

**The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 5 – “Of Divine Providence”, Session # 11 –
“The Goodness of King Asa”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class,
and presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 28th, 2019.**

Paragraph 5 – The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, p)that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, q)and their good.

p) 2nd Chronicles 32: 25-26,31; 2nd Corinthians 12: 7-9; q) Romans 8: 28

Romans 8: 28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

It will be good to remind ourselves of this verse at the outset of our study that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him. If a person has been effectually called by God, they are called according to His purpose for them, in terms of the works that they will do. These works have been prepared beforehand that they might walk in them. We therefore need to understand that all Christians have some good in them because of the working of God’s Spirit in them. But not all Christians make progress in holiness with the same speed or consistency of obedience. Christ’s righteousness covers them all, and the grace of the Spirit is given and applied to all, and all this for just and holy ends. He works all things together for good to those who love Him, and whatever befalls them is by His appointment, for His glory, as well as being for their good, to conform them more to the image of Christ.

Thus far I have tried to carefully explain to you in past sessions what our Confession is saying when it says that the most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions and deceitfulness of their hearts. He leaves them for a season; He draws back from them and is not “with” them for a time, for very good reasons which are a part of their sanctification; their becoming more holy even as God is holy. He does this so that they may be humbled for their past sins, and that He might raise them up to a more close and constant dependence upon Himself and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin. And then, it says, “And for other just and holy ends”. And then this further explanatory statement – “So that whatsoever befalls any of His elect is by His appointment, for His glory, and their good.”

I want to illustrate these phrases at the end of Paragraph 5 by having you turn with me to 2nd Chronicles 14, 15, and 16; to consider how many good principles of righteousness were fleshed out in the life of king Asa. I want you to understand that in the heart and life of any Christian there are many things in righteousness which they must learn to do. There are many things that the Lord must deal with in relation to their learning to do righteously, in order that they might become holy; many lessons of truth related to being righteous which need to be worked through. This is illustrated in a wonderful way for us in these chapters.

The 1st Principle of righteousness is that a good man will do righteous deeds by seeking help from God.

2nd Chronicles 14: 1-15 – “So Abijah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David.” “Then Asa his son reigned in his place.” “In his days the land was quiet for ten years.” “Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images.” “He commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment.” “He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him.” “And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years,

because the LORD had given him rest.” “Therefore he said to Judah, ‘Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.’” “So they built and prospered.” “And Asa had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah who carried shields and spears, and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty men of valor.” “Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah.” “So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.” “And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, ‘LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude.’” “O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!” “So the LORD struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.” “And Asa and the people who were with him pursued them to Gerar. So the Ethiopians were overthrown, and they could not recover, for they were broken before the LORD and His army. And they carried away very much spoil. Then they defeated all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD came upon them; and they plundered all the cities, for there was exceedingly much spoil in them. They also attacked the livestock enclosures, and carried off sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.”

We should observe first of all that king Asa was a good man. He did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. This is something that is true in a general overall sense in the life of anyone who truly knows the Lord because they have been given a new heart in regeneration. If they have been taught the good way of the Lord, like Asa was by his father Abijah, and when they then seek the Lord for themselves, He is then at work in them, “both to will and to do according to His good pleasure”, as it says in Philippians 2: 13. He will lead them to do what is good and right when they seek Him. Asa, it says, not only sought the Lord for himself, but he took it a step further as a king. It says in verse 4 that he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. He removed the false worship of his fathers, which the kings before him had set up. And in verse 5 it says that the kingdom was quiet under him.

Truly this is a great thing, when the leaders of a country who know the Lord, go about to do good works to remove false religion; that God will give them rest. If a people want peace and rest in their society, if they want to do a good work in their days, they will remove idolatry and false religion from the land. False religion in our day is any other religion than that of true Biblical Christianity. God cannot bless any country in any lasting, in-depth sense, with great wisdom and great grace if they will promote all religions as being equal. They are not. All religions but Christianity are false because the people holding to them do not believe in Jesus as being the only-begotten Son of God who had to obey God’s law perfectly, and suffer, bleed, and die on the cross for our sins. Those who do not believe in Jesus do not have the Holy Spirit working in their hearts. They have only the spirit of a man listening to deceived men, and the demons who hold them captive. A good person calls other people to repentance, and the first of all the sins that they repent of is false worship.

1st Thessalonians 1: 9 and 10 – “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...”

Isaiah 30: 15 – “For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: ‘In returning (in repentance - NKJV) and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.’”

Verses 6 and 7 of chapter 14 of 2nd Chronicles tell us that this is when a society and all of its institutions can be strengthened, when the king and the people seek the Lord – “And Asa built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years because the Lord had given him rest.” “Therefore he said to Judah, ‘Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.’” “So they built and prospered.”

This good king Asa also built a strong military. **Verse 8** – “And Asa had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah who carried shields and spears, and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men who carried shield and drew bows; all these were mighty men of valor. They were men of proven ability.

We further see in verse 9 that Asa was tested in regard to his military strength as to whether he would trust in it or whether he would trust in the Lord. Thankfully, he chose to trust in the Lord and seek Him for the victory.

2nd Chronicles 14: 9-12 – “Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah.” “So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephatha at Mareshah.” “And Asa cried out to the Lord his God, and said ‘Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude.’” “O Lord, You are our God do not let man prevail against You!” “So the Lord struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.”

The 2nd Principle of righteousness is that the Lord is with you while you are with Him.

2nd Chronicles 15: 1-9 – “Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him.’” “And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.” “For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law.” “But in their distress they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him.” “In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands.” “Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress.” “But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work.” “Now when Asa heard these words and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded the prophet spoke, he took courage and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then restored the altar of the LORD which was in front of the porch of the LORD.” “He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.”

Here we find a promise made by Azariah the prophet coupled with a warning; that the Lord would be with them if they were with Him. Asa and the soldiers with him had obtained this great victory in battle but Azariah came forth to exhort them to greater perseverance yet, in following the Lord. The Lord would be with them all the while that they were with Him; that is, following Him in accordance with His word and relying upon His wisdom and strength to be given to them to face the challenges of war. So Azariah gives them a little overview of the history of Israel from the times of the Judges, in verse 3. For a long time Israel had been without the true God, without a teaching priest and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.” There was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands.” “So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity.” (This was God’s providence by the way)

Amaziah the son of Oded was teaching them that if they would be strong in faith in God and strong in seeking God, which is what it mean to be “with” Him, God would be with them, and their work would be rewarded, he says in verse 7. And the same will be true for us as well. The Lord will be with us if we are with Him; that is filled with His Spirit, seeking Him for more of the Holy Spirit and grace to do His will and grace to do and keep His commandments. Now, see how Asa responded so well to this exhortation in verse 8 – “And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Obed the prophet, he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had taken in the mountains of Ephraim; and he restored the altar of the Lord that was before the

vestibule of the Lord.” “Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw the Lord his God was with him.” This is Divine Providence and Divine concursus. This is how reformation comes to the Church of Jesus Christ today. It is not simply by the recovery of sound doctrine, although that is absolutely necessary. But it is just as much related to whether it will be revealed to people; the fact that God is with the person who is making the reformation in the church or trying to bring back the nation to walk in the fear of God.