

# The Comeback Kids

2 Chronicles 15:1-15 August 24, 2025

In 2018, Washington Commanders' quarterback Alex Smith dropped back to attempt a pass. The Texans sent a blitz and two defenders sprinted through with no one blocking. When they came down on Alex, they mangled his right leg. The replay is hard to watch. Alex suffered a spiral and compound fracture to his tibia and fibula.<sup>1</sup>

The injury would have been bad enough, but an infection set in. It developed into necrotizing fasciitis - death was spreading in Alex's body. He went septic. Doctors suggested that an amputation might be his only option if he wanted to survive.

17 surgeries later, Alex still had two legs, but he had lost the nerve that gives you the ability to raise your foot.<sup>2</sup> Through hundreds of hours of physical therapy and the use of external bracing, and special shoes, Alex *did* learn to walk again. But the story gets better: In 2020, Alex *returned* to play in the NFL. And he won the last game of the regular season that year, clinching the NFC East. That year, he was named the NFL's Comeback Player Of The Year. Get this guy a biopic!

2 Chronicles 15 is a historic, inspiring comeback story. One where God's people overcame spiritual injury and infection. If you are familiar with this area of Scripture, it's more losses than wins for God's people. Kings and Chronicles catalog their slide into compromise, idolatry, war, defeat, and ultimately exile. But every once in a while, something wonderful happens: The leaders and the people realize that God is good, that He can be trusted, that He loves them, and they should throw off their idols and fall into His open arms.

This passage is *full* of reminders that should inspire us and calibrate our lives as we realize the good grace of God and His promise that if we seek Him, we *will* find Him.

**2 Chronicles 15:1-2 - <sup>1</sup> The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. <sup>2</sup> So he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Asa and all Judah and Benjamin, hear me. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you.**

This story starts with God calling out to His people. Now, some very quick background: Just before verse 1, Asa and his army of 580,000 faced off against a Cushite army of a *million* soldiers. Asa cried out to the Lord for help and at the end of the battle, the Cushites had *no* survivors.<sup>3</sup>

The soldiers of Benjamin and Judah were carrying off a bunch of plunder when Azariah came and met them with this message from the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex\\_Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Smith)

<sup>2</sup> <https://hangerclinic.com/blog/patient-stories/washington-post-alex-smith-custom-leg-brace/>

<sup>3</sup> 2 Chronicles 14:8-15

It was not *only* a message for Asa, not *only* a message for the priests. It was for *everyone*. God calls out to all of us with the message of the Gospel. That we have a choice between life and death. That He is willing to be our God now and forever if we are willing to believe Him and obey Him.

This message, "If you seek Him, He will be found by you," was not some new arrangement. It's what God said through Moses in Deuteronomy 4. It's what God said through David to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28. It's what God would say through Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29. And it's what Jesus still said in the New Testament. If you *seek* the God of the Bible, He *promises* you will find Him. And with Him you will find salvation for your souls, provision for your life, the Holy Spirit to indwell your heart and transform every aspect of who you are, your present, and your future. It's an offer worth more than any battle plunder we could possibly imagine or compile.

*But* it's is a choice. You can choose to seek God or *abandon* Him. You can refuse His offer and *not* believe that He is true, that He is trustworthy, that He is able to do what He promises. To go your own way, along your own path, toward goals of your own choosing. If you do that, you abandon this generous God of love and He will let you do it. As we learned Wednesday night, the Lord does not stay where He is not wanted. Not in a life, a family, a church, a community, or a nation.

Now this *doesn't* mean that if you're a Christian and you make one mistake, you give into one temptation or you make a poor choice, you lose your salvation or God abandons you. What we're talking about here is a continuing state of rejection, moving away from the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Here God says, "Don't do that. Let's be together."

**2 Chronicles 15:3-4 - <sup>3</sup> For many years Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without instruction, <sup>4</sup> but when they turned to the LORD God of Israel in their distress and sought him, he was found by them.**

If God wants to be with us and makes these promises, then why had Israel been without Him for so long? Where did He go? Well, we see it right there: They *turned* their backs on Him to go their own way. As soon as they turned back toward Him, *there He was!* Ready to receive them. Ready to help.

Azariah says that the mistake they made which caused them to forsake the Lord was that they had no teaching priest and no instruction. Meaning, they didn't know the Word of God and how it must be *applied* in their lives, in their communities, in their choices.

We see that process play out in Judges, in Kings, in Chronicles. When people turn from the Word of God and instead do what is right in their own eyes, the result is distress and ruin. A lack of theological understanding and devotion leads people to being swallowed up by their enemies. They left the study and obedient application of God's Word and so were swallowed up by the culture, swallowed up by the foes around them, swallowed up by temptation and selfishness.

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<sup>4</sup> *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

But when God's people *realized* their mistake and called out to the Lord, He was faithful to rescue again and again and again. Because when we are faithless, He remains faithful.

**2 Chronicles 15:5-6 - <sup>5</sup> In those times there was no peace for those who went about their daily activities because the residents of the lands had many conflicts. <sup>6</sup> Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every possible distress.**

Azariah's description "implies a condition of political upheaval extending beyond the borders of Judah."<sup>5</sup> It was a time of bloodshed. Of war. Total lack of safety and decency.

Aren't things similar today? We are in a world of distress. A world on the brink. Why? Romans 1 tells us why. When people or a nation consistently rejects God, when we exchange the truth of God for the lies of the world, eventually God gives us our way and hands us over to the desire of our hearts. He lets us have what we want. When that happens, the result is distress. Trouble. Penalty. Wrath.

Our world looks like that. Asa's world was like that. One of the great encouragements of this chapter is that, *in a world like that*, we can live out our faith in a way that leads to *rest*, cleansing, spiritual power and purpose. We can be *bright light* in dark days.

**2 Chronicles 15:7 - <sup>7</sup> But as for you, be strong; don't give up, for your work has a reward."**

God challenges and *commands* them to live in His uprightness and not give up. But, pause for a moment and drink in the comfort of these 7 verses. A God Who loves us *this* way and *this* well and *this* patiently and powerfully.

The kindness and promise of God was *not* only for Asa, it was for every foot soldier, maiden, and servant. And it wasn't only for *them*. God promises the same to His people today. Matthew 10, 1 Corinthians 3, 2 John 8. God commands *and* encourages us to *continue* in our faith, promising that His reward is waiting for us. A full, eternal reward.

There where it says, "Be strong," the term means, "Be courageous. Take hold of it. Seize it."<sup>6</sup> And that's *exactly* what the people did.

**2 Chronicles 15:8a - <sup>8</sup> When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet, he took courage...**

They *could* do what God commanded him to do. He said, "I'm commanding you to take courage," and then it happened. It happened not by programs or pushups, but by faith. Right then and there they said, "Ok, we *believe* God." And their courage wasn't just a moment of passing emotion. It led to conviction and conduct. Look at their Godly courage in action as verse 8 continues:

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation With Commentary*

<sup>6</sup> TWOT

**2 Chronicles 15:8b - ...[they] removed the abhorrent idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He renovated the altar of the LORD that was in front of the portico of the LORD's temple.**

It began with the purifying process of removing the filth from their lives. Not just a statue or two. This refers to all sorts of revolting or disgusting things from a religious standpoint.<sup>7</sup> They didn't just give holiness lip service or do a symbolic clean up project. They covered every area of the land. And they removed what needed removal, even when it was very hard and personally costly. Asa had to even remove his own grandmother from her position because of her idolatry.

If you're a Christian, you're saved. Your sins have been forgiven. But that does *not* mean our lives don't need purifying. God sanctifies us day by day. Cleansing our minds, cleansing our desires, burning off the dross. We still deal with a sin nature within us and a sin-soaked world around us.

Jesus described it as someone who has been washed, but whose feet pick up impurities as they move through life.<sup>8</sup> *I* need sanctification. *You* do too. The Lord wants to deal with the many issues we have which have been contaminated by sin. Shaping our hearts and lives in righteousness.

**2 Chronicles 15:9-11 - <sup>9</sup> Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, as well as those from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing among them, for they had defected to him from Israel in great numbers when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. <sup>10</sup> They were gathered in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. <sup>11</sup> At that time they sacrificed to the LORD seven hundred cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from all the plunder they had brought.**

This was a real work of God in many lives. We'd call it revival. And it was less about unbelievers getting saved than it was about believers *being* believers with real conviction.

Part of their conduct was to generously give to God from their plunder. It was a personal offering of thanks to God for what He had given to them. That's the Bible's perspective on giving. Not that it is compelled, but that it flows from a realization of all that God has done for me, and then my giving back to Him in gratitude, and contributing to His work so *others* can find out what He's done, too.

Based on the timestamp we're given, there's a good chance these sacrifices were happening during the Feast of Weeks.<sup>9</sup> We call it Pentecost. In Israel, the Feast of Weeks was a harvest feast, where you would bring some of what you grew to the Lord in thanks and trust.

Here they're harvesting holiness and hope and reliance on the Lord. They give from the plunder, knowing that God would make good on all He said. Showing that communion with Him was worth more than silver or gold.

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<sup>7</sup> Victor Matthews, Mark Chavalas, and John Walton *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*

<sup>8</sup> John 13:10

<sup>9</sup> *Faithlife Study Bible Notes*

But this revival wasn't only about certain behaviors. From conduct they moved to *covenant*.

**2 Chronicles 15:12 - <sup>12</sup> Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their ancestors with all their heart and all their soul.**

The covenant was not just that they would bring a certain number of lambs or burn down a certain number of altars. It was that they would *seek* the Lord. They *listened* when He said: *Seek Me*. They covenanted to seek Him, not just in word, not just in deed, but with all their hearts and souls.

**2 Chronicles 15:13 - <sup>13</sup> Whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel would be put to death, young or old, man or woman.**

Seems a little harsh, right? Listen: Israel was meant to be a Theocracy. The Law of God was what set them apart and they *must* be distinct in order to be the delivery vehicle for the Savior of the world.

Now, we don't put anyone to death for not seeking the Lord. But make no mistake: If you do not seek the Lord, death *is* the end. Jesus said those who do not believe in Him die in their sins. And they go on to eternal death to pay the penalty for those sins in the Lake of Fire. Jesus came to save you from that death. But He will not *force* you to be saved. You must believe to be saved.

**2 Chronicles 15:14-15 - <sup>14</sup> They took an oath to the LORD in a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets, and with rams' horns. <sup>15</sup> All Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They had sought him with all sincerity, and he was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.**

From calling to courage to conduct to covenant, now to celebration. Economically and culturally it might look as if they had lost a lot. Plunder, altars. But look at them sing! Look at their joy. They had not lost *anything*. They *gained* the Lord. He was *found* by them. And *with* Him came His grace. Rest.

That term refers to being settled in your place, with overtones of victory and salvation.<sup>10</sup>

In an explosive world, *these* people had joy, not fear. There was an eternal aspect to them that brought vitality and satisfaction to every area of their lives. It was a personal relationship with the Living God.

Outside, nations were warring, cities were crushing each other. But in Judah? Unity. Harmony. Worship. Joy. Rest.

This generation overcame the injuries their enemies had inflicted on them and the infection of idolatry. They made a remarkable comeback. But would it last? That was the choice the *next* generation would have to make. And the next, and the next. The same *we* can make today.

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<sup>10</sup> TWOT