

JOSIAH: STEPS TO SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

(2 KINGS 22-23)

INTRODUCTION:

1. In the 90's in Key West, Florida, a 78-year-old man took two months to notice that his roommate was dead. He told the police, "...the guy was very stubborn and wouldn't answer him."
2. We need to avoid that happening in our own lives—being dead without others even knowing.
 - A. We can become spiritually cold or empty and end up accomplishing little for the Lord.
 - B. Or worse, we can unknowingly end up being spiritually dead in the bondage of sin.
3. If you suspect this might be true of you, let's consider king Josiah and how he drastically changed himself and those around him for the cause of God and righteousness (2 Kings. 22:1-2).
 - A. As just ONE man, he showed great courage and changed the course of a nation and brought about an unfortunately short-lived spiritual renewal to a corrupt, idolatrous people.
 - B. How did he accomplish this? Let us take some time to consider his STEPS TO SPIRITUAL RENEWAL and how they might apply to our lives.

BODY:

I. Like Josiah, we must recognize our responsibility to do what was right.

- A. This is important because our culture has lost its sense of responsibility—always giving some excuse or reason why our behavior not our fault...and Christians are not immune. We are responsible for our own spiritual well-being in connection with God's grace!
- B. As proof, consider Josiah's tragic heritage.
 1. His grandfather was *Manasseh*, a wicked man who committed idolatrous abominations, worshipped Baal and the "host of heaven," sacrificed his son, practiced witchcraft and mysticism, while also shedding much innocent blood (2 Kings 21:1-6, 9, 16).
 2. His father *Amon* did the same (2 Kings 21:20-21).
 - a. It was a dark time to be born and if Josiah had turned out wicked, no one would have been surprised and our society would not have blamed him!
 - b. But, God would have blamed Him!
 3. For, as is true today, He didn't have to follow suit **and he didn't!** He defied the odds, reversed the trend, and did what was RIGHT, imitating David instead.
 - a. He chose to change himself and to change the things around him.
 - b. For, when he became king the Temple was in disarray, the Law lost, and the people were idolaters. But, by the end of his thirty-one year reign the temple had been repaired, the idols destroyed, and God's law was once again in its place of prominence and power!
 4. We cannot blame others for what we are *right now*.
 - a. We may want to fill our thoughts with "if onlys," but that is self-defeating!
 - b. We likely all could have had it better—more money, greater opportunities, etc.!
- C. What we need to understand is that our parents may have given us...
 1. Our genetics, but God has given us His grace. We must decide what we will do with it!
 2. Our body, but we must decide whether to give God charge of our life and soul.
 - a. Like Josiah, you cannot change your family's history, but you can control the way you live and what path you take. Living a better life in serving God is up to YOU!
 - b. Illustration: Viktor Frankl observed in his time in the Nazi concentration camps that "Even in the most horrid situations, where people are totally controlled, there is one thing that can't be controlled. They cannot control your ability to do what is right. They can't do it. Nobody has that power over anybody." **So, my friends, we can always fulfill our responsibility to do right!**

II. Like Josiah, we must determine to seek the Lord!

- A. Josiah at age of 16 turned to serve God during a time of complete depravity in Israel (2 Chron. 34:3 – “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.”).
 1. While most were making the decision to go the opposite way, he began to seek the Lord, resulting in decisive action and sweeping changes. He accomplished great things for God!
 2. He did this by making a COVENANT, or commitment, to God (2 Kings 23:2-3 – “...And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord. ³ Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.”).
 3. 2 Kings 23:25 says he “turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might,” which is what it takes to change us and change our world.
 4. There is great power in the decision to do right and continue to do so!
- B. How do we *seek* the Lord?
 1. As was true of Josiah, and as was promised in Jeremiah 29:13, “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”
 2. Seeking the Lord with all our heart involves action, not just by being morally good, not just by worshipping every Sunday, or just by calling yourself a Christian (Matt. 7:21); we must give our time, effort, and resources to accomplish God’s will, trusting that His will is greater than ours and that He will reward us for doing so!
 - a. We can’t sit around all day thinking about what we would do for God if we had this or that. For, God is going to ask you what you did with what you had!
 - b. We must ask ourselves if we are the “blessed,” or “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” for “**they shall be filled**” (Matt. 5:6). If we want to be filled, it is time for each of us to contribute something significant to God’s cause!
 3. Josiah *was only one person*, but he was dedicated to seeking God and doing right and he changed a nation! Who or what will you—one person—change and do? For, as Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

III. Like Josiah, rediscover God’s word:

- A. What began this national revival was that someone found God’s law while repairing the temple (2 Kings 22:8-10).
 1. Think about the fact that the word of God had been *lost* among God’s people!
 2. What the world has failed to do (destroy God’ word), His people, you and me, can do by simply pushing it aside, forgetting it, or neglecting it.
- B. When Josiah heard the reading of the word of the Lord, he listened and allowed it to change him.
 1. His *response* was righteous fear and earnest zeal to do God’s will (2 Kings 22:11-13 – “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. ¹² Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, ¹³ “Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”).
 2. What he heard translated into action, seeking for those of his kingdom to hear the Law and to make a covenant, as we have read, to keep it (2 Kings 23:1-4).

3. Because his heart was right and he heard God word and obeyed, God blessed Him (2 Kings 22:19-20 – “because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,” says the Lord. ²⁰ “Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.”).
4. So, like Josiah, we need to do more than just read the word. We need to listen to it, hear it, allowing it to enter our hearts that we might do what pleases God (Jas. 1:21-22 – “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”).

IV. Like Josiah, reform your behavior!

- A. Like Josiah when he tore down and destroyed the idols, the alters, and the false places of worship, we must tear down old ways of sin, doubt, and rebellion, eliminating anything that hinders us from being spiritual, saving souls, and visiting/supporting our brethren and others (Eph. 4:22-24 – “that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”).
- B. Even if it means turning against the ways of all around us, as did Josiah, we must tear it all down and build up righteousness.

V. Like Josiah, rebuild your life.

- A. Josiah not only eliminated the evil, but after doing so he worked to repair the Temple and restore what was lacking (2 Chronicles 34:8 – “In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.”).
 1. His rebuilding focused on God and His dwelling place
 2. And, our rebuilding must focus on **providing a proper heart** in which God may dwell.
- B. As we eliminate the negatives, let us seek to put on the “new man” in Christ, being renewed in the mind by the knowledge of Christ (Col. 3:9-10 – “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”).

CONCLUSION:

1. So, my friends, you can’t just sit there. You must grow, build, and rebuild for God.
2. If you are outside of Christ and you realize your need for spiritual renewal, the forgiveness of the sins that condemn your soul to eternal pain and suffering, then Christ is the answer.
3. Truly trust and obey Him and you can be saved – B-R-C-B-LF. If you have not lived faithfully, repent and return and be renewed!