I do not know who they may have been, but probably they were godly persons who sympathized with the prophet and said, "We shall surely meet with a terrible judgment for dealing thus with God's servant." Perhaps they spoke freely about it, and so Asa put them in prison too.

Thus God's own child had become the persecutor of God's servant and of other faithful ones. Oh, it was very sad, very sad! Well might God then resolve that the angry should smart for his faults very severely, that the rod should come home to his bone and his flesh, and render his remaining days exceedingly sorrowful.

O beloved friends, among your most earnest prayers pray God never to let your sins prosper, for if they do, they will breed a gangrene in your spirit which will lead on to yet more dangerous diseases of soul, and they will inevitably entail upon you a dreary inheritance of affliction. God does not always whip His children the next minute after they do wrong. Sometimes He tells them that the rod will come, and so makes them smart in apprehension before they smart in actual experience, for they are thinking of what it will be, and that may be even a worse trial to them than the trial itself.

But as surely as they are His own peculiar people, they must and shall be taught that sin is an exceedingly great evil, and they shall have no joy of their dalliance with it.

Thus I have shown you who Asa was, and what faults he fell into and how this led to other faults, and now we have to show you *what God did with him when he came to a close reckoning.*

"Now," He seemed to say, "I will take you in hand Myself," and He sent him a disease in his feet—a very painful disease too. He had to suffer night and day. He was tormented with it and found no rest. God's own hand was heavy upon him, and some of us know to our cost that disease in the feet can become a very grievous affliction, second indeed to none, unless it be a malady of the brain.

Now did the king learn that embroidered slippers give no ease to gouty feet, and that sleep flies when disease bears rule. This should have driven Asa to repentance, but to show that afflictions of themselves will not set a man right, Asa had fallen into such an unbelieving spirit that, instead of sending to God for help, and crying for relief to Him who sent the disease, he sent for the physicians.

It is not wrong to send for physicians, it is quite right, but it is very wrong to send for physicians in place of crying to God, thus putting the human agency before the divine. Besides, it is very probable that these physicians were only heathenish conjurors, necromancers, and pretenders to magical arts, and could not be consulted without implicating the patient in their evil practices. Though Asa would not approve of their heathenism, yet he might think, "Well, they are famous for their cures, and who they may be is not so much my concern. I will put up with that, if they can cure me they may come."

So his unbelief deprived him of the cure which God could readily enough have given him, and he had his physicians and their physic, but they were miserable comforters to him, giving him no relief and probably causing him to suffer more than he would have suffered without them. They were physicians of no value, and their medicines were a delusion. How often is it so when we persist in looking away from God. He who has God has all, but he who has all besides God has really nothing at all.

Asa's life after that period was a life of war and pain. His evening was clouded and his sun set in tempest. Have you never noticed the career of David? What a happy life David's was up to one point! In his youth he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but he was very merry. What joyful psalms he used to sing when he was a humble shepherd boy! And when afterwards he was an exile in the caves of Engedi, how gloriously he poured out notes of gratitude and joy!

He was at that period and for years after, one of the happiest of men. But that hour when he walked on the roof of his house and saw Bathsheba, and gave way to his unholy desires, put an end to the happy days of David. And though he was still a child of God and God never cast him away, yet his heavenly Father never ceased to chasten him. From that day his life teemed with trouble—troubles from his own children one after another, ingratitude from his subjects, and annoyance from his enemies.

Afflictions sprang up for him as plenteously as hemlock in the furrows. He became a weeping monarch instead of a rejoicing one. The whole tenor of his life changed, a somber shade is cast over his entire image. You recognize him as the same man, but his voice is broken, his music is deep bass, he cannot reach the high notes of the scale. From the hour in which he sinned he began to sorrow more and more.

So will it be with us if we are not watchful. We may have led very happy lives in Christ up to this moment, and we know the Lord will not cast us away, for He doth not cast away His people whom He did foreknow, but if we begin to walk distrustfully, and adopt wrong actions, and dishonor His name, He may from that moment say, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities. Because I love you I will chasten you, for I chasten every son whom I love. And now, because you have thus gone astray, you shall be filled with your own backslidings. Your own vanities shall become your vexation throughout the rest of your days."

Asa does not appear to have had any peace until at last he fell asleep, and then, I trust, his dying bed was as sweetly perfumed with penitence and pardon as his funeral couch was odoriferous with fragrant spices. The sweet spices of forgiving love and reviving faith were there, and he died rejoicing in his God through the great sacrifice, brought back after a time of wandering, the cloudy day at last ended in a calm, bright evening. But who wishes to go so far astray, even if he be at length restored?

O brethren, we do not merely want to go to heaven, but we desire to enjoy a heaven on the road to heaven. We would like not only to come up from the wilderness, but to come up from the wilderness

leaning on our Beloved. We would not wish to be saved "so as by fire," but to have an abundant entrance administered to us into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Asa's character was well known among the people, and they loved and respected him. The mistake he had made grieved many of the godly, I do not doubt, but for all that, they felt that one fault must not blot out the recollection of nearly forty years of devoted service to God, so they loved him and they honored him with a funeral worthy of a king, a funeral by which they expressed both their sorrow and their esteem. But may it never be said of you and of me, "He led a good life. He was eminent in the service of God and did much, but there was an unhappy day in which the weakness of the flesh mastered the inner life."

O dear sister, if you have brought up your children and have seen your family about you, and they have been proofs to all the world of the way in which you have walked with God, and of your care to discharge your duties, do not let your old age be given up to petulance and murmuring and complaining, so that your friends will have to say of you, "At the last she was not the happy Christian woman that she used to be."

My dear brother, you have been a merchant, and you have resisted a great many temptations, and you have been noted for your honorable character, do not now in a moment of extreme trial begin to doubt your God. May the Holy Ghost preserve you from so great an ill. In the time of your need you will find the Lord to be Jehovah-Jireh. He is no fair weather friend, but He is a shelter from the storm, a covert from the tempest.

Stand fast in your faith in Him. Do not question your God, and do questionable things in consequence, for, if you do, it will be said by those who come after you, and perhaps even while you live by those who love you, "He was a good man, but there was a sad period of weakness and inconsistency. And though he was deeply penitent, yet from that unhappy day he went limping to his tomb."

What a precious Christ we have, who saves such sinners as we are at all! What a dear and blessed Lord we have, who does not cast us away, notwithstanding all our slips and falls and shameful wanderings. Beloved, let us not be so base as wantonly to grieve Him—

"We have no fear that Thou shouldst lose
One whom eternal love could choose;
But we would ne'er this grace abuse
Let us not fall. Let us not fall."

With such a warning as this of Asa before us now, do not let us relax our watchfulness and insensibly turn aside. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." That is your model, that is the promise which Scripture sets before you. Plead it, and try to realize it. Let us go from strength to strength. Let us ask to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If we have wanted props hitherto—outward and visible props—and have not been able altogether to rely upon God, may the Lord help us to grow stronger, so that we may have done with Ready-to-Halt's crutches. May we walk uprightly before the Lord because we rely upon Him, trusting ever in His sure faithfulness, and in the power which guarantees that His promise shall be fulfilled.

I do not know to whom I may be speaking a needful word, except that I know it is needful for myself. Peradventure there are some here to whom it may be just the word that is wanted. Dear brother, the life of faith is a blessed one. A believer's course is a tried one, it is a warfare, but for all that, all the sorrows of faith put together do not equal in bitterness one drop of the sorrow of sin, or one grain of the misery of unbelief.

The king's highway may be rough, but By-path Meadow in the long run is the rougher way of the two. It looks very pleasant to walk on the green turf, but remember, it is only in appearance that By-path

Meadow is smooth. The ways of Christ are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace, as compared with any other paths in the world. And if they were not—if to serve the Lord led us only into sorrow and trouble—I trust the loyal hearts here, the virgin souls whom Christ has chosen, would resolve through floods or flames, if Jesus led the way, to follow still.

O beloved, may you cleave to the Lord by a simple faith! May you cleave to Him when the many turn aside! May you witness that He has the living Word, and none upon earth beside! Because your hearts are frail and feeble, ask Him now to cast the bands of His love about you, and the cords of a man, to bind you fast to His altar that you may not go away from it, for except He hold you fast, you must, you will decline, and prove apostates after all. But He will hold you. He will keep the feet of His saints. Only trust not in yourselves. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

If any man says, "I stand," let him take heed lest he fall. Beware of that self-confidence and spiritual boasting, which is becoming common among Christians, ay, and among some of the better sort, who can even brag of their attainments. When, if they did but know themselves, they would confess that they are nothing better, even at the best, than poor, naked, miserable sinners, and have need to look to Jesus, for we are nothing but empty boasters apart from Him, since only in Christ are we anything.

"When I am weak, then am I strong," but at no other time. When I think I have whereof to glory, then am I indeed despicable. I know not myself, and am become purblind, so as only to see what my own pride makes me think I see.

May the Holy Ghost keep us humble—keep us at the cross-foot—keep us flat on the promise, resting on the eternal Rock and crying, "Nothing am I Lord—nothing, but Thou art all in all. I am all emptiness: come and fill me. I am all nakedness: come and clothe me. I am all weakness: come and glorify Thy power, by making use of me!"

God bless you, dear friends, and if there be any among you who have not a God to trust in, or a Savior to love, may you seek Jesus now! If you seek Him, He will be found of you, for whosoever believeth in Him is saved, whosoever trusts Christ is saved. Pardon and salvation belong to every soul that hangs its hope upon the cross. May God bless you richly, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PARTS OF 2 CHRONICLES 14, 15, 16

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—668, 667

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.