

A Loyal Heart – 2 Chronicles 16:9

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Introduction

And yes, you heard that right, we are going to be opening up the book of 2 Chronicles. “I surely must have actually meant to say 2 Corinthians, right?” “Isn’t Chronicles just a book with a ton of names of genealogies we know we should care about but *usually skip over during our one-year bible reading?*”

Oh, it’s so much more than that! Yes, there are portions that have many names and all for a great purpose, though that isn’t today’s topic. 2 Chronicles retells incredible Old Testament history in important and applicable detail.

Paul said to the Ephesians elders in **Acts 20**, “²⁷ *For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*” *We must not get away from reading what God has written.*

Romans 15:4

⁴ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

The Old Testament is not just fun stories so that we have children’s ministry curriculum, they are for our learning! That we might find **endurance** and **encouragement** and **hope** to keep on keeping on!

1 Corinthians 10:11

¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The examples here in 1 Corinthians are directly referring to the complaining children of Israel. There are many stories in the Old Testament of what **NOT** to do. **Admonition = warning**

Now today, we are going to be heeding the warning from the life of King Asa.

Out of all the wicked kings that Judah had within its history, King Asa is absolutely one of the better kings. He would probably be in the top percentile. However, unfortunately Asa doesn’t end like he began.

He had a great run. Many years of righteous leading that was well pleasing to the Lord, but sadly, that is not the way that Asa finished.

Today, we are going to talk about loyalty and what it looks like to have a loyal heart toward God.

Jesus spoke of loyalty in His sermon on the mount...

Matthew 6:24

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

According to Jesus, love and loyalty go hand in hand. And there is no such thing as split loyalty. Jesus always required an all-in attitude. No fence sitting. “He who is not with Me is against Me”

The NKJV translators decided to use the word loyalty here in the New Testament, along with various places in the old, and I think it’s a great word choice. *Other translations use the word devoted.*

Loyal: “*antechō*” - to give oneself entirely, to be fully devoted to, to hold firmly, to cleave to

The idea of this Greek word is to hold so closely to something that there is no room for anything else.

This is the nature of biblical loyalty. A picture of this is within the marriage relationship. By nature of the marriage union, to say yes to one another is to say no to every other person on the planet.

And this is the kind of heart that God is **AFTER**. This is the heart that God is **SEEKING**.

And this has always been what He has been seeking after since the beginning. This is why He didn't make humans as forced robots, because to get a loyal heart has to come with a choice.

Loyalty is only as valuable as the ability to choose it.

From the beginning the greatest commandment has never changed....

Matthew 22:37-38

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment.

He wants our whole heart and nothing less.

Read 2 Chronicles 16:1-14 & Pray

The way we are going to approach our passage today is in stages. During the first stage, we will be looking at it through a wide-angle lens; studying the context of the previous chapters. **Next**, we will zoom in and break down *chapter 16*, which is what we just read together. Then we will spend time looking at our single verse of focus, verse 9, and pull out everything God would have for us today.

Stage 1: The Context (the 14th & 15th chapter will help with this)

2 Chronicles 14

This is where we are first introduced to Asa as he becomes king over the southern kingdom of Judah.

During the first 10 years of Asa's reign, there was peace and quiet in the land. It had been a while since a righteous king was on the throne in Jerusalem.

We learn here that Asa was a good king, and he did was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He removed altars, high places, broke down sacred pillars and cut down wooden images. And in its place restored biblical worship. During those first 10 years of peace, Judah prospered. They built cities and fortified the nation.

After that 10-year period, a huge Ethiopian army came against them. They had a million men with 300 chariots. At this time, the southern kingdom of Judah had a military presence of about 580,000 men with no chariots to speak of.

It was at this that Asa was put to the test. As they prepared for battle, Asa prayed the following...

2 Chronicles 14:11

¹¹ And Asa cried out to the Lord his God, and said, "Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!"

I love this prayer! It shows us an insight to the heart of Asa! *1 million or 10 million, doesn't matter!* **And the author records that God** struck the Ethiopians before Asa and they fled. And as they pursued, we are told they could not recover... *"for they were broken before the Lord and His army."*

The first 10 years of Asa were a *smashing success* because he relied upon the Lord.

2 Chronicles 15

Chapter 15 take place 5 years later and opens up with God sending a man named Azariah with an encouraging message to King Asa during the 15th year of His reign.

Azariah assures him of God's presence with them as they seek Him. He says to Asa to be strong and not to let his hands be weak because all his work will be rewarded!

It was at this word that Asa took even greater action to crack down on any false idols from the land that he ruled over and restored the altar of the Lord. He proceeded to gather everyone, and they entered a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul.

Asa was so committed to this that the author inserts verse 16 which describes for us the removal of his own grandmother from royalty because of her false idol worship.

That must have been an awkward Thanksgiving.

The writer sums it up in this way...

2 Chronicles 15:17

¹⁷ But the high places were not removed from Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was loyal all his days.

What we have here, is a statement of contrast. In the northern kingdom of Israel, pagan worship was still happening, but under Asa, this never happened. Asa doesn't end well, but even in that, never crosses to the point of the leading the nation to the worship of false gods. *And the fact that God still allows a statement like this regarding Asa is highly encouraging in light of our own downfalls and what we find in chapter 16.*

And so, for the next 20 years there was no war in the land. It seems that during these years of peace, Asa begins to forget where his help comes from, *which is of course from the Lord of heaven and earth.*

Stage 2: The Chapter

The Conflict (2 Chronicles 16:1-6)

Chapter 16 opens up in the 36th year of Asa's reign, 20 years of peace have passed by, and it almost seems that King Asa gets comfortable. During this time, King Baasha, who was reigning over the Northern Kingdom of Israel, made a strategic military move to come up against Judah by building up a fortress to hinder Judah's going in and out.

And what did Asa do the last time there was someone who was bigger and badder that came up against Judah? He cried out to the Lord! *"it is nothing for You to help"*

Yet this time, we find that he doesn't rely on the Lord at all, but uses silver and gold from the very temple of God to bribe an enemy king to get him to help him by attacking Israel's flank!

And the scariest part of this whole thing is that it worked. The temporary success of not relying on the Lord can be a trap. We can be tempted to look at our life and think, *"it's working"*, everything is all good and take the grace of God as a stamp of God's approval on how we are living our lives.

It was here that Asa relied on his own understanding. Where he trusted in his own ability “to get out of it” rather than the power of God. After all, he has been at it these 35 years and *oh how quickly we can forget what God has done and think we have done it ourselves.*

This is what Moses had warned the children of Israel...

Deuteronomy 8:11-17

¹¹ “Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, ¹² lest—*when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;* ¹³ and *when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;* ¹⁴ when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ¹⁵ who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;* ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— ¹⁷ then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

We must take heed to this trap. The blessings and grace of God experienced over an extended period of time can begin to make our hearts trust in ourselves and our own abilities.

2 Corinthians 3:5

⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God,

The Confrontation (2 Chronicles 16:7-9)

After all is said and done, God sends a prophet to speak to King Asa, his name was Hanani. Hanani doesn’t hold back but speaks on behalf of God.

Hanani tells Asa that he relied on the king of Syria rather than the Lord God. (v.7)

“therefore, the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand.” (end of v.7)

Hanani shares with Asa that God not only wanted to deliver him from Israel, but also wanted to give even Syria into his hand. But Asa dropped the ball and instead, relied on the very king that God wanted to deliver him from.

When we rely on ourselves rather the Lord, we ALWAYS miss out on the “better” that God has for us.

He then reminds Asa what happened 25 years earlier with the Ethiopians. He reminds him how big and bad they were, but because Asa relied on the Lord, he gained the victory over them.

HOW EASILY WE CAN FORGET THE GREAT THINGS GOD HAS DONE FOR US

And at these great statements, you would hope that Asa would come to his senses and repent of trusting in the flesh, but sadly, this is not the case.

The Conclusion (2 Chronicles 16:10-14)

Asa’s response to Hanani reveals that this wasn’t just a one-time mistake on his part, but was a major heart problem.

His heart was no longer soft to the Word of God. Rather, it actually made him angry, and Asa even imprisons Hanani for confronting him with the Word of God. (v.10)

What a slippery slope sin is. 35 years of rock-solid leadership and one sinful decision led to another that led to then another.

The end of verse 10 tells us that Asa then began to even oppress some of the people in his kingdom at that time.

And unfortunately, Asa never recovered from this. We are even told that four years later, he became severely diseased in his feet...

“yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians” (end of verse 12)

With how this is commentated on by the writer, many scholars think that the physicians were not just regular doctors but some kind of sorcerers in the land who would seek to expel diseases by charms, incantations, and mystic arts.

This became a pattern to the end of his life. And what was the heart of the problem? Of course, it was a problem of the heart.

Loyalty isn't just a one-time decision but a lifetime of daily choices.

When you begin to rely on yourself and it all seems to work out, it can become a habit that is hard to shake. And for Asa it was a snowball effect that left his legacy lacking.

Asa wasn't able to say what Paul said at the end of his lifetime...

2 Timothy 4:8

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

May this never be the case for any of us where we had many years of following the Lord but then our hearts began to grow cold.

We must keep ourselves in the love of God! We must fan the flame in our own life that our love and loyalty for the Lord doesn't grow cold.

To which then brings us to verse 9. Now without the context of the chapter and preceding chapters we could easily misunderstand and misapply this verse but with it there is much to be drawn from it.

After all, this verse comes in the form of a very intense rebuke from a prophet sent by God to correct the king who He has set over His people.

Why did God see fit to put chapter 16 in the Bible? How might we learn from this example? We know that this account is recorded for our encouragement and warning.

We have looked at the context, we have studied the chapter, now let's get into verse 9.

Stage 3: The Verse

⁹ For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

What we learn from this verse gives us specific insight into the very nature of God and is worthy of our utmost attention.

The Pursuit of God (verse 9a)

⁹ *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth,*

This is not our pursuit of God but His pursuit of us. When we talk about the pursuit of God it's often in reference to our pursuit of Him. However, the only reason we are able to seek Him is because of His initiation.

Jesus tells us it is the Father who is drawing us. The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the author of our faith. That He is the originator and the initiator. We didn't find God, but He found us! We didn't go looking for Him, He saw us and chose us before the foundation of the world!

We love Him **ONLY** because He first loved us. The story of the Bible is not man's pursuit of God, but God's pursuit of man **AND THIS REALITY IS AS TRUE IN OUR DAY AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN.**

GOD IS LOOKING. GOD IS ON PURSUIT.

This is the idea that the eyes of God are consistently scanning. *And where is he looking? Throughout the whole earth!*

This concept of to and fro is something we also find in the book of Job. Satan is roaming like a roaring lion. He too is on pursuit. He too is looking. And he has his own purpose for doing so.

Job 1:7

⁷ And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Yet unlike Satan, God is looking, not having to walk back and forth but is omnipresent, never missing a thing. God never overlooks anyone. No one is out of His gaze.

This reality of the God who sees is put on display in the person of Jesus...

The disciples didn't find Jesus, Jesus came to them and called them to follow...

We find that Jesus "saw" Nathanael before ever meeting him...

John 1:47-49

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

That is awesome! It wasn't just that Jesus caught a glimpse of him walking by. HE SAW HIM.

When Jesus talks with the woman at the well, He says this...

John 4:23

²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

This not only something God desires but it is what He goes after.

And we know that God doesn't see as man sees. He isn't looking for great ability or big donations. God is looking for loyalty.

He isn't looking for perfection, but for those who are in pursuit of Him. This is one who even when he falls, will get back up again and keep on running.

Remember what God spoke to Samuel in that moment of decision of anointing the new king?

1 Samuel 16:7

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see as man sees*; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Now in this pursuit of God, what is the purpose of God?

The Purpose of God (verse 9b)

to show Himself strong

God desires is to show Himself strong in the lives of His people. It's what He loves to do!

He showed Himself strong on behalf of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and so many more. **IT'S WHAT HE DOES AND IT IS WHO HE IS**

He isn't looking for the strong, He is looking to show His strength in those who know they need it.

This was a lesson that Jesus had to teach to Paul and one that we would be wise to learn...

2 Corinthians 12:9

⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

It is in our weakness and confession of our own insufficiency that His strength is given its proper place in our lives.

But this strength is not given for the glory of another but for the glory of God. From the Scriptures we know that God is jealous for His glory. It's why He does anything that He does.

Why did He create? For His glory. **Why did He redeem?** For His glory. **Why will He judge?** For His glory. **Why does He choose?** For His glory. **Why does He allow?** For His glory.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The Scriptures tell us that God will share his glory with no man.

Asa had already learned this first-hand back in chapter 15. Judah should have gotten destroyed by the Ethiopian army who was double their size and had weapons they did not possess, **BUT GOD.**

God pursues us that He might fulfill His purposes in us *but He only does this for the person whose heart is loyal to Him.*

The Person of God (verse 9c)

on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

Loyal: entire, whole, constituting the full quantity or extent

2 Chronicles 16:9 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

⁹ For the eyes of Yahweh roam throughout the earth to show Himself strong for those whose hearts are completely His.

This is why the greatest command is to love the Lord your God with **ALL** your heart, **ALL** your soul, and with **ALL** your mind.

With loyalty, there is no looking back. Jesus says this to the one who wants to follow Him.

Luke 9:62

⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Vance Havner (*who they say is America’s most quoted preacher*)

A wife who is 85% faithful to her husband is not faithful at all. There is no such thing as part-time loyalty to Jesus Christ.

This type of no going back attitude, this no plan B mentality, is demonstrated at the call of Elisha...

1 Kings 19:19-21

¹⁹ So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of oxen* before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. ²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” ²¹ So *Elisha* turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

There was this idea of no going back. Like Cortez burning the ships.

And God always practices what He preaches. God desires loyalty and loyalty is exactly what He gives. All over the Old Testament we find this Hebrew word “hesed” translated as mercy or lovingkindness. This is God’s covenantal love. His loyal love.

Jeremiah 33:3

³ The Lord has appeared of old to me, *saying*: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

And while our loyalty can wavier, His never does! Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself! Loyalty is not something God merely displays but it is who He is.

David is described in the Bible as being a man after God’s own heart, as man who had a loyal heart toward the Lord. *Now this is very encouraging given David’s huge sins like adultery and murder, just to name a couple.*

Yet what about David made his heart loyal? HE ALWAYS CAME BACK. When Nathan came to him with the Word of God, he repented and got right with the Lord. *A loyal heart is not a perfect one, but one that is on pursuit.*

1 Kings 11:4

⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as *was* the heart of his father David.

Notice Solomon too started well but it was his wives who turned his loyalties away from God.

SO WHAT DO WE DO? HOW DO WE POSSESS AND MAINTAIN A LOYAL HEART?

First, we must realize that past loyalty does not ensure future loyalty. We must not bank on any spiritual experience of the past to sustain us in the future. We must be aware that as we experience the goodness and grace of God, our sinful hearts can so easily twist into self-reliance.

Second, we must understand that any loyalty we do show toward God is not as a result of our resilience but His grace.

We must continually say what John Bradford said, "There but for the grace of God go I"

The English reformer said this upon seeing criminals who were being led to their execution.

Paul said it this way...

1 Corinthians 15:10

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me.

David had prayed to the Lord that God would give this kind of heart to Solomon...

1 Chronicles 29:19

¹⁹ And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all *these things*, and to build the temple for which I have made provision."

So, we must understand one does not possess this apart from His divine impartation however, like Solomon, we have a role to maintain it.

Third, we must labor to be loyal. We do this not by focusing on what we have done for Christ in the past but what He is doing in us and through us **now**.

Philippians 3:13-14

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Remember love and loyalty are intricately connected. We must be active in abiding in the True Vine and keeping ourselves in the love of God.

And today, if you, like Asa, have had years of faithfulness in the past, but have found that you have left your first love, if you have waived in your loyalty, ***you must then repent and do the first works.***

Revelation 2:4-5

⁴ Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

It isn't how you start but how you finish.

And if today, you were to say to yourself, I've never given my allegiance to Christ in the first place. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT GOD IS STILL LOOKING. HE IS SEEKING WORSHIPPERS. HE IS SEEKING THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO TRUST HIM.

And today, Jesus is drawing you to the Father. His pursuit of you has been since before you were ever born. So much so that 2,000 years ago He came to this earth to live a perfect life, die a sacrificial

death, and rise from the dead so that if you would put your faith and trust in what Jesus has done for you, He will come into your life and **NOTHING CAN EVER** separate you from His loyal love.

GOD WANTS TO SHOW HIMSELF STRONG ON YOUR BEHALF, do you have a heart ready to receive all that He has?

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing by Robert Robinson

Years after Robert wrote this hymn, he wandered away from God. In a spiritually backslidden condition, Robert was traveling in a stagecoach one day. His only companion was a young woman unknown to him. In the providence of God, and not realizing who it was she spoke with, the woman quoted *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, saying what an encouragement it had been to her. Try as he might, Robinson could not get her to change the subject. She asked him what he thought of the hymn she was humming. He responded, "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then." Gently, she replied, "Sir, the 'streams of mercy' are still flowing." He was deeply touched by that. As a result of the encounter he repented. His fellowship with the Lord was restored through the ministry of his own hymn, and a Christian's willing witness.

Verse 3

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.