

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

II. The Divided Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:1-22:53

G. Overcoming Income Insecurity

(1 Kings 15:9-24 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The lack of income security permeates today's world, leading to anxiety in millions of people:

(1) On the international level, Britain's then Prime Minister David Cameron four years ago complained how "corrupt officials, oligarchs and money launderers" were "plundering the wealth of countries . . . rich in oil, gas and minerals" and "funneling money around with impunity" to the economic deprivation of the citizens of such nations. (David Cameron, "Corruption Cure: Transparency, Taxes, Trade," The Wall Street Journal, June 5, 2014, p. A15)

(2) On the national level, I recently heard financial guru Dave Ramsay on his radio show claim that 70% of the households in America live from paycheck to paycheck because of debt. That fact coupled with the lack of job security so common in today's world with its competitive global economy and political uncertainties leads many in our country to be anxious about the possible loss of their home or their whole way of life! (Lane Anderson, "Job insecurity is the new normal. Here's how it's affecting your family life," August 1, 2015; deseretnews.com)

(3) On the state level, Kathryn Boughton's story, "GOP candidates make pitches in New Hartford forum" (Republican-American, April 13, 2018, p. 1B) told of a recent marathon meeting "at Ann Antolini School" just west of us here in New Hartford where "18 Republican candidates for state offices presented their platforms," with most expressing concerns about the financial burdens on state citizens in the form of high "corporate and business taxes . . . 'inefficiencies' in state government" and "high utility costs, income, sales and gas taxes."

(4) Locally, a letter to the paper's editor from Dr. Edward Volpintesta, M. D. of Bethel explained how "the shortage of primary-care doctors in Litchfield County" was due to "low incomes" they have "compared with specialists that turns medical students away from . . . primary care, and forces some doctors to quit," Ibid., p. 6A.

Need: So, we ask, "What does God want us to do about the income insecurity we face?!"

I. When Judah's king Asa came to the throne after his father Abijam, he initially followed the Lord like his ancestor David, and God greatly rewarded him with wealth in fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant:

- A. In the dispensation of the Law, God promised the people of Israel in the Deuteronomy 28 Mosaic Covenant to obtain comprehensive health and wealth in reward for obeying God's Word, cf. Deuteronomy 28:1-14.
- B. Accordingly, when Asa came to Judah's throne after his father Abijam, he initially heeded the Lord, so God rewarded him with a great income of wealth in accord with the Mosaic Covenant, 1 Kings 15:9-15:
 1. Asa removed the male cult prostitutes and the idols his father had made, and he even deposed grandmother Maacah II from being Queen Mother for making a detestable idol, 1 Kings 15:9-13. [In Hebrew, "mother" (v. 10) often means "grandmother" as here, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 1 Kings 15:10.]
 2. Though the high places remained where people would worship God opposite His temple, Asa's heart was upright before the Lord (1 Kings 15:14), so God rewarded him by giving him booty gained by his father and himself in their respective acts of faith in the Lord in war, and Asa put them in the temple treasury, 1 Kings 15:15; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 519.

II. However, when Israel's king Baasha cut off Asa's access to key trade routes to curtail his income, Asa failed to trust God by misusing God's gift of great war booty to solve this problem, 1 Kings 15:16-23a:

- A. The ongoing war between Judah's king Asa and Israel's king Baasha eventually resulted in Baasha's invasion of the tribal territory of Benjamin in the northern part of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to fortify the city of Ramah there and thus inhibit any "to go out or come in to Asa," 1 Kings 15:16-17 KJV.
- B. To explain this "to go out or come in to Asa" phrase, we note that the city of Ramah was situated just south of a major trade route intersection Judah needed for trade with other key Middle Eastern nations. Baasha thus invaded Benjamin from the north, going as far south as Ramah to fortify it and use it to cut off trade to and from Asa who was further south of Ramah in Jerusalem, The Carta Bible Atlas, 2002, p. 93. Baasha thus cut off Asa's sources of income from trade with other nations to disable him from waging war against Israel!
- C. Instead of turning to God for help, Asa took all the booty God had given him from the temple to use in bribing the Aramean king who was allied with Baasha to break his treaty with Baasha and attack him, pressuring Baasha to withdraw from Ramah to defend his nation Israel from Aramea up north, 1 Kings 15:18-19.

D. As Asa had hoped, the Aramean king accepted his bribe and attacked Baasha so that Baasha retreated from Ramah, and Asa used the fortifying materials Baasha left behind to fortify other towns, 1 Kings 15:20-23a.

III. Nevertheless, the Lord punished Asa's failure to rely on Him to handle Baasha's threat to his income:

- A. 1 Kings 15:23b reveals that Asa suffered diseased feet in his old age, a signal of God's punishment for sin in accord with the Mosaic Covenant, cf. Deuteronomy 28:15, 21-22.
- B. The companion passage of 2 Chronicles 16:7-9 explains that God critiqued Asa by sending His prophet Hanani to critique Asa for failing to rely on God for his income needs in contrast to how he had previously relied on God to defeat the Ethiopians, what had resulted in a huge reward of booty, cf. 2 Chronicles 14:9-15. Asa was furious at Hanani's words, so he imprisoned him and oppressed other people, 2 Chronicles 16:10.
- C. God thus struck Asa with a great disease in his feet, but even then he did not turn to the Lord for healing, but tried to be healed by means of magic practiced by pagan practitioners, Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to 2 Chronicles 16:12.
- D. Asa thus died in spiritual defeat, having started well only to fail by not trusting in the Lord, 1 Kings 15:23-24.

IV. Asa's life with certain relevant Scripture passages offer guidance on rightly handling income insecurity:

- A. The events of the early years of Asa's reign along with Psalm 62:10-12, Matthew 6:31-34 and Philippians 4:19 reveal that **IF** we believers even in the Church era heed Scripture, God will provide all the income we need.
- B. Yet, once God gives us the income, He does **not** want us to do what Asa did in spending it all independent of His leading and will, but **still trust God and follow His biblical lead on handling the financial needs we face:**
 1. Scripture calls us to prepare our field work before building a house, Prov. 24:27 ESV. We should thus get the skills/training we need to earn a living (field work) before buying a home and having a family.
 2. Scripture **implies** that we should avoid debt, spending less than we earn and investing the difference to make that remainder of our income build wealth for us (that we rule and not be a slave), Proverbs 22:7.
 3. God's guidelines on **how** to invest that remainder of our income **effectively** is clarified in Eccles. 11:1-6:
 - a. We should invest aggressively, boldly, Ecclesiastes 11:1a.
 - b. We should invest long-term, not short-term, for long-term gains, Ecclesiastes 11:1b.
 - c. We should diversify our investments, minimizing risk and ensuring gains, Ecclesiastes 11:2-5.
 - d. We should steadily add to our investments out of our regular income for long-term gains, Eccles. 11:6.
 4. Scripture directs that even those who have acquired or inherited large nest eggs of wealth must pay attention to their earning and investment income(s) for their future financial welfare, Proverbs 27:23-27.
 5. Scripture directs us to give of our income to the Lord's ministries for His reimbursement, leading to a life of giving to His ministries with resulting blessings, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

Lesson: When Asa wholeheartedly heeded God's Word and relied on Him for victory in war, God richly blessed him even regarding his income, but when his income stream was threatened and he sought to solve the problem himself independent of God, foolishly wasting the riches God had given him, the Lord withdrew His blessing.

Application: If faced with income insecurity, (1) may we trust in Christ for salvation to become a child of God under His Much-More Care, John 3:16; Romans 8:32. (2) Then, (a) may we rely on God for income security and (b) heed His Word on HOW to acquire, manage and preserve the income He provides as noted in part "IV" above.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Last Tuesday when I began forming this sermon, our Church received a thank-you note from one of our missionaries. It read: "Dear Friends at Nepaug Bible Church, [my wife] and I are really grateful for your part on our support team! Your prayers are moving the ministry forward in large ways as discipleship training is multiplying! Thank you for your faithful monthly support, the large love gift earlier this year, and the special Christmas gift. Those have sustained us and provided for our needs. Praise God for you! With our love, [the missionary family]."

There was a time some years ago when our Church could not meet such needs, and the same missionary who wrote this thank-you note had then called me full of concern and asking if our Church had dropped its support of his family since we were so far behind in our giving to them! Our congregation then lowered its budget better to reflect our actual income so we could meet our pledges to our missionaries. If more money came in than had been budgeted, we could give it as a love offering to our missionaries. Thus, instead of depressing our missionaries by not giving what we had promised to give them, we could encourage them by giving bonuses above what we had pledged!

Our decision to budget less and so better reflect what we take in, a biblical one, has proved to be a blessing!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, may we rely on God for our income security while focusing on heeding His Word in gaining, managing and preserving the income He gives to avoid stress and be blessed.