



## **Godly Confidence-Part 1**

### **Trusting God When You're Scared**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, there is a great little verse that's tucked away in our New Testament that is calling us to spend more time in our Old Testament. That's important for us to recognize particularly in these days when a lot of people downplay the importance of the Old Testament. You've got to realize the call of Scripture to say look how much benefit there is in studying the Old Testament. The verse I'm thinking about is Romans Chapter 15 verse 4 when it says that we need to understand that everything written in the past, he's speaking there of Old Testament Scripture "was written for our instruction." It's a great Greek word "Didaskalos." It means "to teach," it's great for teaching. And then he says this, so "that through the endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Well, we certainly could use some hope. We need hope. He talked about hope in the 5th chapter of that book, and he said, listen, hope is the kind of thing that when Christians have it, it's not a cross your fingers kind of hope, but a certainty in God and his promises, he said that's a hope that will not disappoint. That's a "hope that will not be put to shame." We need hope. And the things that we get from studying the Old Testament, their endurance and encouragement, they come from the study of Scripture in the Old Testament, and they'll give us that confidence, that holy, godly assured, certain confidence that God is God and that we are rightly related to him and that we can hold on tight to his promises.

You know, it's not just the good examples that we can learn from in the Old Testament. As Paul was writing the Corinthians, he said, you know, there are a lot of things they did wrong in the Old Testament that you can learn from. As a matter of fact, some of the ways that God responded to the mistakes and the sins and the transgressions of the people in the Old Testament, those are the things that are written for our instruction, for our warning. They're examples to us so that we might not, in essence, do what they did. Don't do what they did. You need to avoid those things, you need to learn from them and make sure that you don't fall into the same problems.

Well, I've picked a character here in the Old Testament that I want to spend two weeks talking about who will be a great example to us, that will bring you, I trust, endurance and encouragement. The result will be that you'll have hope, hope and a godly confidence in God. But we need to realize that it's not just looking at a clear example of a guy who did things wrong. As a matter of fact, the reason I think you might identify with him, particularly if you're making progress in your spiritual life and growing in your sanctification, is because he was known as a godly man. This king, the third king of the divided kingdom in the south, the king of Judah, King Asa was a godly man who was described in Second Chronicles 14 as being someone who did things that were both good and pleasing in the sight of the Lord. That's good, you'd like that affirmation from God. And even in the chapter right before the chapter I'd like to look at this morning, in Chapter 15, it says of King Asa that he was someone whose heart was wholly God's. He was devoted to the Lord. He was committed to God. This was his life. He was one who wanted to please the Lord, just like his great-great grandfather David had done.



Well, it's important in looking at a person like this that you realize, as with all the biblical characters, that, of course, he wasn't perfect. There are two scenes in his life. I'd like to cover the first one this week and the second one next week that is in Chapter 16 of Second Chronicles that show us these missteps, if you can call them that. That may be a trivial way to describe them. But things that did not please the Lord, things that did not work out well, that you can recognize, no matter how varsity you might feel in your Christianity, these are vulnerabilities for you and vulnerabilities for me. We need to look at these so that we might be able to determine in our own lives whether we qualify for the kinds of things going on in King Asa's life. I hope that you'll get endurance and encouragement from these two messages as we talk a little bit about the life of King Asa.

So if you haven't already, take your Bibles and turn to Second Chronicles, Second Chronicles Chapter 16. I'd like to read from this passage from the English Standard Version and recognize a little bit, with some commentary here, what's going on. Get oriented to the geography, to the time period, and understand how we might be able to avoid the problems that Asa ran into at the end of his life.

It says in verse 1, "In the 36th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha, king of Israel, went up against Judah and built Ramah." Now that sentence is a mouthful if you're not oriented to at least make the distinction in your mind that since the division of the kingdom... Of course, we had Saul, that was the people's choice. Then we had David, that was God's choice. Then we had David's son, Solomon, he built the temple. Then Solomon had a son, Rehoboam, and Rehoboam made some big mistakes that split the kingdom in half. They were sinful mistakes. In that split, you started then to change the nomenclature of the north and the south. We're used to calling a whole group of them Israel. We say that's all Israel. These are all Israelites. But since the division of the kingdom at this particular point in the 9th century B.C., we start to make the differentiation that when we're talking about Israel, we're talking about the 10 tribes of the north that split off from the two tribes of the south. And we call the south now Judah.

So we have the king of Judah here. When we talk about the reign of Asa, that's all, really, that Chronicles is trying to focus on is the line and lineage of David. The line and lineage of David that leads to Christ, we're reading about in Second Chronicles here, and so when you see that the king of Israel, you need to know that's the king of the northern tribes. Baasha was the king of the northern tribes and went up against Judah. Well, that's the southern kingdom and that's the line of David and that's the focus of the Chronicles and Baasha built a city called Ramah. Now "went up against" I guess you could think of it just in terms of conflict. You could say the Rams went up against the Raiders and that might make sense. But geography is involved here, because anytime you talk about going up in warfare against Jerusalem, it doesn't matter if you come from the north, south, east or west, you're going up. Jerusalem is about 2,400 to 2,500 feet above sea level. We would say we're "going up to L.A." and you're going "down to San Diego," but really in their nomenclature, you're going to walk uphill, you're walking everywhere. When you're walking to Jerusalem, you're always going up.



So think of it this way. Get your geography in mind. You got the northern tribes up here. King Baasha is the king of the north. You've got Asa, King Asa, the king of the south down here, and you've got the northern tribes up here under the direction of the king, moving up against Jerusalem, going up against them, even though they're going down. They get to a town called Ramah. Unless you know your biblical geography really well, this is a town about six miles north of Jerusalem. So just as you're coming up into Jerusalem from the north, you've got this town and it's a very important town because it's right there in the watershed, which is the trade route, the main highway into Jerusalem.

What happens here is he goes and builds this city "that he might not permit," bottom of verse 1, "anyone to go out or to come into Asa, king of Judah." So you've got a blockade. You've got this border town that now the king of the north is building. He's fortifying it. He's not letting anyone get in or out, and that is certainly a threat. I mean, you don't have to live in ancient times to think about a foreign army, I know it's your brother with which you're at animosity with, but the northern tribes of Israel that want your territory. They'd love to assume the southern tribes, but they're coming down and they're within five or six miles of your capital. You're not going to sleep easy at night. As a matter of fact, it's not explicitly said here, but you can bet, just as the subtitle of this message is trying to suggest, that King Asa had to be scared. Matter of fact, he makes mistakes in this passage and it's all out of fear. He's making decisions out of fear because, of course, he's got a problem on his hands on the northern border, which is just six miles away. He's got King Baasha there with his troops building a blockade so that no one can get into Jerusalem.

So what does he do? Verse 2, "King Asa took silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the king's house, and he sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus." Now, those are as recent as the headlines and if you know your geography today, it's the same as then. You got north of the northern tribes of Israel, you can picture the Sea of Galilee in the northern area of Israel today, you've got up above that, Syria and the capital of that is Damascus. And in Damascus at this time, in the 9th century B.C., you had King Ben-hadad the first who was on the throne. And if you research his reign, he's an up-and-coming leader with a lot of power, a lot of might. He's taking over territory all the time. And the wise thing to do if you're an ancient king is to make a brief peace treaty with him so he wouldn't take over your territory.

So he was at a stalemate with a lot of nations, including the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah, and the northern kingdom of Israel. Ephraim, Jacob or Israel. So Baasha has got a treaty with him. You've, of course, got King Asa has got a treaty with him. And now you've got Asa going, "Well, I got a problem on my northern border from the northern tribes of Israel. I'm going to call, send my envoys up here to the northern kingdom that sits above Israel and I'm going to have a big entourage with a lot of gold sent. He sends them to Damascus and he says this in verse 3, "There's a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father," Abijah, "and his father," Tabrimmon, the king of Damascus before. I mean, our dads had things going on and they were at peace and we're at peace. "But now I'm sending you silver and gold." It must have been a lot of it to grease his pockets here. And I've got a request for you. "Go and break your covenant with Baasha, king of Israel, so that he may withdraw from me." He can't fight two wars at one time. He's trying to take over my territory. Hey, can I pay you off here with all this money so that you can start a war here in the northern part of his kingdom and take the pressure off of me and



maybe he'll withdraw? That's the hope and everything can go just as it was before. Before this big mess with King Baasha and maybe things will be fine.

So, verse 4 says, "And Ben-hadad listen to King Asa and he sent commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel." So now he's starting an assault upon the northern territory of Israel. They got the same problem now that King Asa had. They've got war on the northern borders. They've got no time to mess around in the south because these cities are being conquered. "Ijon and Dan and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali," that northern tribe way up north. "And when Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah down south and he let the work cease." I'm done with this blockade. I'm done building this fortress. "And King Asa took all of Judah."

So, he got all of his territory back. And "they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber." All the work that King Baasha was doing, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah. If you were to take a map, maybe in the back of your Bibles if it's detailed enough, you can see those two cities are even north of Ramah. So now he's extending the buffer, the DMZ there. He's got this period now where he's moving this line of demarcation further north. He's got two cities here now and he's saying, "Great. I've got peace on the border."

So King Asa has got his sandals up on the desk at this point in the Oval Office of ancient Israel, if you will. And he's got the problem solved. No trouble. Everything's great. He's feeling good. He's got to be. You had a threat, you neutralize the threat. I mean, you lost a few bucks in the accounting of the temple and of the king's house, but no more troubles -- until the preacher shows up, which is often the case. Verse 7, troubles are coming now.

Verse 7, "At that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa, king of Judah," and said that sure was crafty and shrewd of you. Fantastic. Congratulations. Let's have a potluck because you've solved the problem for the kingdom. We're all sitting here at ease. That's not what Hanani says. He says there's something going on that people might not be able to detect, may not be able to see, but God sees right through the things that you just did. And he's worried about something that only you would know about and only he would know about it. And because he's the prophet here, he's the seer, that's the word, the old word for prophet, he's going to reveal it. He says, "Because you," underline this word, highlight it, "you relied..."

Something about your confidence, something about where you were trusting. "You relied on the king of Syria." You went to King Ben-hadad and "you did not rely," there's the word again, "on the Lord your God, and the army of the king of Syria has escaped you," which is an interesting way to put it. Because if you look back all the way to the promises of what God said about the Promised Land, he was going to extend the borders all the way to the Euphrates. He was going to extend the property of Judah and the throne of David would have a vast kingdom. That was the promise. Well, certainly that would mean that somehow Syria is going to have to bow to Judah at some point. Well, he said, "he's escaped you." Who knows what's tucked away in that statement, what God would have done through King Asa? "He's escaped you."

And then he says, look back, think back, verse 8, "Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen?" Well, this was in Chapter 14, which we haven't



read yet. But you see, there was some kind of victory in his past that he did the right thing because in the secret places of his heart, he wasn't relying on a treaty with a foreign king. Verse 8, bottom of the verse. "Yet, because you relied on the Lord," in that case, "he gave them into your hand." Now the most famous verse in all of Second Chronicles, here it comes, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." Oh, Asa, "you've done foolishly in this, for from now on you're going to have wars." Damascus is going to be a problem. Syria, the northern tribes, King Baasha. You're going to have all kinds of problems now. Had you just relied on me, things could've gone so much differently. But you didn't.

"The eyes of the Lord..." Of course he doesn't have eyes, he doesn't have iris, he doesn't have optic nerves. God is spirit. Right? But his perception of looking around, here's the poetic way of saying this, he's just trying to find someone whose heart is blameless, which is not about sinlessness, it's the Hebrew word for wholeness. It's like your heart is wholly mine. Completely. What's the context? You're relying on me. I'm just looking for someone who could trust me, who is trustworthy. I just want to give my support away. It was like thinking of someone who was super-rich, who wants to give his money away. I'm just looking for someone who'll take it. And that's this amazing statement through the prophet Hanani.

Well, Asa's response: repentance, verse 10. No, he gets angry. Asa was angry with the seer, taking it out on the preacher, as is often the case. I can tell you that's not a good idea. "He puts him in stocks in prison and he goes from the word "angry," look at this word "for he was in a rage." "A rage because of this." What? It wasn't just the prophet, he was mad at the messenger, but really he was mad at the message. He was mad at the fact that he'd fallen, he'd failed, he'd stumbled. He didn't trust God. I mean, you got someone like that who is really angry and in charge, you don't want to be around the king. Unfortunately, there was a circle around the king and who knows how many people this involved or what exactly it was, who knows how it was done, but the last verse is not a happy one here. "Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time."

Ten verses in the first part here of Second Chronicles 16 that reminds us of the costliness of simply shifting our trust in the situations of life, that I'd like to point out in the first six verses imply responding to a situation out of fear. It's not stated explicitly, but it's there implicitly, isn't it? The only reason he's running out to do these things is because he's afraid, as you and I would be. There are a lot of situations that will provoke fear. There are pressure points in our lives. Whatever the battle might be for you, it could be a financial battle, it could be a legal battle, it could be some relational battle. There's something going on that provokes a sense of fear. And you start thinking, what if, what if, what if, what if? And it's hard for you.

And the point of this passage is something happened that was diagnosed in verses 7 through 9 that wasn't seen by Asa. And if it was, it was pressed down and it's suppressed in his heart. But he was not trusting God in all of this. Instead, he was just acting. I mean, a lot of men in this room even, they don't think they're anxious. They don't think they're worried. They don't think they're scared. Well look really carefully at how your relationship with God is going when you are pressed in a situation that really does invoke, if you were honest with yourself, some fear and





anxiety and wonder in your own mind whether or not you were acting out of fear or whether or not there's something clearly expressing trust in God by the things you choose to do.

Is God against strategizing militarily? Of course not. There's so much of it in the Bible. And it's all spoken of positively. Is there any problem with making treaties, treaties with other nations? Not a problem with making a treaty with other nations. There are some specific situations where he says don't do it. But there are other situations where he's totally in favor of it. It wasn't about working with another nation, but there was something, and I think there are enough evident signs in the passage, that tell us that this was an act of King Asa that was based on fear and anxiety, and clearly, as the diagnosis will reveal, you weren't trusting me in this. That's hard but what I want you to see are the problems that are always the hidden landmines when you're scared.

Let me just state it this way. Number one. You and I need to "See the Temptations in Your Fears." When you're afraid, and I'd like you to think about the things that make you afraid, the things that make you anxious, the things that make you worry, I just want you to recognize that is fraught with opportunities for you to sin.

Now, I remember traveling, going to churches where the pastor gets up, or some staff pastor at the beginning of the service, and they try to get you in the mood for worship by having some statement like this come your way. They say (whispering), "We want you just to forget about everything in your week." They don't say quite that effeminately, but they're like, you know, "just tune out. Just don't think," sometimes it's in a prayer, "God, just let us forget about everything that's happened this week. And we're just going to focus on you." Listen, I'm all about focusing on God in church. I get that. But there's never a time I want you to come into the sermon and forget about everything in your week. That's the whole point. God wants to transform your week by having you think about the Word and the eternal matters within the Scriptures so that you might attack next week differently than you attacked last week.

So in this case, I can't even talk to you about the application of this passage unless you start thinking about what's going on in your week, where there are battles that really, if you were to be honest, they are inflicting some concern. Let's just put it with a mild word. Some worry. You're anxious about it. What is that? What is that fear? And then start thinking, what are the things that happen when I respond to those pressure points and I start doing things out of fear and anxiety instead of trust and confidence in God? That's an important place to be in that self-analyzation, to look carefully at my own heart and recognize, you know what? I can do some things in this fear that are going to lead me to compromise. And let's just think about that.

Look at the passage for just a second. You've got a couple of things going on. Let's start with the most obvious. It'll take it backwards here, but look at the bottom of verse 3. He's sending this money and it says this: After he sends the silver and gold, he's asking the king of Syria, "Go break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." I just want you to think about that. Here's the man whose heart is wholly devoted to God. Here's a man who does the things that are good and right in the sight of the Lord. These are the ways he's described in



Chapter 15 and 14. And now he's saying, "Hey, king of Damascus, I know you made a promise, but I'd like you to break it. Here's some money. Would you break your promise, please?"

I hope you realize that's just not a godly thing to do. I don't want to be a promoter of people breaking their promises. I certainly don't want to be somehow beckoning someone to lie. They've made a promise, you need to keep your promise, even if that promise may be a problem to me. It sure would be great if King Baasha did not have a peace treaty with King Ben-hadad. That would be awesome. But he does. So what do I do? Well, I'm not going to bribe him so that he breaks the covenant because I'm not into covenant breaking. So we already know that there's compromise here. He's cutting corners because he's afraid. I don't think he's in favor of lying, but he's sure promoting it right now. It's funny the things you'll do when you're scared enough to start cutting corners and violating standards that you would keep at some other time when you're not afraid.

Go back up in the passage, verse 2. How's he trying to pay off King Ben-hadad the first? Well, with silver and gold. Well, that's great. Did it come out of your checkbook? Did it come out of the war budget? The military budget? No. Half of it did. Some of it did. "Asa took silver and gold from the treasuries of the house," here it is, "of the Lord and the king's house." Hey, if you want to start writing checks out of your own bank account for this, that's fine. I don't want you ever promoting and trying to buy your way out of a jam with something that you're promoting some kind of lying or unfaithfulness, but I certainly don't want you spending God's money on that.

Now, think about that. What was the money in the treasury for? Well, it was for making the worship of God glorious. It was for gilding the temple that Solomon had made. It's for the upkeep of the temple. It's about the repairs to the temple. It's about paying the scribes to make copies of the Torah and the scrolls. It's about paying the priest's families. We want a really healthy worship budget. That's what was all-important to God. King Asa is going in here and he's tapping those resources and taking from that money that belongs to God and trying to pay his way out of his fear. I just wonder how many of us do that.

It's going to get real uncomfortable right now. Don't treat me like the seer, Hanani, but I wonder how many of you know what you ought to be doing with some of your resources that really do belong to God that you have in your own heart a conviction at a time when you see in Scripture what God should be having you do financially? I mean, all of us should be giving, let's talk about our regular budget. We ought to be giving to the church from our domestic budgets. That is a requirement in Scripture. And because you're afraid, you may be saying, I can't afford to give here, not to the church, I can't afford to give there, but I'm going to pad my bank account here or work on my retirement fund there or make sure I get this down payment fund up over here, so I'm going to worry about these things.

Well, the post-exilic prophets dealt with this all the time. You're busy in your paneled houses making sure all of that's good while the Lord's Temple sits in disrepair. He basically calls them, in the book of Malachi, he says, you're thieves, you're robbing from God. I mean, it's an interesting way to look at it. Here's Asa really literally robbing from God, taking money that was designated for the worship and the promotion of what's going on in the temple and he's using it to pay off



foreign pagan kings so that they might start a war up north after they had promised not to start any wars up north.

Not to mention, speaking of repairs, I mean, think about the way that God wants to use what's happening with our Compass 2020 to advance the kingdom and build the church. Before you start crossing your arms, some of you that are so upset every time money comes up from the platform, which it doesn't very often, you can keep a tally if you'd like. But I want you to think, are we saying even when the conviction of God comes upon us to give to something like that, we're saying to God, "Well, I would, but I got to use it over here for this." And that becomes something that you think if I don't do this then I'm going to be in trouble. And the what-ifs and the what-ifs and the what-ifs govern, which is nothing more than worry and fear and concern, the things that I ought to be doing with the Lord's money. And I'm just saying there are a million things you can think about.

As a matter of fact, I want you to make sure, if you don't go to a small group, this week's the week, you start in a small group, find one on the web site and get in a small group. Take these discussion questions and we need you to think through the specifics in your life. The question is simply this: what are the temptations that come your way to compromise, to cut corners, to do things you know you shouldn't do when you're afraid? And it starts with what are you afraid of? What are the things, the pressure points in your life? And if you think, well, it's a health scare. Can you just hold that for a week? Let's get to that next week, because the next thing Asa is going to deal with is a personal health crisis.

But beyond your health, what are the things that scare you? And I want you to start thinking when I hit those scary situations and I know God has said this: "Hey, trust me." He said this: "Seek first the kingdom. All those other things. I'll take care of all that." He says this: "I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you." He says this: "No one can snatch you from my hand." He says this: "That you know that the birds, they don't go out there and reap and sow and put in storehouses, but your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more valuable than sparrows?" When he says, "I know you're afraid as to how your house or your home or your clothes are going to look? Would you look at the lilies of the field? They don't spin. They don't toil. But even Solomon and all of his glory, he didn't look like one of them. Don't you think if he does that for the grass of the field, that's here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, don't you think he'll clothe you, O you of little faith?"

You've got a God that says all that, and if you act out of fear, if you don't consult him, if you don't rely on him, then what? Well, then let me start with this. You don't serve a math equation. You don't have a math equation telling you these things and making these promises. This is a person. God is a person. Intellect, emotion and will. I know he's infinitely other and transcendent. I get that. But you do know that God comes in very personal terms to his people when they don't trust him and he says things like this in Jeremiah Chapter 2. He says, "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they walked away?" I'm quoting now, it's a great passage, Jeremiah Chapter 2. "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far away from me, and they went after all these worthless things?" What was wrong with me? What did I do wrong?





Even in this morning's Daily Bible Reading, did you read that? I mean, it's a harsh passage I understand. If it's your birthday I'm sorry this is your Daily Bible Reading today. But it's basically God saying, "Look at everything I've done. Why would you turn away from me?" And maybe that Jeremiah 2 passage, "What did your fathers find in me? What fault did they find in me that they walked so far away from me?" This sets up for a passage I quoted many times and perhaps you know. He says there are two things, "two evils that my people have committed," two things that the heavens should be appalled and earth should shudder over. And they should be like, "Wow, I can't believe they did that." What are the two evil things? "They forsook me, the spring of living water." I would have given them everything. I would have taken care of them. "And they've hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns," broken wells, "that can hold no water."

You know what Asa needed? He needed peace. What was he reaching out for? Jesus said it. You're reaching out for the peace that the world gives. And guess what that's based on? The capricious attitudes of King Ben-hadad the first. Guess what it's based on? Money. How much money you can buy him off for. All this temporal peace. Jesus says, "I leave you peace." I'm going to go away. "I'm leaving you peace, but not a peace that the world gives." But I'm giving you a different kind of peace. A peace that really is going to, as Paul says, "surpass all understanding." That even if Ramah gets taken and I know that may be your concern. If I really trust him and don't cut corners and don't do whatever I can at the job or in my workplace, I don't know what's going to happen. I could lose that account. I could lose this major funding. I could lose my home. You might.

Ramah might be a cut-off city, a blockade, a successful fortress by the enemy and you may lose some ground. I understand that. But the win you see on earth, which Asa thought he had pulled off, was a failure in heaven. What he needed, he needed success in heaven. He needed to have that reliance on the Lord, even if he failed on earth. Because I guarantee you the promise that's held out to him by seer Hanani was God would love to strongly support you. And I doubt in that promise when he's talking about, "Dude, you could have had Syria." I doubt you would have taken that little border town of Ramah and lost it. God would've taken care of you. Why don't you trust him?

Don't offend God. That's one of the biggest temptations is that you end up risking offense of a personal God. For you, looking at a God who says, "I am here. I will support you. I will take care of you." And you saying, "Well, I don't believe it." If I went out to lunch with you and I said I'd pick up the tab. If you spent the whole time afraid I wasn't going to pay for lunch, I would be offended that you don't believe me, you don't think I have the power to pay for it. I would be concerned about the fact that you are personally insulting me because you refuse to believe that I'm going to do what I said I was going to do.

See the temptations in your fear. I know that's just an assignment for your homework because you've got to spend time in your situation looking at those temptations and making sure whatever it is, whether it's picking up the phone and calling, you know, the ambassador in Syria, whatever the action is that does not reflect your trust in God, you've got to figure out what that is, you've got to see the compromise and you've got to recognize the problem. And then you've got to be able to be honest about the right response to what the prophet Hanani said and say, "I want to do the exact opposite of what King Asa did."



Look at it with me, verse 17, "At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa the king of Judah and said to him, 'Because you relied on the king of Syria and did not rely on the Lord, your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet you relied,' there it is the third time, "you relied on the Lord," and then "he gave them into your hands. For the eyes of the Lord," look at this amazing statement, "they run to and fro through the whole earth, to give strong support," he can't wait to give strong support, "to those whose heart is" complete, it's full, it's not double-minded, "it's blameless," it's what it ought to be "toward him. You've done foolishly in this, for from now on you're going to have wars."

Number two on your outline, I just want to make sure that we "Put Our Confidence In a Willing God." I love the point of verse 9. How willing is God to walk you through your next trial? How willing is God when the armies are up against the borders of that town and you feel the attacks by the lawyers or by your family members or by your neighbors or whatever conflict you're going through to say, "I know God is willing and ready to stand in strong support of me."

Does that mean you're going to win every battle? Sidebar here. Listen, you've got to have three things, at least in your mind, clearly, as it relates to what Scripture says regarding winning and losing. Let's start with this. Paul is in prison in Rome in the book of Philippians. He writes the Philippians and he says this. I know this, that I'm confident that I can glorify God in this situation. Now, my eager expectation is that I'm going to get out. But I love what he says here. Note carefully in your ears. Philippians Chapter 1 verse 20. He says, "I have an eager expectation and hope that I will not be ashamed, and I have full courage now as always that Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." That's an interesting statement. He says, "I got full courage." That's what I want for this series. Full godly courage. I'm confident in God. I will not be ashamed. Eager hope and expectation. That's what we need from Scripture in this Old Testament story. He says, whether I get out of this prison or whether the Romans chop my head off.

Now you know the next verse. That's verse 20. You know verse 21 because we've all memorized that, I hope. Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ," here's the logic, "and to die is gain." I can't lose in this. Oh, it might be painful to have my head chopped off by the Romans, but I know this: it's not a problem. It's not a problem? Well, here's the good thing about what Paul prayed for and had the Philippians praying for is that he would be released and he was released. He got out of the Roman prison and he went out on another quick preaching tour. Then he got arrested again, he got sent to Rome and he's sitting in jail a second time, he writes the second book to Timothy, the second letter to Timothy. And in Chapter 4, the last extant writing we have from the Apostle Paul, he says, this time, guys, I have no eager expectation of getting out. I think I'm done. "My life is being poured out as a drink offering." But you know what, Timothy? "I've fought the good fight, I have finished the race," I did it. And guess what? History tells us he got his head chopped off, he was killed by the Romans.

But here's what he says in the middle of all that. Second Timothy Chapter 4 verse 18. "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed." It's an evil deed for the Roman government to cut off Paul's head for preaching the truth about Christ. That's an evil deed. How are you being delivered from



the evil deed? Does that mean your head's not going to be chopped off? No. He's confident he's going to be killed on this one. But he says, "I'm going to be delivered from every evil deed," listen to the next line, "and God will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom."

Even if Asa were to lose the battle on the northern border of his kingdom, which God had implied, and Hanani's response, that wouldn't happen. But even if it did, there's something so much bigger, there's something so much more eternal. There's something that goes beyond the stretch of this life that when it comes to fear, hey, Asa, you should not be afraid at all. My whole point in this Godly Confidence series is that you are not a fearful, anxious person. You shouldn't be afraid. Why? To quote one more passage, as I said three passages: Philippians 1, Second Timothy 4. How about this one? Luke Chapter 12.

In verse 4 he says this: "Friends, do not fear the one who can kill the body, and then after that, there's nothing else they can do." Hey, Paul, even if they chop off your head, there's nothing they can do beyond that. He says, "I'll tell you who to fear. Fear the one that after he kills the body, can cast your soul into hell." Who's that? That's God. And Jesus said, "Yes, I tell you, fear him." Whoa! That's a rough passage. It's not on any Christmas cards. You know, you don't see that as a, you know, a wall art for cross-stitch for your mother and, you know, in the Christian bookstores. This is a hard passage. "Cast your soul into hell, fear him."

Well, he then turns to his apostles, his disciples, and he says this. He says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Verse 7, "Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. So fear not: you are more valuable than many sparrows." Now, he said that in a different context, in different ways. But in this passage, he says God is not overlooking the sparrows, he's watching over them. He's certainly watching over you. And the one I'm telling you to fear is God, your judge. But here's the thing. You trust in me, even though you die, yet shall you live. And if you believe in me and you die, you're going to live forever. You're fine. Paul, if they chop your head off, you're OK. Hey Asa, if King Baasha comes and runs a spear through your chest as you sit on the throne in Jerusalem because they blocked off all your resources and kill you in your throne, don't worry about it. That's a big, big thing, if you lose your business, if you lose your house, if you lose the lawsuit.

The win for the Christian is this: you have nothing to fear if you have everything right with the King of kings. Nothing. You should not be afraid. These temporal skirmishes in life, they're really not the problem. The problem is the big picture. Now, does God give us victories along the way? He would have given him Syria, let alone Ramah. He would have done that for him. But you need to realize the fearlessness of the Christian is based on something eternal, not whether or not you get through this situation financially or legally or relationally. Well, how do I deal with this? This reliance? It's there in verse 7. It's there in verse 8. Rely, rely, rely. You're relying on the wrong thing.

Peter, you've got to sympathize with him, who was scared when Jesus kept saying things like I'm going to be delivered over the Pharisees, the chief priests, the scribes. They're going to kill me. They're going to crucify me. It's going to be a bad situation. And Peter says, "No, it'll never be that way." And Jesus responds and he says, "Get behind me, Satan." "You're setting your mind on the



things of men, not on the things of God." So there was something in his fear about I can't have the shepherd struck down. And even the prophecy that was quoted, "The sheep are going to scatter." "No, I don't want that. I'm afraid of that." Jesus fearlessly marches to the cross. Peter's afraid. He says, "No, I don't want that to happen." And he recognizes at the end of his life, as he writes First Peter, "Well I get it now."

God may or may not give us the next battle that we're facing, but the big picture you need to know is always secure. And he says, so I'm asking you to do this, First Peter 5, "Would you just humble yourself under the mighty hand of God?" Because the promise is he'll never leave you, he'll never forsake you, he will always provide. He's going to take care of you. It doesn't mean you're going to win. It doesn't mean you won't ever fall to a financial collapse. It doesn't mean that you won't get evicted, it doesn't mean any of that. But in the end you realize that there is a God under his mighty hand that you've submitted yourselves to, "who will exalt you at the proper time," and you will win at the proper time.

And then he says this: "casting all your anxieties on him." There's the key. Do you want to know what to do? Take your thoughts about all these things and the what-ifs. And it's not, as other preachers have said, that you're thinking too much about the problem. It's really that you're not thinking enough about the problem. And some people think that you're just thinking too much about it. OK. Think more about it. Think more about it. What-if? What-if? What-if? What-if? What-if? Just follow it all the way to the end and the what-if will get you to the place as a Christian where it's OK. The war has been won. And then you take that concern and thinking it through thoroughly, you cast it onto him.

Do you know the next line in that passage, First Peter 5:7? It says, "Casting all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." He cares for you. What an offense it would be for us to not put our confidence in such a willing God who says, "I will walk you through the fire, I'll walk you through the flood. You just trust me." Sometimes he delivers. Sometimes he lets us fall to earthly battles. But like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah said in Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as you know them by their Babylonian names, he said, "The Lord is able to deliver us. But even if he doesn't, just let it be known to you O King" Nebuchadnezzar, we're not going to bow, we're not going to compromise, our confidence is in the right place.

We'll see this next week as we look at our own problems with our own health. But you do understand that when it comes to us looking at whether it's physicians or in this case treaties with foreign nations, as long as there's no compromise ethically, God is not against those things. God would like you to work. But first, he wants you to take the anxieties you have, placed them on him, knowing and affirming that he cares for you, and then he would like you to get to work. Get off your knees. Get to work. But as Proverbs 16 says, what you need to do is roll your work to him. It's a great Hebrew word, when it says "commit" it's the word to take something and roll it into someone else's lap, to take your work and commit it to the Lord, to roll it onto him and say, OK, God, here's what I think we ought to do. I think I should call the Syrian envoy and we should talk a little bit about what's going on in the north. I don't want him to do anything illegal, immoral. I don't want him to do anything unethical. I don't want him to break any laws of God. But maybe I should have a discussion. I don't know what the next step is, but I know the next step



should not be based on fear. We take care of our fear, we take care of our anxiety, and then we act. We act with a submission that God cares for us and we're going to roll our work over to him. Proverbs 16:3.

Roll your work over to the Lord. "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." God is so willing and ready to help you and walk you through the next situation. This is not a prosperity gospel, but he wants to walk you through that. And I find that 80% of the time it comes out favorably. He's wanting to trust us, just like the promise was here, 100% certain in his case, he would have delivered him from the threat to the north, all the way to the north, all the way up to Damascus.

But the response didn't go so well, verse 10. Look at our passage here. "Asa was angry with the seer and put him in stocks in prison." It wasn't bad enough to throw him in prison. He put him in stocks in prison. He locked him up. He locked him up personally, and "he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time." I joked about the fact that he repented. Of course, he didn't repent. It's not unusual for the godly person to point out in the life of someone, in this case the king, that he had done wrong. We saw Nathan do that with David. The good news with David, Asa's great-great grandfather, is that when Nathan said, you're the man, David repented. Unfortunately, Asa doesn't do that.

Three years later, he's got a disease. I don't know where he was spiritually at that point, but it didn't seem like he was in a very good place. He doesn't look like he ever got his heart soft toward God again in this situation, but you need to realize that the idea here is that everything would've been different had he repented. Is it bad that you lost some opportunity that God shut down what he would have given you? Okay, great. But pick up where you're at and do the right thing. I mean, the lesson in Scripture always for those who find that they're failing, when you feel the pang of conviction, maybe through a sermon, that you haven't trusted God and you took matters into your own hands about whatever it is that you've done, you've made a decision based on fear. I'm here this morning as the seer, if you will, the recapitulation of God's prophecy saying to you, here's what God says, don't do anything out of fear. Don't ever act out of anxiety. Trust in God. You didn't trust in God. If you feel that pang of conviction, repent and repent quickly.

Number three, always repent quickly. "Be Quick to Repent," number three. That is the call always in Scripture. We don't see it in Asa. We don't see him seeing it as temptation, we don't see him putting his confidence in a willing God and we don't see him repenting. All those three things we ought to do just the opposite. Repent, repent, repent, repent. How important is it for us to see that need in our lives, knowing God will pick up the pieces wherever we're at? Are there consequences for the sins that we commit if you didn't trust God? There may be residual consequences, but you've got to learn to repent. And let me say this. When someone points it out to you, whether it's a preacher or whether it's someone in your small group or whether it's your spouse or whether it's a friend, whether it's some godly person that comes in your life says, "I don't think you handled that in a godly way," can you receive that correction? Asa couldn't do it.





Proverbs 15:5 says, "A fool despises his father's instruction," his brother's instruction, his teacher's instruction, his underling's instruction, "but whoever heeds reproof is prudent." They're smart. They're wise.

Our actions in response to correction is naturally anger. I had someone correct me recently and they were right in their correction and they were young and they did it flippantly and they probably didn't do it the way I would want them to do it. My first response was godly repentance. No. My first response was I was angry. I was angry. And I thought that's just the way it always is. Then I had to deal with someone here on our team who got a blazing criticism from someone older. And I thought, it doesn't matter where it comes from, basically. Right? It's hard to respond to correction and we get defensive. I'm just telling you, if your response is anger, that's not a good response. I mean, the proverbs are written to you, the hothead, "the hot-tempered man," Proverbs 15:18, "all he does is stir up strife." It's only going to get worse. Proverbs 14:17, "A man who's quick-tempered will act foolishly." You're going to act dumb. You're going to make dumb decisions in your anger.

And some of you in this room have an anger problem. And you're angry when you realize you've blown it and you can't get it back. Something in life has been broken because you did the wrong thing. Many of the wrong things you do are because you're afraid and you respond in fear. You make a bad decision. There are consequences. Sometimes you see those consequences starting to play out and you get mad. Don't get mad. Bite your lip. Sit in the corner, face the corner, put the dunce cap on, whatever you have to do until you get over your anger and then repent, repent, repent. Repentance starts with confession. You say, "God, I blew it. I'm sorry." That's hard to do. You've just got to bite your lip. You don't pick up the phone and complain to everyone about this person and what they said. "Can you believe the pastor said that about money?" Or "Can you believe this person in my small group called me out for that," or "I can't believe my mom called and said these things." Stop with telling everybody, work through your anger and just get to repentance. If there's any truth in it, find that truth.

This is going to affect your relationships. It affected Asa's relationships. "He inflicted," bottom of verse 10, "cruelties upon some of the people at the same time." You know Proverbs in Chapter 22 verses 24 and 25 say people shouldn't even be your friend if you're given to anger. It says, "Make no friendship with a man given to anger." Don't hang out. Don't "go with a wrathful man." If you can't control your anger, particularly when you see that you've done something wrong, when someone's pointed out your error. I mean, this can be tested in traffic on the way home, in the parking lot, when two people reach for the same donut on the patio. I don't know. You're going to get to a place where you realize my response is not a godly response. My response is an angry response. And all I'm telling you is God would have you get your anger under control. The Spirit of God wants to do that. The outburst of anger is a fruit, an expression of the flesh.

The Spirit of God wants to produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is self-control. Asa didn't have any of that. He stewed for at least three years, it seems, and didn't have the wisdom to stand back and say, wait a minute, that's not the right response. As Proverbs goes on to say, Chapter 28 verse 13, you want to keep burying your transgression, concealing it, stuffing it, trying to rationalize and excuse it, you're not going to prosper. "But the one who confesses and forsakes," his sin or



his transgression, "will obtain mercy. Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart's going to fall into calamity." And that's what's next in our passage. More calamity for Asa because his heart was hard.

When your kids are young and they come back from the first day of school, they come back with a backpack full of papers from the school. All the papers the parents have to fill out. That's the day I make sure I'm preaching somewhere, doing ministry (audience laughing). I don't want to be there for all that. When we sit at the kitchen table, of course, and have to fill them all out, one of the important cards you have to fill out is the emergency contact list. You know, your kid gets his arm ripped off at school or whatever, "who am I supposed to call?" The nurse wants to know. The principal wants to know.

I always give that some thought, basically, because there are more than two lines. I'm thinking mom and dad. Okay, let's have mom be first. I don't know. I mean, I'm thinking through who should be on the top of the list. And then there are other people. Okay. Well, I guess this... maybe call this person. And all the principal has to do is go into the file and see what that is and they know who the first emergency contact is. But you know, you have an emergency contact list. It's unwritten, but it's there. And when you hit a bump and when there's a problem and there's trouble in your life, you're feeling that emergency, you need to call someone. Unfortunately, there are too many Christians in this room whose heart is wholly given to the Lord, who do things, who in God's sight is righteous and good. You've done well in your Christian life. But a crisis is going to test where your reliance is. Who are you going to call out to?

Listen to this, Psalm 50 verse 15. Here's God's speaking right now to you. "Call upon me in the day of trouble." Call upon me. Call me first. Do you know what Asa needed to do? Drop to his knees. He gets the report, "Ramah, it's being besieged. I mean, the troops of the north are there and they're blocking off the passageway. You can't even come through the washbasin here to get to our city. They're going to cut off our supplies.".

He should have been on his knees and he should have said what he said two chapters earlier. Can I show you that? Let's end with this. Second Chronicles Chapter 14. It says in our passage about the Libyans and the Ethiopians. Well, here they are. They came to a place called Mareshah. Zerah was the commander of all this under the pharaoh. It talks about an "army of a million men," which is an idiom in Hebrew. It may have been literally a million men, but it's a way to speak of just the countless group of people with "300 chariots," verse 9, Second Chronicles 14:9. That's like counting, you know, Abrams tanks or Nimitz class aircraft carriers or, you know, whatever, F-18 Hornets. It's like the fighting machines of the ancient world. That's a big thing. A scary thing to say they had 300 chariots.

Asa earlier in his life went out to meet him and they drew up in their battle lines, as they often did, in these valleys, with this span between them, a standoff. Zephathah was the place at Mareshah, verse 11. Here's what Asa should have done. Here's what you should do. Here is the prayer for you to pray when you are faced with a pressure point that causes you any kind of anxiety, any kind of worry, any kind of fear. "Asa cried to the Lord his God." I love that possessive. Verse 11, "Asa cried to the Lord his God, 'O Lord, there is none like you to help.'" Of course you're



going to be at the top of my emergency contact list, of course. "Between the mighty and the weak." I've got a problem here, and it's big. Maybe that's the problem with you not calling out to God, you think the problem is small? I don't care how small the problem is, you ought to be calling out to God, "Help us, O Lord, our God."

Here's the word, here's the word rightly used. You shouldn't need a prophet to convict you and to confront you on not having it in the right way. "We rely," there it is, "we rely on you, and in your name we've come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let man not prevail against you." I'm so associated and alive with you, it's like I'm standing with you. Don't let them win. "So," verse 12, "so," because of that, "the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. "Asa," verse 13, "and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians fell, and none remained alive, for they were broken before the Lord," I love this, talk about possessive, not only are you our God, now our army is your army. "Broken before the Lord and his army. The men of Judah carried away very much spoil." I hope you have an emergency contact in your mind that's very clear. You need to be praying, your prayer life needs to reflect your reliance on God.

When Israel got this right, they said some amazing things early on in the Pentateuch. Moses thought about the way that God had responded coming out of Egypt and he said this, Deuteronomy Chapter 4. He said, these people not only have your truth written out now, the first few books of the Bible are being written, they're wise understanding people. But he said, "What other nation is there that has their god," their deities, their idols, "near them the way our God is near to us whenever we call on him?"

The most underutilized weapon in the arsenal of your life is found on your knees when you recognize, whether it's a small problem, a medium problem, a big problem or a life-threatening problem, is to go before God and say, "God, you're the first person I'm looking to before I ever make plans, before I ever strategize, before I ever pop off an email, a text or call someone, I'm going to turn this problem over to you. Trust in the Lord when you're scared. God will give you a godly confidence that surpasses all understanding.

Let's pray. God, your Word's very clear that it's better to take refuge in you than to trust in people. "It's better to take refuge in the Lord," Psalm 118:9 says, "than to trust in princes." It doesn't matter how big the person on our speed dial might be in our mind. The first person we talked to ought to be you, giving our heart and our anxieties, our fears and our concerns and saying, "God, this is your problem. I'm your person. Don't let this prevail against you and your people." God, let us identify so closely with you that you respond as you do so well and say, "that's my man. That's my gal. Those are my people." Just remember that. Let us not fear. "The wicked flee when no one pursues them." They are running at the rustling of leaves. "But the righteous," Proverbs 28:1, "are as bold as a lion." Give us godly confidence. The godly confidence we didn't have last week, last month. Strengthened us, particularly as we prepare for whatever might be next for us. The test of our faith. So provide for us, God, in ways that you haven't in the past, that we can see your greatness as we rely on a great God. Help us God, to trust you when we're scared.



In Jesus name. Amen