

## Your Work shall be Rewarded – II Chronicles 15:1-7

### I. Introduction:

- A. We have had many references lately to **Hebrews 11** – Paul’s great study of faith.
1. One of the highlights of that chapter is **verse 6** – *“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*
  2. Reiterating, the first part of that statement, he says, *“Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God.”*
    - a. The Lord is not pleased with any effort to serve or worship Him, if that service is not mixed with trust in Him for His blessings.
    - b. The more we lead on the Lord, the more He is pleased, and the reverse is also true.
    - c. Faith in the Lord glorifies God as little else can, because we are forced to be emptied of ourselves.
  3. And obviously, as Paul says, in order to come to God, we must believe that He is – that He exists.
  4. Now, will you agree with me that while the first two parts of that verse are well-known and often explained, the last part is not so often emphasized?
  5. *“Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a REWARDER of them that diligently seek him.”*
- B. God is a rewarder. He repays the efforts of those who earnestly seek him in faith.
1. I didn’t take the time to find and read them all, but I can say that the Bible often speaks of rewards, often pointing out that God is a rewarder of faith and of diligently seeking Him.
  2. With that in mind I’d like to ask you a question.
    - a. It is not in any way meant as a criticism, because I am certainly not holding the right answer.
  3. My question is: Have you sought the Lord today – have you diligently sought the Lord?
    - a. When you got up this morning, did you spend time in prayer, beseeching God to reveal His glory in our church services and through the preaching of His Word?
    - b. As you came to church, did you come with your heart yearning and pleading to see His face
    - c. Did you come in faith trusting that He would bless?
    - d. *“Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God.”*
  4. And remember, *“He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*
  5. Rarely does God grant great victory to unexpected people; to people who are not seeking divine victory.
  6. Rarely does revival come upon a church which doesn’t earnestly yearn for it – asking, seeking and loudly knocking on Heaven’s door.
  7. *“He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*
- C. As an example which is **not** found in **Hebrews 11**, let’s think about another event from the history of Judah.
1. Consider if you will, the people of God, the prophet of God, the Spirit of God and the message of God as they are taught in **II Chronicles 15**.

### II. The people of God were, at that time, lead by King Asa.

- A. Asa was the third king after Solomon.
1. He was immediately preceded by his father Abijah, who reigned only three years.
  2. Before him – the first king after Solomon – was Asa’s grandfather Rehoboam.
  3. It was during the reign of Rehoboam that the ten northern tribes of Israel chose to rebel from the house of David, forming a separate nation, and leaving Judah and Benjamin under Rehoboam.
  4. **Chapters 14** and **15** took place less than 25 years after the glorious reign of David’s son, Solomon.
  5. However, despite the moderately good reigns of Solomon and his successors, Judah had fallen into a spiritual malaise – lethargy – and to some degree – idolatry.
  6. Even Asa’s mother had a grove of trees with her own little idol established there.
- B. In application, Judah was no longer glorifying God, preaching Christ and magnifying the gospel.
1. The people of the nation weren’t carrying out their God-given responsibility as ambassadors for Jehovah.
  2. They were still going through the motions of religion, meeting every week and singing the Psalms of David.

3. But look at **verse 3** – *“Now for a long season Israel (both divisions of the nation?) hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without the law.”*
- C. My paraphrase would be: since before the death of Solomon, Israel claimed to worship Jehovah, but the people had corrupted His image in their hearts.
1. And, oh, they had lots of priests, but no **teaching** priests, no preachers of the Word.
  2. They had tons of religion, lots of pomp and ceremony, but they had no heart for the Lord.
  3. They were without the law – the Word.
  4. The people heard nothing but feel good, philosophical and psychological sermons.
- D. And when as their attentions were turned away from the Lord, the Lord turned His attention away from them.
1. *“And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in.”*
  2. Without the blessing and protection of God, tribulation and problems fell upon the inhabitants of Israel and Judah. *“God did vex them with all adversity”* – **verse 6**.
  3. **All** adversity? The economy collapsed, epidemics swept through the population.
    - a. Maybe there were locusts and civil unrest. Corrupt local governments. Power-mad politicians.
    - b. And that is before, during, and after enemy nations started saber-rattling and threatening to attack.
- E. In **chapter 14** there arose an enemy in the form of Zerah the Ethiopian.
1. He had an army of a thousand, thousand soldiers (**verse 9**). Isn't that a million men?
  2. He also had three hundred chariots which would have created an attack similar to Hitler's blitzkrieg.
- F. King Asa, a man who *“did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God”* (**14:2**), had tried to prepare Judah for the inevitable judgment of God.
1. But either his reforms were only superficial, or perhaps they came after our text in **chapter 15**.
  2. His efforts to build fortifications did nothing to deter Zerah's plans to destroy the people of God.
  3. Today, Satan hates the Lord's church, when that body begins to catch fire with a desire to glorify His name.
  4. Back in the day, Asa went out against Zerah with his Judean army half the Ethiopian's size, *“and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathan, at Mareshah.”*
- G. Then good-hearted Asa, knowing that he was militarily handicapped, *“cried unto the Lord his God, and said,*
1. *Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power:*
    - a. *help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude.*
    - b. *O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.”*
  2. This is a wonderful prayer displaying faith in the midst of great need.
  3. *“We rest on THEE, and in THY name we go against this multitude.”*
    - a. *“Let not man prevail against THEE”* – *“This is not about us, Lord. It is all about you.”*
  4. When put that way; when Asa prayed in faith, laying everything in the Lord's hands, God responded as we would expect.
  5. *“So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.”*
- H. I can imagine the relief and joy that must have filled the heart of the king, when his scouts told him that the Ethiopians were running for home.
1. With God's blessings, he saved the kingdom; he preserved David's throne; he saved the lives of his wife and family.
  2. It was a great day in the annals of Hebrew history. And God was indeed glorified.
  3. And today, isn't this the sort of thing we want to see in a spiritual way?
  4. Don't we want the Lord's glory? Don't we want to see dynamic church growth?
  5. Don't we year for the salvation of souls – the salvation of the city of Post Falls and the power of God falling on all of the Lord's churches here?
  6. Victory, Lord! Send revival!

### III. It is with this behind us that we come to our text and the visit of Azariah, the son of Oded.

- A. Most people, even Christian people, are more apt to see their need of the Lord, when those needs are at their greatest.
1. When we are in good health and our income is slightly greater than our expenses, we are prone not to consider our dependence on God.
  2. When the ocean is calm and life is smooth, we tend to forget our dependence on our loving deity.
  3. After our victory at Mount Carmel, we may relax not watching for or expecting our spiritual enemy creeping up.
  4. After the great church service, the rousing sermon, the salvation of a lost soul and the stirring of Christian hearts, we may become just a little full of ourselves – a bit proud.
  5. That is when we really need the ministry of God's prophet.
- B. I am not making any accusations against Asa, a king whom God commended.
1. But I can see the potential for just a little pride in the man after the defeat of the Ethiopians.
  2. Even in saying, *"Praise be the Lord,"* in the back of the mind might be thought – *"God used me. It was my sword God employed. He couldn't have done it without me."*
  3. Exactly why does **chapter 15** follow **chapter 14**? It is not just about the order of sequential numbers.
  4. There may have been another good and important reason.
- C. *"The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded."*
1. We know nothing about this Azariah.
  2. The name is very common, but this particular son of Oded, is not mentioned in any other scripture.
  3. That may not mean very much to you, but it means quite a bit to me.
    - a. It is a reminder that God can raise up and use anyone – even as a preacher and prophet.
    - b. Names, position, previous victories, are not important to the Lord or to any man's usefulness.
  4. The name Azariah means *"Jehovah has helped."*
    - a. The Lord had just helped Judah defeat an overwhelmingly large army.
    - b. And this preacher needed Jehovah's help to continue these blessings.
- D. Azariah, the preacher, needed to be helped by God with the filling of the Spirit.
1. Even **Paul** said, *"(Brethren pray) for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" – Ephesians 6:19.*
  2. Azariah and Paul needed the Holy Spirit in order to know what God's message is.
  3. And they needed the Spirit for needed boldness.
- E. *"The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa,"* apparently as the king returned from battle.
1. If the two men had met earlier and they knew each other, I'm sure that would have made things easier, but we have no indication of that.
  2. I am picturing the triumphant king of Judah, ecstatic with his home win over the team from the south.
  3. Perhaps he was closer and more chatty, more outgoing and effusive with his men than ordinary.
  4. There may have been a lot of chatting, joking, and back-slapping.
  5. Then suddenly, standing in the road way was a rather stern-looking prophet of God, sucking all the joy out of the air.
- F. The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded, giving him boldness to carry out the commission He had given to him.
1. God gave His prophet a message, and an opportunity to share that message.
  2. The Spirit of God created the ministry and the man for that ministry.

#### IV. The Holy Spirit gave Azariah a message.

##### A. *"Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin."*

1. There were no introductory words of congratulations or praise.
2. I don't hear the sound of a smile in his voice.
3. Azariah knows that there is still danger in the region, & that danger was creeping into these men's hearts.
4. Satan has been given a slap in the face, but he is now even more angry.
5. Asa needs to be more vigilant and diligent than he had been before.

##### B. *"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."*

1. There are three things in **verse 2** – the first is: *"The LORD is with you, while ye be with him."*
2. The omnipresent God – the God who is always present at all times everywhere – has decreed to reveal Himself and to bless only those who deliberately choose to stand with Him.
3. As a church, we want the Lord to be present with us this evening and every time we open our church doors.
4. We can expect Him to meet with us, but only while we choose to make this **His house – His home**.
5. This is not Oldfield's pulpit, where he can show off, doing and saying anything he chooses – it is God's pulpit.
6. This is not your church or our church – this is the Lord's house.
7. And He will be with us here when we remember that we are joining Him in His house.
8. When we think to invite the Lord to meet us here, we are on the edge of Holy Spirit desertion.

##### C. The second things Azariah says, **if we seek Him, he will be found**.

1. *"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*
2. We need to learn to come into God's house, looking for the Lord – and expecting – to meet Him here.
3. The Hebrew word translated **"seek"** is quite common – more than 150 times the Bible uses it.
  - a. About half the time the word is translated with some aspect of the word **"to seek."**
  - b. But it is not always seeking with the eye, the telescope or the microscope.
4. David exhorted us all in **1 Chronicles 16:11** – *"Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually."*
5. By what means can anyone seek the Lord? By faith alone?
6. David said in **Psalms 34** – *"I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."*
7. He said in **Psalms 9** – *"They that know thy name (Lord) will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."*
8. Scriptures like these remind us that seeking the Lord is not some light internet search – just type the name of God and He will pop up.
9. If our searching is whole-hearted He will respond with His whole heart.

##### D. But if we forsake Him He will forsake us.

1. There are so many ways to walk away from the Lord; so many ways, deliberate and unintentional, to forsake Him.
2. For example, when we begin to make our worship services more about ourselves than about the Son of God and the Father of lights from whom every good and perfect gift is given, He will forsake us.
3. When we make our primary objective, some system, whether it be Covenant Theology, Landmarkism or some aspect of Eschatology, over God's worship and over the commission He has given us, He will forsake us.

##### E. For a long season, American churches have been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without the Word of God.

1. No wonder we no longer have any influence on society.
2. No wonder our attendance and membership is comparatively small.

3. When our focus becomes changing the government, the Lord will forsake us.
4. When our primary interest is fighting against the LGBTQ agenda, rather than preaching the gospel and striving for souls, then we will become anemic and powerless.
5. God is not interested in modern day reformations. He wants Bible-teachers and evangelists.
6. I would sooner die than be called a *“reformer.”*

F. Azariah concluded his short sermon with the words, *“Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.”*

1. There is only so much anyone can do to strengthen weakened hands.
  - a. He can go to the gym and the physical therapist’s treatment center.
  - b. He can look at his hands, trying to will them into greater strength.
2. But if a stroke has paralyzed that hand, there may be no surgery or therapy to correct the problem.
3. Asa, don’t look to your flesh for any future victory. Don’t turn to the tactics of the world.
4. *“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.”*
5. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

G. Asa, your work shall be rewarded if it is work done for God, in the power of God, and for the glory of God.

1. And the same is true for any of the churches of Christ in these last days.
2. *“Be ye strong... and trust the Lord to strengthen your hands and efforts: for your work shall be rewarded.”*
3. **Paul** said to the **Corinthians**, *“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*

H. Our labor for the Lord will not be in vain while we are with the Lord – when we seek His will and His chosen victories.

1. God had promised, if we meet the criteria of faith and service, *“your work shall be rewarded.”*