

2 Kings 22-23

We spoke last time of the fact that there are times when righteous people have wicked kids. And that it seems like regardless of the godly influence, direction and discipline that the parents may seek to impress or enforce upon the child as they're growing up, that sometimes they just make the unfortunate choice to forsake the Lord and follow after the lusts of their own flesh. But there are also times when just the opposite is true, that radically wicked parents wind up with incredibly godly kids. And from chapters 19-22 it seems almost like a tennis game of righteousness to wickedness, back to righteousness that volleys back and forth across the court of Israel's history.

Chapter 19-20 righteous king Hezekiah, chapter 21 wicked Manasseh and Amon, chapter 22 back to righteous Josiah, and Josiah will be the last of the good/godly kings of Judah prior to their full on captivity be led away into Babylon. And he's also seemingly the single most zealous of all the kings of Judah concerning his desire for righteousness and his longing to be right in the sight of God, walking closely/intimately with God. Obviously we know that David sort of set the standard for the kings of Judah with respect to all that and Josiah excelled in those standards.

But what I love about this particular place that we're at in scripture tonight is the fact that we sort of step into Israel's history here at its single most depraved/debased/decadent point and out of the darkness a light begins to shine. Because it tells me that you can never be so far gone that God won't hear you, or respond to you, if you just cry out to Him, and turn your heart towards Him. Sure you may have to reap of the things you've sown, but God will forgive you, make Himself real to you, and save you, snatching you out of the darkness, and placing you into the light. It's that common thread woven throughout the scriptures that we seem to quote so often around here lately. That, "...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more," Rom 5:20 That, "He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Heb 7:25 It doesn't matter who you are, where you've been, or what you've done, God loves you, wants to forgive you and reconcile you to Himself if you'll but turn *towards* Him, repent of your sin and give your heart *to* Him. Into the darkness comes a beam of light, and into this condition of spiritual death comes the breath of life. We call it revival, one man truly repents of his sin and it impacts an entire nation.

And chapters 22-23 sort of outline for us what we might consider as a road map (if you will) to revival, notice.

Vs1-2

So like Joash, Josiah was incredibly young when he became the king over the nation of Israel, about the age of the average 3rd grader. But right off the bat we're informed of his impeccable track record, he reigned for 31 yrs (meaning he died @ 39) and in that entire time he never deviated 1 time either to the right or to the left from doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. Isn't that incredible? 31yrs with out a notable flaw in his service to the Lord.

He was no doubt a formality at 1st with people running the nation vicariously through him as a child, but in the 8th year of his reign, or when he was 16 yrs old, we read in 2nd Chronicles that he at that point, personally/formally gave his heart to the Lord and began to really seek after the Lord. We read there regarding Josiah, “*For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.*” 2 Chronicles 34:3 So he began to seek the Lord when he was 16, by the time he was 20 he was pruning and purging the land of several of it’s pagan relics and articles of worship. Next we’ll find out that when he was 26 he had a burden to restore the temple and from that point radical things begin to take place in his life personally/there’s a real awakening spiritually. Notice

Vs3-7

So, we see that the 1st thing that had to happen before revival could take place was that he needed to have a *relationship* with the Lord, #1 Relationship. When he was 16 yrs old he sought the Lord personally, he was no longer just walking in the ways of “his father’s” God, but now he was seeking and serving the Lord *personally*. And that relationship immediately started making changes in his life, a lot of people know Jesus as “Their parents God” or “Their spouses God” but they don’t know Him and serve Him personally, there’s no real impact that’s being made *in* their lives, or *through* their lives because they don’t *know*, seek *after*, or *serve* the Lord personally as *their* God.

What was the 1st change recorded for us here in ch 22, he noticed that temple was in need of repair. And so he set things in order, facilitated, and delegated the work so that the damages to the house of the Lord might be repaired. If we’re to have revival it’s going to take a recognition that there are some things in need of repair when it comes to the church, not only personally and individually, but also corporately and collectively as a whole. You see he got himself right with the Lord (his personal temple), and then he began to notice other things that needed fixed, or made right in the house of the Lord in the public, corporate sense. Things need to be set in order, God isn’t looking to the world to start a revival, He’s looking to the church, “...*if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*” 2 Chron 7:14. So He’s not looking to the world to turn from their wicked ways, He wants *His people*, to turn from *their* wicked ways. To quit pacifying our flesh saying, “Well, it’ll be ok,” when it’s not ok according to the standard of God’s Word. How we should pray, that God might reveal to us by the power of His Holy Spirit where those breeches are, where the damages are, both in our lives individually, but then also in the body collectively, that we might begin to repair, and make right (by His grace) those areas in desperate need of attention of restoration. Of course on a national scale it’s not too hard to look around and see breaches in the church, areas that are in disrepair, ordaining homosexuals to be in the pulpit, people who will scratch the itching ears of the general populous, feel good messages and an abandonment of the word of God, which leads us into the next thing.

Now certainly God wants the world to be aware of it's sin, and that will happen, but it starts with us, the people of God actually living lives, and having lifestyles that reflect and are true to the principles and precepts of the word of God.

Vs8-10

What do we see here? Something else that always accommodates revival, a *rediscovery* of the Word of God; it was all but evaporated from their society. Sounds strangely familiar doesn't it? Our society has done it's best to get rid of the word of God, the fight to eliminate the 10 commandments in public places, taking the bible out of schools, trying to bring legislation against praying in schools, placing all these double standards on Christians to try and silence the Word of God. It's generally believed that under Manasseh's reign he sought to destroy all the manuscripts, but that this one was hidden in the temple, and now that they're all about restoring and bringing proper order to the *house* of God, lo and behold there's a rediscovery of the *word* of God. And what did Shaphan do? He read it before the king; he just let the pure unadulterated word of God speak for itself before the king. How we need to (as a nation) get back to, have a rediscovery of the word of God. If you're entire Christian experience has been with Calvary Chapel you might not realize it, but it's a novel thing today to walk into a church where people are just studying and reading through the bible. You'd think it'd be standard protocol, (going through the bible in church) and it should, but it's not.

But every revival in history revolves around a reading and rediscovery of the Word of God (true to form). What was it that he read? We don't know. Based on his reaction it's believed either Lev 26, or Duet 28 where it speaks of the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience that would come upon the nation.

But this is amazing to me, he's seeking the Lord, desiring to be right with the Lord, but he still doesn't even know what the word requires and desires of him. And that's why we need God's Word, because in our flesh we can be wishy washy, justifying and pacifying our desires, but God's Word shoots it straight, pierces to the division between the soul and spirit, and is a discernor between the thoughts and intents of the heart. It keeps us accountable, in check against the flesh, apart from God's Word you can only go so far, and it's not very. The bible tells us, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" Matt 4:4 Josiah sees the need for repair, rediscovers the word of God.

Vs11

What is this? *Repentance*, the law was read, Josiah repented, and revival is on. This was a sign of the rending of his heart; he realized just how far down they had fallen. See this is what I mean by the mirror of the word of God, he probably thought that things were going pretty good, and comparatively to where they *had* been, they were. But unfortunately, the standards of man, and cultural approval doesn't set the standard, the Word of God does, and in the light of God's Word, they were in a desperate state. So as he's reading the scriptures he discovers that he's not where he thought he was, but rather he has a long way to go.

People all over our nation think they're ok with God, but they don't know what the Word says. Josiah gave ear to God's Word, and herein is the sign of his repentance, he's not a hearer only of the Word of God, a casual consentor, but rather he's a diligent doer of the Word, he bears the fruit of repentance.

Vs12-13

So he notices things are in need of repair, he rediscovers God's word, the word is read, and he repents and what's the net effect? He responds and reacts by refocusing, and *requesting* direction. "Go inquire of the Lord for me, see what we need to do to make this right, is there anything we can do to escape the wrath of God coming down upon us." And notice he's confessing the sins of his people, "They didn't obey the words of this book, according to all that's written in it." But the implication there is that "We will, they didn't do it, we don't know it, we want to know it, we're ready to apply it."

Vs14-20

Quick side note here; as for this woman prophetess I think we do well to see that the Lord was using this woman in a mighty way, just as he did so many other women throughout the scriptures. Think about it, Jeremiah was on the scene at this time, the book of Jeremiah opens up by saying, "*The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.*" Jer 1:1-2 Zephaniah was around at this time, "*The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.*" Zeph 1:1 But when these men were seeking after God's direction in *this* moment of crisis they didn't go to either of those *men*, but rather they went to Huldah the prophetess. And we spoke a bit Sunday morning about how some abuses in the church have caused an unfortunate backlash effect to an unhealthy extreme. And think this is another one, because the bible says that the woman isn't to have authority over a man, some groups suppress and oppress the women in the body. As though they have nothing profitable to say (or prophetess-able in this case), but that's radically untrue, the women are a major blessing to the body of Christ. Generally speaking the # of women that serve in the body, vastly out # the men.

You say, "Well what does that say for the men?" I think we all know what that says about the men. But the word of God poured forth powerfully, and profoundly from this woman, she wasn't serving as a temple priest, but that in no way belittled or somehow stifled the radical work that God was doing via His Word through her life. And she said, "Listen, there's been some sowing, they'll be some reaping, there's no escaping that."

But we want to focus on verse 19. How important it is to have a heart that's tender before the Lord, rather than tough, hard and calloused. And time will forbid us to look at a bunch of scripture but how the bible emphasizes the Lord's heart towards a *tender* heart, a heart that responds and reacts positively to His Word, to that person who has a poor and contrite spirit.

Mark it well, Josiah had a *tender* heart, and he *humbled* himself before the Lord when he came into the light of His Word, he tore his clothes (a rending of his heart) and wept before the Lord. All this to say that he was remorseful, genuinely repentant, humble and broken before the Lord. And what was the result? God would have mercy *upon* him and be gracious *unto* him. Would the nation still bear the judgment of God? Yes, but not in his day, God would in essence spare an entire generation for the sake of one man; imagine that. Can your life make a difference in the world around you, I would say emphatically “Yes.” We serve a just, who’s full of mercy and grace, and this becomes for us a perfect picture of the justice and grace of God at work, His holiness and righteous standard would be vindicated. But He always has mercy, and extends grace to the humble, the tender in heart, who repent in the light of His Word. And often times the work of repentance in your life will have a preserving effect in others lives and they may not even know it. God was showing mercy to the “worldly” for the sake of the righteous, sort of like sparing Sodom for the sake of Lot. God’s judgment upon the wicked was stayed because of the righteous. So he’s told that judgment is still coming, but that God will hold it off throughout his lifetime.

Now as we head into ch 23 we’re going to see more of how his inward repentance, resulted in outward response, and how these things that impacted him personally/privately he spoke of and lived out publicly.

Ch 23

Vs1-3

Here we’re just seeing articulated verbally what we’ve already seen in Josiah inwardly/personally. He wasn’t pointing the fingers at anyone else; he *realized* that a *renewal* of the covenant started with him. But note how his position became contagious, as he poured out his heart and made a covenant that he was going to follow the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, the people reacted to that, they were ready to get behind him, it’s beginning to spill out beyond him. We can’t start pointing out the splinters in our brother’s eye until we’ve 1st dealt with the log in our own; it begins with us. But there’s something contagious about a life sold out to Jesus Christ people want to get in on that, I know I do. When you meet someone who’s on fire for Christ, you just want to be around that person, let a little of that rub off on you, it’s refreshing, renewing. So he makes a stand, and then the people make a stand, what next?

Vs4-14

What’s this trying to tell us? That there was a *removal* of carnality, and the filth of idolatry in and around his life; maybe you’re thinking, “Well shouldn’t that be a little higher on the list?” I have found that the Spirit has a way of cleaning up a persons life in a much more effective manner than I can.

If I enforce something upon someone I've bound them in legalism, if they do it out of a response to the leading of the Spirit, or a reading of the Word, it becomes the overflow of a love relationship with God. If God showed you everything about your life right now that might be considered carnal, or imposing the threat of idolatry, whether you've walked with the Lord 2 weeks or 20 yrs or whatever, you'd die of cardiac arrest. But God deals with us little by little, removing this *here*, growing us *there*, stretching us still more in *this* area, dealing with us a little more about *that* area, showing us how we need to rid ourselves of the other thing. It's called growing and maturing in Christ, and often times there are deep seated things in people's hearts lives that we don't even know about, and we derail them because we don't just let the Lord have *His* way in them. Maybe you see them smoking and you think, "My that's a horrible witness" or they're standing in line to a rated "R" movie that you know is anything but healthy spiritually. And so you start railing them about that, but what you don't know is that they're pulling out of a radically destructive marriage, or drug addiction, or any # of scenarios, and I'm sure 1 day God will speak to them about smoking, or their selection of movies, but right now there are larger things on His mind. Josiah saw the need for repair, rediscovered the word, read it, repented, requested direction and instruction, responded outwardly to what was happening inwardly, renewed the covenant and removed carnality and idolatrous practices around his life. He just got rid of that stuff, the bible teaches us, "*Bad company corrupts good morals.*" 1 Cor 15:33 So he just removed it all.

In vs 7, "The ritual booths of the perverted persons" were basically little make shift bedrooms that were put together where people would go to engage in homosexual activity in the worship of their pagan gods with the male temple prostitutes right there in the Temple of the Lord. And where it speaks of burning altars, scattering ashes, filling places with the bones of men, the idea there is that he was defiling these places that the pagans considered sacred so that they'd quit coming around there and practicing their worship in those places. He'd destroy their altars, burn them down, take the bones of the dead and just scatter them in those places so as to keep people from continuing on in their practice in that place.

Vs15-18

So now he's taken this passion of his beyond his own borders, he's up in Israel territory there in Bethel, which tells us that the revival is spreading, now he's *reaching out*. Having removed the idolatry and carnality around him, now he's reaching out to other places.

Now in order to understand what's happening here in vs16-17 we need to go back about 320+ yrs prior to this point to what was happening in 1st Kings ch 13. It was at that time that kingdom split, Israel in the North, Judah in the south, and Jeroboam was worried that the people would return to Jerusalem yr by yr to sacrifice and eventually their heart would turn back to Judah and he'd be killed. So he set up these golden calves, one in Dan, and the other in Bethel and said, "Here worship here, no need to go to Jerusalem," and he placed an altar in Bethel that he offered sacrifices on.

And we read there, “*And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.*” 1 Kings 13:1-2
 Jeroboam said, “Arrest that man!” And when he stretched out his hand, it withered on the spot, then he said, “Pray for me, that my hand might be restored!” And the man of God did, and his hand was restored, Jeroboam sought to get him to stay, he said “No way, I’ve got to go, can’t eat or drink anything or even return the same way I came.” Well an old prophet lied to him on his way back, got him to turn in and stay, have some dinner.

Then the word of the Lord came to the old prophet telling him that since he’d disobeyed the word of the Lord he wouldn’t make it home but he’d die. Which he did by being torn by a lion, then the old prophet went and picked him up and buried him there in his own tomb and he felt so bad he said, “When I die bury me by this young man.”

Well Josiah is defiling this altar now some 320+yrs later and he comes across this grave and says, “Whose bones are these?” And they told him the story, so he said, “Leave these alone and no one move his bones.”

What I want you to see here is that at this point he recognized God had a foreordained plan for his life. He didn’t even know the story, and yet God had called him by name over 300 yrs earlier regarding His plan for his life. And the bible teaches that God has known you from before the foundations of the earth, and that before you were formed in the womb He knew you. The book of Eph tells us, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” Eph 2:10 So realize and recognize that God has a plan for your life, not just random happenstance. And notice Josiah wasn’t being all spiritual, he was just doing what he needed to do to follow through on His commitments to the Lord, He was on fire for God, and what do you know, he found himself walking in the foreordained will of God for his life and he didn’t even know it.

Vs19-23

Now we love to hear about this, the remembrance and reinstatement of the Passover, because it’s all about the Lamb of God, the life given through the shedding of His blood, the giving of His life that we might not know death, Josiah says, “We need to remember that.” Just like Jesus said that as often as we eat that bread, and drink that cup we do so in remembrance of Him, proclaiming His death till He comes.

Vs24-25

What was the net effect of all of these “R” words that we’ve applied to his life? “Repair, rediscovery, reading, repenting, renewing, removing, reaching out, realizing God’s plan, and remembering the Passover.” He was *renown* for living *radically* for God. That was his legacy, he was radical for God, unlike anyone before him, or anyone after him, I wonder what your legacy will be, what mine will be?

Vs26-34

So he was basically a puppet king whom the Pharaoh didn’t care for so he carted him off to Egypt where he was either put to death or imprisoned till he died and the Pharaoh put his brother Eliakim on the throne in his place. The changing of his name basically signified that he (Pharaoh) had authority over him and could dictate to him, and that Eliakim was in submission to him.

Vs35-37

And now the judgment of God will fall, He didn’t judge in the days of Josiah, but in the succeeding generation He will. It won’t actually be his son that’s taken captive into Babylon but 3 months into his grandson’s reign the heavy hand of God will fall just as He said.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You are a gracious and merciful God, true to Your word, yet tender in mercy, desiring to dispense grace. Lord we pray that You would start a revival in us, that we’d see the areas you want to repair, that we’d rediscover Your Word. That we’d hunger and thirst after Your word, that we’d be a people of repentance, demonstrating outwardly the convictions You’ve placed in us inwardly. That we’d remove idolatry and carnality from our lives, and reach out to others realizing that You have a plan for our lives. And may we never lose sight, but always remember You Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God who’s taken away our sin. And may we live radical lives for you, in these dark days, that Your love might be infectious through us.