

**January 31**

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Chronicles 15 & 16

**Key Verse:** “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...”  
(2 Chronicles 16:9)

## **Overview**

When Asa was loyal to the Lord, He truly showed Himself strong, as the defeat of the Ethiopians proved. On Asa’s return from this great victory, he was met by the prophet Azariah with a message from God. The Lord gave both a warning and a promise. The warning was for him not to forsake God or else God would forsake him; the promise was that if he sought the Lord he would find Him, and if he remained strong, the Lord would reward him. The prophet gave an example from Israel’s past, which probably refers to the chaotic and often apostate period of the judges (cf. Judges 21:25). The people had suffered greatly when they were far from God, but when they “sought Him, He was found by them” (15:4; cf. Judges 2:18).

These promises brought about the desired effect. Asa intensified his reforms and worked all the more diligently to see his kingdom serve the Lord. They renewed the covenant with God, promising to obey Him. Asa enforced the law of Moses regarding the death penalty for anyone who would disobey God’s laws (15:13; Deuteronomy 17:2-7). This was so that wicked people would not have a bad influence on others. Asa completely destroyed anything having to do with idolatry. He even went so far as to remove his own grandmother from her position of influence as the queen mother, because she had an idol (15:16; 1 Kings 15:13).

News of the revival in Judah spread to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. A great number from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who desired to serve the Lord, as had their forefathers, left the Northern Kingdom to reside in Judah, where the Lord was worshipped. No doubt this was the reason King Baasha began to fortify the city of Ramah and strengthen the border: he was losing too many of his subjects to good King Asa (16:1). It appeared that a war was inevitable. This time, however, Asa made a grievous mistake. He did not rely on the Lord to deliver them, as he had a few years earlier. Knowing that the Syrians were allies of Israel, he feared they might join Israel in an attack on Judah. Therefore, with all their silver and gold treasures, he convinced Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, to make an alliance with him and attack Israel. Asa was successful in forcing Baasha to leave his operation against Judah, but in so doing Judah became subject to Syria.

God sent the prophet Hanani to rebuke Asa for his weakness and lack of faith. He told Asa that he could have defeated Syria and Israel if he had only trusted in God instead of relying on man. From then on, he would no longer have a peaceful kingdom. God would have been pleased to show Himself strong on behalf of Judah, if only Asa’s heart had remained loyal. As the key verse states, God is constantly looking for occasions to prove His strength, that all would come to understand that He alone is worthy to be praised and served. No problem is ever too big for God; He is able to deliver and will protect those whose hearts are loyal to Him (cf. Psalms 20:7-8).

Asa's reaction to Hanani's message was not one of repentance but anger, and he threw Hanani into prison. This is the earliest report of a prophet being persecuted, but many more were to follow throughout the history of Judah and Israel (cf. Mark 6:17-18). One sin always leads to another, as it did with Asa, for he also mistreated some of his subjects. They were probably those who opposed the imprisonment of Hanani.

Even when Asa was close to death, he never stopped relying on man. When he became diseased, he did not call on God but only looked to his physicians, who may have used magic. Unlike the Lord, they did not have the power to help him, and the sickness eventually led to his death. He was given an honourable burial, accompanied by the burning of many spices. Because of Asa's weakened faith in God, he never received the rewards God had promised him.

### **Prayer**

Lord, please keep our hearts loyal to You. Put the steel of Your strength down our backbones that we will not compromise by relying on man for our help and not on You.