



Unit 2: What Matters Most

Sermon Series Title: Saints Are . . .

Sermon 4: Courageous in Moving Forward

Bible Passage: 2 Chronicles 15:8-16

Background/Context

The second half of Chapter 15 focuses on the establishment of the covenant ceremony (15:9–15). The king gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers among them out of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon. He experienced a boost in population when people realized that the Lord was with him. In gathering, they offered the Lord seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. The king and his people consecrated themselves to the Lord. In his quest to eliminate foreign worship from Judah, Asa even removed his own grandmother, Maacah from being queen mother. Her offense? In her continued worship of idols, she made an Asherah pole, a Canaanite fertility symbol, which Asa subsequently destroyed.

A. False Gods Removed (2 Chron. 15:8b, 16)

Idols are offensive to God. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Psalm 115:4-7 offers a vivid description of idols: “Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk. They cannot make a sound with their throats.” King Asa responded to the Word of the Lord sent by the prophet Azariah by intensifying his annihilation of all idols in the land.

To be in right relationship with God requires us to remove idols from our lives. Throughout the Bible, people of God understood the importance of the removal of false gods. On his journey back to Bethel to meet the Lord, Jacob said to his household, “Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes” (Gen. 35:2). Later, realizing that he was about to die, Joshua instructed the nation, “Therefore, fear the LORD and worship him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and worship the LORD” (Josh. 24:14).

Serving the Lord requires that we put away all idols. King Asa sought complete removal. He went as far as to remove his grandmother, Maachah from being queen mother because she continued to support idol worship (v. 16). This was an important act by the king. It demonstrated that no one was exempt from obedience.

Application Point: You may not feel that you have idols in your life but take a moment to reflect on what really matters most to you. Family? Friends? Possessions? Career? How will you protect yourself from building idols in your life? What Scriptures will you use to help distinguish whether someone or something is an idol in your life?

B. Altar Repaired and People Assembled (2 Chron. 15:8c-9)

The prophet's words caused Asa to renovate the altar of the Lord in front of the temple. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, and Elijah all built altars to the Lord. They built the altars according to specifications given by God. Moses said, "Build an altar of stones there to the LORD your God — do not use any iron tool on them" (Deut. 27:5). According to this verse, the altar was made out of stones that had not been carved by metal tools. Yet the altar that was repaired by king Asa was one constructed by Solomon. It was made of bronze. The *portico* refers to the area outside the Holy Place, where the burnt offering altar was located. The altar was used to offer sacrifices to the Lord. The objective of the offering was to demonstrate reverence to the Lord and worship of Him.

In addition to renewing the altar, the king assembled the people together. The assembly included all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon. King Asa's actions toward reform drew many more people that wanted to follow the Lord "when they saw that the LORD his God was with him."

Application Point: How have you allowed your circumstances to determine your view of the future? How does Christ's death and resurrection give you hope for the future? What needs to change in your actions and attitude?

C. The Response to Reforms (2 Chron. 15:10-15)

The people responded favorably to king Asa's reforms. After he received the prophet's message, removed the idols, and renewed the altar of the Lord, the people gathered together in Jerusalem for a major feast of sacrifice in the temple. The celebration occurred during the third month, which was the time for the feast of the Pentecost. They amassed an offering of seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep, which they offered to the Lord. The animals that were sacrificed came from the plunder of king Asa's earlier victory (14:13-15).

They also entered into a covenant to seek the Lord wholeheartedly. Knowing that some people would reject seeking the Lord God, everyone voluntarily took an oath of allegiance to the Lord. The oath included an automatic death penalty for anyone who would not seek the Lord, regardless of their status or gender. The people entered into their oath with the Lord joyfully and with instruments. "All Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn it with all their mind. They had sought him with all their heart, and he was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side." They praised God with all their hearts and pursued Him. In light of their pursuit of Him and their praise of Him, God kept their enemies away and allowed them to rest.

Application Point: There are some social media, news outlets, and television shows doing whatever they can to get people to respond negatively to the message of the cross. What will you do to help people respond appropriately to the gospel?