

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 15

Asa's Religious Reforms

The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, 2 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. 3 For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, 4 but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. 5 In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. 6 They were broken in pieces. Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. 7 But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.” 8 As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD. 9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. 10 They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 11 They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep. 12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul, 13 but that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. 14 They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. 15 And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around. 16 Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron. 17 But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days. 18 And he brought into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19 And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

15:1–19 This chapter appears to recount a second stage in the reforms introduced by Asa, beginning with the victory over Zerah and encouraged by the preaching of Azariah (v. 1). (CSB)

Ch 15 Here the Chronicler records the message of Azariah, the second reformation, and the covenant celebration it brought. (TLSB)

15:1–7 Message of Azariah the son of Oded. Three elements are common in prophetic speeches in Chronicles. First, a call for attention: “Hear me” (v 2; cf 1Ch 28:2; 2Ch 13:4; 20:20; 29:15). Second, a statement of truth: “The LORD is with you while you are with Him” (v 2; cf 1Ch 28:9; 2Ch 10:10–11, 14; 20:20). Third, a promise of assistance: “He will be found by you” (v 2; cf 1Ch 14:15; 17:2; 28:20; 2Ch 13:12; 19:11; 20:15, 17; 32:8; 36:23). (TLSB)

15:1 *Azariah*. Otherwise unknown prophet. (TLSB)

15:3 *a teaching priest*. The duties of the priests were not only to officiate at the altar, but also to teach the law (see 17:7–9; Lev 10:11). (CSB)

Instruction in the Law was a priestly duty (Lv 10:11). Cf 17:9; Dt 33:10; Jer 18:18; Hos 4:6–7; Mal 2:7 for examples of its performance. (TLSB)

15:5 *those times*. Though the era is not explicit, his hearers would realize that he was describing the period of the judges, one of the worst eras in Israel’s history. (TLSB)

15:7 *Do not let your hands be weak*. Expression about becoming discouraged or demoralized (cf Is 13:7; Jer 6:24; 50:43; Ezk 7:17; Zep 3:16). (TLSB)

rewarded. Luth: “What is the meaning of the word ‘reward’ which occurs so frequently in the Scriptures? ‘Your work,’ it says, ‘shall be rewarded’ [II Chron. 15:7]; ‘I am your exceeding great reward’ [Gen. 15:1]; also, ‘Who renders to every man according to his works’ [Rom. 2:6 Rom. 2:6 f.]; and Paul in Romans 2[:7] says: ‘To those who seek it by patience in good works, [he will give] eternal life’; and there are many similar passages. The answer is that by all these passages nothing is proved but a consequence of reward, and by no means a worthiness of merit. For it is clear that those who do good things do them in no servile and mercenary spirit for the sake of gaining eternal life, yet they are seeking eternal life in the sense that they are on the road by which they will arrive at and find eternal life. Hence ‘to seek’ means to strive earnestly and endeavor with prompt diligence toward that which is the regular result of a good life” (AE 33:153). (TLSB)

15:8–19 Asa’s response to Azariah: the second reformation (cf 1Ki 15:13–15). The reforms are linked to Azariah’s sermon by the repetition that Asa “took courage” in v 8 (cf v 7). (TLSB)

15:8 *cities he had taken... Ephraim*. A tacit admission that there had been some fighting between Baasha and Asa prior to Asa’s 36th year (16:1); see 17:1. (CSB)

The account of the first reforms by Asa (14:2–5) specifically took place in the cities of Judah. This reform is broader in that it took place in all the land of Judah and Benjamin as well as the cities of the hill country of Ephraim. (TLSB)

15:9 *great numbers had deserted to him*. Cf. the defection from the northern kingdom that also occurred under Rehoboam (11:13–17). (CSB)

As happened during the reign of Rehoboam (11:16–17), members of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon deserted to Asa. (TLSB)

Simeon. It is unclear why this tribe, which was south of Judah and to a great extent absorbed by it, should be mentioned together with the sojourners from the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (see note, 1Ki 11:32). Perhaps the Simeonites declared their full solidarity with the Southern Kingdom at this time. (TLSB)

15:10 *third month of the fifteenth year*. Spring, 895 B.C., the year after Zerah’s invasion (v. 19). The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost) was held in the third month (Lev 23:15–21) and may have been the occasion for this assembly. (CSB)

Tying this festival to the war with Zerah, they sacrificed from the spoils of war. (TLAB)

15:12 *covenant*. A renewal of the covenant made at Sinai, similar to the covenant renewals on the plain of Moab (Dt 29:1), at Mount Ebal (Jos 8:30–35), at Shechem (Jos 24:25) and at Gilgal (1Sa 11:14). Later the priest Jehoiada (23:16), as well as Hezekiah (29:10) and Josiah (34:31), would also lead in renewals of the covenant—events of primary significance in the view of the Chronicler. (CSB)

King and people solemnly reconsecrate themselves “to seek the LORD,” who at Mount Sinai had pledged Himself to make the Israelites “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6) without any merit or worthiness on their part. (TLSB)

15:13 *would not seek the LORD*. Would turn to other gods. (CSB)

should be put to death. In accordance with basic covenant law (Ex 22:20; Dt 13:6–9). (CSB)

15:17 *high places ... not taken out*. In his intentions, Asa was blameless. But evidently the people found ways of circumventing his orders so that he did not succeed in eradicating an entrenched custom. His successors fared no better (17:6; 20:33). *Israel*. Not a reference to the Northern Kingdom. Under the Davidic kings of Judah, Israel in the religious sense continued to exist, despite much unfaithfulness. (TLSB)

Ch 15 When Azariah speaks God’s Word to Asa, the king courageously brings reform to Judah and to members of the tribes of Israel. Today, the Lord likewise calls you to courageous action on behalf of others who need to hear His Word. Take courage! The Lord’s Word accomplishes His purposes for the sake of His people, especially His purpose of salvation. • O Lord, we seek Your blessing in accord with Your Word. Grant us courage to call others to repentance and faith in Your name. Amen. (TLSB)