

The Eyes of the Lord

I'd like to begin this morning by reading a few verses in **2 Chronicles 16**. In this chapter it tells about Baasha king of Israel, who was oppressing Judah, and Judah's king Asa made a league with Benhadad, who was the king of Syria, a heathen king, and through that league he wanted to get Israel off of his back. And guess what? It worked. However, even though it worked, the final outcome for Asa and Judah was not what it could have been had Asa totally relied upon the Lord instead of the arm of flesh.

Now let's pick up the story in **verse 7, 2 Chronicles 16:7**, "And at that time Hanani the seer (**or the prophet**) came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand."

Now, because Asa made a pact with the king of Syria, a heathen king, the Lord's plan did not work out. If Asa would have gone straight to the Lord instead of a heathen king for help against Israel, God would have not only given the king of Israel into his hand, but He would also have given the king of Syria into his hand, and that would have glorified God and Asa would have been able to enlarge his borders. But because he went to man instead of God it didn't turn out that way.

Then in **verse 8** Hanani the prophet continues: "Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand." And so he should have learned from that previous experience, but evidently he was forgetful.

Then in **verse 9** it says, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."

And this proved to be true. God's word is always true. Things always come out the way He says they will, and we should learn a lesson from that. **1 Corinthians 10:11** says, "These things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Notice what it says in **1 Kings 15:32**, "And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days." Too bad Asa didn't listen to the Holy Spirit. He must have neglected his devotional life and just wasn't sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, don't you think? So instead of going to the Lord to begin with and having peace, there was war between these two related kings all the rest of their lives.

Then in **verse 10** it says, "Then Asa was wroth with the seer, (**he was mad at the prophet for**

what he said) and put him in a prison house; . . .”

Now, whenever a king throws a prophet of God in prison, we know that that king is just about done. That’s the testimony of Scripture. Then it says, “for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.” And so in the last few years of Asa’s reign he was a tyrant, even to his own people. Even though in other places in the Bible it says that Asa was a good king and had some mighty victories when he listened and did what God said, in the end he was a spiritual failure. Then in **verse 12** it says, “And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.” Such was the final outcome of one who relied upon the arm of flesh.

Now, what I really want to focus in on this morning is the first part of **2 Chronicles 16:9** where it says “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” Notice, the eyes of the Lord do not walk, but run back and forth all through the earth, and He’s looking for something in particular. He’s searching for those who have a perfect heart toward Him so that He can then display His strength through that person and bring glory to Himself.

Now, why does God do this? So man can get some of that glory? Obviously not. He does it so that it will bring recognition to Himself as the source of all power; as the source of life, and that’s not bragging on God’s part, that’s just simply the truth.

In **Revelation 5:12** it says, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” Were you counting those attributes? There are seven! That means Jesus is God almighty! He has complete power, perfect power, complete wisdom and strength and all the rest, and He’s looking for someone through which He can use it to His honor and glory. And I pray that might be you and that it might be me.

During the time of this story we just read about, King Asa had 36 years of experience under his belt as king. And he thinks now that he can handle the upcoming problem he’s facing with the king of Israel on his own in his self confidence without inquiring of the Lord. And isn’t that just like our fallen nature? In our youth, and in our inexperience and new found faith we realize our weakness and we cry out to God for help in whatever perplexing situation we might be in. But then as the years go by we think we know enough to do things on our own and we forget how desperate and hopeless we were earlier in our experience, and this is the way it must have been with Asa. When he was young he looked to the Lord and was a good King, but when he was older he turned out to be a bad king, and as a result, all the good that he may have done early on will not be mentioned when his name comes up in review before God.

Now the fact that the Bible tells us that the experience of God's people in the Old Testament is for our benefit, then what is it about the story of King Asa that we can learn from? How can we benefit? Isn't it the fact that God still wants to show Himself strong in the world today? He's still the same God, and He still wants to do the same thing. God wants to demonstrate His power, but too many times we don't rely upon Him and we don't give Him the opportunity to show Himself strong. And so it's almost like God is up there in heaven and He has all this power and all this wisdom and strength and riches and very few places to use it. And if ever God gets frustrated and disappointed with human beings, this must be a major reason, don't you think? When opportunities present themselves for God to show Himself strong, too many times we don't have enough faith to believe that He can do what, in humanity, seems impossible for us to do.

Do you think God ever panics when we ask seemingly impossible things of Him for His honor and glory? Obviously He does not panic. Think of the story of Elijah for a minute. Elijah is up on Mount Carmel with an apostate king and 850 false prophets. And it's after 3½ years of drought. And so he asks for two bullocks to be brought and he says to the false prophets, "You pick first. You choose first. You take your bullock and offer it as a sacrifice and call upon your god to answer by fire." And the false prophets say, "No problem." And they prepare their sacrifice, and they call upon Baal to answer by fire, but after several hours go by they receive no answer. And Elijah begins to mock them a little bit. And then they climb upon their altar and they dance around and cut themselves until the blood is gushing out, and they continue this foolishness until late in the day. And in **1 Kings 18:26** the Bible says "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

Don't you think the devil would have loved to answer the prayers of those false prophets? But he didn't, why? Because the God of heaven wouldn't permit it. The God of heaven is more powerful than a false god, and if He says you can go this far but no farther, even the devil has no choice but to obey. Yes, even the devil has to obey God when He puts limits on him, whether he likes it or not, and we should draw courage from that.

Now turn in your Bibles please to **1 Kings 18** and we'll pick up the story. Now it's Elijah's turn and we'll begin in **verse 30, 1 Kings 18:30**. "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down."

And I have to stop right here and apply this to our own selves, because there are many homes today where the altar of the Lord is broken down. Families have plenty of time for television and video games and a hundred other things but no time for the Lord. And so repairing the altar of the Lord means to begin having morning and evening worship together as a family, even if you

have to get up early; even if you have to go to bed late to do it. Do whatever you have to do to repair the altar of the Lord and you will be rewarded for the effort. I guarantee it.

Verse 31. “And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. **(Probably two bushels of seed.)** And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.”

And God panicked and said, “Elijah, what are you doing? That thing is going to be so soaked with water that it’s never going to burn!” Do you suppose that’s what God said? Of course not. God’s thinking, “This is really going to be good, because I’m going to have the opportunity to show Myself strong today.”

Verse 35. “And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.”

Now understand, this is after 3½ years of drought. I don’t know where they got all that water, but it was a precious commodity. But even though it was something the people needed, they did as Elijah said. And besides, God knew it was soon going to rain and there would be plenty to go around.

Verse 36, “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.”

You see, God told him what to do. He wasn’t just taking this upon himself to drench that sacrifice with water and to do things just the way he did it. God told him in advance just what to do, and Elijah did exactly what God told him to do. Do you think it’s important to do exactly what God says? What if Elijah would have deviated from God’s explicit instructions? Do you think there would have been a different outcome that day? God’s plan to show Himself strong would have been spoiled, wouldn’t it? And friends, don’t think that you can deviate from God’s plan and realize a good outcome, because it won’t happen. In these last days there will be millions of people that will make an informed decision to worship on the first day of the week instead of the seventh day and they will lose eternal life because they didn’t do exactly as God says, and this carries over into our individual lives and our every day choices. Do exactly what God says and you will be blessed and He will get the glory; don’t do what He says and you will be cursed and He will not be glorified in your life, it’s that simple.

Verse 37, “Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”

And that was the end of his prayer. And do you suppose when Elijah said, Amen, he quickly jumped out of the way, because he knew what was going to happen next? I don't think he just nonchalantly moved slowly out of the way, I think he moved quickly because he was anxious for God to be glorified.

Verse 38, “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. **(the whole altar was gone. You think it made an impression on the people that day?)** And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.”

And so we see how Elijah was setting God up for an opportunity to show Himself strong here. And God didn't let him down, did He? And neither will He let us down as long as what we're asking is to His honor and glory. The problem is, in our short shortsightedness we don't know many times whether or not a certain thing will glorify God, which simply means we need to know God better than we do. In *Selected Messages, book 3, page 355* it says, “We want to become so sensitive to holy influences, that the lightest whisper of Jesus will move our souls.” When we know Jesus like that, friends, we will know what to do and how to do it and God will get the glory.

How about those three young men who were tossed into the burning fiery furnace? Did they give God an opportunity to show Himself strong that day? Indeed they did! Nebuchadnezzar said to his men, “Heat that thing seven times hotter”, and I want to tell you that that fire was so out of control that those big strong men who threw those three young men into that furnace died right on the spot. Now, do you think God was worried about the intensity of the fire? No way! He didn't say, “Hey you guys, take it easy on the fire. I'm going to have three young men walking around in there in a little while and there's a limit to what I can do.” No! God says, “Pour it on, because this is going to give me an opportunity to show Myself strong today.” And again, why was Jesus able to do that? Because the hearts of those three young men were perfect toward Him.

And by the way, it was Jesus who was in there with those three young men, because remember what the king said in **Daniel 3:25**? “He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Have you ever wondered how Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen king, knew what Jesus looked like? Don't you think it was probably Daniel who had had previous conversations with the king about a Saviour who would come one day to deliver His people? Daniel must have been on an errand that day to some far off place, otherwise there would have been 4 young men who were tossed

in the fire, don't you think? I hope I have the opportunity some day to ask him where he was, and I will if I develop a heart that is perfect toward God, and so will you.

How about Gideon. Remember the story of Gideon? Gideon was up against the enemies of Israel, the Midianites and the Amalekites, 150,000 of them, and Gideon only had 32,000 troops. He's outnumbered nearly 5:1. And so Gideon begins to pray and he says, and I'm paraphrasing, "God what am I going to do? I'm vastly outnumbered here and there's no way for me to win this battle, I don't even have a chance." And God says, "I'll tell you what you need to do. You need to get rid of some of your men, you have too many."

What do you suppose Gideon was thinking right about then? What would you have been thinking? "Are you kidding me? Get rid of some of my men?" God says, "Tell all the men who are fearful and afraid to just go on home", and 22,000 men returned home. Now he's got 10,000 men left, and he's outnumbered 15:1. And Gideon gets on his knees once again and he says, "Lord, what am I going to do? We don't have any weapons. The Midianites took away all of our weapons years ago. What are we going to do against this great multitude?" And God says, "No problem. Get each one of you a clay pot." And Gideon might have been thinking, "What does God want us to do? throw pots at them?" God says, "Get each one of you a torch." And Gideon's probably thinking, maybe God's going to burn them up." And then God says, "Get each one of you a ram's horn." And right about then I think Gideon might have been thinking about the stories he heard as a little boy about the walls of Jericho falling down, and he's probably thinking, "Maybe God's going to kill them with sound."

Now I'm not trying to make light of this story, but these are the kind of things that would probably have been running through my mind were I in Gideon's shoes, but I'm sure he had more faith than I have. In fact, I'm sure he did, because as you read through the story, Gideon and his men did exactly what God said, even though it seemed ridiculous to fight 150,000 well-trained soldiers with pots, and torches, and horns. But they did it. And God got the glory, didn't He? You see, God does things like that because it has to be obvious who gets the glory. God wants to show Himself strong and He's not going to share his glory with any other person. Is it because He's selfish that God does things like that? He wants all the glory? Why does He do it? Because He knows that He is the only source of salvation. People have to go to Him, He knows that, and so He has to get the glory, else they would look to man or whatever to solve their problems like king Asa did, and it didn't end well for him, did it?

Now let's go to **2 Chronicles 20** and look at another example. I think out of all the stories in the Old Testament, this is probably about my favorite one. **2 Chronicles 20**. I'm going to read the

larger portion of this chapter, and I'm not going to comment on it a whole lot because it's pretty easy to understand.

2 Chronicles 20:1. "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, there cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, (**Praise the Lord! He knew where his strength was, didn't he?**) and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, and said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, if, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. (**Now that should be our prayer whenever we're in a perplexing situation, right? Lord, I don't know what to do in this situation, but I'm looking to You for the answer.**) And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; and he said, hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, thus saith the LORD unto you, be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's."

Now this is talking about a physical battle here, but this promise would also apply to spiritual warfare, wouldn't it? We have temptations to meet, we have Satan and all his demons to deal with, but it's not our battle. God says, "It's My battle." **1 John 4:4** says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world", and when we understand that and have faith to believe that, then God can take over, and that's just what He did when king Jehoshaphat prayed and said, "Our eyes are upon Thee."

Verse 16. “To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you. **(That would be pretty comforting news, wouldn't it?)** And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, **(that is, when they were able to view the whole area from a high point, what did they see?)** they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.” None of the enemies of the Lord survived.

Now we could go on and on with stories like this, there are lots more in the Bible. What about the feeding of the 5,000? Maybe more like 20,000 when you count the women and the children. All the people ate and were filled from five loaves and two fishes, and twelve baskets of leftovers were taken up. Even though the faith of the disciples was weak, God showed Himself strong that day, didn't He? Jesus showed Himself strong that day, and the faith of the disciples grew.

And how about the crossing of the Red Sea. God did the impossible that day also, didn't He? The children of Israel walked through the sea on dry ground. And again, God had a chance to show Himself strong. And as for the faith of the children of Israel, it grew that day also.

And we don't want to forget about the raising of Lazarus. What a miracle that was! Jesus could have gotten to Lazarus much sooner than He did, correct? But He waited purposely until He was good and dead, in fact they could smell him. But Jesus, when He said, “Lazarus, come forth,” he who was dead for four days came forth and God was glorified that day, because He was able to show Himself strong.

Remember the story about the hornets? In **Exodus 23** God said He would send hornets out to cause the enemies of Israel to flee from before them if they would just listen to His voice and obey His word. All these stories are for us to understand that God has our backs and He will show Himself strong through us if we will just do what He says, plain and simple.

You know, I believe God enjoys doing what seems impossible for us to do. The more difficult the problem and the greater the challenge, the more He is glorified when He shows Himself strong. However, before God can work in us like He has in the past, we have to have hearts that are perfect toward Him, just like the ones we read about this morning. But how can it be accomplished?

What I'd like to do in the few remaining minutes is look at some texts in the New Testament. The first one is in **2 Corinthians 12:9, 10**. In the previous verses, Paul was speaking about his thorn in the flesh, that was bad eyesight that he received when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he prayed to God that He would heal him. Three times he prayed. And what did God say? He said no. Sometimes God says no! In **verse 9** He told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: **(and then notice what it says.)** for my strength **(God says, for MY strength)** is made perfect in **(what?)** weakness **(in your weakness)**. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

You see, Paul realized that the less he could do in his own strength the more he would have to rely upon God. And when we realize that we are weak, and in our weakness we look to God for strength, then He will show Himself strong in our behalf as well. As long as it's to His honor and glory.

Then in **verse 10** Paul says, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, **(I am glad for my feebleness, I am glad for my defects)**. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, **(notice)** for when I am weak, then am I strong." Strong in the Lord! And that is when God can show Himself strong, because He's going to get the glory.

Galatians 3:1-3. Paul says, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" You see they understood at first that it was through the sacrifice of Christ where their salvation was, that's where their strength was. They understood that. Then in **verse 2** he says, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Just like I said earlier, when we are young and inexperienced we see ourselves as being very little and weak in our own eyes, and the Galatians, at first, understood that their strength was in

the Lord from beginning to end. But they got all mixed up and thought they could save themselves. They began listening to false teachers and they got all mixed up, and with that kind of mindset God cannot show Himself strong. And everyone loses, even God. And so, let's be careful who we're listening to, because not everyone we hear is looking out for our best interest. Look to God and His word and we will be sure to be on the right path.

Hebrews 13:20, 21, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And so, it is the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep and through His blood that we are made perfect. It is as we allow God to show Himself strong that He gets the glory and that we get to develop a character that is wellpleasing in His sight.

One more text in **1 Peter 5:10, 11**, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

So here we see again that God's glory comes through us allowing Him to perfect us. And we are perfected as we allow Him to get the glory. And when God gets the glory others will be drawn to Him. That's the reason for it. And so in this way God receives what He needs to save other souls and we get what we need in order to inherit eternal life. It's quite an arrangement when you think about it. And it's something we have to understand and cooperate with in order to be recipients of and witnesses to God's miracle working power.

And so, through this coming week let's remember "the eyes of the Lord are running to and fro all through the earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of them who's hearts are perfect toward Him." And as we remember that, let's remember also that He wants to show Himself strong through you and through me, realizing our own weakness and experiencing God's strength. And when He has a people who understand it and experience it, then He's going to come back to get us. And I want Him to come back and get me, how about you?