

When You Heard His Words

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Preacher: Colin Horne

[0 : 00] Before we hear God's word preached, let's turn to the book of Chronicles, 2 Chronicles. It's about a third of the way through the Bible. If you find Samuel, 1 and 2 Samuel, then 1 and 2 Kings, and then 1 and 2 Chronicles.

2 Chronicles chapter 34. 2 Chronicles chapter 34. Pastor Colin is going to be preaching on the following verses of this passage.

So listen for the context as we read verses 1 through 13. 2 Chronicles 34, verse 1 through 13. Let's hear God's word read.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 31 years. He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols, and cast images.

[1 : 16] Under his direction, the altars of the Baals were torn down. He cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them and smashed the Asherah poles, the idols and the images.

These he broke in pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem in the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins round about them.

He tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah, and Masiah, the ruler of the city, with Joah, son of Joah, Haz, the recorder, to repair the temple of the Lord his God.

They went to Hilkiah, the high priest, and gave him the money that had been brought into the temple of God, which the Levites, who were the doorkeepers, had collected from the people of Manasseh, Ephraim, and the entire remnant of Israel, and from all the people of Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

[2 : 34] Then they entrusted it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the Lord's temple. These men paid the workers who repaired and restored the temple. They also gave money to the carpenters and builders to purchase dressed stone and timber for joists and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin.

The men did the work faithfully. Over them to direct them were Jehath and Obadiah. Levites descended from Merari and Zechariah, and Meshulam descended from Kohath.

The Levites, all who were skilled in playing musical instruments, had charge of the laborers and supervised all the workers from job to job. Some of the Levites were secretaries, scribes, and doorkeepers.

Amen. Let's hear the word of God preached. We do have much to give thanks to God for this morning, and I especially want to even just testify and give thanks to God for Grace Baptist Church. Thankful for the 10 years that he's given them as a church to have constituted. Because Casey and I were members there for four years, and so we can say that the Lord is doing a good work there.

[3 : 50] We are thankful for the time that we had with them. So, praise be to God, and indeed may his word go forth with power this morning as Pastor John preaches there. We are in 2 Chronicles 34.

And we did just, we just received, we heard the word, and as it was read, we got the context for the verses we'll be in this morning.

You would have thought maybe I just had it read so that I wouldn't have to read all of those names, but it wasn't just that. Thank you, Sam, for doing that, brother. So, we're in 2 Chronicles 34. Well, if you do a quick search online, and you trust what you read online, which is debatable at times, you can find some pretty obscure laws that are still on the books in Indiana, at least according to the Indianapolis Star in 2021.

So, don't hold me to this. So, pay attention, because you might be breaking the law, and you don't even know it. Now, some of you like to fish. I don't, so I don't have to worry about this law.

[4 : 58] But some of you like to fish. You need to know it is against the law to fish with your bare hands. I have no idea why. That doesn't make any sense to a man like me who doesn't fish.

Like, isn't that harder to catch fish with your bare hands? Like, why would you go and do that? But that's the law. Don't do it. Also, don't use dynamite to catch fish, or to kill fish, or to obliterate fish. Don't use dynamite without a permit. If you have a permit, you can use dynamite, and it's legal. That is a weird, obscure law in Indiana.

There are some other obscure laws that pertain to towns. Bremen, I found none, so good job, Bremen. But Warsaw, my former home, has some obscure laws. One of those is that you can't throw snowballs across the street.

That's illegal, to throw snowballs across the street. I guess there's some rationale there. It could be distracting to drivers. But it still feels kind of odd. Now, I'm pretty sure that most of you were unaware of these obscure laws.

[6 : 07] And it makes sense. These are not laws that we are thinking about on a regular basis. I am not going around trying to catch fish with my hands. I'm not bringing dynamite to the local fishing site to blow up fish.

They don't matter much to our day-to-day lives. You could have gone the rest of your life and never known that information and been just as well off. But what if these laws did matter to us?

What if they were of great consequence? Life and death laws. What then if you didn't know those laws? That's a more disconcerting thought.

That is a more troubling thought. We chuckle at these obscure laws because we don't really need to know them. But knowing laws that could impact our lives immensely, that's no laughing matter.

Well, Israel needed to know God's laws. And as we're going to see in our passage this morning, they didn't. Israel didn't know God's laws because Israel didn't have God's word.

[7 : 22] And we're going to see this morning how Israel responded when God's word was rediscovered. When God's word was found once more. Now, we don't need God's laws to be rediscovered.

We have it this morning. You've heard it read this morning. It's being preached even now. We have his laws in his word. But like Israel, we need to consider this.

How do we respond? How do we respond to having God's word today? Well, we're going to see three responses this morning that arise from our text.

Three responses. Here's the first response. Be thankful because you've been given the word of God. Be thankful because you've been given the word.

Let's read together verses 14 to 18 of our passage. While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord given through Moses.

[8 : 32] Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. Shaphan brought the book to the king and further reported to the king, All that was committed to your servants they are doing.

They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the Lord and have given it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen. Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.

And Shaphan read from it before the king. So the law was far from the minds of the people in Josiah's day.

When we come to this text, they have not had God's laws. Now that doesn't mean that the spirit was absent. We see that the spirit was very much at work.

In the verses that were read for context, we saw that Josiah had come to rule on the throne at just the age of eight. But God's hand was upon him.

[9 : 39] And he ruled by doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He walked in the ways of David. He didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left hand.

He was living out the wisdom of God in Proverbs 4. So, verses 25 to 27. So, Josiah, he had not swerved to the right or to the left.

He had walked straight in God's ways, even without God's laws. He was seeking to live in obedience with what he knew. And so, at the age of 20, we saw that Josiah was reforming the nation.

He was getting rid of all of the idols. He was bringing an end to idol worship. And he was going to great, great lengths to do that. But he purged Judah.

He purged Jerusalem of the high places and all of the idols that were associated with it. He was chopping down altars. He was cutting down altars. He was grinding them down to a powder and putting them on the graves of the priests who had served there.

[11 : 02] Josiah was serious about worshiping the one true living God. He was serious about putting away the gods that had been served under previous kings.

And we see this serious-mindedness of Josiah even further in the temple. He took the money that was brought into the temple, and he did what perhaps seems very logical.

He put it into improving upon the temple, repairing the temple, doing restoration work. But not every king had done that in Israel's past. Not every king had taken the money and put it to good use in the temple.

Ahaz was a previous king of Judah. And he had taken the money that was brought into the temple, but instead of using it for the Lord, he gave it as tribute to the king of Assyria.

He gave it as tribute to the king of a nation that worshipped false gods, that would set up high places. He said, here's money that we'll give to you.

[12 : 06] And so Ahaz had taken that money that belonged to God, but we read in 2 Chronicles 28-29 that it did not help him. It didn't help him.

It was a futile effort. King Josiah was very different. He made sure that what belonged to God was used for God. So the temple was repaired.

The temple was restored. That's the focus of verses 8 through 13. And so it's in that setting, as the work on the temple is being done, that this great discovery is made.

A book is found. A book is discovered. Now Israel had been without the law of the Lord for some time. The last that we read of it in the account of 2 Chronicles was in the time of Hezekiah's reign. And that would have been Josiah's great-grandfather. So at least 50 years had passed without the law. Not just the fact that it wasn't being read.

[13 : 12] Not the fact that it just wasn't being explicitly obeyed and followed. They were going without even knowledge, it seems, that it existed. It seems like God's people had no clue about God's Word.

That there was actually a book that contained His laws. There was actually a book that told us of who He is and how to live in relationship to Him. Now from the human perspective in our verses, it seems as though the leaders of Israel literally stumbled on the Word of God.

Now we know, of course, God was sovereignly ordering even the very steps of the leaders that found the law. We know that there are no coincidences or lucky breaks in God's sovereign plans. But from our human perspective, they had stumbled upon it. They weren't looking for it. They were working on the temple. And they found it by accident. And its discovery didn't seem to leave much of an impression on the leaders of Israel.

I mean, at least Hilkiah called it the book of the law of the Lord given through Moses. At least he showed it that much respect. But there doesn't seem to be this reverent awe, this conviction, this joy, this exuberance that we have found God's law.

[14 : 39] I mean, how did Shaphan put it when he presented the book to King Josiah? Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.

A book. Could you sound any more disinterested? Could you sound any less enthused? I have a book to give to you. Hilkiah found it.

So again, it seems like Shaphan had no idea what book he was holding. Not the book. Not this book. Not God's book.

A book. And just when Shaphan came to give his report to the king, when he did that, he didn't make the discovery of this book top priority.

He explained everything else that had been going on. The work is progressing as you had hoped. Let me give an update on that. The money has been going as it should be going. Oh, by the way, here's a book. Let me add in that last detail.

[15:39] Wouldn't you want to lead with that bit of information? Wouldn't you be bursting with excitement and passion and enthusiasm? We have God's message to us.

God has spoken to us. We have all that God has said here about himself and about how to relate to him. It's good. It's beautiful. It's right. It's true.

Here it is. I have it. This changes everything. Josiah, let me read it to you. I have to read it to you. But that's not the response. That's not the response that we read of. Instead, here's a book. How often do we give the same treatment to God's word?

Here's a book. Look, we may not say it as Shaphan did, but are we any more enthused about it than he was?

[16:39] Are we any more impassioned? We have God's word. So be thankful. Be thankful that you've been given the word.

What a joy. What a joy that we have God's revelation to us in our language, that we can understand it, that we can read it, and we can think on it.

God was under no obligation whatsoever to reveal himself to us. He did not have to do it. It was all in his kindness that he said, here's who I am.

Here's what it means to know me. So be thankful that God has given you his word. It is life-giving. By it, God nourishes our souls.

It is to be treasured. Young people, young people, look and listen. Love God's word.

[17:43] It is the best revelation you could ever receive. It is the best news that you could ever have. God's word.

What a gift to us. Because in it, God shows us the beauty and the majesty and the wonder of his son, Jesus Christ. So let's be thankful that we've been given God's word.

It is not just a book. It is God's book. That's the first response that we see here to having the word. Let's look at the second response together.

Response number two. Be sobered. You will be held accountable for the word because you know it. Be sobered.

You will be held accountable for what you know of God's word. Read with me. Beginning in verse 19. And when the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.

[18:44] And the king commanded Hilkiyah, Ahicham, the son of Shaphan, Abdon, the son of Micah, Shaphan, the secretary, and Asaiah, the king's servant, saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah concerning the words of the book that has been found.

For great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us. Because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do according to all that is written in this book.

So Hilkiyah and those whom the priest had sent went to Huldah, the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tokhath, son of Hazra, keeper of the wardrobe.

Now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter and spoke to her to that effect. And she said to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Tell the man who sent you to me, thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah.

Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the words of their hands. Therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.

[20:00] But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, Thus shall you say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Regarding the words that you have spoken, Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants.

And you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me. I also have heard you, declares the Lord. Behold, 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 disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants.

And they brought back word to the king. So have you grown overly familiar with the Bible? You read it like chaffin, perhaps unenthused.

You read it and you carry on with your life. You read it, but you don't really take in what you are reading or what you are hearing. How easy it is to become numb to God's word.

So Josiah's response is sobering for us. First, he listened to the word. He listened intently as it was read.

[21 : 16] You can imagine that his eyes were not glazing over. He wasn't nodding off to sleep because he understood this is no ordinary book. This is not just a history that I'm reading.

This is not just any book that has been found. It is God's book. And so he was careful to hear all that was read to him from it. And then, Josiah, he tore his clothes.

He was so grieved by what he heard that he tore his clothes. He was cut to the heart because he had recognized. He had recognized the sin of Israel.

He recognized that the nation, including himself, was guilty of great offense against God. And he recognized that this God that they offended, he was just and he was holy and he's righteous and he's good.

And so he said, great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do according to all that is written in this book.

[22 : 23] So now that Josiah knew it, now that he knew what the Bible said, now that he understood the great consequences that awaited for Israel's past disobedience, he recognized God will be faithful.

He's going to do just as he said. He's going to be faithful to bless obedience in Deuteronomy. And he's going to be faithful to punish disobedience, as he said in Deuteronomy.

And now Josiah knew. He knew what God had said. Do you know what the Bible says? Do you know the message of the Bible?

God is creator and good, and we've sinned against him. And we're now worthy of punishment and eternal death, and yet he sent his son to die in the place of sinners, to make them right with him.

Do you know that message? Have you sat in the pews week after week, and you've heard it over and over? You could recite it yourself, and yet you still have not repented of your sins and trusted in Christ.

[23 : 38] Do you know that God will hold you more accountable than people who knew less than you? That you knew, and yet even in your knowing, you rejected God outright.

You said, I don't want your ways. That's a terrifying position to be in. And Josiah got that. Josiah understood that. That's why he tore his clothes.

He understood the accountability that he now had for what he had just heard from the Word. He knew what God demanded of him. He couldn't plead ignorance.

He couldn't say, I didn't realize this is all that you have to say. So what did Josiah do? He didn't tell Shaphan to stop reading and to close the book and to hide it.

Go put it back wherever it was found and don't tell me where it was found. He didn't run from what God had said. He didn't treat what God had said lightly either.

[24 : 44] He didn't shrug his shoulders and just go back to his business as the king, whatever business that might be. He didn't decide to put off dealing with what he had just heard.

He immediately turned to the Lord with a humble, contrite heart. He turned to God and God heard him.

God heard Josiah in his humble repentance on behalf of the people. If you aren't in Christ this morning, don't run from the Word.

Don't shrug your shoulders at the Word and move on with your life. Don't deal with it later. Turn to the Lord today.

Repent of your sin and trust in Christ as your only hope today. And for us who are in Christ this morning, we too can grow familiar with the Word.

[25 : 51] We too can treat the Word flippantly. We can lose sight of the holiness and the justice and the righteousness of God. So consider carefully what the Word says.

Consider carefully the words of James in James chapter 1. Be not just hearers of the Word only, but doers of the Word. We have the Word.

So be sobered. We've been called to obedience to that Word. We will give an account. Let's consider our third response together.

Our third response to having the Word. Be encouraged. Be encouraged. You have the church with you as you keep the Word.

Read with me verses 29 through the end of the chapter. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

[26 : 57] And the king went up to the house of the Lord with all of the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people, both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord.

And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after 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 the covenant that were written in this book.

Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel.

And made all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. All his days, they did not turn away from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

You see, Josiah was diligent. He was a diligent man. He could have been lazy. He could have heard the words of Huldah that had come from the Lord and he could have kind of breathed a sigh of relief.

[28 : 17] He could have thought, oh great, I'm going to die in peace. I'm not going to be judged harshly for the disobedience of previous generations because I humbled myself.

So I'm going to be complacent now. He could have taken that kind of sinful posture. But he did it. He was intent on making up for lost time.

The people had gone 50 plus years without the word of God. He was going to obey it. And he wasn't just going to call himself to obey it.

He and all the people, all of Israel, were going to obey the word. So he gathered the people together from the greatest to the least.

And they went to the temple. That's a fitting place for them to go. They went before the presence of the Lord. They came before his presence and this is what they did. They made a covenant.

[29 : 19] They joined together in their commitment to the Lord to keep his laws. And then the text says this.

The text says that Josiah made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it. So it's not just that Josiah went to the temple and he made the covenant, but he said, hey everybody, we're doing this together.

We are in this together. All the people promising to live in obedience to God's word. This was a community affair.

This was a public affair. All of the people had assembled together. And they had joined together in their commitment and they were doing this in a very public fashion.

And then they followed through on it. That's how we see this chapter finish out. Verse 33. All his days, that's Josiah's days, all his days, they did not turn away from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

[30 : 29] So they committed together and then they followed through together. Now this isn't the only time in Scripture that we see this kind of public, collective commitment from God's people to walk in obedience.

After entering the promised land, Joshua renewed the covenant that was made with the Lord and the people, they joined with him.

Joshua 24.24 says, And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God we will serve and His voice we will obey. Same kind of situation happened later in Nehemiah 9 when the people had sinfully intermarried with idol worshipers.

The people then joined together to confess their sin and to commit themselves to obedience to the Word. We read this at the beginning of Nehemiah 9. Now on the 24th day of this month, the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth and with earth on their heads.

And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day.

[31 : 50] For another quarter of it, they made confession and worshipped the Lord their God. So they had been sinfully following after false gods that these other peoples were worshipping.

And what did they do? They came together and they committed themselves publicly with one another to walk in obedience. So all of these are examples to us to see.

All of these are examples that our faith, it has a public reality to it. We live out the Christian life together. We live out the Christian life alongside one another.

Just last week, we received new members into this church. I was one of them. And we came up and we made vows to you who are members of Grace Fellowship and you made vows to us.

This wasn't just a private experience. It was a public experience with one another. It was a visible ceremony.

[32 : 53] There were verbal commitments spoken aloud to one another. Much like what we see here in 2 Chronicles. We live in obedience to God together.

We live in obedience before one another and that produces this healthy sense of accountability to one another. Accountability is a whole lot harder if we keep our faith entirely to ourselves.

Now there absolutely are personal aspects to our faith. God saves individuals. God knows us not just collectively.

He knows us individually. There are personal elements to our faith that get worked out in private ways. It is good for us to spend time alone with the Lord.

But sometimes those private aspects of our faith are emphasized to the neglect of the public aspects. And so this passage here in 2 Chronicles it pushes back against the notion that my faith is just between me and God.

[34 : 05] It pushes back on that. And that's something of a radical idea in our world today. So much of life can be spent in isolation from others.

That's to our detriment. God has gifted us not just with himself but with one another. Journeying together on our way to eternity with the Lord.

It's a privilege that we get together. So let's not shy away from each other. Let's not make our faith solely between ourselves and God.

We've been joined together as a body. Let's keep moving toward one another. Let's fight the urge to turn in on ourselves. Let's fight the urge to keep our faith private. Let's be encouraged.

We have one another as we keep the word. Well, we've been given a compelling example in Josiah this morning.

[35 : 07] An example of how we ought to respond to having the word. Let's be thankful. We've been given the word. Let's be sobered. We're going to be held accountable for what we know of the word.

Let's be encouraged. We have one another as we keep the word. Josiah is a great example to us. But one greater than Josiah has come.

One greater than Josiah has come. And he too gathers us around the word. And just like Josiah did with the people of Israel, Jesus Christ in Luke 4 he gathers us around the word and like Josiah he reads from it.

He stood up and he read from the word and the hearing of all. Then he closed it and sitting down in Luke 4 Jesus said, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

This word rediscovered by Josiah given to us was fulfilled in Christ. Josiah had gathered the people around the word and they had covenanted together they'd read from it that they might obey.

[36 : 27] Jesus gathers us around the word he read from it and then he did obey. No doubt about it. Not maybe not attempted he did.

Josiah made a covenant between Israel and the Lord this covenant to walk after the Lord this covenant to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their hearts and all their souls it was a covenant to obey.

And then you read on not much farther and Israel like us failed failed to obey but Jesus Christ did it. He obeyed in every way. He walked with his father. He kept his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes and he kept them with all his heart with all his soul.

He was not divided in any way in that. And then he carried a cross up a hill beaten mocked crucified crucified.

[37 : 36] And he died the death of a criminal. He was condemned as one who had broken every commandment of the Lord. And though he himself had broken none he died in the place of those

who had.

Scriptures say that he was given a grave with the wicked. He himself had committed no wickedness. He died for wicked criminals such as us.

Criminals with sinful hearts who had broken the Lord's commandments. This is Jesus Christ. And he is far greater than an example to us as Josiah is here in 2 Chronicles.

He's our Savior. He's our Lord. He didn't just show us the way of salvation. He is the author of our salvation and he is the perfecter of our salvation.

What he starts he finishes that good work in us. So the next time that you read the word and you are burdened by just how far short you fall in keeping that word you read it and you think so often I don't keep it as I should remember not just your example in Josiah remember your Savior in Jesus Christ.

[39 : 01] he perfectly kept it for you and by his spirit if you are in him he is growing you in his grace he is enabling you more and more to keep it that is our great Savior and so we say together not to us but to your name be the glory let's pray let's pray heavenly father what a Savior you have given to us we thank you father that we know of him because you have given us your word we pray we pray Lord that you would make us to be a people who cherish it who love to read of it who are growing in grace as we do we pray Lord that you would make us to be a thankful people to be a sober people and to be an encouraged people help us in this journey together to love each other to invest in each other to be public in how we live out our faith we can't do this in our own strength we can do nothing in our own strength and so we pray that your spirit would meet us that your spirit would be at work in our midst you've said in your word that he indeed dwells in us that he dwells among us and so we pray that that he would do that work of growing us we pray all of this in Christ's name amen