

2 Chronicles 31-32

As we fall back into the flow of 2nd Chronicles Ch 31 we enter into the scene of an incredible restoration/celebration, in fact a rededication of the kingdom of Judah along with no small number of people from the northern kingdom of Israel joining in as a result of the extension of King Hezekiah's invitation. It was an invitation to repentance; the northern kingdom had been in rebellion against the Lord for generations. There were multitudes of people who'd never even so much as heard the word of God; their lives were marked by idolatry, self indulgence, sin and rebellion. But as Hezekiah reached out to them we see the heart of God toward mankind in that it doesn't matter where you've been, it doesn't matter what you've done, it doesn't matter how old you are, how young you are, if you're willing to come to God in repentance He'll *receive* you, *forgive* you, His arms are outstretched *toward* you. Remember Jesus said, "...*the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*" John 6:37 He said, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Matt 11:28 and Again, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*" John 7:37 This is the invitation, that if you're tired and heavy laden, burdened by the ways of this world, if you're thirsting for more than what this world has to offer, then come to Christ and He'll receive you, wash and cleanse you, and make you right in His sight. Hezekiah sent out the invitation, "We're humbling ourselves before God, repenting of our sin and getting right with God and if you'll but come and join us He'll receive you to." and So the people came, and they prepared their hearts to seek the Lord, they were taught the good knowledge *of* the Lord, and God was just healing them, moving in them, working restoration and renewal in them. And God is still in the business today of giving new life to all who trust in Him, who will come to Him, humble themselves before Him, and receive His forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ.

You remember they celebrated the Passover. That feast that celebrated their deliverance from being slaves in Egypt, and they were told to take a lamb, to kill it, place some of it's blood over the doorposts and lintels of their homes and as the angel passed over the land all who were under the blood of the Lamb would be spared the judgment of death. And through that God judged the land of Egypt, the sentence of death upon the 1st born of all who weren't under the covering of the blood of the lamb. But the children of Israel were spared being as it were "under the blood," and they were set free. And all of that simply foreshadowed the work of Christ on behalf of this world which is enslaved to sin. But the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) has been slain, His blood shed, and now if we will but by faith receive the blood of the Lamb to cover the doorposts and lintel of the door of our heart we're spared the judgment of death and separation from God and given life in Christ Jesus. What a cause for celebration, for jubilation and that's what's happening here in our text, the people have come to God, they've acknowledged their forgiveness by faith in His provision for them, and they're just rejoicing in His grace, His mercy, and His goodness toward their lives.

For 2 weeks the nation had an endless BBQ, music was playing, the people were praying, praising God, and getting in His Word, it's been a *revival*, now for the *response*, notice.

Or another way to understand this in “NT” terminology they “bore fruits” worthy of repentance; there he was J.B. preaching to and teaching the people when the Pharisees and Sadducees showed up on the scene. He saw them lingering in the crowd and began to cry out, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.”

In other words, “Don’t just talk the talk, walk the walk.” Your life, my life is to reflect our confession of Christ. You see what’s happening here is that their lives were changed as the result of their being in the presence of the Lord, humbling themselves and repenting before the Lord. They “cleaned house,” got rid of those things that were jockeying for the position and priority of God in their lives. They threw that junk out that would only drag them down and do them in spiritually. You can not come to Christ but that He won’t somehow, and in some way change your life, both inwardly, but then also practically outwardly. There will be some things that got go, and other things that begin to take place that prior to that point hadn’t. Before you had no interest in God’s Word, now you find yourself curious, hungry, longing to know what God has to say to you, Jesus will add that drive, that desire to your life. You used to not think too much about praying, now you can’t imagine a life that didn’t involve consistent, persistent prayer and communion with God. Jesus changes your life. Paul put it like this, “*But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*” Col 3:8-9 In Christ those things are done away with, we no longer walk in those things. But it’s not simply a matter of having certain things “subtracted” from your life, it’s also a matter of having other things “added” to your life. You see we “put off” the things we just mentioned, but we “put on” other things in their place. Listen, “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*” Col 3:12-15 Jesus changes your life, and it’s all for the better; both presently, but also more importantly eternally.

Vs2-3

The idea here being that we’re not to think of what happened as a 1 time isolated event. Hezekiah wanted to ensure that his kingdom was in compliance with the word of God in an ongoing, enduring state. Once the feast was ended he appointed the divisions of the priests so that things were in order as they were back in the days of David. That they might serve, give thanks, and offer praise in the camp of the Lord. Regular priestly service was re-instituted including sacrifice, general service and worship. Of course we could get into the fact that having been called as a royal priesthood unto our God our lives should be marked by the same things. Sacrifice, service, and worship, not because we “have to” we’re not under the law. But because there’s such an overflow of love from our hearts toward the Lord that how can we not? How can we not serve Him, how can we not sacrifice for Him, how can we not worship Him?

He's loved us, given Himself for us, and now "God here's my life in return I offer it up to You to use me as You see fit, a living sacrifice holy and acceptable, it's my reasonable service (or worship)."

And we see Hezekiah leading by example when it came to having things set in their proper order both personally and nationally in appointing a portion of his personal possessions to the work of the restoration of temple service. As a leader how can you expect your people to be willing to do something, or be behind something that you yourself aren't? If you want to be the greatest in the kingdom you're to be, I'm to be the servant of all, we're to lead by example, so that others around us might see what it looks like to have Christ at work in us, Hezekiah did just that.

Vs4-7

There was such an outpouring of response from the people that it took them 4 months to gather in the provision that God was making for the ministry. Hezekiah reinstated the tithe according to the law and the people responded with rejoicing.

Now we spent quite a bit of time on this subject in 2nd Cor 8-9 recently so we won't tackle it too deeply tonight. Suffice it to say that we realize, we recognize what's going on here is a sign that these people are spiritually healthy and responding generously to the work of the ministry. What was the point of the tithe? Notice Vs 4, it was support for the priests and Levites that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. Now the law stated very plainly that the tithe was God's, but God gave it to the priests and Levites to sustain them and bless them in their service to Him in the ministry. Now if you didn't give the tithe you weren't ripping of the priests you were robbing God, because it's His, He chose to give it to those who ministered on His behalf vocationally.

But we've noted before that one sign of a healthy body of believers, is that they're givers. And that will be represented in their lives personally, and in the body collectively. And the reason we can state that with such authority isn't only because it's a matter of obedience to the word of God specifically, but it also illustrates the heart of God at work in your life individually. God is a giver, what do we have but that we haven't received it? He gives us richly all things to enjoy, life, our next breath, hobbies, nature, obviously and most importantly even His only begotten Son. He's so loved us that He gave to us Jesus Christ to die on our behalf so that by faith in Him He could *give* us eternal life with Him. God is a giver, there's no way around it, and He's the same yesterday, today, and forever, so that if He's alive and at work in my heart and in my life, if it's truly no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, I'll be a giver as well. Hezekiah said, "It's time to get back to obeying the word of God, we're to give the tithe so that those who minister on behalf of the Lord can do so with out worry wondering where their next meal is coming from, out there tilling the fields so that they're distracted from the study of the Word of God."

If they were out in the secular work force so that they could live, they couldn't study as they needed to, the result being the spiritual health and well being of the people would diminish because they would be unable to effectively teach the people God's Word, God's ways, His heart toward them, His love for them. And so it was critical for the spiritual health of the nation that the people bring the tithe to the storehouse, that place that nourished them spiritually. And they did so with joy, it wasn't an obligation in their heart, but an opportunity to lay up treasure eternally.

Vs8-10

Hezekiah came to see how things were going and he saw all these heaps of grain and various aspects of the tithe and it just blessed him and blew his mind. Not only because of the generosity, but because it was validating the work and moving of the Spirit among them. The priests and ministers of the Lord having been so long neglected now are being provided for in abundance.

Vs11-15

Few things here briefly, 1st of all we want to note Hezekiah's understanding that with God's provision comes proper management. Vs 12 tells us that they brought the tithes into the storerooms "faithfully," and notice again in Vs 15 the mention of the assistants as being "faithful." So both faithful *management*, and faithful *managers* of God's resources; Paul wrote in 1 Cor 4:2, "*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*" If God has entrusted to you a stewardship (which He has to some degree each and every one of us) then you are and I am to be found faithful. There in the latter portion of Matt 24, and in Ch 25 Jesus speaks of the importance of being found faithful as a steward of that which God has entrusted to you.

Also in Vs 14 we note as to where the tithe was required by the law you could also bring a free will offering to the Lord. The tithe is God's, anything I give beyond that is of my own freewill, both were happening here.

Vs16-18

You see there's that word "faithfulness" again. God is big on faithfulness, commitment and holiness. And we note that they were providing for those who were written in the genealogies perhaps because suddenly there were all kinds of people "called" to the ministry. It suddenly seemed lucrative so there were priests and Levites coming out of the woodworks, but it's not a career choice, it's a calling. So if they weren't in the genealogy they weren't paid. And we noted the wives and children were provided for as well. They could've been out in the workforce making money for the family but due to the nature of their calling they were to be provided for through the ministry again so that the whole family could be given over to that which God had called them to. They sanctified themselves, were set apart to the Lord in holiness.

Vs19-21

We love what we're seeing in Hezekiah up to this point. His chief concern isn't political power, or prestige, but in doing what was *good* and *right* and *true* before the Lord his God. And everything he did to seek the Lord, be it in the service of the house of God, or in the law, or in the commandment he did it with *all his heart*. So he prospered. In other words God blessed his life, his reign because he was seeking 1st the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Placing God as the highest priority of his life. How important it is that we give the Lord the "1st fruits" the very best of our lives, that what we do for Him, and in His name we do it with all our heart that He might be glorified and magnified in and through our lives.

Ch 32

Vs1

Ok, we need to stop here for a minute because this is something important. Our tendency is to look at Hezekiah and his deeds of faithfulness, his priority on seeking 1st the Kingdom, serving the Lord with all his heart and draw the conclusion that that somehow grants him general amnesty or immunity from enemy onslaught, or attack. How often we think when we're in this season of just serving, seeking the Lord, giving ourselves whole heartedly over *to* the Lord that nothing can go wrong, God has our back. And we think it strange, almost unfair when trials or affliction visits us. Because we have a tendency to think that things go wrong only when we deserve it so we start thinking, "What did I do to deserve this?"

But in reality the enemy probably won't bother you as long as you're *unfaithful*, or *not* seeking the Lord with all your heart, as long as God isn't your priority, you're not the enemy's priority. But once there's been *repentance*, there's been *revival*, there's been a positive *response* to the word and ways of God, one thing you can count on is enemy *resistance*. Peter said, "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*" 1 Peter 4:12 Yet whenever a fiery trial tries us we think, "Man this is strange, what have I done?" Perhaps you've served the Lord your God with all your heart, all your strength, and all your mind and because of that the enemy is upon you, encamped against you. So don't think that when you come to Christ, or submit yourself to serving Christ that all your problems will be over. To the contrary you have a whole new batch of them. But they're temporary, you've been forgiven of your sin and have everlasting life in Christ. The light afflictions of this life aren't worthy to be compared to the eternal weight of glory that is to be revealed in us.

Vs2-4

So when the attack was preparing to come upon him the 1st thing he did was take inventory and make sure there wasn't anything he was doing that would enable the enemy to wage war more effectively against him.

People need water, so all the wells outside the city he had stopped up, that way he wasn't supplying the Assyrian army with resources he could use against him. When the enemy is upon you make sure you're not in some way supplying him with a way to effectively engage you. Availing tools to him he can use against you, get rid of those things that might strengthen his position. He depleted resources that the enemy might use against him. But then he also bolstered his personal defenses, notice.

Vs5

So he did what he need to in order to weaken the enemy's position while simultaneously strengthening his, repairing breaches in the wall, raising up towers. When the enemy is upon you take close inventory of the walls and towers of the word of God and prayer in your life. Repair the breaches, build them up and fortify them. Now some might argue that he did all of this because of a lack of faith, I say it was the overflow of his faith, he put feet to his faith, you do your best and commit the rest to the Lord. If you want a job you don't sit there and wait on your phone to ring, man you get out there and get applications in and you trust the Lord to do the work. He raised up towers, built up the walls, depleted resources the enemy could use, but for all that he knew wherein the victory would be found.

Vs6-8

The psalmist put it like this, *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God."* Ps 20:7 John said it like this, *"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."* 1 John 4:4 There are more with you than there are with the enemy, not only because you and God make a majority but even numerically Satan is out matched 2 to 1. When he rebelled he took 1/3 of the angels with him, that leaves 2/3 to your defense. It's only going to take 1 of them to throw him into the abyss so we're not to fear the enemy. Remember there was Elisha and his servant in the cave surrounded by the Syrian army. His servant was freaking out, "We're surrounded, we're going to die!" Elisha said, "Don't worry, there's more with us than there are with him." and Elisha said, "Lord open his eyes that he might see." and He looked and all around the Mts were chariots of fire surrounding the Syrian army. God's got your back, "W/him is the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us fight our battles."

Vs9-12

Now in reality all he's doing is displaying his lack of understanding of the word of God. He knew that Hezekiah had made these broad reforms, had the high places of worship torn down and all. But in his mind that must've made God mad at Hezekiah, when in reality it was God's Word that caused Hezekiah to tear them down in the 1st place. But the accuser has a way of causing us to doubt, and discourage us from following God's word. "Maybe we shouldn't have done that, after all now the enemy is upon us, things aren't looking good." Hey, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.

Vs13-14

The Assyrians were an incredibly cruel and calloused kind of people. They would skin people alive, as they prepared to siege a city they would take the heads of the people they'd killed in previous cities and impale them on stakes all around the city. They were just ruthless, and sought to strike terror into the hearts of the people they were preparing to do battle with. And so he's all, "Don't you know who we are? What we've done to the people's of other lands? Don't let Hezekiah deceive you into thinking your God is going to deliver you anymore than the gods of the other people delivered them."

Vs15-19

Which was obviously a big mistake, it's one thing to malign a man (as bad as that is) but this guy purposefully taunts the Lord, he's invoking God to come against him if He can. "These other gods couldn't deliver how much less will Hezekiah's God deliver?" and They were mocking God and seeking to play these mental games with the people.

Now it should be said that though it doesn't mention it here Hezekiah didn't do everything perfectly here. The record in 2 Kings shows us that he tried to pay off the king of Assyria 1st, but you can't buy the enemy off, it didn't really even delay his attack. He also sought an alliance from Egypt, the whole time Isaiah the prophet telling him to trust in the Lord and not in man. But now Hezekiah is at a point whereby he doesn't know what else to do, so now...

Vs20-23

Sennacherib boasted that God couldn't deliver...God delivered. We're told in 2 Kings 19 that in one night the angel of the Lord went through and wiped out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. I mean deliverance of this scale is right up there with the parting of the Red Sea, not a single arrow was shot from the enemy. God destroyed his army and he went home shame faced, 15-20yrs later his own sons killed him in the temple of his god (imagine that, his god couldn't deliver him). No god can deliver like our God, He lifts us up out of the miry clay and sets our feet on the solid rock of Jesus Christ Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed, the Lord heard and delivered Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrian army. Is there anything too hard for God? He makes a way when there is no way.

Now Assyria was a world power, so when they were defeated all these nations were like, "Ding Dong the witch is dead" and so they sent gifts and presents to Hezekiah and he was exalted in the sight of the nations.

Vs24-26

Again you'd have to read the Kings account to get the full story, he was going to die. Isaiah told him to set his house in order he was going to die. He turned his head to the wall cried out to God, asked Him to remember him for all the good he'd done, God healed him. He turned the shadow on the sun-dial back 10 degrees as a sign that He'd given him 15 more yrs to live. Now in all fairness it would've probably been better had he submitted himself to the will of God for the end of his days rather than cry out for an extension.

Because it was during that last 15 yrs of his life that he had Manasseh, the single most wicked king Judah ever knew and Hezekiah was never really the same after his healing. He failed his final spiritual exam (so to speak) by boasting before the Babylonian representatives of his riches, showing them to them. And so they went back told Nebuchadnezzar and as you know it wasn't long after that before the Babylonians came and took them in to captivity and took all the riches to themselves. It's not wrong to make our petitions known to God, but how important it is to be resolved that "not my will, but Your will be done nonetheless." Had Hezekiah died at his appointed time none of those things would've happened.

Vs27-33

The true test of our character is who we are when we're alone, when we don't think anyone is watching and what's really in our heart comes out. God is watching, but Hezekiah failed that test. Started well, would've ended well but that final 15 yrs didn't fare well for him. Oh I'm certain we'll see him on the other side but how important it is to be resolved to God's 1st choice for us. We can't improve upon God's design for our lives, we can only make matters worse. But God is faithful, and though he didn't do so hot at the end, he was overall an incredible influence for godliness in the nation and God used him in an amazing way. God can take and use the likes of you and me, imperfect people, to accomplish His perfect plan if we'll simply submit and surrender our lives to Him.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your goodness, for Your grace and for Your mercy that never fails us. We thank You for Your Word, for Your encouragement to us, help us to finish well, to be good and faithful servants, humble, usable, always decreasing that You might be increasing in our lives. We ask that Your word would bring forth fruit in our lives, accomplishing the purpose for which You've sent if forth.