

**THE LORD FULFILLS HIS PURPOSE**  
**2 Kings 23:28-32**

Second Kings chapter 23, reading from verses 24 to 32. Our sermon text is verses 28 to 32.  
From verse 24:

“<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. <sup>25</sup> Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.

“<sup>26</sup> Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. <sup>27</sup> And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.’

“<sup>28</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? <sup>29</sup> In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him. <sup>30</sup> And his servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father’s place.

“<sup>31</sup> Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. <sup>32</sup> And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.” Amen.

Please join me in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we ask, O Lord, that you would help us to learn, to understand, to inwardly digest, to indeed mentally chew over and make food your word. Please help me as I speak. Please help us all as we listen. Please give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand and to obey. We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

It all seems to come to rather a sad ending, doesn’t it? We’ve read about Josiah. I hope that you, like me, have loved everything you’ve heard about him. I mean, the guy gives me goosebumps. Every time I read these passages of Scripture, I just get transported into glorifying God.

This wonderful young king comes to the throne at the age of 8, and at 16 begins to seek the Lord and serve the Lord with all his heart and soul and might, so much so that Scripture tells us that there was never anyone like him for turning to the Lord with all his heart. It’s not saying that there was anyone who was, for example, less or more righteous than he; it’s not saying that there was not a prophet more powerful; it’s not saying any of those things. It’s talking about the depth of his turning to the Lord.

It says in verse 25 of chapter 23, “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.” It’s saying that no one else, no other king, no other leader in Scripture underwent such a deep and thorough transformation. No one else turned to God with such passion, with such depth, with such determination.

Now we know from Scripture—we know from Old Testament, we know from New Testament—that the only way that anybody can come to such a deep, heartfelt repentance and such a deep conviction to follow the Lord—the only way that can come is by the work and the power of the Holy Spirit. So therefore, we look at the life of Josiah and we see the work of God in King Josiah. We see the work of God’s saving grace.

Last week we looked at the restoration of the Passover, and Josiah reigned for another 15 years after that inauguration of the Passover. So we can imagine that for the 15 years in Jerusalem, you have a godly king upon the throne. You have temple worship operating, as indeed it should, according to the word of the Law of Moses.

We also looked last week in Second Chronicles, and we saw that Josiah read not only the Law of Moses, but he looked to the writings of King David for how worship was to be conducted. He became truly a man of the Book, a man of the Word of God. For 15 years there was a righteous king upon the throne.

Now when you read the commentators here, they keep pointing out that this revival obviously didn’t seem to take root in all sectors of the society. Where did we finish our reading? What was that depressing line about the son of Josiah? Verse 32, speaking of Jehoahaz: “And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.” That’s just the biggest downer. I mean, what a terribly depressing line.

Remember right where we started, back in the first sermon on this series—that constant refrain regarding the kings of Israel and most of the kings of Judah: “He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,” “He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,” “He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,” with very few exceptions. Remember what a breath of fresh air it was when we came to Josiah—“He did what was right in the sight of the Lord.” Light—it’s like the sunrise. Wonderful. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Josiah dies; Josiah’s son is enthroned; and—the echo. “He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

You see, the thing that overrides all of this, all of scriptural history, all that is revealed to us in redemptive history in the Bible, is the providence of God. All of these things are happening exactly according to the will of God. Nothing has come to pass that God did not ordain.

Looking at verse 26: “Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him.<sup>27</sup> And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.’”

God is in the business of revealing His glory through creation. I know I've said this many a time, but if you've wondered why the universe that we know is almost beyond our comprehension, that when we as people look out into the heavens, we see something that seems to us almost eternal and infinite, it's because that's the kind of stage that God needs upon which to reveal His glory.

Now God's glory is not revealed in the works of a man. God's glory is not revealed by taking a man and building that man up. God's glory is not revealed through the children of Adam. God reveals His glory through God. God reveals His glory specifically and particularly through Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, we're told that Christ *is* the glory of God revealed.

So when we read in the Old Testament of this King Josiah, and of what a great man he was—and he was surely a great man—no great man can turn aside the wrath or the judgment of God. No great man can be a tool or a means by which the glory of God is revealed. No great man can reveal the glory of God. The glory of God is so infinite and glorious that only God can reveal it.

Josiah could never be anything more than a pointer, or a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. A good king in Judah could never be anything more than one who was ushering in the ultimate king, because who's the ultimate king of Israel? Who's the ultimate king of Judah? Who's the ultimate king of the people of God? Yahweh—the God of the covenant; the living God. He's the King.

So even though Josiah was a great and godly man, that great and godly man cannot propitiate the wrath of God. He simply cannot do it. God's judgment must be enacted. There is a weight and a burden involved in being the people of God. If you bear the name of God, what does the commandment say? "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain."

We, today, call ourselves Christians. Who's name have we taken? The name of Jesus. And Jesus is God the eternal Son of God. We bear His name. We have taken His name. And the people of Israel, the people of Judah, were God's covenant people. They bore His name. They had taken His name. Their city, Jerusalem, was the base where He had set His name to dwell. His glory was to be revealed in temple worship, in and through the priesthood, through the prophets, through the kings.

We've talked about these things already. They bore His name, and there is a certain burden that comes with bearing His name. Never forget the commandment: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain." We should always remember that.

All right, the teaching that in theological terms called antinomianism—what does that mean? *Anti*—we know what that means: against; *nomianism*, *nomos*: the law. "Against the law." Antinomianism is a teaching against the Law, and it's the teaching that says, Well, if you're a Christian, you don't worry about right or wrong, you don't worry about any of that stuff. You don't worry about knowing God's Law. You do whatever you feel like doing because you're under the leading of God's Holy Spirit and you can't do anything wrong. Don't worry. Just don't pay attention to things like that.

Now to an antinomian, I'm a legalist; but to a legalist, I'm an antinomian. An antinomian believes that any teaching of the Law, any teaching that we should fear and obey God is some kind of legalism. The commandment says, Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. We have taken His name. We are Christians. It's the fruit of our Christian life which will be the indicator of whether or not we've taken His name in vain. And we should always remember that. We should *always* remember that.

Now coming back to our Old Testament passage and to Josiah. Josiah was never going to be the savior. It was just never going to happen. The Lord Jesus Christ, God the eternal Son of God, He is the Savior. He is the Messiah with a capital "M". He is the Son of David, with a capital "S". It was never ever going to be Josiah. God said that He would judge, and indeed He will judge. And God had said and promised that Josiah would not see God's judgment fall, and that he would be gathered to his fathers in peace. So in the providence of God, Josiah goes out to battle. It was an unnecessary battle.

Turn if you would to Second Chronicles chapter 35, and let's read the parallel passage, verses 20 to 25:

“<sup>20</sup> After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to meet him. <sup>21</sup> But he”—now that “he” is referring this time to Neco—“he sent envoys to him, saying, ‘What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.’ <sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to fight in the plain of Megiddo. <sup>23</sup> And the archers shot King Josiah. And the king said to his servants, ‘Take me away, for I am badly wounded.’ <sup>24</sup> So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. <sup>25</sup> Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day.”

It was a needless battle. The king of Egypt didn't come looking for a fight with the king of Jerusalem. The king of Egypt was involved in international politics, and he was going to fight for his ally against Babylon. We don't know exactly why Josiah felt that he had to get involved. We can only guess as to what his motivations were.

Perhaps he felt that as a son of David, he had to go out and fight. David went out and fought at the head of the king's armies. Perhaps he was trying to manipulate events so as to curry favor with what he sensed was a more powerful nation coming from the north. He had Egypt to his south; he had Babylon to his northeast. Babylon, the prophets were telling him, was going to be the great power. Babylon was going to be the power that crushed Judah. Perhaps he was hoping that in somehow by fighting with the king of Egypt, he would in some way curry favor with Babylon and make things better.

But God's kings, I think, are not meant to actually get too involved in worldly politics. Remember as we read earlier in this series about how God expected His kings to behave—not to deal too much with Egypt, not to get too many chariots, not to glorify themselves. Anyway, Josiah went out to fight.

It's pretty tough here. It says that Josiah was opposing God. See Second Chronicles 35, verse 21, where the Pharaoh starts speaking: <sup>21</sup> ... 'What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.' <sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to fight in the plain of Megiddo."

I'm a little perplexed, because I don't know how it is that Josiah should have known that the Pharaoh was speaking the word of God. I can only imagine that the last place he would ever have expected to hear the word of God was from Pharaoh. Perhaps the point that the author is making is Josiah did not seek the advice of a prophet. He did not seek a word from the Lord.

When he first heard the word of the law read to him and he repented, what did he do? He sent messengers to the prophetess at that time, Huldah, asking advice, asking for a word from the Lord. And perhaps the author of Second Chronicles is just sort of trying to nudge our thoughts along that way.

You see, Josiah didn't consult with his prophets. We know that Jeremiah was a prophet at this time. We know that Zephaniah was a prophet at this time. Josiah didn't consult with his prophets, and so he didn't get a word of the Lord from one of the prophets of Judah. So the word of the Lord came to him through the mouth of Pharaoh. Perhaps that's what he's being told.

It is perplexing to understand why he should have listened to Pharaoh, but nevertheless, the Scripture's telling us that he should have heard the warning. The warning did come from God. He did not have to be involved in this battle. He did not have to fight. Remember, Josiah was human, and could easily have fallen under his own pride here—a little bit of pride. Every one of us should understand that and always be wary of it.

We live to serve God, and when we serve God, the evil enemy, the flesh, is always trying to rear its ugly head and tell us how good we are and how proud of ourselves we should be. And it could well be that there was a little bit of pride. Perhaps it was pride that led him to go to battle.

Anyway, he went to battle, he was shot by arrows. It says in the text that it happened straightaway, immediately. There wasn't even much of a fight. Looking at 2 Kings 3:29, "In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him." There's a couple of alternate ways to translate that, but they all come down to the point that battle was fairly preemptive. It didn't last long. As soon as he saw him, he suffered defeat.

So Josiah dies in battle, but he dies in faith. Remember the promise was that he would be gathered to his fathers; that he would go down to his grave in peace. And he was at peace with God. There's nothing at all in either Second Kings or Second Chronicles to suggest that Josiah was in any other condition than the condition of being a saved and regenerate believer in God, of being a justified man, of being one who is at peace with God. So he died in peace, though he was killed in a battle. He died in peace.

And we've got to remember that to die in Christ is to die in peace. It's to die at peace. Seems like a strange thing to say in this day and age. We'd love to imagine that the days of persecution are far gone, but when I read some of the things that some of those who are politicians and seeking power at this time are saying, I can't help but wonder if even within my own lifetime I'm going to see people dying for their faith—dying for the Lord Jesus Christ, in nations like ours—in Western nations. I can't help but wonder if it's coming.

I'll just make a little side point. A particular politician, one who's running for the highest office, made a comment that nobody can disagree with homosexual marriage for any other reason than hatred and bigotry. Now think about what he's saying. He's saying you have no right to disagree with homosexual marriage on any moral grounds. That's what he has said. We as Christians have no right to disagree with homosexuality on any moral grounds.

Now where does that kind of talk lead to? It leads to the persecution of the people of God. It leads to the persecution of people who will not back down. If it comes to that, those who are in Christ will die in peace, for they are justified in the sight of God. The promise of Jesus is, Though he die, yet shall he live.

So Josiah is killed in battle, and one of Josiah's sons, Jehoahaz, is put upon the throne, and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. If we look at verse 33 of Second Kings chapter 23, we see that he was under the power of Pharaoh Neco. "And Pharaoh Neco put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem."

So Josiah dies, one of his sons is put upon the throne, and his son does evil. Now look at verse 34: "And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. . . .<sup>35</sup> And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh." In other words, he answered to Pharaoh. These sons of Josiah were immediately under the power of the world. The summary of both of these faithless sons is that they did evil in the sight of the Lord. These faithless sons were immediately under the power of the world, under the power of Egypt, and then later, under the power of Babylon.

When a nation was ruled by a righteous king, as Judah was whilst Josiah was king, that nation was under the protection of God. They were not paying tribute to the nations around them. They were not paying tribute to the Egyptians or the Babylonians. The righteous king dies, a sinner comes to the throne, and immediately they lose their place, their power. God is no fool. You don't break the law of God, you don't disobey God and expect to walk around singing and dancing and being happy. It doesn't happen that way. The way of the sinner is hard, and the way of sinful Judah was hard.

Having said all that, I want to point out once again that this revival that happened under King Josiah must have led many thousands of people to faith. Many thousands heard the word of God. Many thousands had faith that was living and active whilst they were in the Babylonian captivity. Many thousands returned to Jerusalem around 90 years from the death of Josiah—many thousands. So either long-lived people or the children of long-lived people had faith. They had heard and they believed the word of God. God has His plans. God must judge, and in judgment God chose mercy. That's the scriptural pattern. Those who sin come under the power of sin. God is always trying to display to people the works of His judgment.

If we were to turn to Second Chronicles, chapter 12—don't worry about going there—remember how it was that Solomon in his sin caused the division of the nation of Israel. It became the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. You had the golden calves in the northern kingdom, you had the southern kingdom under the son of Solomon. Well the son of Solomon also sinned, and in his sin, the Lord sent prophets and he heard the word of those prophets, and he humbled himself. The king's name was Rehoboam, and he was the son of the Solomon.

Now I'll read you Second Chronicles chapter 12, verses 7 and 8: “<sup>7</sup> When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: ‘They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. <sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, they shall be servants to him,’” Why?—“‘that they may know my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.’” That they may know my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

When things happen, like a righteous king dies and a sinful king comes to the throne, and that nation comes under the power of sinful nations, what's God doing? He's making sure people understand the difference between the service of God and the service of idols; between the service of God's word and the service of the nations of the countries—idolatrous nations. God's judgment may seem slow in coming to us, but it comes. It always comes. The works of God do not change. All things unfold according to *His* divine plan and according to His providence.

We started our service this morning reading from Psalm 33. Did you notice in the Psalm, around verses 9, 10, and 11 of Psalm 33 what it has to say? Start reading at verse 8: “<sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! <sup>9</sup> For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. <sup>10</sup> The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. <sup>11</sup> The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.” The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.

No one stops God's will from happening. No one stands against God. When we think of spiritual warfare, when we think of battle going on, when we think of things happening, when we think of good versus evil, these things all happen under the ordained will of God. It's God who says that these things will happen. Nobody stands against God. God has created all things, even the wicked, for the day of evil.

Psalm 115, verse 3 reads: “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.” We won’t turn to it, but you find a very similar phrase in Psalm 135, verse 6. God does as God pleases. God was pleased to bring Josiah to the end of his life before He brought judgment upon the nation of Jerusalem.

Remember the passages in Romans that talk about people being handed over, handed over, handed over, being confirmed in their sin, being hardened in their hearts? Well, God handed Jerusalem over to sin, to Josiah’s sinful sons, who confirmed the nation once again in its evil—to bring down the judgment of God. Turn if you would to Isaiah chapter 45, beginning at verse 5:

“<sup>5</sup> I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, <sup>6</sup> that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. <sup>7</sup> I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.” I make well-being and create calamity. No one stands against God. No one stops God’s righteous decree. All things happen according to God’s will.

Josiah dies in battle. Jerusalem is handed over to the nations around her. Judah comes under the judgment of God. Why? Because of God’s righteous decree. Why? Because God has a redemptive timetable; because the Lord Jesus Christ is to come around 600 years after the death of Josiah—that’s where we’re at, around 500 to 600 BC at this time. The Lord Jesus Christ is to come. Salvation does not come by the hand of any man. It comes by the hand of Jesus.

Where do I want to go from here? What sort of applications now do I want us to take from this? We’re basically finished dealing with the life of Josiah. Turn if you will to Psalm 138, our Old Testament reading earlier. Let’s read it:

“<sup>1</sup> I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; <sup>2</sup> I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.” For you have exalted above all things your name and your word. God’s glory is reserved for God alone. God’s glory comes through and from God’s word alone. Jesus—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” God’s written word, God’s living Word—the Lord Jesus Christ. He has exalted above all things His name and His Word.

Move down to verse 7: “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me. <sup>8</sup> The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.” Verse 8: “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.”

What did Josiah achieve? Exactly what God purposed for Josiah. What did he fail to do? Nothing that God intended for him to do. “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.” Josiah accomplished everything God intended for him to accomplish. Josiah did not fail to succeed in anything that God set for him to do. In other words, everything that Josiah did was according to the will of God.



Now what's the application for us, in our lives? My friends, we won't be any more than God intends us to be; we won't be any less. We won't fail to do that which God intends for us to do. His good works have been prepared for us beforehand, as it says in Ephesians chapter 2. He's predestined us to do certain works. We will do exactly what He intends us to do. We won't die at the wrong time; we won't live too long; we won't fail to be anything other than that which God intends us to be.

We have a mission in this world, just as Josiah had a mission, and God's purpose and will in our lives will be fulfilled. That doesn't mean that we become passive and do nothing, it means that we live in obedience to God's will and God will make of us what He pleases, both as individuals and as a church. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for us. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for all of His people. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for the church. And He will not fail. He will not fail. There's security in this.

We should be very pleased that we can pray about this. When we pray that God will use us and bless our obedience, we're praying according to God's will. We're praying exactly according to God's will. And He will fulfill His purpose for us. We can't fail. If we are truly regenerate, if we are truly God's people, if we are truly born again, we cannot fail to be what God intends us to be. Our sharing of the gospel will be exactly as fruitful as God intends it to be. Our ministry in this town will be exactly as fruitful as God intends it to be. We won't miss out on a single thing. Therefore, we should be actively obeying God and praying.

Remember Josiah received his word of assurance, and upon receiving his word of assurance, what did he do? He charged out, and we see that avalanche of activity. "And he," "and he," "and he," "and he,"—cleansed the temple, destroyed the idols, killed the false priests, took the other priests who'd been sacrificing in the wrong place out of the ministry. On and on and on, *and* he led the people back to the Passover; *and, and, and*—Constantly operating in obedience to the word, and therefore, to the will of God.

That's what God has set for us, and we will achieve exactly what God plans for us. We won't fail to become what God intends for us to be, and we won't succeed one millimeter past the success that God has planned for us. We will be God's people in this world, doing exactly as He requires. So we're not to be fearful. We're not to be worried.

Turn to Matthew chapter 6—the Sermon on the Mount. Start reading at verse 25: <sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" We'll stop our reading there.

Which of us by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of our lives? We will be exactly what God intends us to be. There's no question or doubt about it. I stress again, that does not mean passivity. It does not mean laziness. It does not mean casual, blasé, "Oh well, it's all in God's hands, who could care less? As long as I say I believe in Jesus and act as nice as I can, everything will be fine."

No, that's not what God requires of us. He requires our willing and our active obedience. "For it is God who works in us to will and to work for His good pleasure." We are to do according to the will of God. If He grants success, that's because that was His will. If we see no fruit, it's because that was His will. But we should be actively obeying and praying. We should be seeking to root out from our lives habitual sin. Take that picture of Josiah, charging all over his nation like an avenger, like someone seeking justice wherever he turns, and apply that picture to our own personal lives as Christians.

Everywhere that we see sin, everywhere that we see idolatry, everywhere that we see wickedness, we should be at war with it. We should be mortifying the flesh. We should be putting to death the deeds of darkness. We should be putting down our sinful passions and desires. We should be purifying our worship, always. Repentance is not the beginning of the Christian life, it is the ongoing Christian life, and true repentance is a war with sin.

Do we hate sin? Do we hate sin? Do we really, truly hate sin? Or do we make excuses for it? I'm not asking whether or not you get angry when you see sinners doing evil things out on the street. What do you expect from the world? What do you expect from the unregenerate? What do you expect from people who have not been raised under the word of God? You can expect nothing from those people, other than that sin will reign in their mortal lives.

I'm talking about when we look in the mirror of God's word, when we see the wickedness and the evil of sin for what it is, and when we see how much God hates it—do we then see the sin in our own hearts for what it is? Do we then see the wickedness in our own lives for what it is? Don't worry about hating the sin in your brother. I'm asking, Do you hate the sin in yourself? Do you really hate the sin in yourself? And do you really hate that part of yourself that is so weak that it keeps going back to it, keeps wanting to return to it? You all know what I mean. I don't know you well enough to know the thoughts of your innermost heart and mind. Only God knows you that well; it's just as well. And only God knows me that well. But I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

You have sin in your life, and you always seem to find a way and an excuse to go back to it. You don't hate it enough, and you don't hate your own sinful nature enough. You haven't declared war on it. You haven't gotten radical with it. You haven't let the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction go deep enough. You haven't let the conviction of the Spirit cause enough pain. It's a painful process to open yourself up before God, to come truly into the presence of God as you are, acknowledging before God your very own sin life that happens in your own mind, in your own imaginations, in your own thoughts. It's a painful process.

We should be at war with sin, and 99.9% of that battle is with our own sin. Just let .1% of the battle be about what's going on around you. Try and put in a good word here and there. But I'm telling you that we should be Josiahs in this dark and evil nation around us. Josiah didn't try to wipe out the sin in Egypt, and he didn't try to wipe out the sin in Babylon or Assyria. He tried to wipe out the sin that was present in that place where he had dominion and authority.

Now, what does Scripture tell us? It tells us that in our unredeemed state, that in the state of sin, we are slaves to sin. The man who sins is slave to his sin. But what does it also tell us? For example, Galatians chapter 5, verse 1 tells us that for freedom Christ has set you free. Stand fast, therefore. To be in Christ is to be given freedom. Freedom is nothing other than an exercise of power.

What's freedom under God? When God gives His people freedom, what does He give them? Victory over sin. Each and every one of us as a Christian, if we are truly born again, regenerate Christians, we have been given by God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, victory over sin. It has been given, and therefore, if we are not fighting against sin, if we're not fighting against and hating that weakness, that evil, that desire, that lust that dwells within each and every one of our hearts, whatever it is or whatever it might be, well we have to ask the question, Am I truly regenerate? Am I truly one of God's people?

The most righteous person among us—whoever that may be, raised in a Christian household, raised under the word of God, who has seen far less than I, raised a sinner, raised in a dysfunctional household, following after every lust that moved across my heart—has got to understand something: God judges righteously. The greater your exposure to the word and the grace of God, the greater your sinfulness.

So you might say, Well, you know, he was a lustful man. He chased the ladies around. Your pride—and I'm trying not to look at anyone in particular—but your pride in your own righteousness is just as vile and filthy and disgusting in the eyes of God as another man's lust for pornography. Your pride is just as evil in the eyes of God, because even if you are in some way more righteous than one of your brothers, it's only by the grace of God, and you're only that way because God has *made* you that way. So you should actually be the most *humble* of people.

Those who are truly righteous are the most humble of people, because they understand that what they've got is the gift of God. They understand the sin that is within them, apart from the grace of God, would ruin and destroy their lives just as it destroys the lives of the people around us. The broken marriages, the miserable kids, people going back before the courts for the same stupid offenses, again and again and again—you name it. In terms of true sinfulness, they're no less nor more sinful than us. Yes, some sins are greater. I know that, you know that. We know that. But God has given us dominion over our own lives. He's granted freedom in Christ.

God gave Josiah the power and the authority to cleanse Jerusalem, to cleanse the temple, to cleanse the nation of Judah, and Josiah was even able to take that authority further into the old kingdom, to the nation that was called Israel, or the Northern Kingdom—he was able to extend that authority and attack sin and evil and wickedness wherever he saw it.

Well my friends, just as God gave Josiah authority to Josiah to cleanse, the very first place we've been given dominion and authority is over ourselves, and in our own lives. And God expects us to exercise that dominion and that authority over ourselves—attack sin within ourselves. And each and every one of us who is given any kind of responsibility must exercise that authority. A father is given a dominion in his own household and is expected to attack sin in his own household.

Now we have to do that gracefully. You don't go cutting people's heads off, you know—we're not to sacrifice people on altars. We're going to have to do that through the word of God, we're going to have to do that through prayer, and we're going to have to do that through honest heart-to-heart Christian fellowship. For those of us who teach, and for myself, I've been given another sphere of dominion. I'm to attack and cleanse the sin within our own congregation.

Now once again, it's not for me to be here hypocritically casting judgment on anyone in the room. But it is for me to tell you, Come to the word of God, look very hard at yourselves, see what God requires of you, hear the voice of the shepherd. Remember Jesus saying, My sheep hear my voice? Hear the voice of the shepherd, and put it into action. Get moving!. Go to war against sin! Go to war against wickedness. Cleanse yourself. Cleanse everything that you've been given dominion over. Cleanse it, and hate it, and keep hating it.

I'm warning you, and I'll warn you now in all honesty, the flesh will not give up easily. That old man, that Adam, he will not just die. He will keep trying to resurrect himself. He's an imitator of Jesus. He would like to be God Himself. Jesus was resurrected. The sinful man will be resurrected. He keeps bringing himself back to life, in your life, and the moment you relax your grip, you'll find that you're falling back into your old thought patterns and sins all over again.

It's a life of constant warfare, but it's not a life without victory. There's great joy in it. You should know the victory and the joy of victory over sin. You should know the joy of sin not exercising its power over your life anymore. I *can* turn away from that. I can turn away from the porn, the alcohol, drugs, the pride, whatever. I can see that I'm a sinner in the eyes of God.

There is victory, but the victory never comes without battle, and the battle comes every day. You grow in grace, you grow in faith, you grow in Christ-likeness. The nearer you come to the presence of God, the more aware of your own sin you will become. That's the Christian life. The most righteous person is the most humble person, because living in the presence of God, they see themselves for what they really are. The closer you draw to God, the more wicked and evil you see your own sin as being. The closer you come to the presence of God, the deeper the conviction.

All these things, as it says in First Corinthians chapter 10—all these things that happened in the Old Testament are given as an example to us. They're given as something to read back and to look over. I love the story of King Josiah. I love the good works that he did. It's not actually bad news that he died in battle. It's not actually bad news that his sinful sons came to the throne. It's not actually bad news that Jerusalem came under judgment.

Why? Because all of this was in the providential plan of God to bring His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world; that He would become incarnate; that He would become the spotless Lamb of God; that He would become the one who sets things right; that He would be the one who gives God's people power over sin—power and dominion and authority. And it starts with us, that power, dominion, and authority.

God has given us all that we need to live in a way that is pleasing to Him—all that we need. And He will fulfill His purpose in us. He will fulfill His purpose in us. The greatest thing about the Christian life for anyone who is truly Christian is that you cannot fail. You cannot fail, for God has tied His name and His purposes up with your very life.

And if you are truly a regenerate Christian and born again in the Lord Jesus Christ, He cannot *let* you fail. You *will* glorify God, in this life and the next. We *will* be fruitful, in this life and the next. We *will* be God's people, in this life and the next. Why? Because God has staked His name upon it. He's staked His word upon it. What does it say? Remember that line in Psalm 138—"Your name and your word you have exalted above all things." He's staked His name and His word upon His people.

He will fulfill His purpose in us, but He will fulfill His purpose in us through us, God's people, actively obeying God, getting involved. We must obey. There's no excuse in the Christian life for sitting and waiting. No. Obey God. Perform your Christian life in the sight of God. Perform your duties, your Bible studies, your prayer life, your witnessing—we do all of these things in the sight of God. As fathers, as teachers—everything we do, we do it in the sight of God. And He *will* fulfill His purpose for us. He *will*. That's His promise.

And never forget this: The Lord Jesus Christ died for the elect. He died for the elect. What does that mean? They cannot but be saved. They cannot but be saved. God doesn't fail. That's what we've got to understand. That's what Reformed theology, in a way, is all about. God cannot be frustrated. God cannot be denied. God does not fail. He simply does not fail. That which He purposes, He does.

Jesus has died for people who are not yet saved. His blood has been shed for the elect, and there are elect in this world who are not yet saved. They have not yet been called into the kingdom. And we, God's people, are here in this world to serve, to pray, to preach, to share that word. The guarantee of success is that the elect will hear the word. They will hear the word. It will be effective. It will be powerful. He will fulfill His purposes in us.

So we've got to fight, we've got to fight the sin within, we've got to obey, we've got to be active in our obedience, and we leave the result to God. A farmer does all he can. A farmer tries to do everything right. He works the soil, he calculates the amount of fertilizer to use, he buys the best seed, he sows the seed. But he's always at the mercy of God, because you need water, you need sunshine, and you need sunshine at the right time. You're always at the mercy of God.

Now it's up to us to do all that we can—plow, sow, fertilize. Think of it however you want to think of it. It's up to us to do all that we can, but we are under the providence of God. The fruit will be God's fruit. The harvest will be God's harvest. But my friends, He will fulfill His purpose for us. He will. It's His word. It's His absolute word. Share the word. Call the people. Who will come? The elect. Are there people out there for whom the Lord Jesus Christ has shed His blood? Do you honestly believe that they aren't out there? Do you honestly believe that the paltry number of Christians in this district at this moment is all that God set His heart upon? I don't, not even for a moment.

Scripture tells me that up to the very last day, the day when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself returns and closes out history, up to the very last day, people are being saved, will be saved, will hear the preaching of the gospel, will be called to life and repentance—right up to that very last day. While there's light, work. That's what Jesus said, isn't it? While you have the light, work.

We have the light. We have the light—our time. We have the word of God. We have the light of the word of God. We have the light of the presence of God. There's light in our dwellings. It's the light of God's grace. We must obey, and God will fulfill His purposes in us. That's His promise, that's His guarantee. He's staked His very name and His word upon it, and our God is a God who cannot and will not fail. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, once again I do pray that your word would do its work among us, that we would be your obedient people. Help us in the battle with sin, strengthen us that we may be obedient in all things. Send forth laborers into the harvest, and may we indeed be made laborers. You have given us your word. By your Spirit, please give us the boldness to share, to preach, and to love those around us. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.