

引言 INTRODUCTION

Humans are habitual animals. You may have a unique pattern of doing things that is different from others, even your family members. How do you develop those habits? Part of it is a result of your upbringing. Perhaps your parents taught you to cook or fold clothes in certain ways. Your routine schedule also sets some restrictions on you. Some people have to get up at 7:00 or earlier to get ready for work and prepare their kids for school. Besides, other factors like personality and personal preferences may come into play. Couples need to go through a time of adjustment soon after they married. Difference in how two persons squeeze a toothpaste may escalate to a reason for divorce! Buying two toothpastes may temporarily resolve the issue. But a couple cannot have two sets of everything. A better solution involves communication and compromise to decide whether to go with his way or her way, or it really does not matter. As we grow up, we gradually choose the ways that can bring us the biggest benefits. When we think of our relationship with God, is it only a matter of habit? Perhaps you read Bible daily, pray to God often and attend church meetings every week. Do you keep those habits out of convenience or out of conviction? Today, we will study the life of Asa. He was faithful to God early on in his reign. Unfortunately, he departed from God at a later stage of his life. Asa's experience is a good reminder to us. God does not want to be our consultant; He intends to be our Lord. We will cover three chapters of the Bible as we focus on a few key episodes of Asa's life. We will read portions of them as we proceed in our study.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 靈命的塑造 Spiritual Formation

I will call the beginning part of Asa's reign a period of his spiritual formation. Asa determined to follow God when he first became a king. Let us read from **2 Chronicles 14:1-7**. Asa ruled over Judah for a total of 41 long years. The author describes Asa as a fine king in the eyes of God because he had a godly life. Asa made an effort to eliminate the problem of idolatry in the country. He removed the high places, statues of false gods and other related religious facilities. Those items existed when the three previous kings were on the throne during the past 60 years! After clearing the idols, Asa urged his people to worship Jehovah alone. He encouraged people to seek the Lord by obeying His laws and commands. To "seek" God means to consult and to follow Him. After getting rid of their idols, they had to make up their mind to do what God sees as right. Likewise, you seek the best expert when you need to fix your car or house. If you trust their diagnosis, then you should let them do the necessary repair. Similarly, we should always examine our lives in light of the Bible, and abide by what God says. God will bless us when we seek Him. In the case of Asa, God blessed his country with 10 years of peace. The word "peace" and a similar word "rest" are used five times in the section we just read. People could feel at ease to raise their families and accumulate wealth. Asa then took advantage of the peace to build cities and walls to prepare for any future attack. God's blessings to us can appear in different forms. When we come to a certain age, we do not need a lot of stuff to stay happy. Sometimes we may take things for granted when everything goes smoothly. You maintain a good health to

make a living. Your kids are well-behaved at home and in school. Your family can sit together for dinner on most nights. You can sleep well and do not have to worry about tomorrow. Do not forget to give thanks to God for giving you peace to enjoy these blessings.

After a duration of peace, an enemy was now on the horizon. Let us hear the reading from verse 9 to 13. Cush is in the nowadays Ethiopia. Historians said Zerah's troop could be working for the Egyptians. Asa led his people to cry out to God for help when they arrived at the battlefield. Asa admitted in his prayer that it was impossible for Judah to overcome its enemies. However, Asa also understood that the real battle belonged to God. In **verse 11**, Asa said "in your name we have come against this vast army..." Hence, God should not let men prevail over Him. If Judah lost, the enemies would ridicule that Jehovah was unable to protect His people. God came to Asa's rescue. **Verse 12** describes: "The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah..." God crushed the Cushites through the hands of Asa's soldiers. They kept pursuing their enemies, killed a number of them, captured some villages and collected a lot of plunder. The war was a test of Asa's faith of in God. He trusted God in both the peaceful and tumultuous time. Being faithful to God does not exempt us from hardship. A city wall is proved to be strong only when it can withstand boulders thrown at it. Similarly, only difficulties can verify if we truly rely on God. Jesus says in **Matthew 7:24-25**: 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Storms can be a threat to our property, health or a relationship. Those challenges reveal the foundation of our faith. But do not think that you are alone in a storm. Indeed, you have to shoulder the anxiety, headache and tears. But God is working in you and beside you. We can learn from Asa next time when a storm comes. First, we objectively assess the danger. Second, we humbly call on the Lord for help. We recognize that the problem does not only affect us. It also puts God's reputation at stake. Third, we march out in faith with the resources God gives us. God never guarantees victory in every battle. But He promises to be with us always. We may suffer some damages. However, God intends to strengthen our faith as we come out from the storm.

2. 靈命的復興 Spiritual Reformation

God helped Judah win an important battle. The victory ignited a spiritual reformation in the nation. Listen to God's Word in **15:1-7**. God's Spirit came upon prophet Azariah. He spoke to Asa on his return from the war. In verse 2 he reiterates a general principle: seek the Lord and He will be found. The result is His blessing. The reverse is also true: forsake God and He will forsake you. Then Azariah quoted the example of Israel as an illustration. By "Israel" it can mean the northern kingdom. But the descriptions also matched the spiritual status of the whole nation during the era of the judges. It was one generation after the Israelites settled in Canaan. Most people forgot about what God did to their ancestors. Without any standard to comply by, people did whatever they wished. They went after the idols the Canaanites worshipped. God then raised up adversaries to discipline His children. In the whole book of Judges, there is a cycle of sin, enemies' oppression, calling to God for help and His deliverance through a judge. Then the cycle was repeated. Asa should know the history well. The message to him was clear: do not duplicate the bad example of his ancestors. Someone said it right: those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it. However, God is always faithful even when we are sinful. He

loves us so much that He even allows us to betray Him. But we have to bear the consequence of our disobedience. However, He always waits for us to come back to Him. Spiritual reformation sometimes occurs after we turn back from sin. It can happen to our children too. They grow up in the church. They know all the Bible stories. What if they walk away from God after they leave home? We of course need to pray for them, hoping that God will restore them to the right path. We should also learn from God's unfailing love. We reject their bad decisions, but we should never reject them. Our door should always remain open for them.

The words of Azariah greatly inspired Asa. Spiritual reformation spread out to the whole nation. Asa was all the more fired up to eradicate idols. Next, he asked his countrymen to rededicate themselves to God. We will continue to read [verse 10 to 15](#). Asa demanded everyone to renew their covenant with the Lord. Those who disobeyed were punishable by death. Was Asa trying to set up a dictatorial regime? Of course not! Asa simply reiterated God's requirement of an undivided commitment. The same command applied to the king too. People reacted with shout of joy. [Verse 15](#) tells us the result of their pledge: "They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side." The author used the same words of seek, find and rest as in chapter 14. God indeed blessed them with rest. There was no war for the next 20 years. The people of Judah renewed their oath with God. Every now and then we should also pause and reexamine our commitment to God. Some couples renew their marriage vow, perhaps after they are married for 30 or 50 years. It is an opportunity to revisit their promises to each other. Perhaps there needs to be some adjustments or even mistakes to confess and forgiveness to grant. The goal is to make the relationship even better. We as Christians also need frequent spiritual tune-up. For example, after a major surgery you feel like God graciously extends your health. You pray to God: "Thank You for restoring my health. I desire to please You the rest of my life." Perhaps you bought a new house. You can say to God when you get the keys: "Please use this gift from You to bless others." Maybe you just retired. You can pledge to God: "Please help me make good use of my free time to further Your Kingdom." I often pray to God in the morning: "Lord, I thank You for giving me another day. Help me to become a blessing to the people around me today."

3. 靈命的衰敗 Spiritual Deformation

Asa brought about a spiritual reformation in Judah. Unfortunately, good time will not last forever. Asa's reign ended in a spiritual deformation. Chapter 16 records two incidents that show Asa's lack of faith in God. Let us read [verse 1 to 3](#). Now the northern kingdom was waging war against Judah. Ramah was in Benjamin, which was to the north of Jerusalem. The city was on a major route between the two nations. Baasha's plan was to cut off transportation between the north and south. Chapter 15 says that some people from the north deflected to the south when they saw that Jehovah was with Asa. Baasha definitely wanted to stop that. Unlike the war against the Cushites, Asa did not lead his troop to the battlefield. Instead, he used money to buy help from Aram. The country was located to the northeast of Israel. We mentioned before that in the future Aram became a recurring threat to both kingdoms of Israel. Aram king Ben-Hadad agreed to help. He successfully chased Baasha away, and seized a few cities. Asa thus sent his people to haul away the building materials from Ramah and used them to fortify two southern cities. It seemed that Asa's plan did work. But it was not a wise move even from a military standpoint. Aram now set a foothold in Israel. It is like inviting a lion to settle in your back-yard

after it scares away a wolf. Asa's unwise strategy reflected a spiritual deformation. A prophet came to confront Asa. Let us hear the reading of **verse 7 to 9**. Hannai pin-pointed the key problem. Asa relied on men's help instead of God's help. He forgot that God defeated a stronger army from Cush. Since Asa had made a foolish decision, from now on there would be war rather than peace. Instead of confessing his sin, Asa got mad at Hannai. He put Hannai in jail and even tortured some other people. **Verse 9** conveys God's desire: "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him..." It was as if God has a radar detector in His hand to look for faithful followers. Asa did match the description before. We see in **15:17**: "... Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life." The exact wordings appear in both verses. What can we make of that? No one is perfect. Asa tried to live up to God's requirements. On the whole, Asa was a good king in God's eyes. But he demonstrated a lack of faith to God in this war. Remember how God rated David's life? David did everything right except for his sins of murder and adultery. Neither can we be perfect. But we should pursue godliness. While we cannot be sinless, we should seek God's help to sin less.

There was another episode three years later that showed Asa's spiritual deformation. We will now read **verse 12 and 13**. The passage does not specify what kind of foot disease Asa had. He stumbled again for seeking man's help rather than God's help. We need to make it clear that there is nothing wrong for us to look for an expert when we have troubles. Seeking a specialist and praying for God's wisdom are not mutually exclusive. I will take my car to a repair shop when it has a mechanic issue. I will find the best handyman to fix a leak on the roof. But I will also pray. God blesses us with capable people and technological advancement. However, we must keep in mind that ultimately it is God ministering His grace through the resources available to us. We thank the people who provide help and give glory to God. Asa's stubbornness persisted to the time of his death. His earthly life came to an end as he wrapped up his reign two years later. The people of Judah paid great tribute to Asa at his burial. After all, he did many great things to the country. Sin often takes away our pride. We can easily fall if we are being careless. We then realize that we can do nothing apart from God.

結論 CONCLUSION

God does not want to be our consultant; He intends to be our Lord. Asa had successes when he put God first. But he later failed when he relied on his own wisdom. Spiritual maturity is a lifelong struggle between victory and defeat. We should keep building on our relationship with God. Eventually, habits of trusting God will become part of our character. We do not even need to think twice when we face the next challenge that we can rely on our faithful God.

引言 INTRODUCTION

人類是慣性的動物。你的做事方式可能與眾不同，甚至和你的家人也不一樣。你如何養成這些習慣？部分原因是你的成長經歷。也許你的父母教你以某些方式做飯或疊衣服。你的時間表也給你一些限制。有些人必須在七點或更早起床，以準備上班和孩子上學。此外，個性和個人喜好等因素也會影響一個人。夫妻結婚後需要一段時間來適應。兩個人擠牙膏的方式不同可能會升級成為離婚的理由！買兩根牙膏可以暫時解決問題。但是不可能所有東西都買兩套。更好的解決方法是溝通和妥協，以決定是按照自己的方式還是按照對方的方式來做事，或者根本無所謂。隨著我們年齡的增長，我們逐漸選擇可以為自己帶來最大益處的生活方式。我們與神的關係，是否也僅僅是習慣而已？也許你每天閱讀聖經、經常禱告並每週參加聚會。這些習慣是出於方便還是出於你的信念？今天，我們會看亞撒的生平。他在位早期時對神忠誠。可惜的是，他在後期卻遠離神。亞撒的經歷提醒我們一件事。神不要成為我們的顧問。祂希望成為我們的主。我們的學習會包括三章的經文，我們將會閱讀其中的部分內容，然後把重點放在幾件重要的事情上。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 靈命的塑造 Spiritual Formation

我把亞撒統治的初期叫做他的靈命塑造時期。當亞撒成為王之後，他決定專心跟隨神。讓我們來讀**歷代志下 14:1-7**。亞撒統治猶大長達 41 年之久。作者形容亞撒在神眼中是一位好的王，因為他過著敬虔的生活。亞撒努力消除國家裡拜偶像的問題。他拆毀邱壇、神像和其他相關的宗教設施。那些東西在過去 60 年中，前面三個王在位時就一直存在！在清理偶像之後，亞撒敦促人民要單單敬拜耶和華。他鼓勵人民尋求神，並遵守祂的律法和誡命。「尋求神」的意思是明白並跟隨祂的心意。在除掉偶像之後，他們必須下定決心去做神認為正確的事情。如果你需要修理汽車或房屋時，你會尋找最好的專家。如果你相信他們的建議，你便應該讓他們進行維修。同樣，我們必須根據聖經來審視自己的生活，並遵守神的話。當我們尋求神之時，神便會祝福我們。就亞撒而言，神保守他的國家有 10 年的太平時期。在我們剛剛閱讀的經文中，「平安」或類似的用詞出現了五次。人們可以安心地養家糊口並積累財富。然後，亞撒趁機建築城市和圍牆，做好防衛的措施。神對我們的祝福可以藉不同的形式出現。當我們活到某個年齡時，我們不覺得需要很多東西就能保持滿足。有時，當一切順利時，我們可能會把事情看為是理所當然的。你有健康可以謀生、你的孩子在家里和學校都表現良好、一家人可以在大多數晚上坐在一

起吃飯、你可以睡個好覺，而不必為明天憂慮。不要忘了感謝神賜予你平安來享受這些祝福。

經過一段太平時期之後，現在有敵人出現了。讓我們來讀**第 9 到第 13 節**。古實是在今天的埃塞俄比亞。歷史學家說，謝拉的部隊可能是為埃及效力的。亞撒帶領他的人民到達戰場時向神呼求。亞撒在禱告中承認，猶大不可能戰勝敵人。但是，亞撒也明白，真正的戰爭是屬於神的。在第 11 節中，亞撒說他們是：「... **奉你的名來攻擊這大軍 ...**。」因此，神不應該讓別人戰勝祂。如果猶大被打敗，敵人會嘲笑耶和華無法保護祂的子民。於是，神拯救亞撒。第 12 節描述：「... **耶和華使古實人敗在亞撒和猶大人面前...**。」神藉著亞撒士兵的手勝過了古實人。他們不斷追捕敵人，殺死了許多人，佔領了一些城市並奪取了很多財物。這場戰爭是對亞撒信心的考驗。他在太平與動蕩的時候都信靠神。相信神並不等於我們不會面對困難。要證明城牆堅固，就必須用巨石撞在它的上面。同樣，只有困難才能證實我們是否真的依靠神。耶穌在馬太福音 7:24-25 說：**24 「所以，凡聽見我這話就去行的，好比一個聰明人，把房子蓋在磐石上；25 雨淋，水沖，風吹，撞著那房子，房子總不倒塌，因為根基立在磐石上。」**暴風雨會威脅到我們的財物、健康或人際關係。這些挑戰揭示了我們信仰的基礎。但不要以為你自己是在孤軍作戰。沒錯，你必須承擔憂慮、重擔和眼淚。但是神一直在你裡面並且在你的旁邊。下次暴風雨來臨時，我們可以向亞撒學習。首先，我們客觀地評估危機。第二，我們謙卑地求主幫助。我們明白問題不僅影響我們，也危及了神的聲譽。第三，我們要憑著信心，用神賜給我們的資源而勇往直前。神並沒有保證我們每場戰爭都會取得勝利。但是祂保證永遠與我們同在。我們可能會遭受一些損失。但是，當我們經歷風暴之後，神希望我們的信心更加堅定。

2. 靈命的復興 Spiritual Reformation

神幫助猶大贏得了一場重要的勝仗。這場勝利掀起了全國的靈命復興。請聽 **15:1-7** 中神的話。神的靈降臨在先知亞撒利亞身上。戰爭歸來後，他與亞撒交談。在第二節中，他重申了一個基本的原則：尋求主，就必然尋見祂。結果就是祂的祝福。反之亦然：離棄神，神定必離棄你。然後，亞撒利亞引用以色列為例子。「以色列」可以是指北國。但是這些形容也符合整個國家在士師時期的屬靈光景。當時是以色列人定居迦南之後的第二代。大多數人都忘記了神對列祖的作為。當沒有任何可遵循的標準時，人們便任意而行。他們追隨迦南人崇拜的偶像。然後神興起敵人來管教祂的兒女。在整本《士師記》中，都有一個循環：犯罪、敵人的壓迫、呼求神的幫助以及祂通過士師的拯救。然後循環重複。亞撒應該很了解歷史。其中的信息很明確：不要重複他祖先的壞榜樣。有人說得很對：那些不從歷史汲取教訓的人便註定要重蹈覆轍。但是，即使我們犯罪，神也總是信實的。祂愛我們到一個地步，甚至允許我們背叛祂。但是，我們必須承擔不順服的後果。但是，神總是等著我們回

到祂的身邊。有時候，靈命的復興會發生在我們從罪中回轉之後。我們的孩子可能也會經歷同樣的事。他們在教會長大。他們熟悉一些聖經故事。如果他們離開家之後遠離神怎麼辦？我們當然需要為他們禱告，希望神把他們帶回正途。我們還應該學習神永恆的愛。我們否定他們的錯誤決定，但我們絕不應該拒絕他們。我們的家門應該是永遠為他們敞開的。

亞撒利亞的話大大地激勵了亞撒。靈命的復興席捲了整個國家。亞撒更加積極地消滅偶像。接下來，他要求他的人民重新向神委身。我們會繼續讀第 10 至 15 節。亞撒要求每個人再次與主立約。那些不服從的人將被處死。亞撒是否試圖建立獨裁政權？當然不是！亞撒只是重申神對人的要求。同樣的命令也適用在亞撒身上。人們的反應是歡呼雀躍。第 15 節告訴我們他們立志的結果：**猶大眾人為所起的誓歡喜；因他們是盡心起誓，盡意尋求耶和華，耶和華就被他們尋見，且賜他們四境平安。**作者使用了第 14 章中尋求和平安這些相同的用詞。神就賜福，使國家享受太平，接下來的 20 年都沒有戰爭。猶大子民重新向神立約。我們也應該常常停下來並檢視我們對神的承諾。有些夫婦可能在結婚 30 或 50 年後再次宣讀婚姻的誓言。這是一個審視彼此諾言的機會。也許雙方需要一些調整，甚至需要承認錯誤並尋求饒恕。目的是使關係更美好。我們的屬靈生命也需要經常調整。例如，經過一次大手術後，你很清楚是神延長了你的健康。你可以向神禱告：「感謝祢使我痊癒。我希望在餘生中討祢的喜悅。」也許你買了新房子。拿到鑰匙時，你可以對神說：「請使用祢給我的禮物來祝福他人。」也許你剛剛退休。你可以向神祈求：「請幫助我善用時間來擴展祢的國度。」我經常在早上向神禱告：「神啊，感謝祢賜給我新的一天。幫助我在今天成為別人的祝福。」

3. 靈命的衰敗 Spiritual Deformation

亞撒為猶大帶來了屬靈上的復興。可惜好景不長。亞撒的靈命往後衰敗。第 16 章記錄了兩件事表明亞撒對神缺乏信心。讓我們讀 1 至 3 節。現在北國向猶大宣戰。拉瑪是在耶路撒冷北面的便雅憫境內。這個城市正處於兩國之間的主要通道上。巴沙的計劃是切斷南北之間的運輸。第 15 章說，有些北國的人看到耶和華與亞撒同在，於是便投奔南國。巴沙肯定想阻止那個情形。與對抗古實人的戰爭不同，這一次亞撒沒有帶領部隊前往戰場。他卻花錢向亞蘭國尋求幫助。它位於以色列的東北面。我們之前提到過，將來亞蘭會經常威脅到南北兩個國家。亞蘭王便哈達同意提供支援。他成功地將巴沙趕走，並佔領了一些城市。於是，亞撒派遣他的人民從拉瑪搬走了建築材料，用來修建兩個南國的城市。亞撒的計劃似乎奏效了。但是，即使從軍事角度來看，他的行動極為不智。亞蘭現在在以色列立足。這就像找一頭獅子把野狼嚇走後，獅子現在卻住在你的後院。亞撒沒有智慧的策略反映他靈命的衰敗。有一位先知來責備亞撒。讓我們來讀第 7 至 9 節的經文。哈拿尼指出了核心問題。亞撒依靠人的幫助而不是神的幫助。他忘記了神幫助他擊敗古實更強大的軍

隊。由於亞撒做出了愚蠢的決定，從現在開始，他將會遇到戰爭而不是平安。亞撒不肯承認他的罪，反而生哈拿尼的氣。他把哈拿尼關在監獄，甚至折磨了其他一些人。第 9 節傳達了神對人的期望：「**耶和華的眼目遍察全地，要顯大能幫助向他心存誠實的人...**。」彷彿神手中有雷達探測器來尋找忠心的跟隨者。亞撒在之前的確符合這個描述。我們在 15:17 中看到：「**...亞撒的心一生誠實。**」在兩節經文中都出現誠實這個形容。從中我們能得出什麼結論呢？沒有人是完美的。亞撒努力地達到神的要求。總個來說，亞撒在神眼中是個好的王。但是他在這場戰爭中表現出對神缺乏信心。還記得神如何評價大衛的一生嗎？大衛除了謀殺和姦淫兩項罪以外，其他一切都做對了。我們也並不完美。但是我們應該追求敬虔。雖然我們不可能停止不犯罪，但我們應該尋求神的幫助以減少犯罪。

在三年後的另一件事情上再次顯示出亞撒靈命的衰敗。現在我們閱讀**第 12 節和第 13 節**。經文並沒有註明亞撒患有哪種腳病。他再次失敗，只尋求人的幫助而不是神的幫助。我們需要強調一點，遇到麻煩時找專家本身是沒有錯的。尋求專業意見和向神求智慧兩方面並沒有衝突。遇到機件故障時，我會拿車子去修理。屋頂漏水時我會找最好的師傅來修理。但同時我也會禱告。能幹的人和高科技都是神的祝福。但是，我們必須記住，最終是神通過我們找到的資源來賜予祂的恩典。我們感謝那些幫助我們的人並歸榮耀給神。亞撒的固執一直持續到他去世的時候。兩年之後，他結束了統治，並離世了。猶大的人民在葬禮上向亞撒致敬。畢竟，他為國家做了很多偉大的事情。罪常常帶走我們的驕傲。如果我們不小心，我們便很容易跌倒。然後我們才明白，離開了神，我們什麼也做不到。

結論 CONCLUSION

神不要成為我們的顧問。祂希望成為我們的主。當亞撒把神放在生命的首位時，他就獲得了成功。但是後來他依靠自己的智慧便失敗了。靈命的成熟是得勝與跌倒之間的終生努力。我們必須不斷建立與神的關係。最終，信靠神的習慣將成為我們品格的一部分。面對下一個挑戰時，我們甚至不需要思考就學會依靠信實的神。