



Cornton Baptist Church

Demonstrating God's love in action
in the community of Cornton

Through the Bible

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Nehemiah
2Chronicles Luke
Acts 2Timothy 2Peter
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January 2012

The foundation Solomon laid for building the temple of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. (v.3)

Today sees the start of a New Year. Many of us enter the New Year looking forward to what God will do in our lives and in our church in the coming days. Many enter the year glad the old one has past and hoping that the new one will be better. We are filled with hope and anticipation. One of the ways to enjoy the coming year is to set the right foundation at the start of the year. The right foundation is centred on Christ. The old hymn writer got it spot on when he wrote ‘*On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.*’ And so this year we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The best ways to do that are to be found daily in His Word, to come to Him often (continually says Paul) in prayer, and to join together with God’s people for worship Sunday by Sunday. Doing these things we will seek to live God’s way day by day.

Here in 2 Chronicles 3, Solomon is beginning to build the temple. It is worth noting that he is building the temple on Mount Moriah. This is the place where Abraham went to offer his son Isaac 1,000 years earlier, and then 1,000 years after the temple was built, on this same mountain, another Father offered His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, Jesus Christ.

We read that Solomon laid the right foundation and then built up from there. Everything was in place just as it should be. And then he added the pillars at the front of the temple. The pillars are named as Jakin and Boaz meaning ‘he establishes’ and ‘in his strength’. This would be a reminder to the people whenever they came into the temple that God has established this nation and it is only by His strength that this nation will stand. It was important to have the right perspective of things before you entered the temple.

Pray: asking God to help you build your life on the rock this year.

Reflect: am I standing on Christ the solid rock? How can I remain standing on the rock?

When all the work Solomon had done for the temple of the LORD was finished he brought in the things his father David had dedicated. (5:1)

I wonder how many of your children and grandchildren got toys for Christmas that needed built up. When we came to build them did we just rush in or did we take time to look at the instructions and follow them carefully. Did we take great care and concern over the construction so that we got it just right for our kids?

Solomon took great care and concern in building the temple. Every detail had to be right. All these details listed here for us emphasise the great care and concern given for worship. Everything had to be in order so that the people could rightly worship God. I wonder at times how much care we take that everything is in order for us to worship God. Are our hearts prepared for worship week by week – do we examine our hearts and confess our sin before entering God’s presence in worship?

And what of the house of the Lord – do we take great care and concern over it? Haggai challenged the people of his day about the great care they took of their own homes but the poor attention that was given to the Lord’s house. And sometimes we are guilty of that too – our own homes are immaculate, well decorated, clean and tidy while the church is given less attention. (Not our church of course as it is fresh from the refurbishment and extension)

The temple took seven years to build. There is so much emphasis on the temple in the Old Testament and this is because: it was the centre of worship that called people to correct belief through the generations; it was the symbol of God’s presence among His people; it was the symbol of forgiveness and grace, reminding people of the seriousness of sin and the availability of mercy; it prepared the people for the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who would take away the sin of the world; and it was a place of prayer.

Pray: asking God to help us prepare properly for worship of him.

Reflect: do I take great care and concern over the Lord’s house?

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD... “He is good; his love endures forever.” (v.13)

The temple is complete and now the Ark of the Covenant is brought in and given its place. The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place and their worship began. Notice that as the people came together to worship the Lord it was not some chaotic, free-for-all, where everybody was doing their own thing. They sang in one accord, with one voice, to the Lord, the focus was the Lord! They joined together in unison. There was no division among them. There was no focus on anything other than the Lord. The Lord had been so good to them and they simply wanted to lift their voices as one to him in worship and praise. When we join together for worship we ought not to be competing with each other or debating with each other, we ought simply to focus on God and when we do that we will want to lift our voices as one in awe and wonder in worship to a Holy God.

As the people sing they cry out ‘*He is good; his love endures forever.*’ They know God’s goodness in their lives. And notice that word for love there is *hesed* which means loyal, steadfast, or faithful love and stresses the idea of a belonging together of those involved in the love relationship. It has the idea of God’s faithful love for His unfaithful people. All that God does towards us is based on His love. That’s easy to believe when you’ve just won the Lottery or things are going well, but for most of us, life isn’t always pretty. We often face some disappointing circumstances. And yet as we come through those we recognise God’s presence with us and are able to respond by saying his love endures forever.

And as the people cry out together in praise to God, God comes and fills the temple with what we call the “Shekinah”, the radiance, glory, or presence of God dwelling among His people. The word Shekinah is derived from a Hebrew word meaning “to dwell”. It was after this time of worship and praise that the Shekinah glory, the presence of God, filled the temple. God truly inhabits the praises of His people!

Pray: praising God for his goodness and his love.

Reflect: do I focus solely on God in worship?

And now, O LORD, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true. (v.17)

Here we find Solomon praising God and offering a prayer of dedication for the temple he has just completed. As he prays he comes humbly before God. He is King of the nation yet he gets down on his knees and prays to God. And there is a great starting point for us. When we come to pray we come before the God of the universe. There is none like Him in all the world. He is the one and only God. And so we too should come humbly and recognise our position before him.

As Solomon prays he looks around and looks back and remembers God's promises – and he recognises that God keeps his promises. There is not a promise God has made that he has not kept. He is not like us when we make a promise and then somehow or other are unable to keep it and let people down. God never lets anyone down. What he says he will do. Solomon then called upon God to keep the promises that He made. This is the great secret to power in prayer - to take God's promises to heart in faith, and then boldly and reverently call upon Him to fulfil the promises.

Spurgeon said "God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh I my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, 'Lord, do as thou hast said.' And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises."

And none more needed is the promise in 1 John 1:9 that God will forgive us our sin when we confess it before him. Solomon asks in his prayer (v.36-39) for God to hear the confessions of his people and forgive them their sin. And notice Solomon recognises that there is no one who does not sin – we are all sinners. Let's pray come humbly before God asking for forgiveness, invoking his promises, and praising him for his loving kindness.

Pray: confessing any sin before God and claiming his promises.

Reflect: do I claim the promises of God?

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (v.14)

It was one of those split-second exchanges between a 16-year-old girl and her father, but it spoke volumes. While he was out of town, she had broken her curfew and stayed out too late with her boyfriend. Now she had to talk to Dad about it. Embarrassed and afraid, she sat quietly looking down at her hands in her lap while the discussion went on. She apologised and they decided on a suitable discipline. "Look at me," Dad said. She didn't want to, but she did. Instead of a hard look of displeasure, she saw tears and a look of deep love. She threw her arms around him, and they both knew that everything would be all right between them.

To keep everything right between us and our heavenly Father, we have to seek His face. We may feel guilt, disappointment, anger, or hurt toward God. But that is when we must respond to His invitation to look at Him - especially if fellowship has been broken. And as we look into his face, through His Word and in prayer, we will have the assurance that everything will be alright.

Verse 14 forms what is probably the best known and most loved verse in all Chronicles. It expresses the stipulations that God lays down for a nation to experience his blessing, whether that nation be Solomon's, Ezra's, or our own. Those who have been chosen to be his people must cease from their sins, turn from living lives of proud self-centeredness, pray to the Lord, and yield their desires to his Word and his will. Then, and only then, will he grant heaven-sent revival. We must look at God and ask for his forgiveness.

We would do well in life to daily come before God, confessing our sin, turning from it and seeking to live God's way.

Pray: thanking God for sending Jesus to the cross in order that our sins could be forgiven.

Reflect: do I daily confess my sin and seek to walk in God's ways?

At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built the temple of the LORD and his own palace, Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given him. (v.1-2)

Solomon has spent twenty years building. The first seven years were dedicated to building the temple for God (1 Kings 6) and then the next thirteen years building his own palace (1 Kings 7). Now it is time for Solomon to develop the kingdom and to build it up. Here we discover that he takes the cities Hiram has given him and rebuilds them and settles some of the Israelites there. He then goes on to develop the kingdom further by building up and rebuilding other cities.

As we read this I believe we can see something about priorities in Solomon's life which are actually good priorities for us to have in our life. God ought to be first in our life. (Matthew 6:33) *'But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'* If we put Him first, then everything else will fall into place. And I don't mean our "ministries"; I mean our personal relationship with the Lord. Solomon sought to build the temple for God first. He wanted to give God the pre-eminence in his life.

Then we ought to have our family, our "house", as our second priority. A qualification for an "elder" is someone who has it together at home. (1 Timothy 3:4-5) *'He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)'* Then we build our kingdom. That might involve our business, our hobbies, even our ministries. Solomon has built the Temple, then he built his palace, now he's going to build his kingdom. He has things in the right order. In our lives we ought to love God first and give him first place. Then our priority ought to be our family before then giving consideration to our jobs and ministries.

Pray: thanking God for his love and the love of our families.

Reflect: are my priorities ranked properly in my life?

But I did not believe what they said until I came and saw with my own eyes...praise be to the LORD your God who has delighted in you. (v.6, 8)

I remember well the day Morag told me she was pregnant with Andrew, our first child. I was so excited but then I began to think can it really be true. The pregnancy kit certainly turned the right colour but her body still looked the same. When she went for a scan and returned with the picture of the baby within I could really rejoice because now I had seen with my own eyes. At first I heard Morag's words but then I saw with my own eyes and could truly believe that a baby was on its way.

The Queen of Sheba experiences something like that here in chapter 9. She has heard of Solomon's fame – his great wisdom and the palace he has and the riches – but she does not believe it. She wants to examine it more. She wants to see and experience it for herself. So she heads to see him, asks him lots of questions – hard questions it says which may well suggest riddles, and he answers them all. She is blown away. She is also amazed at the palace set up and all the possessions within the palace as well as all the servants in their robes.

Having seen, she believes and she declares praise to God. This fulfils what God said to the Israelites when giving the covenant in Deuteronomy 28: 1, 10 *'If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands that I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you.'*

Importantly the Queen is like many in our world. They hear the news about Jesus and they come to investigate him for themselves. They read the Bible, they ask their questions, they pray for understanding and God lifts the veil from their eyes. Many in our world sadly, hear about Jesus and choose to ignore him or reject him without even checking out all the facts. We need to pray for them and keep sharing Jesus with them.

Pray: asking God to help your unsaved family and friends come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Reflect: am I reading and learning more of our Lord day by day?

But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him. (v.8)

A mild-mannered man was reading a book on being self-assertive and decided to start at home. So he stormed into his house, pointed a finger in his wife's face, and said, "From now on I'm boss around here and my word is law! I want you to prepare me a gourmet meal and draw my bath. Then, when I've eaten and finished my bath, guess who's going to dress me and comb my hair." "The mortician," replied his wife.

Rehoboam has succeeded his father Solomon as king. The people come to him asking for some leniency in regard to the heavy taxation upon them. Rehoboam wants to assert himself as king. The first thing he does is ask them to come back in three days. He wants to take time to make the right decision. It is good advice to take time to consider important decisions – don't rush into quick decisions.

He also has the wisdom to consult the elders. They served under Solomon. They heard his wisdom often. People around us are not perfect but they are a great resource. They have experience and wisdom than can help us. So we ought to go to them and listen to them. They suggest he shows kindness to the people and favours their request. Rehoboam does not like their advice and rejects it. He goes to the young men who are his peers. They give him some unwise advice which he follows quickly and it ends in disaster. They say he should lay an even heavier yoke upon them.

There is one bit of advice and counsel missing here – Rehoboam does not consult with God. He thinks he can do it all himself. He is self assertive and runs on ahead without asking for God's help. We have seen this time and again through the Old Testament – people forget to turn to God and think they can do it themselves. It never works for long. May we never forget to turn to God in prayer asking for his leading and guiding.

Pray: asking God for wisdom in dealing with the matter at hand in your life just now.

Reflect: do I turn to God for help? Do I seek out the wise counsel of others and listen to it?

So they obeyed the words of the LORD. (v.4)

Rehoboam wants to restore the nation by force, so he gathers his army together and prepares to do battle. But God speaks to Rehoboam through the prophet Shemaiah, and tells him to stay at home and not to fight, for this is of God. In Proverbs 16:9 we read Solomon say *‘In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.’* Rehoboam had developed a plan but that was not God’s plan, and he had to be redirected. And believe it or not, he listened and obeyed.

The Lord instead allows division to happen. Division is not good, and yet God allowed it. You see, the Northern Kingdom of Israel began and ended in idolatry. They had no king that truly led them in the ways of the Lord. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was not perfect but at least had some godly kings who brought reform to the land. Thus, this division was healthy, in a sense, for the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

In the church today I think God allows division to occur from time to time. You see, sometimes people come in with very different views and they try to spread them, which makes the body weak and unsure. Thus, division can strengthen a body by bringing together a group of people who are united in their beliefs. I think it was Spurgeon who was asked “Have you had any blessed additions to your church this week?” And he said “No, but some blessed subtractions!”

The real desire in church ought to be for us to be united in the ways of the Lord. We should seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, leaving our own personal pride, preference and ambitions to the side. We should seek to work together for the sake of sharing the gospel. Rehoboam listened to wise counsel here and allowed the kingdom to be divided. He listened to the Lord. May we always seek God’s wisdom and guidance.

Pray: for all those in your church family today.

Reflect: do I follow God wholeheartedly and seek to follow his ways rather than my own selfish desires.

The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said “The LORD is just”. (v.6)

When Rehoboam started out, young and inexperienced, he looked to the Lord for help. He wasn't a godly man but as he took over the kingdom the nation was divided and he needed all the help he could get. In difficult times, during times when we feel totally unqualified, we tend to look upward. But like Rehoboam, after we establish ourselves, have some experience under our belts, we don't look up any longer, but to ourselves. Rehoboam strengthened himself, his kingdom was secure, he felt in control, and he turned from the Lord. He allowed his success to deteriorate to pride and self-reliance. And as we have said before, as the leaders go, so goes the nation. The Southern Kingdom followed after their king, who forsook the Lord.

God brings judgment upon Rehoboam and the Southern Kingdom of Judah because they turned away from the Lord. When they looked to the Lord the kingdom was strengthened, but now, because they have forsaken the Lord, the kingdom will be weakened. You have to give them credit here. This prophet of God, Shemaiah, comes to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah and tells them the reason God's judgment has come upon them is because they have turned away from the Lord, it was their own fault! And the king and his leaders recognise their failure and see the righteousness of God.

When we find ourselves in sin, backsliding, and someone comes up to us and tries to get us to see our error, and help us to get back on track, we tend to become angry with them. We don't want to hear what they have to say. Then, as we reap the consequences of our sin we become angry with God, we blame Him for what is happening to us. God is not unfair or unrighteous. We need to do like Rehoboam, humble ourselves before God, confess our sin, and turn back to Him.

Pray: confessing your sin to God and asking for his forgiveness.

Reflect: do I try and do things in my own strength or am I fully relying on God?

The men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers. (v.18)

Here we see war about to break out between the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel. But Abijah, king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, was outnumbered 2 to 1. And that is a big disadvantage. So Abijah is going to try and talk his way out of this battle, explaining that David and his descendants have the right to the throne and Jeroboam doesn't. He speaks very boldly, as we shall see, and I think it is because he knows that what he is saying is what God has already promised.

Abijah is saying that God has established the house of David to rule over the nation, and no other dynasty shall rule. This covenant of salt spoke of preservation, and thus, the dynasty of David was not to end. Abijah blasts Jeroboam and his men. He says that they took advantage of his father Rehoboam when he was young and inexperienced. He says that they turned from God and turned to idol worship – they even brought their idols into battle with them. In comparison Abijah reminds them that they in the south are still fulfilling the requirements of the Lord – they are offering their burnt sacrifices.

As he is talking Jeroboam had sent troops to the rear and Judah now realised they were being attacked from front and rear. They cried out to the Lord and God routed Jeroboam and all Israel. Judah won the battle despite being outnumbered. And only because when you are on the Lord's side you are never outnumbered.

Here is an important principle that we see throughout the Scriptures. The battle is never ours, it is always the Lords. God is the commander of the army, thus, as the enemy surrounds us, we can trust in Him, and walk by faith, and not tremble in fear.

Pray: thanking God for his leading, guiding and protection.

Reflect: do I fully trust God and walk by faith?

Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. (v.2)

Asa was one of the few Godly kings that the Southern Kingdom of Judah had. He brought reform to the land. It says of Asa that he *'did what was good and right.'* Let me ask you this, "Can you do something good and yet wrong?" Yes you can, for there are many good things you can do with the wrong motives. For example the Pharisees, they fasted and prayed, both good things, and yet they did them in such a way to draw attention to themselves. A good thing, wrong motive. God does not want our life filled with hypocrisy; He does want us to do what is good and right!

Asa brought reform and pointed people back to the Lord. He urged them to obey the Lord's commands. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us in Hebrews 10:24 *'let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.'* The encouragement to us is to keep pointing others to Christ, urging them to accept his grace and mercy and forgiveness, and to live life his way.

God gave Asa and the people of Judah a time of rest. They did not fritter it away though. Rather they used it to prepare for what could be ahead. They built fortified towns and made arms and trained an army. They did this during the time of rest so that when danger came they were ready. Zerah came against them and they were outnumbered but Asa called to God and God delivered them from their enemy. They were prepared for battle.

Sometimes we can look at the best athletes and get to think that they only work at their "job" a few hours each week. We might look at a professional golfer like Tiger Woods and think that he only swings his clubs a couple of hours a week at the tournaments. Or at David Beckham and think he only kicks a ball for a few hours a week. A top professional will work at his skills eight hours a day. They must be disciplined.

Like it or not, we are in a spiritual battle. If we want to survive the battle, we need to learn to be disciplined. Keep reading and learning God's word.

Pray: asking God to help us do what is good and right.

Reflect: am I prepared for battle? Am I reading God's word daily?

The Lord is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. (v.2)

“I do not boast that God is on my side,” wrote Abraham Lincoln. “I humbly pray that I am on God’s side.” Lincoln’s words paraphrase the thoughts Azariah expressed to King Asa of Judah. After the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, he said, *‘The Lord is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.’* (verse 2). The call is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. The call is for us to keep seeking God and following him.

This prophet of God, Azariah, comes to Asa after this great victory and tells him to continue walking with the Lord, for if you don’t, He will forsake you. Now for Asa, and most if not all of us, that would be the farthest thing from our mind. “Of course we are going to follow after you Lord, what in the world are you talking about?” Let me say this, if God takes the time to warn you about something, you would be wise to listen! Too many times we think we know more than God knows, and we quickly come to find out we were wrong.

Here Azariah re-caps their history. He is telling Asa that before there were priests and before there was the law, God was the one who was still faithful even though His people were not. It is as Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:22-23, *‘Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.’*

Azariah is encouraging Asa to continue in the work. And we are encouraged to do the same. Don’t give up even though others have failed before you. Don’t give up, even though the work may be difficult and seem unrewarding, for God will reward you, and your labour is not in vain, even though you may not see immediate results. Remember His faithfulness and keep walking in His ways.

Pray: asking God to help us walk in his ways and be on his side.

Reflect: am I walking in God’s ways?

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war. (v.9)

Astronaut Jack Lousma described how earth looks from space. He wrote: “With the naked eye we could see freeways, airports, and cities..., white clouds and the snow on the mountains. We could see the green-and-brown patchwork of the farmers’ fields and the beautifully painted deserts...When we were over Chicago, we could see most of Hudson Bay..., Washington, DC, and Baltimore. We could see two-thirds of the way down the Mississippi River and out to Denver.”

What intrigues me about this amazing out-of-this-world vantage point is its vast range yet intricate detail. It reminds me of God’s perspective of His universe and of the inner world of each of His children. The Bible says that ‘*the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth*’ (verse 9). Even more striking is the fact that He knows all about us - even our secret thoughts! (Psalm 139:1-4).

And here in chapter 16 we find Asa facing an enemy again. With the last battle he relied on God. Now he has built up strength and power so when this enemy comes he tries to deal with it himself. He does not rely on God. And God sends a seer to warn him but for the rest of his days Asa ignores God. And God watches all this and allows the land to be at war from now on.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these verses about God’s eyes always being upon us. We can never drift outside the range of His loving care, and we can never hide from His holiness. This both reassures us and unsettles us, for it’s a love that never lets us go, nor does it let us get away with any wrong. And there is no greater love than that.

Pray: thanking God for his love and care.

Reflect: what do the eyes of the Lord see in my life at the moment? Confess any sin to God.

They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the LORD; they went round to all the towns of Judah and taught the people. (v.9)

During a severe thunderstorm, a mother tucked her child into bed and turned off the light. Frightened by the storm, he asked, “Mummy, will you sleep with me?” Hugging him, she replied, “I can’t, dear. I have to sleep with Daddy.” Stepping out of the room, she heard, “That big sissy!”

Fear is real. But it’s not always negative. In 2 Chronicles 17:3-10, we read about a healthy, positive fear that prevented neighbouring countries from going to war against Judah. What had caused this fear? We are told that *‘The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat.’* (verse 10). The implication is that when the people began to be taught the Word, the nation prospered and they were protected from their enemies.

A respectful fear of the Lord was also what King Jehoshaphat desired for his own people. So he made it a priority that they be taught God’s Word. He knew that if the people were in awe of the Almighty, they would humble themselves and obey Him. Doing what was right would bring prosperity to Judah and respect from neighbouring countries.

Proverbs 15:33 declares, *‘The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom.’* Those who fear Him act with wisdom; they walk faithfully before Him as they obey His commands. The Word strengthens us. The demons tremble as we learn to put the Word into our lives. It is a sharp sword (Ephesians 6:17), and an offensive weapon to the enemy. It is one of the tools that keeps us from sin (Psalm 119:11) It is the things that makes us useable to God (2 Tim 3:16-17).

And so it is vital for us to know God’s Word and to use God’s Word.

Pray: thanking God for His Word.

Reflect: does my life reflect the lessons I learn from reading God’s Word? i.e. am I putting into practice what I learn?

So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. (v.31)

The Star Alliance is an affiliation of airlines that seeks to maximise passenger benefits. If you're travelling on a member airline, you can accumulate frequent-flyer miles after transferring flights and enjoy faster check-in. The Alliance's Web site calls it "a more civilised way to fly the world."

But not all alliances are mutually beneficial. In chapter 18, we read that Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, formed an alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, when they joined armies against Syria. This is a strange and confusing alliance and we are not told why Jehoshaphat entered into it. His son married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel and that spelled disaster later on. Just as oil and water don't mix, neither does good and evil. And you never sacrifice truth and righteousness for the sake of unity!

Jehoshaphat worked so hard to relate to Ahab, to unite the kingdom, that the enemy mistakes him for Ahab. Ahab was trying to protect himself and confuse the enemy by disguising himself and letting Jehoshaphat dress in his royal robes. And it worked. The enemy went after Jehoshaphat and caught him. As they were about to attack he cried out and the Lord helped him. Here is a reminder that we can never stray so far from God that he cannot hear us and will not help us.

I think we make the same mistake from time to time. We try so hard to relate to the world, that we are mistaken for the world. We must be careful that in our desire to see people turn to Christ that we don't water down the message or lower our standards. When we do that we dim our light and we can dim it so much that they can't see Christ in us, but the world.

Pray: asking God to help us be wise in sharing the gospel.

Reflect: do I water down the message of the gospel to make it more palatable when I am sharing it?

Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem and he went out among the people...and turned them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. (v.4)

As Jehoshaphat returns home, the prophet Jehu rebukes him for his actions. And he tells him ‘*Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?*’ Now as you read that it seems confusing, for we are told to love those that hate us, to reach out to the lost. I think what God is saying here is this. Jehoshaphat was fellowshipping with Ahab, and light and darkness don’t mix. It is one thing to share Christ with the lost; it is another thing to be one with them.

In the midst of rebuking him for what he has done wrong, he encourages him for what he has done well. God looks at Jehoshaphat’s heart and the good that he has done, and God extends His mercy to him. Jehoshaphat had rid the land of Asherah poles and he had set his heart on seeking God.

The problem for Jehoshaphat is often our problem – we are too busy trying to do good that we don’t see ourselves falling into sin. We have to be careful in trying to love others and help them, that we don’t lose the focus of their real need – to know the Saviour. Jesus often dealt with people’s physical problems before going on to deal with their sin. We have to do the same. And we have to watch that their way of life does not become the norm for us.

Now we don’t know how long Jehoshaphat was away from his people, but during that time they strayed from the Lord. Now Jehoshaphat, having been challenged by the seer, is going around trying to get the people back on track, for without a shepherd, the sheep were scattered, and strayed from the Lord. He takes the words of rebuke and uses them as a focus for doing better. When someone tells us the truth about ourselves, even when it hurts, how do we respond? You can get mad at the person. Or you can think about it and take it to heart. Maybe there’s a lesson to be learned.

Pray: asking God to help us keep seeking after His kingdom and righteousness.

Reflect: do I need to learn from a rebuke from a friend?

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. (v.15)

A wise Bible teacher once said, “Sooner or later God will bring self-sufficient people to the place where they have no resource but Him: no strength, no answers, nothing but Him. Without God’s help, they’re sunk.”

He then told of a despairing man who confessed to his pastor, “My life is really in bad shape.” “How bad?” the pastor inquired. Burying his head in his hands, he moaned “I’ll tell you how bad - all I’ve got left is God.” The pastor’s face lit up. “I’m happy to assure you that a person with nothing left but God has more than enough for great victory!”

In today’s Bible reading, the people of Judah were also in trouble. As Jehoshaphat gets word that three nations are gathered around the west shore of the Dead Sea, he is fearful. Now this is not a fear that paralyses, but it causes him to seek the Lord. To me, this is a good fear. We all need to experience this for it truly gets us to re-focus our lives back on the Lord. Jehoshaphat set his face to seek the Lord and called for a national fast. How exciting to see that when they needed to, they came together as a nation to seek the Lord. They knew He was the only one who could truly help.

Now as they are gathered at the temple, Jehoshaphat begins to pray before the Lord. They admitted their lack of power and wisdom to conquer their foes. All they had left was God! But King Jehoshaphat and the people saw this as reason for hope, not despair. ‘*Our eyes are upon You,*’ they declared to God (verse 12). And their hope was not disappointed as He fulfilled His promise: ‘*for the battle is not yours, but God's.*’ (verse 15).

God puts things in proper perspective, it’s His battle. Because of that, we need to bring our requests before Him and ask for guidance, and for direction in the situations we find ourselves in.

Pray: asking God for help in your current difficult situation.

Reflect: when I am fearful do my eyes look to God?

He passed away, to no one's regret and was buried in the city of David, but not in the tomb of the kings. (v.20)

What a sad epitaph to have '*He passed away, to no one's regret.*' No one missed Jehoram when he died. I heard the story of a man who told a local minister that his oldest brother had died. When the minister expressed surprise that he had not heard the news already, the man said, "We never had it announced in any way. He cared about nobody and nobody cared about him." How sad.

Why did people not miss Jehoram? Well Jehoram was a wicked man who did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He was Jehoshaphat's son, the one allowed to marry into the northern kingdom to the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Early in his reign he killed all his brothers and other potential rivals. He led the nation in the worship of false gods, had a troubled 8-year reign, and died from a terrible, painful disease '*to no one's regret.*' (Verse 20).

Not only did Jehoram die a painful death but there is a certain irony in verse 17 as we learn that the Philistines and the Arabs attacked Judah and carried off all the treasures from the palace and all Jehoram's wives and sons – all except one. Jehoram killed all his own brothers so he would be the only ruler. Now an enemy has come and taken all but one of his children. I wonder how he feels about that.

It's a sad story. Jehoram wasn't missed when he died, because he had been a self-centered and godless person. The Bible gives Jehoram this short and tragic epitaph: '*He did evil in the eyes of the LORD.*' (Verse 6).

Let's remember that the extent to which we care about our relationships - both with God and the people He has put in our lives - will determine how much we will be missed when we pass on. If we keep this in mind and live to please God and show love to others, we'll be missed when we depart this earthly scene.

Pray: asking God to help us be faithful to him.

Reflect: do I live to please God or please myself?

He too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong. (v.3)

It doesn't matter how many times we teach the young people to behave and show respect for the leaders and others in our youth café – all it takes is the influence of one wrong friend and it is all forgotten. I think of one young lad in particular who when he is on his own listens and follows the instructions, can play a game quite happily with you even chatting to you about his day and what is happening in his life. Then his friend comes in and suddenly no listening, no sitting, no following the rules and his language even changes. The power of influence.

Here in 2 Chronicles 22 we see the power of influence on the life of the new king. Ahaziah has taken over from his father Jehoram. His mother was Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. The influences on her life had not been great and here she seeks to teach her son the same way. Athaliah was the power behind the throne. She influenced her son greatly, and not for the good. She counselled him to do wickedly. Verse 4 tells us that on account of his mother's influence *'he did evil in the eyes of the LORD.'*

Not only did he follow his mother's influence but he went on to follow the influence of all in the household of Ahab. People around us in our families, our friends, our work colleagues even those we socialise with can have a dramatic influence on our life. We have to watch who our friends are and watch the influence they have on our life.

And parents we have such a responsibility...a responsibility to bring up our children well; to instruct them in the ways of the Lord; to teach them right from wrong. We often delegate that responsibility to teachers at school and even Sunday School – but the main place our children learn is at home. They watch us. So let us seek to bring them up well and point them to the Lord always.

Pray: for your children that they would grow to know the Lord and walk in his ways.

Reflect: am I a positive influence on my children?

Jehoiada and his sons brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; they presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. (v.11)

We get sent a copy of the Gideon magazine every quarter. Morag loves to open it up and read it through. It's amazing how many stories you read of ordinary people who were given a copy of the New Testament and Psalms when they were at school, or started a career in nursing or the army or such like. They accepted the bible usually with a bit of a giggle with their friends, took it home, placed it on a shelf and then forgot about it. Years later, having reached a tough and difficult time in their life they have remembered the little red bible and picked it off their shelf and started to read it. And having begun to read they come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

I don't think we should ever underestimate the gift of a bible to someone. I give copies of the bible to children at dedication services and to married couples at their wedding. I believe it is the best gift they could be given.

Jehoiada the priest had hidden the king's son, Joash, in the temple for six years. Joash's grandmother Athaliah wanted to kill off all possible successor to the throne of Judah. This young lad had been protected so that God's promise to David could keep being fulfilled that one of his son's would reign on the throne. Now that the boy was growing older and Jehoiada had strength, it was time to crown him as king.

During the coronation ceremony they presented Joash with '*a copy of the covenant*' – the books of the law; the first five books of the bible. This was the greatest gift the king could be given.

The bible is God's Word for his people. It is alive and active, sharper than any two edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). It is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). May we use it often and may we give it to people as well.

Pray: for our children that they would read God's Word and learn from it.

Reflect: do I speak of God's Word to others?

After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. They abandoned the temple of the LORD...and worshipped Asherah poles and idols. (v.17-18)

Mickey's wife bought a new line of expensive cosmetics guaranteed to make her look years younger. After a lengthy sitting before the mirror applying the "miracle" products, she asked, "Darling, honestly, what age would you say I am?" Looking over her carefully, Mickey replied, "Judging from your skin, twenty; your hair, eighteen; and your figure, twenty five." "Oh, you flatterer!" she gushed. "Hey, wait a minute!" Mickey interrupted. "I haven't added them up yet."

Flattery will get you everywhere. There is a danger in leadership when people begin to "bow" to you tell you that you're wonderful. It appears that these officials will have influence upon Joash. I wonder if their influence doesn't start with their flattery. As they talk to Joash he leaves behind his upbringing and the teaching of Jehoiada the priest and goes the way of the world. You will remember that Jehoiada gave him a copy of the covenant in the previous chapter – the greatest gift he could be given. During Jehoiada's life, Joash followed the ways of the Lord – even going as far as to have the temple repaired and restored.

Then Jehoiada died at the ripe old age of one hundred and thirty. The guiding influence on Joash's life was gone. And he flutters in the wind. The officials come and no doubt flatter him as they pay homage to him, and then they turn him away from the Lord and back to idol worship.

We have to be careful who we listen to and who we follow in life. Some people will try and flatter us with good words and praise in order to get us on their side. They may well then lead us away from God and down a different path. Let us be wise in hearing the praise of others and let us seek the praise of only one – the one who will one day utter those words 'well done, good and faithful servant.'

Pray: for good friends in our lives who keep us centred on Christ.

Reflect: do I revel in the praise (and flattery) of others?

*He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly.
(v.2)*

This verse sheds some light on a works theology. You can do good things, help all kinds of people, and yet if your heart is not right before God, it is meaningless. You can even serve God but if your heart is far from Him, if you don't have a relationship with Him, then all the work you do is meaningless. Amaziah did good things but his heart was far from the Lord. Yes it was far better for Amaziah to do good rather than evil, the people benefited from that. But he was still lost; his heart was far from the Lord. And that my friends is a sobering thought! And Jesus makes it even clearer in the New Testament when He spoke of those that honoured Him with their lips and yet their heart was far from Him (Matthew 7:21-23). He said that he never knew them and will send them away.

We see Amaziah listen to the man of God and send away the troops from Israel. He goes into battle without them and God helps him win the victory. I find this next bit truly amazing. God has just given him the victory over the Edomites with 100,000 less troops, and in this victory Amaziah gathers the gods of the people he has just defeated, and brings them home with him. In doing this, he is now worshipping these gods.

And you think "Why in the world would he do something as stupid as that?" It is really quite simple for we see it done all the time today. When your backs are up against the wall, and you have no other place to turn, you turn to the true and living God for help. But after the trouble is over you turn back to the gods of this world, the gods of the flesh. They appeal to you, even though you know they can't help you, but they can satisfy your flesh. Amaziah does just that, he went to the gods of this world, the gods of the Edomites, for he no longer needed the true and living God. Well, he may have thought that way, but the reality is, he needed God more than ever in his life, and so do we!

Pray: for the strength to follow God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Reflect: do I allow the appeals of the flesh to tempt me?

As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success...But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God. (v.5, 16)

During World War II, Harry Truman became President of the United States when Franklin Delano Roosevelt died. Truman said he felt as if a great weight had been dropped on him, and he asked people to pray for him. It is said that his old colleague Sam Rayburn tried to help him be humble when he said, "They'll tell you what a great man you are, Harry, but you and I both know you ain't."

In 2 Chronicles 26 we read about Uzziah, who was a remarkable king. He took office when he was 16 and ruled over the nation of Judah for 52 years (vv.1-3). He was God-fearing and led the nation into a long era of prosperity. He went to Zechariah who instructed him in the fear of God. There is no better thing for us to do than seek out the counsel of a godly and wise older and more mature person. Mentoring is such an important part of the Christian life. If you are an older person seek out a younger person to mentor and train in the ways of the Lord. If you are a younger person seek out a wiser more mature person to mentor you and instruct you about God. As long as Uzziah sought the Lord everything went well. His fame spread far and wide and he became powerful.

And then things started to go wrong. We read that he became proud and it led to his downfall. We are not sure if the people were puffing him up and telling him how good and powerful he was, or whether he just picked all that up himself. Whatever the case, he decided he could go into the temple himself and burn incense on the altar. This was a task for only priests. God had instructed this way back in the days of Moses.

God struck Uzziah down with leprosy and he ended up co-reigning with Jotham his son. His life ended miserably on account of his sin.

Pray: that God would keep our hearts focused on him alone.

Reflect: do I allow my pride to puff me up and think that I can go it alone and ignore God in the process?

Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God. (v.6)

I don't know about you but sometimes my desk gets far too cluttered. And when it gets cluttered I can't find anything and I can't seem to work properly. I end up clearing my desk, filing the paperwork, binning the rubbish, and creating a nice to-do list. Once that is done I am able to work so much better once more.

There is a sense to which Jotham is setting things in order once more. He did not follow his father's example and did not enter the temple. He saw the error of his father's ways and decided to follow God properly. Uzziah had gone into the temple to burn incense and ended up with leprosy because of his sin. Jotham did not want this. We read that Jotham rebuilt the upper gate of the temple and then worked on building up towns and forts and towers. Unfortunately not all the people followed their king's example. The people continued in their corrupt practices we read.

We read that Jotham grew powerful. His power came from his walk with God. It says there that he walked steadfastly before the Lord. This means that he looked to the Lord and followed in his footsteps. He obeyed the teachings of Scripture. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. In another translation it says that he '*ordered his ways before the LORD.*' The Hebrew word translated as ordered and walked steadfastly means to fix, make ready, prepare, provide, provide for, furnish, to arrange, order.

Jotham's strength came because he cleared out the way before him. We have to remove the clutter from our lives in order that we might walk steadfastly before God. We have to confess our sin, turn from it and seek to walk in God's ways.

Pray: for God's help in sorting your life out in order to follow him closer.

Reflect: what is the clutter in my life just now? Deal with it before a faithful and loving God.

In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD. (v.22)

When God associates a king with the kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, it was a rebuke. You see, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had no good kings, they all were evil, some worse than others. And so God is saying that Ahaz was just as wicked as they were. He was not at all like David, the standard for all kings to be judged by. And as we have said before, David was not perfect, but he never led the nation into idolatry. Ahaz, on the other hand, goes crazy and sets up all these places of worship, offering sacrifice to all these pagan gods, and even offering his own children in the fire as a sacrifice to them.

God now brings judgment upon Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their wickedness. He uses the Syrians and the Northern Kingdom of Israel to carry out His judgment. But Israel goes overboard and takes back home with them many slaves, which God forbid. A prophet comes and hits the nail right on the head. He rebukes Israel for their actions, in thinking that they were better than Judah and that is why God used them. We too must remember that when we correct someone; that when we do, we do it in love and temper it with mercy. Many times we correct people with a “holier than thou” attitude when the reality is we are all sinners saved by Christ and not because we were worthy of it.

Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah are being attacked from every side. And you would think that this would at least get his attention and cause Ahaz to look up, but the king’s heart is so hard and he refuses to listen to the warnings, to see why this is happening. He shuts his eyes to the truth. As the pressure from God increases, Ahaz hardens his heart even more and he refuses to look up. And many do the same today as God is trying to get their attention, they do everything they can to look the other way and not acknowledge Him. Let’s make sure when God is trying to get our attention that we respond to him in humble repentance.

Pray: seeking forgiveness for sin God is drawing to our mind just now.

Reflect: how do I react when God is trying to get my attention?

So the service of the temple of the LORD was re-established. (v.35)

Hezekiah is the next king and he does what is right in the eyes of the LORD. He wastes no time in bringing forth spiritual reform to the nation. The first thing he does is to re-open the house of worship, the temple, and to repair it. Why did he have to do this? Because during his fathers reign, Ahaz closed everything up that had to do with the Lord. We are told in 2 Chronicles 28:24 *'Ahaz gathered together the furnishings from the temple of God and took them away. He shut the doors of the LORD's temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem.'* Thus, Hezekiah is going to open the doors of worship once again, the place where spiritual revival is to begin.

The temple was used as a big storage area where all the junk, all that was worthless was kept. And I think many times we fill our hearts with all kinds of garbage, like bitterness, anger, covetousness, all kinds of fleshly living, and in doing that or having that in our hearts, we have a hard time worshipping the Lord. You see, we are the temple of God, and God wants us to remove that garbage from His temple, and the amazing thing is, that as God purges more and more of that garbage from our hearts, from our lives, the easier it is to worship Him.

Not only was the temple cleaned, but all that was broken was restored, and those things that were removed from the temple were brought back. The temple was prepared once again for sacrifices to take place and the worship of God to begin. As soon as it was ready Hezekiah has the people offer the right sacrifices in the temple. The sin offering is made so that atonement could be made for the sins of all Israel.

Friends when we recognise sin in our lives, the right and proper response is to confess that sin before a holy, just and loving God, to turn from it and to seek to live for God going forward.

Pray: asking God to reveal the garbage we fill our hearts with and then confessing those sins before him.

Reflect: what do I allow to fill my heart and life?

*God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.
(v.27)*

You have to love the heart of this man. Not only does Hezekiah send letters to Judah, but also to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, to come and join them in the Passover celebration. Right now the time is around 720-715 BC, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel has been carried away captive by the Assyrians for their idolatry. Only a few people remained in the land and Hezekiah is saying to them that it is not too late to get right with God. What a heart. Many today would say that they got what they deserved, but this king opens his arms to them to come back and get right with God. That is a shepherd's heart. Let us watch our attitudes that we do not condemn people when God is the God of the second (and third, fourth, and on and on) chance.

They celebrate the Passover and their praise and worship goes on and on. When true revival breaks out it is seen with great joy and God gives new songs to be sung. And I love what is said here, they played '*loud instruments*' it says in verse 21 in the King James version. Worship styles change but the words do remain the same, the focus remains the same, it is upon God. I look forward to God giving our worship team new songs as He speaks to their hearts. Too often we are living in the past, back in the 17th century or so, singing hymns. And please understand that there is nothing wrong with hymns, but God is still alive and He gives us new songs to sing; new life that focus us back on Him. Worship should be upward.

During this whole time of praise and celebration the people prayed as well. And here is an important reminder about prayer - God hears. God hears us when we pray to him. It doesn't matter that we all pray at the same time - God hears. When we pray our prayers of praise and petition reach the very throne room of heaven. Let's not give up lifting our voices to our Father in heaven.

Pray: thanking God for all his goodness, greatness and majesty.

Reflect: do I give my all in worship to God?

They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. (v.5)

The day the church treasurer resigned the church asked the local grain elevator manager to take the position. He agreed under two conditions. That no treasurer's report would be given for the first year and that no questions be asked about finances during that year. The people were surprised but finally agreed since most of them did business with him and he was a trusted man. At the end of the year he gave his report:

- * The church indebtedness of \$228,000 has been paid.
- * The minister's salary had been increased by 8%.
- * The Cooperative Program gifts has been paid 200%.
- * There were no outstanding bills.
- * And there was a cash balance of \$11,252!

Immediately the shocked congregation asked, "How did you do it? Where did the money come from?" He quietly answered: "Most of you bring your grain to my elevator. Throughout the year I simply withheld ten percent on your behalf and gave it to the church in your name. You didn't even miss it! Do you see what we could do for the Lord if we were all willing to give at least the tithe to God, who really owns it?" And so the new treasurer had made his point.

Hezekiah started by restoring proper worship in the temple and here he moves on to cleanse the country of idols. Having done that he assigned the priests to the various roles and then ordered the children of Israel to give what was due to the priests and Levites for this role they fulfilled. Remember that the tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance or land as a possession. They were to be in the ministry full time, totally devoted to God and not distracted by working outside the ministry. Thus, the other tribes were to support them and their families. (Numbers 18:20-24).

And we see here the blessing of what happens when the people gave back to the Lord. There was enough for them and more left over. May we be generous in our giving to the Lord and may we do it with a cheerful heart.

Pray: thanking God for all his provision of our needs.

Reflect: do I give my tithe (and what I am able) cheerfully to the Lord?

With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles. (v.8)

When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah, Hezekiah knew that the city of Jerusalem would come under attack, so he went into action to defend the city. He built up the broken wall and raised up another outside of it. He also ‘*made large numbers of weapons and shields*’ and ‘*appointed military officers over the people*’ (v.5-6).

But it would take more than that to save the city from the onslaught of the powerful armies of Sennacherib. So Hezekiah called the people together to encourage them. In the face of their seemingly hopeless situation, he declared, ‘*There is a greater power with us than with him*’ (v.7).

How could he say this? He gives the answer in the very next verse: ‘*With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.*’ That was their hope. Sennacherib had power, men, and prestige – ‘the arm of flesh’ - but the inhabitants of Jerusalem had the Lord! And that’s all that mattered. When the battle came the Lord saved Hezekiah and the people.

Hezekiah did all that he could do, and then he committed the rest to God. Too many times we are so passive in our Christian walk. We expect God to do it all, when many times He works through us. We need to do our part and then let God do His. Do your best and commit the rest to God!

Is there some “enemy” pressing in on you today? Do you feel as though the opposition is about to crush and destroy you? Does everything seem hopeless? Take heart, child of God! With the Lord on your side, you are never outnumbered.

Pray: thanking God for his shelter and protection.

Reflect: do I expect God to do it all or do I allow him to work in and through me?

In his distress he sought the favour of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. (v.12)

A young man was driving an old worn-out car on a desolate road in a downpour when the engine died. As he coasted to the side of the road, another car stopped and the driver got out and asked what was wrong. The stranger opened the hood, tinkered with something, and signalled the driver to turn the ignition key. When the car started, the amazed driver shouted, "Thanks, I was afraid the engine had failed for the last time."

The rescuer replied, "Every car has at least one more start in it if you can get a spark. The same principle applies to people. Someday you will have occasion to apply this knowledge. Remember, as long as a single spark of life remains, it's not too late for anyone to make a fresh start." Thirty years later, this once-stranded driver is a chaplain in a large prison. He testifies that those words about a fresh start have come back to him again and again.

Manasseh here finds that fresh start with God. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He made idols and worshipped them. God tried to get his attention but Manasseh ignored him. Isn't God's mercy unbelievable! Manasseh should have been wiped out and yet God is calling to him, trying to get him to listen and to get the nation to listen, but they refused. Since he refused to listen to the prophets, God tries to get his attention by having him taken captive by the Assyrians - they placed hooks in his nose and fetters on him, and carried him away to Babylon. This is what Manasseh needed before he was broken and would look up. God knows what it will take before we are low enough and helpless enough, to look up to Him and repent of our sin. Manasseh repents and is restored to the kingdom in Jerusalem!

It doesn't matter how far you feel you have run from God, he will still give you a fresh start. Turn to him now before it is too late.

Pray: thanking God for his amazing grace, mercy and love.

Reflect: do I offer others a fresh start or do I think they are too far gone?