

Survey of the Bible part 49 2Chronicles 31- 32;1-8

Last week we ended with King Hezekiah re-instituting the temple worship and inviting not only all of Judah to partake of the Passover, but also inviting the northern kingdom Israel to do the same.

Many from Israel were there as they celebrated the Lord's deliverance of Israel by taking them out of the bondage of Egypt and ultimately bringing them into the Promised land. In a show of solidarity between the two kingdoms we see how God has brought His people together again under the theme of freedom from bondage.

And as we've moved through these sections we have also seen how Israel has been used in the O.T. as the sign and shadow of the future Israel whose deliverer would take them out of the bondage of sin as the Messiah would come and give His blood as a sacrifice for His people.

Galatians 4:3-7 ³ So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

And so, the bondage of Israel in Egypt would point to the bondage from which we would be delivered and of course the promised land that was given to Israel would foreshadow the promised land all of us in Christ, who are now the true Israel, would one day possess on the new earth in our resurrection bodies.

And so, Hezekiah is used of God to show this one people coming together to worship and serve the one true God, our deliverer and Savior and King. And then we come to chapter 31 and we see the outworking of this new found attitude toward God.

2 Chronicles 31:1 ^{NAU} Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the Asherim and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the sons of Israel returned to their cities, each to his possession.

What does this tell us about the way in which our faith should demonstrate itself in the real world?

It should be a faith of action, but not action for action's sake, rather action in the truth where we reject any false notion of how God is to be worshiped and to understand that the truth matters.

And when we talk about the truth of God's word what is another way of identifying that truth? What are the teachings of God's word called?

Doctrine. There's a tendency in the church today to regard doctrine with contempt as some recommend that we simply love people and come together in unity and not concern ourselves with doctrines that only divide.

The problem with that attitude is that doctrine is meant to divide; that is to divide the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff, from those who promote false teachings.

The doctrines of God are the truths that explains who God is and what His purposes are. For people who claim to be Christians and who don't want to conform themselves to God's doctrine, His teachings, they essentially deny God.

Ephesians 4:14-15 ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

Without proper biblical doctrine there is no growing up in all aspects into Him who is our Head, that is Christ.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 ^{NAU} I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

And so, what Hezekiah has done is to simply adopt the doctrines that God has instituted and those doctrines do not include worshipping false gods and idols.

And so, if that is the case what should he naturally do if there are idols and false gods in the land?

Get rid of them. But simply getting rid of the bad is not what biblical doctrine teaches, there is a positive side to this equation and that is to turn to the one true God and worship Him alone.

2 Chronicles 31:2 ² And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites by their divisions, each according to his service, *both* the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister and to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of the LORD.

And so, throughout all the land Hezekiah was faithfully fulfilling his role as leader who represented God, and His people were following his lead as they served and worshiped their Lord.

2 Chronicles 31:20-21 ²⁰ Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what *was* good, right and true before the LORD his God. ²¹ Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered.

Again, this is an amazing thing that God's people are trying to follow their Lord and be faithful to His lead.

But what often times happens when God's people are being faithful to the Lord?

The enemy comes in to try and wreak havoc with our faith.

2 Chronicles 32:1 ^{NAU} After these acts of faithfulness Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and besieged the fortified cities, and ²thought to break into them for himself.

So, how do we deal with these attacks and what should be our attitude in the midst of these attacks?

The first thing to understand is to realize there is an attack. And by attack I mean anything from physical to spiritual attacks. We all know what a physical attack may entail: economic issues, health

issues, family issues, work issues. Any of these things can be used of the enemy to try and weaken our faith.

But it doesn't have to be the enemy who may use these and other issues to address our faith. God Himself will often times use these types of things to test our faith with the express purpose of strengthening our faith.

James 1:2-4 ² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various ¹trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

In these verses, who does James blame for these various trials?

No one. He simply addresses them as trials.

Could they be coming from the enemy?

Could they be coming from God?

But notice that no matter who they come from what are they designed to do according to verse 3.

Test our faith.

Well, does Satan test our faith?

No, Satan tries to destroy our faith.

Testing our faith only comes from God, no matter the venue in which it takes place.

And so, it is assumed that when a trial comes our way, either from the enemy or God Himself it is designed for one purpose. To test us to help us measure where our faith in God is.

^{NAU} **1 Peter 1:7** so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Keep in mind that even if the enemy is bringing a trial our way it can only happen as God allows such trials even as He did with Paul.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-- to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

What do these verses suggest about this messenger of Satan and how he was able to torment Paul in the flesh?

God ordained that this messenger of Satan would accomplish his dastardly work in Paul's life.

Why would God do that to Paul?

To show Paul that God's grace was more than sufficient to bring Paul through the trial in the strength that God would supply. And so, the issue is ultimately not where the trial is coming from, either God or Satan, because ultimately it is ordained by God, but the issue is are we able to rejoice in the various trials knowing that the testing our faith is for a purpose, which as James says, is to produce endurance.

We're running this race called life for the long haul and like Paul we want to be able to say that we've run the course and finished it in a way that brings glory to Christ. But the message all along the way is to always keep our eyes on God who is able to deliver us and use us in the process.

This is precisely what Hezekiah told the people of God in his day when the king of Assyria came up against them as that king tried to turn their joy into gloom.

2 Chronicles 32:7-8 ⁷ "Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. ⁸ "With him is *only* an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

1 John 4:4 ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

^{NAU} **Romans 8:31** What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

Ephesians 6:10-13 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Like Israel of old God speaks to His Israel today and tells us that the battle is still going on and we are to take up His armor and by faith follow Him wherever He may lead so that He may receive the glory through our lives as we trust Him.

By the way, when we're told in 2Chronicles 32:8 that the people relied on the words of Hezekiah that word relied can also be translated leaned on or rested on.

This is what a leader for God does. He gives God's people the truth of God and the encouragement of God so that the people of God can rest in those words and be comforted in the process of such a trial.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Notice what Paul says here.

Who is the great comforter?

The God of all comfort.

But why does God comfort us as individuals in all our affliction according to this passage in 2Corinthians?

“.....so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

But that comfort only comes from one place. The same place that was able to allow Hezekiah to comfort the people of his day. And that comfort comes from God’s word which is truth and power as the Spirit of God employs that power in our lives the same way He did in Paul who was able to say, His grace is sufficient.

But what happens when we are comforted by God and we find rest in His grace and peace and strength? Is the battle over, are the insults and threats from the enemy gone?

Not at all. The battle and the accusations continue. And when we come back next week we’ll see exactly how the enemy of Hezekiah and Judah will not relent in coming against God’s people even when the enemy seems defeated.

But again it makes no difference where the trials come from, it only matters where the grace comes from to go through the trial. And if we see this then we will continually flee to the God of all grace and trust that He will help us to grow in that grace so that we can endure to the end.

Romans 8:28-31 ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?