The eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

2 Chronicles 16:9
The Trap of Self-Reliance

We love a self-reliant, independent maverick. From God’s perspective, however, the weak and broken who have learned to rely on Him are the real heroes. Self-reliance is a subtle cancer of the soul because it slowly replaces our dependence on God with our dependence on our own ability and resources. Unlike other temptations, the more experience we gain and the more successful we become the greater we feel the lethal pull of self-reliance.

In 2 Chronicles, the prophet Hanani was called to challenge King Asa’s self-reliance and half-hearted commitment to God: “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” (2 Chron. 16:9).

I am compelled by the image of God systematically scouring the earth to find the rare treasure. Have you ever seen someone searching for a lost contact lens? They will stop everything and try to spot the nearly invisible plastic disc. Their eyes move slowly back and forth across the floor.

Picture the all-powerful eyes of God moving back and forth across the spiritual geography of the earth, scanning continents, countries, provinces, cities, communities, neighborhoods, streets, and homes—until His eyes suddenly stop. A heart that is completely His is difficult to find. I picture the heavenly beings holding their breath in anticipation and then whispering quietly, “He has found one!”

When God finds such a person, He “strengthens” the man or woman whose heart is completely yielded to Him. He enjoys pouring His power into that person. A “heart fully committed” is not only about commitment. It’s about relying on God more than relying on self. In his early life, King Asa relied on and sought after God. But as the years went by, he replaced his dependence on God with his own experience. He was a seasoned veteran of political strategy and military tactics. He was experienced in leadership. Yet he had lost something vital. His reliance on God was gone.

We need to come back to God, turning our backs on our own proud self-confidence. How liberating to transition from the hollow arrogance of self-reliance to the strength of God-dependence.

—adapted from Unstuck by Mark Jobe (Moody Publishers).
God’s Dwelling

When Solomon dedicated the temple, he prayed: “But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (2 Chron. 6:18). The temple in Jerusalem was not a container for God. He is always present everywhere and “does not live in temples built by human hands” (Acts 17:24). But God did reveal His presence there in a unique way, and His glory was visibly seen (2 Chron. 7:1–3). The same thing happened during the time of Moses with the tabernacle (Lev. 9:24).

The temple in Jerusalem is not the only temple of God mentioned in the Bible. The New Testament describes believers’ bodies as “temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). This description is not spatial so much as it is relational. Paul did not mean that the Holy Spirit fills up the physical space inside our bodies but rather that our bodies belong to Him. He purchased us with the blood of Christ and empowers us by His Spirit. God’s ownership obligates us to use our bodies for God’s glory (1 Cor. 6:20).

Similarly, the New Testament describes the church as God’s temple. All those who have been united to Christ in faith “are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).

In this church age, the glory of God is not revealed by means of smoke and fire but through the transformed lives of individual believers who honor God with their bodies. God’s people experience His presence when they come together as church to worship and to hear the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:25). The truth that Christians are temples of the living God sanctifies ordinary life. Every ordinary act is an opportunity to express my devotion to God and display His transforming power.

The truth that believers are being built together to be God’s dwelling is a reminder of the vital importance of coming together as church. We do this to encounter God through His Word and to be built up so that we can continue to glorify Him with our obedience. Jesus Christ ushered in a new age in which believers are the temple, and true worshipers worship the Father in Spirit and truth (John 4:21–24).

FOR FURTHER STUDY
To learn more, read How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit by A. W. Tozer (Moody Publishers).
A Family that Prays Together!

We are so encouraged by our Today in the Word family! Thank you for praying with us and for us each day. When you lift up the individual names of the Moody Bible Institute staff before the throne of God, you are participating in kingdom work. Many members of our staff say they feel especially encouraged on the day you pray for them. We’d love to pray for you as well. Send us a note to say what God is doing in your life and how we can pray for you. Here are a few of your recent letters.

My husband and I do our devotions each morning together and study Today in the Word as part of our daily devotions. It’s been a blessing to us to listen to God daily. —Deborah, Indiana

Today in the Word has been a huge help in my spiritual growth and connection to my family. I am able to share things with my mom and sister who also use it. I also share with friends who I try to encourage in their walk with the Lord. Thank you to all of the writers!! It has greatly helped in understanding God’s Word, and God has used it to give me understanding in many areas. Again, thank you! —Yvonne, Florida

I just received my first issue, and it’s beyond amazing! The teachings quench my thirst for biblical knowledge! —Maria, Ohio

Thank you so much for your efforts to provide this sound daily Bible study for me. And thank you for continuing to provide the hard copy in the mail! I treasure my quiet time with the Lord each morning with my Today in the Word. Thanking the Lord for you! Blessings to you all. —Jan, New Mexico

Today in the Word has been a valued resource in my daily life to draw me closer to Jesus and to look more like Him in spirit and in character. Thank you. —Gary, Georgia

I have been reading and sharing Today in the Word for about 20 years. I have made notes in my Bible along the way. I cannot tell you how many times I’ve used these notes to explain Scriptures and share with others. I pass along the older issues to ladies hungry for the Word. Thank you for this life-changing tool. —Gloria, California
Imagine God saying to you: “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” What would you ask? In the first chapter of 2 Chronicles, that’s exactly what God tells Solomon. Solomon asks for wisdom and knowledge. God grants Solomon his request, and because he wants the things of God and not material things, God also gives him tremendous wealth, prosperity, and strength for his kingdom.

This month in Today in the Word, we’ll study 2 Chronicles, from the inspiring story of the reign of King Solomon to the unhappy reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. From the restoration of the temple at the beginning of the book to the melancholy account of the utter ruin and desolation of Judah and Jerusalem at the end.

Solomon wanted to honor God, and his choices revealed what was in his heart. As we review the arc of Israel’s history in 2 Chronicles, let this account challenge you and help you search your heart. In the same way that Solomon passed the test of choosing spiritual things amid the unlimited possibilities granted to him, may we choose Christ and His righteousness always, everywhere, in all circumstances. And just as the book ends with a brief note of hope for return from the Babylonian captivity, may we also have hope, even in the midst of hardships and pain.

—Elena Mafter, Senior Editor
On November 6, 2018, at age 33, Jeremy Colliton became the youngest head coach in the National Hockey League (NHL) when he followed Joel Quenneville as coach of the Chicago Blackhawks. Quenneville was the second-winningest coach in NHL history and led the Blackhawks to victory in three NHL championships. But in 2017–2018, the Blackhawks finished last in their division. New coach Colliton, therefore, was coming into a great franchise that faced huge challenges to winning another championship. In order to lead players many years his senior, Colliton would need to exercise great relationship-building skills and much patience: “Ultimately it’s about winning, and I have to earn their trust by them believing that I can help them win.”

Solomon faced such a challenge in leading the people of Israel after the reign of his father, David. The Ark was not present in worship, the people were great in their numbers, and there was a considerable distance from Jerusalem to Gibeon (v. 3). But rather than seeking his own greatness, Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom. Only after the Lord promised to establish Solomon’s greatness did Solomon shower people with gifts and acquire horses to demonstrate his preparedness for battle (vv. 11–17).

When we enter a new leadership role, we can be tempted to set the goal of exceeding the success of our predecessors. For church and ministry leaders, it might mean overhauling corporate worship, growing a large staff, seeking a congregation with a reputation of great accomplishments, embarking on an impressive building project, or improving other programs. We must remember the truth of this passage: only the Lord can establish us as leaders and give us the grace and wisdom to lead well.

**Apply the Word**

Hebrews 13:17 exhorts the church to make the work of our church leaders a joy for them, and it is the members who derive the benefit of the joyous work of their leaders. How can you be part of making ministry a joy? Pray for your leaders, and look for opportunities to encourage them with verbal affirmations and practical service.
Building for the Infinite God

What role should secular expertise play in filling service openings in the church? Some have argued that spiritual gifts and calling aren’t relevant when filling a vacancy in the nursery, children’s ministry, or small group leadership. Are spiritual gifts important only for preachers and worship leaders? We find some insight in our passage today.

When Solomon considered building a temple of worship for the Lord that would approach the greatness of God’s being, he realized that task was not possible in one sense: No human temple can contain a God so great. But obedient to God’s call and his father’s instruction, he called upon Hiram for help (v. 3). Hiram was a trusted friend of Solomon’s father, David—a friend already vetted as faithful and able to provide skilled workers. Hiram provided the most skilled worker possible to build articles related to the worship practice, a man who also came from the tribe of Dan (v. 14).

Solomon wisely offered compensation for the work rather than dishonoring Hiram and the workers by expecting volunteer labor. For the work in the quarry, which was not directly related to the artifacts and practice of worship, Solomon also utilized people from outside of Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord.

Skilled musicians, singers, directors, audio and visual technicians, media artists, and people who have spiritual and pragmatic competencies in praying and reading Scripture publicly—all work together to help reflect the greatness of the Lord. Solomon demonstrated that we testify to God’s greatness when we consider the spiritual gifts and God-given talents of those who participate in the ministries of our church and lead our worship services.

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth!

2 Chronicles 2:12

APPLY THE WORD

Consider the greatness of God—He who made supernovas, 60,000 miles of veins in the human body, and an Earth that spins on an invisible axis; He who knows every language and every bit of information known and not yet known to man and who is faithful, kind, and loving toward us daily. What kind of worship are you giving to Him?

PRAY WITH US

Strategy and marketing are among key ingredients for the success of a ministry. As chief marketing officer, Samuel Choy provides leadership in both areas at Moody. Would you pray for God’s guidance and blessing for his service?
Building on the Past

Many new leaders of organizations desire to strike out on their own in order to make their own mark and propagate their ideas and vision. Few coming to the helm of an organization want to maintain the status quo or merely rehash the past glory of their institutions. And indeed, they are often hired with the hopes that they will build a better, greater, fancier, and enlarged organization.

This leadership approach might result in success for businesses, sports teams, and universities, institutions in constant transition with high turnover rates. But this can be disastrous for churches, where the work of a predecessor and the familiar rhythms of spiritual life together remain in the hearts and minds of the members. They often feel connected to the predecessor and uncertain with the new leader.

The story of the building the house of the Lord begins and ends with Solomon giving deference to “his father David” (3:1; 5:1). In the middle of the story, Huram (also called Huram-abi), the skilled worker from Tyre, came to help Solomon on the basis of the king of Tyre’s friendship with David (4:11, 16; see also 2:3, 13). Even though Solomon would build and furnish the temple extravagantly, he would only do so while keeping his work tied to the work of David.

How instructive this is for the new pastor, staff member, academic leader, or ministry director! We can cast a bold vision for a creative and expansive way to reach the nations with the good news of Jesus Christ, or we can be too concerned that our own ideas get the credit. In wisdom, we must recognize that other people in the church often need to feel secure in order to move forward with a vision that does not discard everything associated with the past.

Are you seeking for your own agenda to be implemented? Are you too dismissive of the spiritual legacy of those who came before you? Pray for the Lord to give you the wisdom that characterized Solomon to know how to proceed in ministry in a way that honors God’s calling and is gracious to others around you.

Please pray for the editorial team in the Marketing Communications department: Kevin Mungons, Anneliese Rider, Elena Mafter, Linda Piepenbrink, and Jamie Janosz. May God grant them inspiration in developing content and attention to detail in editing.
Mercy from Thick Darkness

In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll indicates that Alice’s understanding of her world has matured beyond those around her by increasing her physical size, depicting her as uncontainable by her environs. In the last scenes of Alice’s dream, Carroll says, “[Alice] had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn’t a bit afraid of interrupting [the king] . . . ‘Who cares for you?’ said Alice, (she had grown to her full size by this time). ‘You’re nothing but a pack of cards!’” The cards, realizing their precarious position, then proceed to attack Alice, awakening her from her dream.

Solomon understood the paradox of trying to build a dwelling for an uncontainable God. He had built a temple for a God whose only dwelling is behind dark clouds—whom even the heavens cannot contain (vv. 1, 18; Acts 7:47–50)! How could Solomon expect the temple to magnify the greatness of such a God? How can we expect our houses of worship to exalt this same great God?

We must always keep in mind that God is greater than His house and is shrouded in mystery, hiding the fullness of His glory from us until in perfection we can embrace it all. This God is the One who must grow our ministries and memberships, deepening us spiritually, just as the Lord was faithful to build the temple He promised to David.

Moreover, God will exalt His name among us as we keep the Lord central to the identity and activities of our churches. The temple served as a place for God’s people to turn to the Lord for mercy from sin and salvation from judgment. The Lord, who is greater than all He has made, will answer prayers of repentance, for His merciful eyes always are upon His house.

The Lord’s Prayer invites us to intercede for God to pour out His mercy on our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we pray, “Forgive us our debts,” we are acknowledging that we are sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. Take time today to ask the Lord to forgive your sins, and intercede for your church family and the ministries you support and serve.
Excelling in Holiness

A century ago, a parlor in your home signified some wealth or status. This was the room where you would greet guests and display your best furniture, art, and other décor. But the parlor actually has a religious origin from early Christian monasteries. People who entered into vows of silence in the cloisters still occasionally needed to have essential conversations. Fellow cloister members would meet in the inner parlor. The outer parlor was separated from the rest of the cloisters and used to conduct meetings with people outside the religious order. The parlors provided some separation to protect the daily spiritual focus and practice of those who had taken vows.

At this point in our study of 2 Chronicles, Solomon had been leading God’s people for 20 years. He had completed his own palace and the temple for the Lord. Now he turned his attention to expanding the nation of Israel. First, Solomon rebuilt the cities given to Israel by Hiram (v. 2). Next, Solomon began to build, fortify, and conquer cities throughout the territories he ruled in Israel and Lebanon (vv. 3–6). Finally, in alliance with Hiram, Solomon expanded Israel’s reach by sea, enlarging both territory and the royal treasury (vv. 17–18).

Throughout this period of expansion, Solomon increased the influence of worship as well. He refused to use Israelite slave labor (v. 9). He maintained the schedule of sacrifices and provided for the priests and Levites (vv. 12–15). And he also recognized that his Egyptian wife, the daughter of Pharaoh, should not enter a place where the ark of the Lord had been (v. 11). Rather than have her live in the palace of David, Solomon built a separate palace for her in order to maintain the holiness of God’s dwelling.

You don’t need a parlor to meet with God—we can talk to Him anytime, anywhere. But it may be helpful to have a designated space where you can read Scripture, pray, or listen to praise music. Maybe it’s a chair or a breakfast nook, or even something as simple as using a special notebook. What space can you devote to your relationship with the Lord?

Please include in your prayers Marketing Communications director Julia Baad, and project managers and production staff: Cheyenne Lehto, Jacob Iverson, Nikita Cunigan, Rhonda AuYeung, and Robert Tracy. We are grateful for their faithful service!
He Who Takes Our Breath Away

Many people today categorically dismiss the truth of Christ and His claims without ever having read the account of Jesus in the four Gospels. They have already decided that the stories about miracles are myths, the record of a crucified Messiah is for weak minds, and identifying Jesus as God is a ridiculous thing to say about a man. They reject the reports they have heard of Christ without having learned His true identity.

In contrast, when a seemingly unreal report about Solomon’s wisdom reached the Queen of Sheba, she did not accept the words of others about Solomon. Instead, she traveled over 1,300 miles to explore the claims for herself. In doing so, she found that the accounts of Solomon had not even captured the full scope of the truth she experienced in a face-to-face meeting with the man. The encounter caused her to praise the Lord (vv. 5–8).

Our efforts to defend the truthfulness of Scripture are worthwhile. Certainly we are called to give a defense of our hope (see 1 Peter 3:15). Yet as the Queen of Sheba’s encounter with Solomon shows, it would be wise to encourage skeptics in our spheres of influence to examine the claims of Christ for themselves. We would do well to point scoffers to the Gospel of Mark, the shortest Gospel that is full of action and to the point, and the Gospel of John, which uses simple language to emphasize the deity of the Son of Man.

Speaking of Himself, Jesus said, “Something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). As wise and great as Solomon was, Jesus is the greater true king of Israel. He is the one so amazing that seeing who He really is will cause us to rejoice and praise God.

Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness.

2 Chronicles 9:8

PRAY WITH US

A business visionary, Mark Wagner, executive VP and chief operations officer at Moody, is constantly looking for ways to improve operations of MBI’s ministries. Let’s continue to ask God to lead and direct Mark’s every day in the office.

APPLY THE WORD

Invite an unbeliever to read Scripture with you, and allow them to ask questions. Explain as simply and clearly as you can who Jesus is. Be patient and prayerful with their doubts and misunderstandings. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open their eyes so that they can see the greatness of Jesus and praise Him.
Harsh Words of the King

More than one parent has said to a child in an exasperated tone, “I can’t wait until you have children one day!” And more than one parent has thought, “Now I understand my own parents’ decisions better!” What felt unreasonable to a child actually provided a measure of safety. From the perspective of adulthood, we can better appreciate our parents’ intentions to bring us good and protect from harm.

Rather than enter his reign with the perspective of a mature adult, Solomon’s son Rehoboam chose to listen to the immature advice of his friends (vv. 10–11). King Rehoboam’s pronouncement of a rule that is harsher than his father’s led Israel to reject his kingship.

Jeroboam, the people of Israel, and Rehoboam’s childhood friends all seemed to want a new king to rule differently than King Solomon. Apparently, no one, not even Rehoboam, understood the blessing of the rule of Solomon, which had led to Israel’s prosperity. As a result, the kingdom divided into the ten tribes of Israel, that chose to follow Jeroboam, and the two tribes of Judah that followed the line of David.

Our Savior encountered His own people of Israel who misunderstood His Father’s rule—that His Father’s rule invites anyone to experience salvation in the Son of God by grace. Unlike those who want to bind people under a heavy weight they cannot bear, Jesus offers freedom from sin and the power to serve God (Matt. 11:30).

Though He is the eternal Son of God with all the power of the universe at His disposal, Jesus will never scourge us with scorpions but instead invites us to experience His love and forgiveness.

If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.

2 Chronicles 10:7

Every call to endure wrongdoing, be patient while suffering, forgive those who have harmed you, give mercy to a prodigal friend or sibling, or embrace a rebellious child is our good heavenly Father’s will for us. These are opportunities for obedience to Him and for loving others as He has loved us.

Would you uphold in prayer Troy Fichter and Josie Scott who serve at the Solheim Center, Moody’s athletic facility? Praise the Lord for all they do in the management and administration of the Center to benefit the Moody community.
Restored to Rule God’s Way

Why do churches and denominations fracture and divide? While each situation has its own particular reasons, the fundamental reason underlying every division of the people of God is that we live in a fallen world filled with imperfect, broken people. Almost every schism follows a long, painful process that obscures other options that might have preserved unity.

Rehoboam’s choices precipitated a split in the kingdom of Israel, a wrenching apart of God’s people into two separate nations. Rehoboam was the grandson of King David and the ruler in God’s chosen line. But he now ruled over a kingdom of just two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (v. 1). Rehoboam’s first plan was to retake the ten tribes by force and attack the forces of Jeroboam. But the Lord instructed him to stand down from seeking to restore the kingdom by means of war (vv. 2–4). And this time Rehoboam listened to the wise counsel from the prophet Shemaiah and turned back from war.

Rehoboam found that God blessed his obedience and enlarged the kingdom of Judah in ways he hadn’t anticipated. Priests and Levites flocked to Jerusalem. Jeroboam instituted idolatrous worship, but Judah continued to worship the Lord (vv. 13–17). A spiritual revival flourished as worshipers chose to move to Judah rather than bow to the goat and calf idols in Israel. Rehoboam was able to fortify the cities of Judah and make sure they had the means to prosper (vv. 5–12).

As Rehoboam faithfully built up Judah, God also built up his family. Rehoboam was able to place his sons in leadership positions throughout the kingdom, and Rehoboam resembled his father Solomon through his wise administration of the kingdom of Judah (v. 23).

They obeyed the words of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 11:4

APPLY THE WORD

Paul and Barnabas separated after a dispute about working with John Mark (see Acts 15:36–41). The Lord redeemed this fractured relationship to use two ministry teams for His glory. His sovereignty is not impinged by our frailty. If you have endured a church split or a broken relationship, pray that the Lord will work through both parties.

PRAY WITH US

Timothy Arens, VP and dean of Student Life, will appreciate your prayers today. He and his team help students integrate into campus life and flourish during their years at Moody. Will you encourage dean Arens and his team in prayer?
Averting Wrath, Avoiding Evil

Mike Hodge spent years raising and training lions at the Marakele Predator Center in South Africa. Without warning, he was attacked last May by a lion named Shamba that he had bottle-fed as a cub. Shamba dragged Hodge into the bush, but miraculously he survived with a few broken bones and lacerations. The attack was a sobering reminder that even trained big cats are still natural predators and not domesticated pets.

Scripture says that Satan is like a roaring lion that seeks to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). When all seems to be going well—our family life is stable, our ministry is successful, we are enjoying peace and prosperity—we can let down our vigilance against temptation. We loosen our dependency on Christ. Before long, we have been mauled.

Rehoboam had led Judah to be strong and his rule was established (v. 1). And then Rehoboam abandoned the law of the Lord. As commentator Matthew Henry notes, “As long as [Rehoboam] thought his throne tottered he kept to his duty, that he might make God his friend; but, when he found it stood pretty firmly, he thought he had no more occasion for religion; he was safe enough without it.”

When the word of judgment came from the prophet, the king and his princes humbled themselves (vv. 5–8). The full wrath of God was averted as their repentance invited the mercy of God. Yet even after learning that obedience to God’s rule is better than judgment, Rehoboam persisted in evil. He appeared to think that God was a convenient resource for rescue but not sovereign over all life who requires obedience. The final verdict on Rehoboam’s reign was that, unlike his grandfather David, “he had not set his heart on seeking the LORD” (v. 14).

**Apply the Word**

“Be alert and of sober mind” in the face of temptation (1 Peter 5:8). “Watch and pray” to avoid falling prey to temptation (Matt. 26:41). And “God is faithful: he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Cor. 10:13). Choose one of these verses to memorize as a way to build your fortifications against temptation.

**Pray with Us**

Our students will be grateful for your prayers during their spring break, spanning the next two weeks. As students leave campus for home, ministry trips, and social activities, please ask God for their safety, times of refreshment, and good health.
Victory: Covenant and Obedience

Few people expected the Philadelphia Eagles to win Super Bowl LII. The returning champion New England Patriots were five-time Super Bowl winners and a modern dynasty under perennial Pro Bowl quarterback Tom Brady. The two teams led the league with the same regular season record, but the Eagles lost their quarterback to injury just weeks before the Super Bowl. The underdog prevailed, however. The Eagles attributed their victory to hard work, stellar coaching, and a refusal to give up.

Even fewer people might have favored Abijah, the new king of Judah, to defeat Jeroboam and his troops. Jeroboam had already ruled Israel for 18 years at this point (v. 1). Moreover, Abijah’s army was half the size of Jeroboam’s.

But Abijah led the army of Judah to a decisive victory over a trained leader with twice the military resources. Here’s why: They trusted the Lord to keep the covenants He had made with David and Moses (vv. 5, 9). They chose to place their trust in the Lord and obey Him rather than cower before human armies who were led by an idolatrous king (vv. 10–12).

Scripture is clear about who receives credit for the victory. Abijah was brave, his warriors were obedient, and the priests were faithful. But the victory belonged to the Lord: “The Israelites were subdued on that occasion, and the people of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors” (v. 18).

No challenge is greater than the abilities of the One who has called us to salvation in Christ and commissioned us to take the gospel to the nations. Through His power, we can beat all expectations and odds of reaching the lost with the gospel.

As for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him.
2 Chronicles 13:10

Apply the Word

What tasks before you seem impossible to accomplish? Trust the Lord to give you the strength.

What spiritual battle are you fighting? Rely on God’s power for the victory. Like the example of the priests and Levites in verse 11, continue to faithfully obey what God has instructed you to do and wait for His timing. He is sovereign and faithful.

Pray with Us

Today, we invite you to pray for Anthony Turner, VP and dean of Student Enrollment Services, and his executive assistant, Kris Akut. Thank the Lord for their contribution to recruiting, admitting, and retaining students with a vision for ministry.
Bringing Rest to the Land

The United Nations’ Secretary-General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (2018) outlines an effort by member states to maintain peace and secure freedom from conflict. They intend “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” with “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict,” and by “emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by [a country’s] Government and all [of its other] national stakeholders.” Yet every report of war that we continue to hear reminds us that sustained, long-term peace is difficult to secure.

Under King Asa’s rule, Judah experienced ten years of peace. During that time, Asa and Judah were able to fortify their cities and build up a fighting force of 580,000 mighty warriors (v. 8). But Asa did not solely rely on a large military and prosperous cities to sustain the peace the Lord had provided. He was concerned about spiritual peace as well. He removed every bit of idolatry from Judah and charged Judah to follow the Lord’s commandments (vv. 3–5). When Judah did fall under attack, Asa cried to God for aid in war (v. 11). He acknowledged his dependence on God alone to maintain the peace and prosperity of Judah.

In a similar manner, sustaining peace with each other is not simply a matter of mechanics and pragmatics. When we see potential for conflict, we must rely on the Lord completely. We can take prudent action and pursue godliness, but these do not make us immune to turmoil. In those times, we also remember that ultimately it is God who fights our battles and gives us peace.

Asa’s prayer in verse 11 is a wonderful piece of Scripture to use in our own prayer times: “Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.”

PRAY WITH US

Spring break begins today at Moody Theological Seminary in Chicago. Pray for the MTS professors—Andrew Pflederer, Davis Woodall, Deborah Gordon, John Trent, and Ryan Cook—asking God to give them time of rest and rejoicing with Him.
Words of Courage

Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years for resisting apartheid in South Africa. He was forced into hard labor and often kept in solitary confinement, but he later said, “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

Conquering fear is an enormous undertaking when an entire nation might be against your choices, even if you are making righteous choices. Both Joshua and Gideon understood the need to be strong and courageous in order to lead God’s people successfully (see Joshua 1; Judges 6). Later, Timothy would recognize that need while shepherding the people of Ephesus (2 Tim. 1:7). In today’s passage, Asa needed courage to change the course of Judah’s history of brokenness and their experience of God’s judgment on their idolatrous ways.

When the prophet Azariah son of Oded spoke, he charged Asa and all of Judah and Benjamin to have the courage to completely remove idolatry from their midst (vv. 1–7). He promised that the Lord would be with them and reward them and God would relinquish His judgment—if they forsake their idolatry.

Encouraged by the prophet’s word, Asa led Judah and Benjamin with courage to destroy the idols in the land and to restore true worship of the Lord. Notice the personal cost: he had to remove his own grandmother, Maakah (the wife Rehoboam had loved) from her position as queen mother because of her idolatry (v. 16). Like his forefather David’s, Asa’s heart “was fully committed to the LORD all his life” (v. 17). God was faithful to His promise. He did not unleash judgment on Judah, and they experienced peace.

The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you.
2 Chronicles 15:2

Apply the Word

Sometimes following the Lord will cost us. We might forego business opportunities that won’t honor God, or refuse social invitations that might lead us into compromising places. If you are having to count the cost of following Jesus, remember that He promises to be faithful to sustain you.

Pray with Us

Please add the remaining MTS faculty and staff to your prayer list: Angela Edwards, Sajan Mathews, Valencia Wiggins, and William Thrasher. Express appreciation in prayer for their faithful ministry to their students and to the community.
The Failure of Fear

Elite professional athletes always face the difficult decision of when to retire. Should they leave at the top of their game? Or should they eke out as many years of playing time as possible? Should they remain loyal to their current coach or team, or see if they can find success with a new program? Fans often feel torn between wanting to enjoy their sporting hero’s exploits as long as possible and the painful realization, “He should have quit long ago.”

King Asa had been blessed with decades of spiritual success. But after 35 years of serving the Lord, Asa made a fateful error in judgment. When the king of Israel set up a blockade around Judah, Asa appealed to the king of Aram for help (vv. 1–6). The core problem was not the political alliance but that Asa had neglected to seek spiritual guidance first (vv. 7–9).

Sadly, when confronted with his sin, Asa reacted in anger and defensiveness. He imprisoned the prophet. He lashed out at his own people (v. 10). Even after he became ill, he stubbornly refused to turn to the Lord. We cringe when reading about Asa’s disregard for God at the end of his reign.

We can make the same mistake as King Asa. Rather than trusting the Lord with as much confidence and humility as we did at the beginning of our spiritual walk, we grow first complacent, then indifferent, and then embittered.

Like Asa, we turn on the people around us in harshness and harm rather than in love and grace. We must always remember that it is God who shields and defends us regardless of our age, health, or creative ideas. Our confidence must always be in Him.

Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand.

2 Chronicles 16:7

APPLY THE WORD

There is no time to coast on autopilot in the Christian life. No matter how long we have been journeying with Jesus, we must continue to seek the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart for any complacence, indifference, or bitterness. Confess any sin and renew your commitment to have a heart fully committed to living for God.

PRAY WITH US

Would you pray today for Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer at Moody? Thank God for his leadership in managing Moody’s finances and his wisdom in making decisions at the workplace and delegating tasks.
Ignoring the Prophets of Truth

Author Marilynne Robinson wrote in her novel *Housekeeping*: “Having a sister or a friend is like sitting at night in a lighted house. Those outside can watch you if they want, but you need not see them. You simply say, ‘Here are the perimeters of our attention. If you prowl around under the windows till the crickets go silent, we will pull the shades. If you wish us to suffer your envious curiosity, you must permit us not to notice it.’ Anyone with one solid human bond is that smug, and it is the smugness as much as the comfort and safety that lonely people covet and admire.”

One might wish that Jehoshaphat could discriminate between solid friendships and those based only on flimsy appearances. The successful king of Judah agreed to go to war with Ahab solely on the bases of a marriage alliance and the gift of a few sacrificed sheep (vv. 1–2). As we’ve seen already in our study of 2 Chronicles, Jehoshaphat really had no reason to align himself with this wicked king—he should have known that God was more powerful than any alliance.

Jehoshaphat did have enough wisdom to ask for the word of the Lord before going to war. Being under the judgment of God, Ahab accepted the words of the false prophets (vv. 4–6). He rejected the true prophet of God because Micaiah spoke the revelation of God’s counsel in heaven, and declared disaster for Ahab. In contrast, by placing his faith in the Lord, Jehoshaphat was saved on the battlefield whereas Ahab received a deathblow (vv. 28–34).

The text makes clear that God was at work during the battle. Jehoshaphat survived not because of his military cunning but because God delivered him. God still answers today when we cry out to Him.

**Apply the Word**

To whom are you listening for wise counsel and advice? Do you choose to watch or read preachers who promise that you can have your best life now just because it makes you feel better? Or do you hear and learn from preachers and teachers who value the whole counsel of God and seek to share the truth of God’s Word?

**Pray with Us**

Please commit to prayer for the next three days our Public Safety officers who are doing such an excellent job in service of the Institute. Ask the Lord to bless Beau Pieniak, Brian Stoffer, Dainya Wesley-Michel, and Isaiah Reyes.
Q Many believers teach eternal security. But when I think about how sinful I am, I frequently worry that I could lose my salvation. What should I think about this?

A We should always strive to think biblically about these issues. While some biblical passages might have led good and godly people to believe that salvation can be lost, in my opinion the clear teaching of the Bible is that we can have assurance that we are secure in our salvation. Our assurance and hope lie in what Jesus has done, not in our own goodness. John 6:37–40 reminds us that the obedience of the Messiah Jesus keeps us safe.

One key aspect of His statement concerns His commitment to obey His Father’s will. “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day” (John 6:38–39). If the Lord Jesus failed to do His Father’s will, even just one time, then He would not be who He claimed to be. The Lord Jesus staked His entire identity on always doing the Father’s will. And what is one specific desire of His Father? Jesus tells us: “that I shall lose none of all those he has given me.”

Q I’ve known believers who for years seemed to have a genuine faith in Jesus, yet recently they have denied it. Also, some biblical passages seem to teach loss of salvation. How do you explain these issues in light of eternal security?

A Eternal security is the doctrine that teaches that Jesus gives the assurance of salvation to all who come to Him in faith. Here are some suggestions that have helped me understand the difficulties posed by people who seem to deny their faith and helped me to keep assured of my salvation. First, we need to interpret our experiences through the Scriptures and not the other way around. Scripture says that the Lord Jesus will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5), that He holds us securely in His hands (John 10:28–29), and that nothing will ever separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38–39).

Second, often passages that seem to refer to loss of salvation actually refer to loss of rewards. For example, Paul says that he disciplines himself so that after preaching to others, “I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27). This refers to disqualification from either receiving...
We need to interpret our experiences through the Scriptures and not the other way around.

rewards or the privilege of proclaiming the gospel.

Finally, we need to remember that people who seem to abandon the faith may have never known the Lord at all. Scripture notes, “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 John 2:19). It’s why the Lord Jesus will tell some at the final judgment, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matt. 7:23).

Q

Doesn’t Hebrews 6:1–8 teach loss of salvation?

A

This challenging passage seems to say that believers can fall away. When they reject faith, they re-crucify and shame the Lord Jesus, and it is impossible for them to be renewed to repentance (Heb. 6:4–6).

The elementary teaching they are to leave is not the foundational principles of the Christian faith but the Old Testament preparation for that faith. One of the phrases used to describe that foundation is “cleansing rites” (6:2), referring to Old Testament ritual washings (although it is sometimes mistranslated “baptisms”). They are told to press on to “maturity” (6:1), a word better translated as “perfection,” referring to the standing believers receive when they trust in Jesus.

The writer fears they understood Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy but did not necessarily comprehend His spiritual provision (see 2 Peter 2:20–22). Maybe they had “tasted the heavenly gift,” meaning they had experienced the Holy Spirit’s conviction but not His indwelling (see Matt. 27:34). Possibly they tasted God’s Word and God’s power because of their presence in the community of faith but not by personal experience.

These doubters must consider whether they were genuine in their faith in Jesus, and if not, they must put their trust in Him (Heb. 6:4–6). Moreover, the author is convinced that, once considered, they will recognize their own genuineness of faith: “Dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation” (Heb. 6:9).
Establishing Righteous Justice

In Fyodor Dostoevsky’s masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov*, the court judgments lack any moral guidance. Dmitri Fyodorovich’s defense attorney defends him to advance his own career, even though he believes Dmitri is guilty. The prosecutor Ippolit Kirillovich seeks to appease the listening crowd at the trial. His last words appeal for the jurors to support Russia more than for them to seek truth: “Remember that you are the defenders of our truth, the defenders of holy Russia, of her foundations, of her family, of all that is holy in her!” Without a moral impulse in the courtroom, Dmitri is wrongly convicted of his father’s murder.

King Jehoshaphat faced a choice: continue to pursue alliances that had no moral rationale or godly blessing or change his ways to honor the Lord. Thankfully, though Jehoshaphat had made some terrible decisions and barely escaped with his life, his heart was still set on seeking God (v. 3).

Jehoshaphat’s acknowledgment of God’s mercy compelled him to call on Jerusalem to fear God. Wanting his own people to avoid wrath, he exhorted them to judge rightly, and he made provisions for adjudicating difficult cases (vv. 5–7). Notice the central motivation that Jehoshaphat urged his judges, priests, Levites, and tribal leaders to maintain: a fear of the Lord (vv. 7, 9). God’s holiness is the only standard for true justice, and He is always with us to know the inclinations of our hearts.

Following God’s standard for justice requires courage (v. 11). Sometimes we must make formative and corrective judgments to promote godliness, Christlikeness, and discipleship. In order to judge wisely, we must have the fear of the Lord, knowledge of His Word, and courage to stand for Him even when it is challenging.

**Apply the Word**

The Scriptures command us to hold one another accountable to Christian standards of living (1 Cor. 5:12; Titus 3:10). This is loving. When judgments of corrective discipline are necessary, we must commit ourselves to prayer and patience in such situations. We are called to be instruments of God’s holiness.

**Pray with Us**

Public Safety officers, Jacob Muscat, Jose Soto, Kyle Smith, Laurence Wagner, and Robert Clark perform their duties on campus with professionalism and dedication. Thank God in prayer for their contribution to the security of our environment.
A Prayer that Moves God

The spiritual discipline of fasting receives relatively little attention in American churches today. Many Christians are unaware of the purpose or practice of fasting. We often read in Scripture about people who used fasting as part of their spiritual devotion in times of great challenges (see Ezra 8:21; Esther 4:16; Ps. 35:13). They saw a relationship between reliance on the power of God and a refusal to rely on the power of food and drink. Like Nehemiah, they understood that their success rested in the hand of the Lord alone (Neh. 1:11).

In our text today, King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah were facing a coalition far too strong for them to defeat. In response to this great challenge, the king called for a corporate fast across the entire nation (vv. 3–4). This fast was followed by a gathering to pray, calling upon the Lord to defend His people. Judah was crying out to God in distress and trusting in His faithfulness to hear and save them (vv. 5–12).

The Spirit of God responded to their prayers and fasting: “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s” (v. 15). Notice how the people responded to this glorious promise—they fell down in worship and erupted with praise. What a beautiful picture of the joy when God’s people rely on and trust in Him! And indeed, God provided them with a miraculous victory that was above and beyond anything they could have engineered on their own (vv. 22–25).

Overwhelming challenges grant us opportunities to look away from any prowess, cleverness, or preparedness that we might conjure within ourselves. We need to remember that Christ has given us the weapons of fasting, prayer, and praise to access His power.

APPLY THE WORD

Some choose to fast and pray during a time of a crisis. Others fast weekly to give the time and cost of the meal to prayer and financial support of Christian ministry. Consider incorporating such a discipline into your life, if your health allows. If you cannot abstain from food, consider another way to devote time or resources to the Lord.

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our prayers for the Public Safety department, please include Marc Lazarescu, Michael Ashfield, Renan Malafaia, Stacey Craelius, and Steven Cascio in your time with God. Ask the Lord to give them strength to carry out their numerous duties.

Stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you.

2 Chronicles 20:17
Youthful Debasement

Saddam Hussein, shortly after seizing power in Iraq in July 1979, joined with ruling elite members of the Ba’ath Party to execute 22 people who had opposed his ascent to power. The Ba’ath Party Purge violently removed any competition to Hussein’s rule. Hussein was following in the footsteps of a host of rulers throughout world history. That list includes King Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. At age 32, Jehoram’s youthful choice to walk in the ways of wickedness colored the full tenure of his reign.

As the rightful, firstborn heir of the kingdom, Jehoram easily could have chosen to live at peace with his brothers, who had inherited far less than him and had far less power than him. But being insecure, he saw his siblings as potential rivals rather than as supporters (v. 4). Jehoram’s act of fratricide led to judgment from God that included war, destruction of his household, and his own excruciatingly painful and prolonged suffering (vv. 12–14).

The root cause of all this suffering was Jehoram’s spiritual choice to do evil like King Ahab rather than follow the Lord like King David (v. 6). Every word of judgment that God had promised through the prophet Elijah was fulfilled. Eight years later, Jehoram was dead—“to no one’s regret” (v. 20).

Jehoram had everything going for him: a godly heritage, a nation at peace, an extended family, and all the material advantages anyone could want. But none of that could save him from the consequences of his choice to pursue the path of sinfulness. We must never put our trust in God’s blessings and gifts and ignore the Lord, the Giver of all. Only faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, will save us from our sins.

APPLY THE WORD

Paul asked the Corinthians, “What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Both their identity as chosen people and their ability to live in a way to please the Lord were gifts from God—unearned and undeserved. Make a list of gifts and blessings in your life, and then pray through that list thanking God for all He has given you.

PRAY WITH US

Would you encourage in prayer Janet Stiven, VP and general counsel, and her team in the Legal department? We are grateful for legal expertise of this team and ask God to give them favor with every department and organization they interact.
Returning Rule to a Good King

The pervasiveness of wickedness in society can make even the most hopeful person feel cynical or despairing. Human trafficking, corruption, murder, the opioid drug use epidemic, and more—every day it seems that evil has modern culture in its grip.

Reading Scriptures helps to remind us that this is nothing new. The swaying, scheming hands of Satan have long sought to make evil flourish and destroy the hope of the people of God (Gen. 3:15; John 8:44; 12:31; Eph. 2:2; 6:11–12; 1 John 5:19). And Scripture also reminds us that God is always faithful to His promises and will not abandon His people without hope.

Ahaziah’s brief reign started badly and ended even worse, with choices to follow the example of Ahab (vv. 3–6). After his death, his mother, Athaliah, claimed the throne. Firmly committed to the ways of Ahab, she went on a murderous rampage against everyone in the royal family (v. 10). Judah’s future looked very bleak indeed.

Athaliah is not the only important woman in this story. Jehosheba—who herself was in the royal family—smuggled Ahaziah’s infant son out of the clutches of the evil queen (vv. 11–12). One woman chose to seize power for herself through any means available. The other woman chose to put her own life on the line to protect God’s ordained lineage of the house of David. When evil appears to flourish, we do well to remember that God raises up men and women like Jehu, Jehosheba, and Jehoiada who have the courage to stand up for God’s truth. May the Lord lead men and women today to seek the removal of evil from society as they serve Christ, the rightful Heir of the kingdom and hope for the restoration of God’s righteousness over the earth.

He too followed the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him to act wickedly.

2 Chronicles 22:3

How does your life bear witness to the truth that Jesus is the rightful Heir and Son of God? Like Jehosheba, perhaps you need to take action on behalf of children at risk from the evil in our world. Prayerfully consider volunteering at a crisis pregnancy center, after-school program, local food pantry, or a ministry supported by your local church.

PRAY WITH US

Greg Thornton, senior VP of Media, asks for your prayers in anticipation of Moody Radio’s Spring Share fundraiser tomorrow. We pray that financial goals would be met and spiritual objectives would be accomplished for God’s glory.
Without a Mentor

Aesop’s famous fable “The Tortoise and the Hare” reminds us that someone who starts well in a race is not guaranteed to finish first. The quickness and arrogance of the much faster hare are no match for the slow steadfastness of the tortoise.

Unfortunately, the reign of Joash more closely resembles the hare than the tortoise. He began his rule with excitement for the restoration of the house of the Lord (vv. 4–5). He called for the Levites to gather quickly Moses’ required offering from all the people. When they did not respond in haste, the king acted to see that the tithes came in. In contrast to the shocking desecration of the temple perpetrated by Athaliah and her sons, Joash had zeal to restore the temple and the worship of God.

But Joash’s heart for the Lord did not remain steadfast after the death of Jehoiada the priest. “As long as Jehoiada lived, burnt offerings were presented continually in the temple of the Lord” (v. 14). But then Joash listened to other advisors, abandoned worship, committed idolatry, and ignored the prophets. His descent away from God culminated in the murder of Jehoiada’s son (vv. 21–22).

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “It was a crime most foul to murder the son of Jehoiada, one of those who had helped to put the crown upon the head of the king. To do this evil deed in the court of God’s house, when the prophet was engaged in his Master’s business, and delivering a divine message, was to heap sin upon sin.”

Joash reaped the reward of his sin, being murdered in his own bed and denied a burial in the tombs of the kings (v. 25).

### Apply the Word

If you are young in faith, seek a mentor to counsel you in spiritual things. Wise advice is important! If you are a mature believer, find someone who would benefit from your guidance and friendship. You can make a huge difference in someone’s life! Investing in these relationships can reap spiritual benefits for you and others (Titus 2:1-8).

### Pray with Us

Today, Dr. Mark Jobe has the opportunity to host his first Share event as president of Moody. Support him in this ministry by asking the Holy Spirit to guide his words and use them to edify the Moody community.
Partial Obedience

Probably every parent of teenagers can relate to this experience: the parent issues an instruction or relays a story, while the teen nods and murmurs “um-hmm” without looking up from his mobile phone. A few minutes later, the parent asks, “Did you hear me?” “Um-hmm,” the teen replies without moving. When the young person still sits looking at his phone, the parent demands: “Were you listening to me?” “Oh, sorry—what did you say?” Half listening is scarcely better than fully ignoring someone.

Amaziah half-heartedly listened to the word of the Lord. When it was to his benefit, he humbled himself before the Law or the word of a prophet. He would not put to death the children of those who conspired against his father, respecting the Law in Deuteronomy 24:16 (v. 4). He acknowledged his error when the first prophet told him he was wrong in hiring Ephraimites to join his army despite risks of retaliation (vv. 7–10). He was even willing to take a risk in dismissing a sizeable fighting force.

But Amaziah’s obedience was inconsistent. After he won a victory over their enemies in Seir, he brought Edomite idols back to Jerusalem and began to worship them (v. 14). He rejected the word of the second prophet. He would not listen to his counsel, and neither would he listen to the counsel of the much stronger king of Israel (vv. 16–20).

Obedience to the word of the Lord takes full-hearted effort; a half-hearted effort is disobedience. James tells us to “do what it says” (James 1:22). We must adhere to its wisdom, or eventually we, like Amaziah, might reject all sound counsel. We must trust in the grace of Jesus our Savior in order to walk in faith and obedience (1 Cor. 15:10).

APPLY THE WORD

What is your attitude to the preaching of the Word of God at your church? Ask the Lord to give you a meek heart—one that places you under the authority of the Word. It’s vital to overcome a prideful heart—one that places you above the authority of the Word and is often characterized by criticisms of the preacher or the message.

PRAY WITH US

Moody Radio’s Strategic Marketing team—George Economos, Brittany Bernholdt, and Hannah LaMaster—will appreciate your prayers as Spring Share continues on campus. May the Holy Spirit build a sense of camaraderie, joy, and trust at all Share’s broadcasts.
A Path to Leprosy

When playing with tools in his father’s workshop at age 3, Louis Braille was struck in the eye by a piece of metal. The injury blinded him, and a subsequent infection took the sight of his other eye. His parents determined to give him as many opportunities for education and enrichment as they could, and Louis applied his creativity and keen intellect toward creating a reading and writing system for visually impaired people—completing it by age 15! He also developed a method for mathematics and musical notation. The system he invented, now known as braille, is still used today and has been adapted to include new technologies for email and computer terminals.

Young people can accomplish amazing things! King Uzziah was only 16 years old when he took the throne, and his reign began with great success (vv. 3–5). Attentive to the counsel of God’s prophet Zechariah, Uzziah defended Judah against their enemies, fortified the cities, and provided resources for the land to flourish. “As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success” (v. 5).

But then Uzziah followed the pattern that we saw earlier with King Joash. His youthful zeal for the things of God and his willingness to rely on godly leaders were replaced by pride in his own accomplishments and trust in his own power (v. 16). Uzziah’s specific transgression was his attempt to claim the priestly duties for himself, venturing into the temple to burn incense. The “courageous priests of the LORD” confronted him, and his reaction compounded his sin (vv. 17–19).

Rather than repent, he grew angry. Rather than submit to God’s law, he was defensive. In divine judgment, God punished Uzziah with leprosy that removed him from the presence of God’s people.

Scripture warns us against pride (see Prov. 16:18). To fight pride, we must follow Christ. “Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather . . . he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:5–8).

Please join us in praying for Scott Curtis, Jack Haveman, and Perry La Haie at WGNB, Moody Radio station in Zeeland, Mich., during the station’s annual Share fundraising event. On their behalf we thank Moody’s friends like you for your support.
Mighty and Young

**Social identity** is the term used by social psychologists to describe the ways that people express who they are. These ways include making choices that align with their “in-groups” and avoiding behaviors that they associate with their “out-groups.” Social identities can include geography, ethnicity, gender, age, and professional affiliation. Some people want to be identified as academically gifted and work hard for the best grades in school. Others might find such identity to be for the so-called geeks or nerds, and work hard to stay away from such identification!

King Jotham decided to choose the identity of a servant of the Lord, and he made choices that aligned with being a godly king. He opposed the evil enemies of God’s people, and he repaired the temple. He fortified Judah and ensured their prosperity. “He walked steadfastly before the LORd his God” (v. 6).

Jotham also avoided behaviors that would lead to destruction. He learned from the example of his father, Uzziah, and did not attempt to enter the temple. He did not claim rights and privileges that were reserved for the priests (v. 2). He was a powerful king because he trusted God, and he did not allow his political power to poison him with deadly pride.

Though Jotham was a godly king, the people did not follow his example. Their corruption and idolatry continued. They enjoyed the benefits of peace and prosperity that they received because God blessed Jotham, but they made no attempt to repent of their own sins and turn their hearts toward the Lord. They assumed that a good king was enough to protect them from God’s judgment, and they ignored the lessons of their history. As we will read tomorrow, they would soon learn otherwise.

**APPLY THE WORD**

Do you align yourself with the truth of God’s Word and seek to please Him? Or are you hoping that the good deeds of others will protect you from the consequences of your sinful choices? Each of us must give an account before God—make sure you are ready! If you have not trusted in Christ alone as your Savior from sin, do so today!

**PRAY WITH US**

Share, the annual fundraising event for Moody Radio, is in full swing at WMBW in Chattanooga, Tenn., today. Please ask God to bless the efforts of Brent Manion, Jason McKay, Paul Martin, and Tabi Upton to make Christian radio possible.
In their book Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis, Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, and Issam Smeir write: “The question of refugees—and refugee resettlement, in particular—has divided the church as well. Many Christians feel torn between the natural desire to protect themselves and their families and the desire to minister compassionately to the vulnerable.”

Israel could have taken advantage of these prisoners of war and put them to forced labor in any job the Israelites deemed menial. Or, driven by nationalism, xenophobia, and a desire to emphasize the historical ethnic separation, they could have returned the captives to their lands without offering them any help. The trek home by the 200,000 starving, naked, and shoeless women and children would have left the caravan from Judah vulnerable to the elements and raiders, and surely would have meant death by exhaustion and starvation for many.

In the kindness and sovereignty of the Lord toward Judah and Israel, He raised up one prophetic voice and several leaders who understood the depths of the mercy of God. Israel herself was guilty of the very idolatry that had led to Judah’s plunder. They too were deserving of the wrath of God (vv. 10–13). So rather than incurring more guilt by subjugating their brothers, the prophet and the chiefs exhorted Israel to show compassion to the broken throngs of Judah. The men of Israel, who could have increased their own wealth with the spoils of war and taken advantage of every woman, instead clothed, fed, and anointed with oil each of the 200,000 refugees, giving them help and dignity. The men of Israel carried the desperate people of Judah back to the homes.
The Joy of Consecration

When a sports team needs to rebuild after a series of losing seasons, it can be difficult for an owner to know where to begin. Hire a new coaching staff? Draft a younger roster? Hire one or two big-name stars? The success of the Oakland Athletics baseball team’s use of analytics, described in Michael Lewis’s book *Moneyball*, sparked an interest in statistics and metrics for teams with small budgets.

When it comes to rebuilding a congregation after years of departing members, diminished offerings, and deferred maintenance, the Scriptures consistently offer the same prescription. We see this under the leadership of Zerubbabel the priest (Ezra 3) and in the command to Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 2:1–8). And we find the answer in our reading today, when Hezekiah begins rebuilding Judah. The first step is always to reestablish right worship as the priority.

Hezekiah restored the doors and vestibule of the house of the Lord while also consecrating the Levites to do their work in the house (vv. 3–11). The building itself needed to be treated with care to make sure it was functional, and those charged with leading the people in worship needed to be consecrated and purified. If Hezekiah gave the doors and vestibule attention but did not consecrate the Levites, he would have communicated that the house of the Lord was simply a building—that what happened externally and aesthetically was more important than the holy God who dwells in His house.

The revival of worship was the inspiring result. This time, in contrast to the reign of Jotham, the people followed the leadership of Hezekiah and joined in the sacrifices of repentance and praise (vv. 27–36).

We are the temple of the Lord (see 1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19–20). When we gather as the church, God dwells in our midst. Are we taking care of worship spaces so they are functional, and do we worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth? (John 4:24). Do we use our bodies to serve God? Do we seek to follow Him daily and align our will with His?

Remember our Stewardship reps today as they faithfully represent Moody around the country. Pray that God would give them favor as they interact with friends of Moody and ask that their witness would always honor God and His purposes.
Imperfect, Yet Still Passover

The New Testament continually refers to Christ’s death on the cross to pay for our sin and His resurrection from the dead to offer us new life. The books of Acts through Revelation describe the ways that the church works out the demands and implications of the Person and work of Christ. Every New Testament book addresses the themes of atonement, redemption, forgiveness, and what was accomplished “in Christ.”

God prescribed the annual Passover feast, including a means for unclean persons to partake of Passover in the second calendar month rather than the first (Num. 9:9–10). But the people had not gathered to celebrate Passover together in years (v. 5). Now, in response to Hezekiah’s invitation, people gathered from across Judah and even some from the tribes in Israel (vv. 11–15).

The practice of this renewed Passover was not perfect; some people were not purified as the Law required. But because people had hearts that longed to worship God, the Lord overlooked the imperfections in His mercy. With Hezekiah’s intercession, the Lord healed them rather than bringing judgment upon them (vv. 18–20). The people received many extended blessings of grace from remembering the Lord’s redemption. Notice how many times the words joy or rejoicing appear in this text. Worship will lead to joy!

**The LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.**

2 Chronicles 30:9

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**APPLY THE WORD**

Before you next partake in the Lord’s Supper, meditate on Luke 22:7–23 or 1 Corinthians 11:17–34—passages that describe the institution and practice of the Lord’s Supper. Seek to go before the Lord with a clean heart that is prepared to remember His death for your sins and to praise Him for His resurrection that gives you new life.

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**PRAY WITH US**

As spring break ends and undergraduate courses resume, pray for the Intercultural Studies faculty. May God bless Clive Craigen, Mary Cloutier, Mary Hendrickson, and Michael Rydellnik with energy and stamina to finish the semester strong.
Supporting the Priesthood of God

Even in the most affluent congregations in America, there appears to be little sacrificial giving. Statistics in 2018 report that on average believers gave 2.5 percent of their annual income to the church. As John Piper has noted, “The evidence that many of our people are not rich toward God is how little they give and how much they own.”

How amazing to read about the abundant offering for the priests and Levites under Hezekiah. When the king commanded the people to give, they gave so much that they had to build storage facilities for the surplus of contributions toward the work of the priests and Levites (vv. 7–11)!

Why did the people respond with such generosity? It was not because the king had ordered or forced them to. It was the result of their commitment to worship. After the Passover, the people remembered who had saved and preserved them—not the idols of the land but the Lord who brought them out of Egypt. Therefore, they rid the land of idols, wholly depending upon the Lord for their provision (v. 1). The gracious outpouring to support the work of the priests and Levites was a tangible example of their love for and trust in God.

The people of God also had the example of Hezekiah, who obeyed the Lord with his whole heart (v. 21). Hezekiah viewed his role as king not as an opportunity for personal enrichment or power but as a godly leader who could model obedience to the Lord for his people. Throughout Judah, he did “what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God” (v. 20). God was pleased with this worship and obedience and poured out blessings on Hezekiah and the people.

**APPLY THE WORD**

The apostle Paul said the labor of pastors is work that deserves proper wages (1 Tim. 5:17–18). The church should care for the material needs of God’s servants as the right response to their care for the spiritual growth of the people of God. Examine your giving to make sure that you are providing care for God’s servants in your church.

**PRAY WITH US**

Pray again today for our Intercultural Studies faculty. Include Richard Wilkinson, Samuel Naaman, Stephen Clark, and Timothy Sisk, thanking Him for their humble service of training students for cross-cultural ministry.
A Scary Challenge to Our Faith

Why do bad things happen to good people? Rabbi Harold Kushner answered that question in his bestselling book by arguing that God is loving but not omnipotent. Prominent atheists have said this is proof there is no god at all. The book of Job, however, offers a different answer: God has His own reasons that we might never know, but we can continue to trust in His goodness and faithfulness.

Hezekiah had been a godly king who led the people back to worship. Nevertheless, Sennacherib, the feared ruler of the Assyrian empire, decided to attack Judah (v. 1). We should never think that our godliness will make us immune to the trials of the world.

Many kings before Hezekiah had reacted to military crisis by seeking unwise alliances, worshiping idols, or listening to bad advice. Hezekiah, however, responded to the crisis in confidence and faith. He made preparations in Jerusalem to deter the Assyrian siege, and he reminded the people that the might of Assyria was no match for the power of God (vv. 2–8).

After Sennacherib unleashed a torrent of blasphemy intended to weaken the resolve of the people, Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah turned to God in prayer (vv. 16–20). They knew that prayer was a more powerful weapon than any sword devised by man. Their confidence remained steadfast that the Lord could save. God answered their prayers with a miraculous victory! Defeated and disgraced, Sennacherib returned home where he was assassinated by his own sons.

According to the world’s perspective, Sennacherib had all the power. But Hezekiah did not let trials take his focus from God. In the end, Sennacherib was humiliated and God was glorified.

APPLY THE WORD

Billions of people need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of them live in countries ruled by Islam or communism, with Christian evangelism either restricted or persecuted. The challenge feels like Sennacherib coming against Hezekiah. We need to awaken each morning with cries to the Lord of harvest to send more gospel laborers.

PRAY WITH US

Thank God for the leadership of Jim Elliot, vice president of Stewardship at Moody in Chicago. Ask God to continue granting him wisdom and precision in his work as he oversees donations to Moody and leads his team to serve effectively.
The End of Evil

The first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, consolidated much territory under his rule and laid the foundations for what would become the modern nation. But his true obsession was his fear of death and attempt to find an elixir that would grant him immortality. He killed scholars and burned books to focus their attention on his quest, and he developed an immense underground mausoleum that included the Terracotta Army to protect him. Ironically, he died suddenly of what is believed to be Chinese alchemical elixir poisoning—he had been ingesting mercury that he thought would give him eternal life.

The reign of Manasseh is jaw-dropping in its scope of evil. Not only did he return to idolatry, he actively blasphemed in the temple of God (vv. 3–5). In his obsession with other gods, he even sacrificed his own children in pagan worship, one of the most detestable practices condemned by the Lord (v. 6).

The people followed Manasseh into sin, and they ignored the Lord’s attempts to call them back (v. 10). Finally, God got his attention: Assyria captured Manasseh and led him into captivity with a literal ring through his nose (v. 11). At last, Manasseh was in a position to recognize his sin. In the face of destruction with no means of escape, the God of Manasseh’s fathers became his God, and he cried out to Him for salvation.

The great hope in the story of Manasseh is that he responded to God’s coming judgment on his sin by calling upon the Lord. The God of heaven heard his prayer for mercy and responded with salvation from his certain captivity and death in Babylon. Manasseh, with a heart changed by the Lord, changed his ways to honor the God of Israel (vv. 12–16).

When he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea . . . Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.

2 Chronicles 33:13

Apply the Word

Is someone in your life steeped in sin? Do you doubt they will ever repent and accept the salvation of Christ? Manasseh’s example reminds us that God’s arm is not too short to save anyone, even the people who might most surprise us. Commit to praying for that person and ask the Holy Spirit to perform a miraculous work of grace.

Pray with Us

As we keep the Stewardship department in our prayers today, please mention Moody’s Planned Giving program. Thank God for Crystal Davis-Landrum, Kirsten Miller, Lysa Ellis, and Mark Pycke. May God give them wisdom and joy in their work!
Recovering the Law

Amy Carmichael became a Christian at age 15. A few years later, she began a Sunday school for girls who worked in the mills of Belfast; it soon grew so large that a new hall was built that seated 500 people. She became best known for her missionary work in India, especially her efforts to rescue girls from temple prostitution. She remained in India even after she was bedridden, and the books she wrote during this period have encouraged and inspired generations of Christians. India outlawed temple prostitution three years before Amy Carmichael died.

King Josiah sought the Lord in his youth and described the spiritual blessings that came to the people as a result of his leadership. Like Amy Carmichael, he was still a teenager when he turned his heart to the Lord, and he followed that commitment with action to root out the idolatry that had plagued the land (vv. 2–7).

Ten years later, Josiah presided over an effort to restore and rebuild the temple. He ensured that finances were raised and workmen were organized and the priests and Levites were provided for. But nothing prepared him for the discovery of the Book of the Law, which had apparently been lost and utterly forgotten (vv. 8–15).

When Josiah heard the word of Scripture, he realized that Israel and Judah had broken the covenant with God and deserved the full measure of His judgment (vv. 19–21). In response, he led the people in repentance, prayer, and a renewed commitment “to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book” (v. 31). God promised to delay His coming judgment until after the death of Josiah.

**Apply the Word**

God’s people must meditate on the Law daily (Ps. 1:2); parents must teach their children the Law daily in association with all of life’s activities (Deut. 6:4–6), and the Christian leaders must study the words of the Law daily (Deut. 17:18–20). Maintaining biblical authority in the church and in our lives takes daily effort by God’s people.

**Pray with Us**

Remember Moody Radio in your prayers, mentioning specifically the Program Production team. Ask God to bless the efforts of Amy Rios, Christopher Segard, Joel Swan, and Joseph Carlson. May their diligent efforts produce content that honors God!
Passing Over Death

In the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign, Israel recovered the Law of the Lord and reestablished biblical authority throughout the kingdom. They reinstituted the Passover in such a way that it surpassed any Passover celebration in hundreds of years (v. 18).

Four times the writer refers to the authority behind the Passover preparations: The word of the Lord commanded through Moses (vv. 6, 12), the orders of worship given by David (v. 15), and the spiritual leadership of Josiah (v. 16). In another instance we see Josiah act without an explicit reference to authority: contributing his own wealth to the Passover (v. 7). It seems in this instance that Josiah was applying wisdom to determine his actions. It would be wise for the king to ensure that enough lamb was available for the Passover sacrifices, even if it meant he needed to contribute personally.

Josiah held a Passover that pleased the Lord by obeying the Word of God, following the precedent of David, and applying his own wisdom. The people of God in Judah and the remnant of Israel all gathered to observe this momentous occasion of obedience. Josiah’s legacy of faith was so great that he continued to be mourned after his death in laments composed by the prophet Jeremiah (vv. 24–25).

In much of our spiritual practice, we should follow the commands of Scripture, but we might also have particular church or denominational traditions that influence our worship as well. Certain situations call for us to exercise wisdom and good judgment. Not every detail of worship is rigidly prescribed in the Bible, and therefore we can acknowledge that cultural or denominational differences can be acceptable variations of worship that pleases the Lord.

**The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel.**

2 Chronicles 35:18

**APPLY THE WORD**

Wisdom is required to know when Scripture gives us a clear command and when we need godly judgment. Thankfully, God has promised to give wisdom to all who ask (James 1:5)! Spend time in prayer today asking the Lord for wisdom, both for yourself and also for the leaders in your church. Thank Him for making His wisdom available to us.

**PRAY WITH US**

Will you continue to pray for the Moody Radio Production team today? Thank God for the work of Ryan McConnaughay, Steven Tabor, and William Davis. Thousands of listeners around the world benefit from the faithful service of these people.
A True King

King T’Challa was the rightful king of the fictional nation of Wakanda. But a usurper, Killmonger, appeared to kill the good king and rule the land with vengeance, hatred, and a thirst for world dominance. The people of Wakanda were resigned to their bitter fate, but King T’Challa—the Black Panther—was not in fact dead and returned to claim his throne. Wakanda, filled with hope and gratitude for deliverance, determines to help other nations build a better world under the leadership of their true king.

The final chapter of 2 Chronicles recounts the sad end of Judah’s final kings. One by one they fall prey to the external enemies of Egypt and Babylon and the internal sins of rebellion against God. But even in this dark chapter, notice three grace notes shining through.

First, God kept His promise to Josiah to delay His judgment—but now He was fulfilling His word given through the prophetess Huldah (34:22–28). Second, God continued to send prophets and messengers to call His people to repentance (vv. 12, 15). Though the people did not listen, God did not abandon them, and He promised that their exile would be limited (v. 21). Third, God would work through the Persian king Cyrus to restore His people (vv. 22–23).

The hope for Judah no longer lay in their kings, all of whom now abandoned righteousness and pursued evil. But God would still be faithful to His promise that their true King would come from the line of David. Our hope today rests in the return of the King of all kings—Jesus Christ. He will be faithful to His Word to provide a Sabbath rest for His people in His kingdom to come.

APPLY THE WORD

As we conclude our study of 2 Chronicles, give thanks for the hope we have in Christ and His promises. Thank Him for His promise to provide rest for those who are weary of the troubles of this life. Thank Him for being faithful to His word to save us forever. Thank Him for walking with us in this life and providing eternal life with Him forever.

PRAY WITH US

Praise God for His continued faithfulness through your own journey. Thank Him because He continues to lead and strengthen His people, drawing them into fuller and deeper commitment to Him.
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