

Declaration of Dependence

A Sermon for July 4, 2010

By Claude V. King

Scripture Text: 2 Chronicles 14 –16

Focal Verse: “The eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9, NIV).

Summary: God’s presence, power, and blessing are experienced by those who are fully committed to and dependent upon Him.

Background: Read “Revival under King Asa” in Appendix 2 below.

I. God’s Declarations

- A. God strengthens those who are fully committed to Him (16:9).
- B. God reveals His presence and power to those who are rightly related to Him (15:2).
- C. Those who seek God will find Him (15:2).
- D. God will forsake those who turn away from Him and do not fully depend on Him (15:2).

II. The Dangers of Misplaced Dependence

- A. Asa chose to depend on the King of Aram and not on God (16:1-7).
- B. Because of misplaced dependence, Asa experienced war instead of peace (16:9b).
- C. Asa chose to depend on physicians alone instead of the Lord (16:11-12).
- D. Because of misplaced dependence, Asa suffered severely for two years and died (16:12-13).

III. The Blessings of Declared Dependence

- A. Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord (14:2).
- B. Asa commanded the people to seek the Lord and obey Him (14:4).
- C. God gave rest and prosperity to His people (14:6-7).
- D. In the face of battle, Asa declared his dependence on God (14:10-11).
- E. God delivered His people with a mighty victory (14:12-15).

III. Following Asa’s Good Example

- A. Asa and the people sought the Lord (15:2-4).
- B. Asa removed detestable idols and repaired the altar for worship (15:8-9).
- C. The people agreed to seek the Lord together with all their heart and soul (15:12).
- D. The people declared their dependence on God and received His presence and peace as promised (15:14-15).

IV. Time of Decision

- A. Examples from United States History [*See Appendix 3 below.*]
- A. Will you agree to seek the Lord together and do what pleases and honors Him?
- B. Will you put away every substitute for dependence on God? [*See Appendix 4 below for examples.*]
- B. Will you declare your dependence on Him for your every need?

APPENDIX 1: Revival under King Asa

[The following excerpt is from *Fresh Encounter* by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 21-23. Used by Permission.]

Asa, King of Judah, had a heritage of faith. He was the great-great-grandson of King David. Asa's father, King Abijah, trusted in the Lord and guided the people to follow the requirements of the Lord. Asa was brought up to trust the Lord and faithfully serve Him. When Asa became king, he "did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images. He commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment" (2 Chron. 14:2-4).

God gave them victory over their enemies. God prospered them. Then, evidently, their hearts departed from the Lord, for the Bible tells us that they had been "without the true God" (2 Chron. 15:3). Then, God sent a word to Asa through the prophet Azariah.

Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands. So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!" (2 Chron. 15:1-7)

God did not overrule the people's choice to forsake Him. He did, however, allow them to suffer the consequences of their sin. They were without the true God. The priests were not teaching the law, so the people got farther and farther from God. Crime increased so much it was unsafe to travel. Nations and cities were at war with each other, and God was troubling the people to get their attention. (Does any of this sound familiar?)

King Asa needed this reminder from the Lord. God did not leave Israel; they left Him. God would be with His people when they returned to Him. God was calling them back into a right relationship with Him. If they would seek the Lord, He would be found. But, if they forsook the Lord, He would forsake them. Asa heard the words from the Lord and responded.

And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land . . . and he restored the altar of the LORD that was before the vestibule of the LORD. Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

So they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they offered to the LORD at that time seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought. Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. Then they took an oath before the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams' horns. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their

heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around. (2 Chron. 15:8–15)

Asa prepared for the return to the Lord by removing the detestable idols and repairing the altar of the Lord. He then called all the people together. This was serious business, and the future of the nation depended on the wholehearted response of the people. According to this passage, the people did not come as a result of pressure from the King. They were not reluctant or sad. They sought the Lord with all their heart and soul, eagerly, with shouting and trumpets and horns, and with rejoicing. God met His people and restored peace on every side.

Do you see a pattern for revival? God's people forsook Him. He disciplined them. Then he called them to return to Him. All the people sought God with all their hearts, and He was found. The great joy of revival came after the repentance.

APPENDIX 2: God Healed the United States

[The following excerpt is from *Fresh Encounter* by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 209-212. Used by Permission.]

The following are examples from history of one of the leaders of the United States calling his people to repent of their individual and national sins. The Congress and the President sensed the Civil War they faced was the result of God's righteous judgment of the nation for its sins. The division of the nation was great. There was no reason why the United States could not have become two separate countries after that great war. However, the President called the nation to prayer and repentance. The war came to an end; the nation was reunited; and the land was healed. This is a testimony of how God can bring a deeply troubled nation to repentance.

During the period of the Civil War in the United States, both houses of Congress and President Abraham Lincoln sensed a desperate need for the nation to humble itself before Almighty God and confess its sins and repent before Him. The following excerpts come from proclamations issued by President Lincoln between 1861 and 1864.

Proclamation of a National Fast Day, August 12, 1861

"Whereas a joint committee of both houses of Congress has waited on the President of the United States and requested him to recommend a day of public prayer, humiliation, and fasting, to be observed by the people of the United States with religious solemnities, and the offering of fervent supplications to Almighty God....

"It is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to his chastisements; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past offenses....

"Whereas when our own beloved country, once, by the blessing of God, united, prosperous, and happy, is now afflicted with faction and civil war, it is peculiarly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in this terrible visitation, and in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals, to humble ourselves before him and to pray for his mercy....

"Therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do appoint the last Thursday in September next as a day of humiliation, prayer, and fasting for all the people of the nation."

Proclamation of a National Fast Day, March 30, 1863

"Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, has by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation:

"And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord;

"And insomuch as we know that by his divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins... We have been the

recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God... we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

“It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness....

“I do hereby request all people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord.... All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.”

Proclamation for a Day of Prayer, July 7, 1864

“Whereas the Senate and House of Representatives, at their last session, adopted a concurrent resolution, which was approved on the second day of July instant, and which was in the words following, namely:

“That the President of the United States be requested to appoint a day for humiliation and prayer by the people of the United States; that he request his constitutional advisers at the head of the executive departments to unite with him as chief magistrate of the nation, at the city of Washington, and the members of Congress, and all magistrates, all civil, military, and naval officers, all soldiers, sailors, and marines, with all loyal and law-abiding people, to convene at their usual places of worship, or wherever they may be, to confess and to repent of their manifold sins; to implore the compassion and forgiveness of the Almighty... to implore him, as the supreme ruler of the world, not to destroy us as a people, nor to suffer us to be destroyed by the hostility or the connivance of other nations, or by obstinate adhesion to our own counsels which may be in conflict with his eternal purposes....

“Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln.... do hereby appoint the first Thursday of August next to be observed by the people of the United States as a day of national humiliation and prayer.

“I do hereby further invite and request the heads of the executive departments of this government, together with all legislators, all judges and magistrates, and all other persons exercising authority in the land, whether civil, military, or naval, and all soldiers, seamen, and marines in the national service, and all the other loyal and law abiding people of the United States, to assemble in their preferred places of public worship on that day, and there and then to render to the Almighty and merciful Ruler of the universe such homages and such confessions, and to offer to him such supplications, as the Congress of the United States have, in their aforesaid resolution, so solemnly, so earnestly, and so reverently recommended.”

May the day come in the United States and in other needy nations around the globe, that the leaders of each nation will have a holy fear of God and call the nation to prayer and repentance. “Lord, do it again!”

APPENDIX 3: Substitutes for God

[The following excerpt is adapted from *Fresh Encounter: A Plumb Line for God's People* by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1993), 21-23. Used by Permission.]

Many of the things that we substitute for God are not good or bad by themselves. They can be valuable and even commanded by God when they help us in our relationship with Him. They become despised by God when we turn them into substitutes for Him. Our human tendency is to turn to substitutes for Him, His presence, His purposes and His ways. However:

- There is no substitute for life that comes from Him.
- Only He has a right to set the agenda for Kingdom work.
- We cannot accomplish Kingdom work on a God-like scale in human ways.

Read through the following list of possible substitutes for God. Ask God to reveal to you any thing, person, group, or activity that you have turned to as a substitute for Him, His purposes, or His ways. Remember that many of the things listed below are only “bad” when we substitute them for God. If God surfaces any of these as substitutes past or present for which you need to repent, mark it and take the issue to the Lord in prayer immediately.

Substitutes for God and His Presence and Activity

- Trusting methods rather than trusting God.
- Trusting programs rather than trusting God.
- Trusting other people rather than trusting God.
- Trusting organizations rather than trusting God.
- Trusting people and political action rather than trusting God.
- Trusting _____ rather than trusting God.
- Substituting emotionalism for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Substituting religious ritual for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Substituting elaborate pageantry for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Substituting entertainment for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Substituting human traditions for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Substituting famous people for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Substituting _____ for experiencing God's presence in worship.
- Spending so much time watching television that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time in my job or earning extra money that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time working in organizations that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time doing church-related work that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time taking care of the things I own (house, yard, cars, boats, gardens, etc.) that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time in recreational activities that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time _____ that I do not have time for my relationship with God.
- Spending so much time as a church doing: _____ that our members do not have time for their relationship with God.
- Substituting Bible study and going through my prayer lists for a love relationship with God.
- Substituting relationships with other people for a love relationship with God.

- Being in love with the world and the things of the world rather than in love with God. Striving for riches rather than a relationship.
- Looking for fullness of life in sexual relationships rather than looking to Him who is my life.
- Looking to the futurists and sociologists to decide what kind of church we need for the future rather than looking to Christ who is Head of His church and who alone knows the future.
- Looking to the books of men for guidance rather than looking to God's Word for guidance.
- Focusing on a practical popular theology of spiritual gifts rather than being filled with the Holy Spirit himself.
- Seeking the praise of people rather than the praise of God.
- Refusing to offend people even when we offend a holy God in the process.
- Relying on human reason instead of God's revelation.

Substitutes for God's Purposes

- Caring about numbers and goals instead of people.
- Spending time and resources on self or our church but not spending time or resources to meet the needs of those around us who need our help.
- Caring about people's physical condition but not caring about their spiritual condition.
- Being content with church members who attend without any concern for or attempt to help the "sheep" who have gone astray or who are broken and hurting away from the "fold."
- Being satisfied with the signs of "success" (budgets, buildings, baptisms, attendance, etc.) without the manifest presence and power of Almighty God.
- Spending so much time inside the church building that we don't have time to care for the needs of the sick, naked, hungry, thirsty, or prisoner outside the church building.
- Working hard at the ritual practice of religion but ignoring justice and mercy for the poor and oppressed.
- Settling for a decision for "baptism" and church membership rather than assuring that the person is a convert and a disciple.

Substitutes for God's Ways

- Walking by sight doing only what we know WE can do rather than walking by faith in the One who calls us to do it.
- Marketing the church with advertising, promotion, and gimmicks rather than letting God so reveal Himself through us that He draws people to Himself.
- Living by the letter of the Law rather than by the spirit of the Law.
- Affirming self rather than denying self.
- Live to die rather than die to self in order to live.
- Live by the world's ways rather than by Kingdom ways.

Follow this link to see and order the revised *Fresh Encounter* resources by Henry and Richard Blackaby and Claude King. <http://www.lifeway.com/e2/shop/?id=005226601>