

A Heart That Refused to Turn Back

We've now come to one of the darkest chapters in Judah's history. Ahaz, the son of Jotham, became king at just twenty years old, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. But unlike his father and grandfather, Ahaz led the nation into deep spiritual and moral collapse.

"Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done."

—2 Chronicles 28:1 NKJV

He Followed the Culture Instead of God

"For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel."—2

Chronicles 28:2–3 NKJV

Ahaz followed the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, including child sacrifice—burning his own sons in fire to false gods. This wasn't just idolatry. It was a complete rejection of the God of Israel, and a full embrace of evil.

Application: Our culture may not burn children in fire, but the idol of self, sexual freedom, and success at all costs still lead people to sacrifice what matters most—their unborn children, their family, their integrity, their soul. Be careful not to adopt the values of a world that's walking away from God.

Defeat Upon Defeat

Because of Ahaz's rebellion, God allowed Judah to suffer. The king of Syria attacked and took many captives. The northern kingdom of Israel also attacked and killed 120,000 men in one day.

"For they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers."—2 Chronicles 28:6 NKJV

They even took 200,000 women and children as captives. But God, in His mercy, moved the hearts of some leaders in Israel who said, *"You can't treat your fellow countrymen this way!"* So the captives were released, clothed, fed, and returned to Judah.

Application: God's justice allows hardship when we walk away from Him—but His mercy often shows up in surprising ways. Even in discipline, God is still kind.

Ahaz Tried to Fix Things His Own Way

Instead of humbling himself before God, Ahaz tried to solve his problems politically. He sent money to the king of Assyria, asking for help. But that backfired. The Assyrians took his money and offered no help. He was attacked on every side—by Edomites, Philistines, Syrians, and Israelites.

"For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord." —2 Chronicles 28:19 NKJV

But Even in His Suffering, He Didn't Turn to God

"Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King Ahaz."—2 Chronicles 28:22 NKJV

Instead of repenting, he doubled down. He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus—the very ones that had defeated him. He reasoned, "Maybe their gods are stronger. Maybe they'll help me." But they didn't. These false gods led to his ruin—and to Judah's.

Devotional Takeaways:

1. Compromise always starts small—but ends in destruction.

Ahaz didn't wake up one day and decide to burn his children in fire. It started with walking in the ways of the surrounding nations, inch by inch. One compromise leads to another until your heart is completely cold to God.

Guard your heart. What are you letting in that doesn't honor God?

2. Culture isn't neutral—it's spiritual.

The culture around Ahaz was full of idolatry, sexual sin, and human sacrifice. God warned His people to completely remove those influences—but they didn't. Eventually, the culture infected the people of God.

What cultural voices are shaping your thinking more than Scripture?

3. Pain doesn't always lead to repentance.

Ahaz was losing battles, losing land, losing people. But instead of falling to his knees, he hardened his heart and went deeper into sin.

Pain doesn't change us unless we allow it to.

When life gets hard, **don't go deeper into sin—go deeper into God.**

4. God still had mercy, even in judgment.

Though Ahaz was a wicked king, God stirred compassion in others. He didn't give Judah what they deserved. He gave them space to turn back.

God's discipline is never meant to destroy—it's meant to restore.

But we must be willing to respond.

5. False gods always disappoint.

Ahaz trusted in the gods of Damascus, in the armies of Assyria, in political solutions—but **nothing worked**. Everything failed him.

"They were the ruin of him and of all Israel."—2 Chronicles 28:23 NKJV

Only the living God can rescue you. Everything else will let you down.

6. Leave a different legacy.

Ahaz died after sixteen years of destruction. But his son **Hezekiah** would rise up and become one of Judah's greatest reformers.

Your past doesn't have to define your future.

Even if you come from spiritual ruin, you can choose a different path. Hezekiah did—and so can you.

Final Reflection:

Ahaz shows us what happens when a heart hardens instead of humbling. When life falls apart, we either turn back to God or deeper into rebellion.

"In the time of his distress, he became even more unfaithful to the Lord." —2 Chronicles 28:22 NKJV

May we never walk that path. Let our pain drive us to the feet of Jesus, not further into self-made solutions. And when false gods fail—and they always will—may we return to the One who offers living water instead of broken cisterns.