

The Power of Fear
3-Year Bible Reading Plan
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Bible Text: 2 Chronicles 15-16
Preached On: Sunday, March 29, 2020

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Well, this morning hopefully you have a copy of God's word, a Bible, wherever you are and I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to the book of 2 Chronicles 15 and 16. If this is your first time with us not just in an online experience but as being a part of First Baptist, Opelika, I want to welcome you as we as a family of faith whether we're in person like we were a few weeks ago, or strictly in an online environment as we are today, to join us in a Bible reading plan. For almost two years now we as an entire family of faith have been walking through and reading and studying the same Scriptures every day. Now typically it's about a chapter a day and some days like the period we're in now, it's two chapters a day, but as we continue to walk through the Scriptures, one of the things that marvels me is how perfectly timed God's word is for our lives.

This morning when you woke up and you're walking through a global pandemic and you're seeing all the newscasts and all the headlines and even the tickers at the bottom of the screen go by, the last book of the Bible you may be thinking of right now is 2 Chronicles when we need hope, when we need strength, when we need courage, but this morning I'm here to share with you there is a story of a man in 2 Chronicles 15 and 16 that just happen to be, notice I say that with a little bit of sarcasm here, God knew three years ago when we put this reading plan together that we would have the week we just had while reading this passage of Scripture.

There's a man by the name of Asa. He's one of the kings of Israel. Now not Israel proper, so much, actually it's Judah in the south, and as you're turning to 2 Chronicles 15 and 16, let me give you a little background of where we find ourselves. We have been walking through the monarchies or the kingships of Israel. We saw the life of Saul and particularly David, and even last week Solomon, but when Solomon passes away, the kingdom is divided. There's a northern kingdom and there's a southern kingdom and Israel in the north would compose 10 tribes of great quantity, but what we know as Judah in the south would have Judah and Benjamin. And so as you go after Solomon, those who were in leadership when it says there the king of Israel, that will not necessarily include the southern kingdoms.

Now if we were to fast forward a couple hundred years, the northern kingdom as spoken by the prophets, they will fall into captivity in 722 BC when the Assyrians will come into

the. In 586 BC, the southern kingdom, Judah, will fall into captivity. Not only did they not listen to the prophets but they did not pay attention to what happened to the relatives in the north and that's going to be important in just a moment. But today we come to a man by the name of Asa and what we see in Asa's life is potentially a story for each and every one of our lives, in fact, this morning I want to encourage you to be like Asa in chapter 15 but not like he was in chapter 16, and what we're gonna see, what happened in Asa's life has the potential of having in each and every one of our lives. What happened is he fell to the power of fear.

Now let's be honest, let's be transparent with each other this morning, these are fearful days. When we hear the latest news or we see the latest statistics of what's happening in the world, or the latest restrictions that we're being asked to abide by, that emotion of fear naturally wells up within us, and I think sometimes even as a believer in Jesus Christ, there's maybe not so much conviction but maybe guilt. "Why did I experience that fear? Why did it scare me? Why did it frighten me?" The thing that I want you to see this morning is this: that even those who are walking the closest with the Lord because we're human, because we're still wrapped in flesh, will have a natural inclination to be scared or frightened about news that they receive, but it's whether or not we allow fear to embed itself in our life, and what I want you to see is in the life of Asa, here's a man who's walking with the Lord. Now he doesn't make it to what we call the Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11, there's about 32 men and women that do make it in that famous chapter of faith, but I am of the belief that he probably is in the top 100 of the Old Testament men and women and that's saying a lot. So I want us to go back into chapter 15 of 2 Chronicles and I want to lay the groundwork for this man by the name of Asa and see how can we learn from his response both the positive and the negative.

2 Chronicles 15, beginning in verse 1. It says,

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: 2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. 3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. 4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. 6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. 7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

I want you to see the challenge that the prophet offers, not only Asa but each and every one of us, that if you seek the Lord, he will be with you, if you do not, there will be as we read, some pretty unfortunate consequences, and in a time where people had lived life as they so chose and not directed toward or focused on the things of God, the challenge is

offered to Asa, "Will you be the one who stands for the Lord? Will you be the one who not just believes in but walks in your faith?"

Beginning in verse 8, we see that Asa accepts the challenge. In fact, today if you'll allow me, I just want to walk through some of the basic questions of life when we talk about the power of fear and I think it's very important that we're studying this character because he was a man of great faith, and I want to borrow from last week. Remember last week as we talked about a proper exit strategy, when you and I eventually row out of this global pandemic whether it be three weeks, three months, we don't know how long it's going to last, we saw what did David do? What were the steps that he took to ensure that coming out of the situation he was as strong, if not stronger than when he entered? I want to use the same characteristics for Asa because we see him walking in the same steps as David and I think all of us would agree, those are pretty good steps to walk in.

So who is this Asa character when it comes to his relationship with the Lord? Well, the first thing that we discover is that he was a man of faith. He was faithful. Remember the prophet has come to him and he's given him the challenge, "You can seek the Lord or you can run from him." Notice what it says in verse 8,

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD.

I want you to fast forward down to verse 12. There's a critical comment that's made here. It says,

12 And they [that would be Israel or the southern kingdom of Judah] entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

Do you see that incredible action of faith? Here this prophet comes unto him and says, "You've got two roads that you can walk down. You can either do it God's way or you can do it the world's way." So what was his response? He acted in faith. Remember we studied last week in Hebrews 11:1 that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Had he seen the blessings of God? No. Had he seen the peaceful times? That's going to be critical to the story in just a moment. Here there were wars and rumors of wars and there's about to be an elongated period of peace because he simply did as God requested, he stepped out in faith. He took the abominable idols, he took the high places, he tore them down and the Bible says in verse 12, they entered into a covenant with God.

Now in an empty room such as this, I'm not able to truly picture what that would mean but in our context, imagine breaking what we are being told as far as physical and social distancing is concerned, imagine being about 12-18 inches away from somebody and

looking them straight in the eye and pledging to do as you've made in covenant. That's what they did. They literally were looking God in the eye and saying, "We will walk in your way. We will walk in your word no matter what challenges come our way." He, as David, was an incredible man of faith, but we also see that he possessed fidelity. Remember last week we talked about fidelity is not just having an action of faith but it's continuing for some time. I want you to notice the very last verse of chapter 15, it's verse 19. It says,

19 And there was no more war [that's that peace, that's the blessing that we're talking of] unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

Now that may just seem like one of those verses that particularly in a Bible reading plan, you just kind of breeze right through and you don't think much about it, but if you go back to when the prophet came to Asa and offered him this challenge, it was in the 15th year. So for 20 years there was peace. What does that mean? That covenant that he made with the Lord, that commitment, that step of faith to take down the idols and the abominable things and to worship the one true God for 20 years, for two decades he walked in the ways of the Lord. That's gonna be an aspect in just a moment that's gonna be very important to the story.

The last attribute, though, is that he was focused. He was a man of faith, he possessed fidelity and he was focused. He was so intent on the things of God he would not allow anything or – this is what's critical – anybody to deviate him from obeying and worshipping and following the one true God.

I want you to back it up to verse 16 and I want you to see a verse that's very unique not only in the life of Asa but in Scripture in totality. It says,

16 And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.

Now I want you to see what that verse means. You see, he had taken down the abominable things, he had taken down the idols, he had taken down all the things that competed against God, but his own mother, now you realize he had power much like Saul did, remember at the end of 1 Samuel where Saul disguises himself? He goes into the witch of Endor and she says, "Well, if I break the law, they'll put me to death." And remember what Saul says? "Oh, I think I can arrange that to be taken care of." Why? Because the Bible says that in the word of the king there is power. Here is a man that even though he had brought down the abominable things, technically speaking he had the authority to just kind of turn the cheek at what his mom was doing, but what did he do? He dismissed her title. He dismissed her position. He took her idols, he destroyed them and threw them in the river. His own mother. He made no excuses for even those who he loved the most.

You know, in Luke 14:26, there's one of those passages that we often classify as one of the hard sayings of Jesus. It says if one does not love the Lord more than his mother, his father, if he does not hate his brethren, he cannot be my disciple, and when we speak of discipleship, the word literally means to walk in the footsteps of or to receive the dust off of one's shoes. If we're gonna walk with the Lord and as he did for 20 years, imagine two decades of faithfulness to the Lord, of fidelity to the Lord, then you have to be focused. You can't let the relationships that you endear the most, you can't allow the opportunities that present themselves to you to distract you from the focus that you have for what God has in your life.

Now why have I spent so much time on Asa's success? Why have I spent so much time on 20 years of him walking with the Lord? Because when we turn to chapter 16, we're not just gonna turn the page, we're actually going to turn in a complete different direction and we're gonna see that Asa was subject unto the power of fear. Why is this critical for us? Because I think oftentimes we think to ourselves, "Well, if I get caught up in the headlines or if those emotions well up in me, I might not be or maybe I'm not the person or maybe I'm not as strong or as courageous as I thought I was." I don't think you can find anybody, at least in this section of the Scripture, that was as faithful and more fidelity and focused as Asa was. For over 20 years he didn't deviate. For 20 years he stayed focused. For 20 years he was faithful. And then chapter 16. I want you to notice what the Bible says, it says,

1 In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 3 There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. 4 And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

Now in those four verses, if this does not make you a believer in the providence of God, I don't know what will. You say, "Providence?" That's one of those big theological words. It means that God is working behind the scenes whether we see it, hear it, or realize it or not. As I mentioned earlier, and as I've done almost every single week, it was three years ago that we put this Bible reading plan together and we knew that in this season we would be walking through 2 Chronicles. None of us knew four weeks ago that this would be the life that we're living today. None of us had any idea what would be presented to us, that I would be standing in an empty room, that we would be eating from restaurants that we love by way of take-out and delivery. None of us saw this happening and neither did Asa.

I want you to see something very providential here. Maybe in the speed of which I read it or you read it there at home and you missed it, notice what it says in verse 1, that in his 36th year Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, he built Ramah, to the intent, listen to this last statement, that he might let none go out or none come in. Doesn't that sound like what we're living today? In other words, whom we know as Asa found himself, he found himself in an environment where he was not able to depart from the city and nobody else was able to come in. If this doesn't sound like social distancing, I don't know what does. If this doesn't sound like sheltering at home, I don't know what does.

So Asa found himself – listen to this, people, this is so providential – he found himself in the same position you're in today. In fact, we're being told in like the last few hours that they're questioning whether we're gonna be able to even drive distances, much less fly across our own country. What we know as international travel has come to a complete halt. We're not able to go out, and no one else is able to come in. We're being told if we were in certain places for a certain amount of time, that on our will and it may even be enforced in days ahead, we're gonna have to sequester ourselves for a period of time, and be monitored not just for our health's sake but for those whom we love and interact with. Isn't it interesting that Asa, this man who for 21 years at this point, had been walking intently with the Lord finds himself in a position eerily similar to you and I today?

Here's the problem: this man of faith, he fell to the power of fear. When did it happen? You know when it happens, right? When you least expect it. You know, one of the passages that we have in Scripture in the book of 1 Peter 5 says that our adversary the devil roars as a lion seeking whom he may devour. Now what's interesting about that illustration that the Lord uses is that he describes him as a lion, the king of the jungle, and it's not just in passages of the Bible that whom we know as Satan is called the god of this world or the king of the children of pride, but I think it's purposeful because whom we know as a lion, the king of the jungle, sleeps about 18-20 hours a day, and he is able to exert his authority and his power in the jungles of the world by a very surgical strategic strike on his prey. That's exactly what the enemy does in our lives. In fact, that's what he's wanting to do in your life right now. As you and I enter this time period as it is going longer than many of us had ever thought and/or hoped, and even though we talked last week about an exit strategy, he is going to be looking for a time to strike in your life and what does he want to do? He wants to do what John 10:10 says, he wants to steal, kill and destroy and he will do so in days like today just like he did with Asa. He will use the instrument of the power of fear.

What did Asa do? He responded by making an allegiance with Benhadad, the king of Syria, the one who was friends and took into his hands Ahab, the one who was married to Jezebel. You know, the person of Asa was a model of faith. When did it happen? Well, it happened when he least expected it. None of us four weeks ago thought this would be the world we're living in. None of us even a few days ago thought that we'd be walking through the world of today. This isn't just a week by week existence or even a day by day, it's oftentimes become an hour by hour as we receive the reports of not just what's happening in our community but at the world at large.

Now we've talked about the who, we've talked about the when, I want to talk about the what for just a moment. Not just what happened in his life, but what did he do in response to the situation. Now remember, his enemy from the north has come in, he's not allowed to go out, he's not allowed. He is basically being sheltered at home and what does he do? Well, he allows the situation, the fear of the situation to embed itself in his life. I want to encourage you on what he should have done but he did not. What is it or what should he have replied? What should he have responded by doing? There are three things, and by the way, for those of you that are note takers, get out your tablet and get out your pen, these are one of those things that I consider refrigerator worthy, okay? There are three things that he had at his disposal that he did not take advantage of in this situation. Now don't get me wrong, it was a fearful situation. They had been cut off from their supplies. Their economic system, much like ours, was probably spiraling out of control. What did he do? He joined himself with the "enemy of the state." What did he have at his disposal that he did not take advantage of? The first thing is this: you do not see anywhere in chapter 16 where whom we know as Asa hits his knees in prayer or seeks the word of God. I mean, he's in a bad place. I mean, he's in an economic disposition that is not favorable to him. He's in a sociological position that is not favorable to him. I'm sure there were people upset they couldn't go, they couldn't come in. "Am I gonna keep my job? How are we gonna function?" It's the same questions we're asking ourselves today, but he didn't hit his knees. He didn't seek the word of God.

You know, we learned the lesson from one of the most famous judges in the Bible, a man by the name of Samson, a man who was of great strength because of the calling upon his life, that hair never being cut allowed that strength to be projected. At the end of his life, he found himself in the temple of a false god, he found himself, the Bible says, they were making sport of him, in other words, they were abusing him as retribution for all the infliction that he had brought upon the Philistines. And there his hair had been shaven, he was embarrassed, he was humiliated, the Bible says his hair began to grow back and he called out to God and when he called out to God, it said that in his last act more Philistines were destroyed than all the other acts combined.

Why is that important not just for Asa's life, for our life today? Asa found himself in a place that was very undesirable. You and I find ourselves today in a place that is incredibly undesirable. But he did not call out to God. He did not seek the Scriptures. Would you have ever imagined when we first handed out the Bible reading plan that you and I would be "sheltered at home" the same week we're reading about a guy who was sheltered at home? I will make you a promise, no matter how this global pandemic is affecting or impacting your life, if you wake up every morning whether you're in 2 Chronicles or the Gospel of John, I promise you that the word of God will impact and give you faith and courage in these difficult days. And he never turned to the Lord, he simply turned to other resources.

The second "what" or the second thing that he did not do is he did not seek the opinion of those who were wise counsel. You know, the Bible speaks about these men in the Bible who sat at the gate. Probably one of the most famous men that we would call the elders of the Old Testament is a man by the name of Mordecai. Remember Esther, the one who

was called to save the people of Israel out of the persecution that was running rampant and the destruction and death that those in leadership desired? We know that famous line where Mordecai, her uncle, said, "For such a time as this, you were born." Mordecai was older in age. Mordecai was a little bit larger in size and the Bible says he sat at the gate. Why is that important? Because he was one who had been there, done that. He had multiple t-shirts, to use expressions of our culture. And what did Esther do? She sought out, she listened to that person who had been down the paths of life before her.

You know, one of the things that we don't see in Asa's life, he does not consult those that were wiser than him. In fact, he fell in the same trap as Rehoboam, one of the kings of the northern kingdom or southern kingdom that he falls into the same trap. You know, the Bible says there's a group of older men who come to him and say, "We've got a suggestion for you. We want to give you a warning. You're about to go somewhere you don't need to go." He didn't like what they said so what did he do? He sought out the opinion of the young people, the ones who were gregarious and said, "Oh, king, you can do whatever you want to do. Go for it!" And it caused great demise in his life.

Now when I talk about age, I'm not talking necessarily about one's physical age but one's spiritual maturity. In days such as this when we receive news or maybe there's an experience or something's happening and we don't know how to respond, the first thing we need to go is go directly to the Lord, go to the Scriptures, go to your prayer closet, but the second thing you need to do is seek out those who are wise counsel, seek out those who are more mature in their faith, seek out those who have walked through some difficulties in life not just as a culture or a community but some personal difficulties. Seek out those who the Lord has brought them through the fiery furnace of life.

Asa didn't seek the Lord, he didn't seek wise counsel, the third thing is he didn't seek history. You know, one of the things that people have brought to my attention as of late as we go through our Bible reading plan is how many times that after one of these leaders dies, it says, "Was not that all that he did recorded in the book of the Kings or in the book of this, or in the book of that." In other words, there were historical ledgers, so to speak, there were what we might call in today's context, there were yearbooks that they had to record all the events and all the decisions. One of the things that he had at his disposal is he could go back in time. What did David do? What did Solomon do? What did the Judges do? What did the great priests like Samuel, how did they respond? How did these individuals in days gone by, how did they handle the adversity of life?

You know, it's been said by many that the one thing that humanity does not learn from history is to learn from it, and today as we are just under a barrage of information that 99% of is entirely negative and fearful upon first hearing, we need to run to the Lord first. We need to go to those who are more mature in their faith and seek out godly counsel and wisdom, and we also need to go back and look at history, not just the history of the people of the men and women of God in Scripture but the history of those men and women of faith who have walked through plagues and pandemics, wars and depressions, how did those men and women continue and walk in their faith? You see, the reason that we would go back and we would observe and listen to what they have to say is because

they didn't do hopefully what Asa did. What was Asa's response? He was presented with an opportunity that he could kind of flank, so to speak, and go around the situation. He entered into a contract with Benhadad even though he had previously entered into a covenant with God. He took his eyes off the one who he was in covenant with and he placed them upon the world.

Now you know in the book of James 1, beginning in verse 13, it says that the Lord does not bring temptation into our life. When you and I are struggling with the things of life, the opportunities of life, even the power of fear in our life, the Lord never brings you the opportunity to sin. The Lord never puts sin in your lap and says, "Are you interested or not?" In fact, the Bible says in James 1 that sin happens when out of our own lust or desires, when that is married with what the world is offering.

Benhadad had been there for his dad. Benhadad had been there with a treasury full of money and an army ready to fight, so rather than keeping his eyes on the Lord, rather than hearing the advice of the elders, rather than going back to the history books and seeing what those men and women of faith had done in days past, he saw the opportunity to get around, he saw the opportunity to gain, shall we say, earthly power and authority instead of seeking heavenly power and authority. It was a simple presentation, an opportunity that he knew was there and he fell into the temptation.

Why is this critical for each and every one of us? Because all of us have the potential to be Asa. We all have the potential to be men and women of faith, to do what he did in chapter 16 and to stand strong for the things of God even if it lasts 21 years, but also we have the potential to fall into the same trap. The next question I want to simply ask is this: how does it happen? How do we fall into the trap that Asa did? How do we find ourselves headed the wrong direction and as we're gonna see in just a moment, it begins to pick up speed?

I want you to fast forward to verse 7 of chapter 16 and I want you to see what happens in his life and I think it explains the how. It says,

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. 8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. 10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time. 11 And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his

disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

Now as we discussed the how, I want you to notice this is a three year time span. It was three years from when he entered into a contract with Benhadad until he died. What do we see happening? The first step of entering into a life of fear and the last step. What was the last step? He sought the physicians not the Lord. Now I don't want you to over-read that in this time. In fact, right now it is the physicians and the nurses and the medical personnel who have become the heroes, rightfully so, of our culture. It wasn't that he sought medical help, that's not the issue. Don't over-read that. It's the fact that his eyes were on everything and anything but God himself.

How did this happen? Notice what it says in verse 7, the seer showed up, the prophet showed up, this man comes to him and he gives him warning again and what does he do? He puts him in prison. He does not listen to him. How do you and I see into the vortex of fear? How do we fall into this trap? How do we become a life out of fear like Asa's last three rather than a life of faith the first 21 that we spoke of today? I'll be honest with you, it's very subtle. It's subtle. He didn't just reject the prophet or the seer of God, he had initiated that years before. It's a slow fade, is what it is. It's one day missing or one day absent of.

You know, if we were in an environment of four weeks ago, it's probably at this time that I would stress the importance not just of daily Bible reading and prayer but being a part of a small group and a Sunday school class in a large gathering of worship. And one of the things that I often say is, you know, read your Bible until you want to, pray until you want to, go to church until you want to, and right now we don't have the privilege of many of the things that I think all of us at some point had taken for granted. It's a slow fade. As we take a step day by day, week by week and month by month in this new normal that you and I are experiencing, understand this, that each and every day if we allow our focus on the things of God to fade, if we allow what we're hearing from the headlines to supersede what we're hearing from the word of God, it will be a slow fade and we'll end up just like Asa. Now it won't be the exact identical story but you're gonna wake up in three months or three years and you're gonna be in a place you had no desire to be. You see, the lion roars. He's very timely. He strikes at just the right moment and in just the right manner. So you and I have a decision today. Will we be the Asa of chapter 15 or the Asa of chapter 16? It happened so subtly and so slowly.

As I've assured you many times, there's going to be a day where we wake up on the other side of the pandemic. It may be weeks. It may be months. None of us know. But how we've responded on a daily basis through this "new normal" will determine how we come out on the other side. Are we gonna be the Asa who cast down the abominable idols even of his own relatives, or are we going to be the Asa who seeks out the world's answers rather than the Lord's and dies in somewhat of obscurity?

The last question that I want to address is the why. Why is this story so important for your life? Why is it so important for mine? I'm gonna state something and if this is your

first time being with us at First Baptist, Opelika, I'm gonna state something that those who are seasoned veterans hear on a very regular basis, that the Bible is a record of the God of second chances. He's the God of third chances. He's the God of fourth chances. And maybe this morning or if you're watching a replay in the evening, maybe you're that person that fear has gotten ahold of, maybe you're that individual who has gotten so consumed with what's happening in the world that you haven't sought the Lord, you haven't sought those who are mature in their faith, and you haven't sought what believers in the past have done. Maybe it was subtle, maybe it was unintentional and maybe it's been a slow fade over just a few days or weeks, why is this passage so important? Because he's a God of second chances.

Look back up in verse 9, one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible that I read through quickly on purpose. It says,

9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.

You realize this was Asa's second chance, right? He had fallen into the temptation with Benhadad, he had entered into a contract that he need not be. We don't have an exact time frame of where verse 9 is in relationship to the contract or his death, but this thing I know, that even if Asa had signed 14 contracts, we serve a God of the 15th opportunity. He's a God of second chances and today, can I encourage you from the word of God to be verse 9 of chapter 16, would you be that man, would you be that woman, would you be that boy, would you be that girl, would we be a family of faith who says our heart is gonna be perfect toward God no matter what our circumstances are, no matter what our surroundings are, no matter what the latest news is. What does it say here? That the eyes of the Lord are looking to and fro. Right now as you sit in your living room, as you sit on the back porch, as you're driving down the road, wherever you are, I want you to hear me clearly: God is looking for men with a perfect heart. God is looking for women with a perfect heart. God is looking for boys and for girls and for students with a perfect heart. And what does he want to do? He wants to do the amazing in your life. He wants to bring you through this situation not in a life of fear but a life of faith.

Maybe today as you hear the challenge from God's word and you see Asa's life compared to chapters 15 and 16, as we kind of transition to our contemporary culture, as we walk through a global pandemic, hopefully as men and women and students of faith, maybe today is one of those days where for the first time the Lord used his word combined with his Holy Spirit to do some surgery on your heart. Maybe today you're that individual no matter what setting you find yourself in today, no matter what your age and what your background is, maybe you realize that you're entire sustenance, your entire source of strength at least in the world around you was your own strength, it was your education, it was your financial resources, it was your networking ability, and here as we find ourselves in somewhat of an isolated environment, all of those things are not nearly as valuable maybe even as important or as, shall we say, successful as days past, and maybe today you realize that your heart has never been given to the Lord, that you've never had

that time in life where you've admitted and confessed that you're a sinner in need of saving. We saw a beautiful picture earlier of baptism, it's a picture on the outside of what had happened in that young boy's life on the inside. It doesn't matter your age or background, maybe you're that person today who's ready to be saved, you're ready to be forgiven, you're ready for Jesus Christ to be your Savior and your Lord.

Here's the great news: you don't have to be in a large church environment for that to happen; you don't have to have a thousand people gathered around you. If you're all by yourself in the living room you can do it right now. If you're on the back porch or if you're driving in a car, I might suggest you pull over and maybe today's the day that your heart is perfect toward him. The Lord's eyes are looking to and fro, who today will give their life to Jesus, who today will admit they're a sinner, who today would be saved. Maybe the who is you.

Simple conversation or simple prayer with the Lord might go a little something like this. "God, today I know and I understand that I'm the problem, that I can't fix this, I can't get my sins forgiven. God, I'm in the wrong and I know it but, God, I believe that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. God, I believe when Jesus Christ went to the cross, that he was paying the price for my sin. God, I believe when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the problems of the world, in fact, there's a whole lot of problems out there, but there's one thing I do know, that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

Earlier we mentioned that there would be a telephone number even the live feed that you're possibly watching by way of broadcast, maybe today is the day you had that conversation with the Lord, or maybe you've had it in recent days and you haven't reached out to anybody. We would love to celebrate with you. We'd love to have that conversation and even though we're not on our campus with a large gathering and we can't go to that room that we've set aside week after week, we're able to have a phone call, we're able to have an internet or an email exchange. Please reach out to us. We would love the privilege of knowing how the Lord is working in your life and how we can come alongside and help.

Today as we continued our study, the challenge that brought God brought from his word, tonight hopefully it's gonna be a challenge and comfort. We're gonna go back into 2 Chronicles 7, one of the most famous prayers in all of the world and we're gonna see it's an amazing prayer but it's also a very dangerous prayer. So I want to invite you in just a few hours to join us again as we go back into 2 Chronicles for a passage of Scripture that, again, is incredibly relevant.

The last thing before we close our broadcast this morning, you and I know that we are simply two weeks away from the celebration known as Resurrection Day. We in our

culture call it Easter. It looks as if that what we know as an online environment in a very large empty room will again be the method of the day. Well, we're here to share with you that we are making plans, hopefully if things allow, to do something a little bit different, creative and hopefully exciting. We're making plans right now for you to be able to drive up in your car to the campus of First Baptist, Opelika, and even though your windows will be up and you're not gonna be able to get out and talk to other people, because that we're already broadcasting on 97.7 FM here in the east Alabama area, you will have the opportunity, I'm gonna be outside on one of the roofs of one of our buildings, you're gonna have the opportunity to at least physically come to a place of worship that will be very safe for all of those who come and participate in. That is two weeks away. We invite you to be a part of it. You're gonna hear more about that in the days ahead. For those of you who cannot or may be nervous about getting out, we still will have this online broadcast but rather than being in an empty room, hopefully we'll be in a very full parking lot. Thank you again for allowing us into your homes and into your lives. Thank you and God bless.