

Read 2 Kings 1

But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'" 2 Kings 1:3

Do you live constantly in the knowledge of God's existence? Many want to acknowledge God when their life is coming to an end or when a tragic situation strikes. The real tragedy is when this becomes part of the life of a Christian. A Christian knows God through Jesus. We know He's more than the "big guy upstairs", but He is the one true God. There is no other source of information, hope and security that we can run to because God is sufficient.

Did you notice the three platoons of 50 that were sent to Elijah? The first two approach him under the king's authority, and they are struck down. The third captain and his men come humbly, indicating that they fear Elijah and the Lord. **Do you have this kind of reverence for God? When you have a problem in your life, how to you attempt to solve it? By watching Dr. Phil or reading a self-help book on the subject. Talk to God. Read His Word. Let the all-sufficient God of everything, the "I AM", help you in your time of need. Live a life that relies on God, and is a testimony to others to do the same.**

Read 2 Kings 2

The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"

And he answered , "Yes, I know; be still." 2 Kings 2:5 They say that misery loves company. As my basic training unit was beginning, another was ending. These graduating recruits told us all kinds of horror stories about how bad things would be. We already knew that basic was going to be brutal, and we certainly didn't need any help getting worked up about it. However, we found the reports of those outgoing soldiers to be greatly exaggerated. There were many tough days, but we never found ourselves nearly blown up on the grenade range, or almost taken out by stray artillery rounds. People need to examine what is rumor and what is inevitable.

These prophets were telling Elisha that Elijah's departure was inevitable. These men all had come to rely on Elijah, probably with many of them stepping forward after the confrontation between Elijah and the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel. They were all worried yet they see Elisha remaining calm. So twice they try to get him flapping, but when he's told of Elijah leaving, he says "Yes, I know; be still." What a simple comment to settle both the hearers and himself. The Hebrew word for "be still" means to "do nothing". Elijah was leaving, and that wasn't going to change. Getting worked up over the matter would do nothing to help anyone. **Are there some situations in your life where you need to be still? God doesn't want us totally passive, but He also doesn't want us scurrying around as if we are responsible for everything that happens to us. Have a prayer concern? Give it to Him, and be still as you wait on His instructions.**

Don't know where to go? Be still for a moment and let God's peace settle and lead you as you live obediently to Him.

Read 2 Kings 3

Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." And the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the LORD has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab." 2 Kings 3:13 It has always been frustrating to me when I watch kids from the same church interact outside of church. Many of these kids who hang out around each other in the youth group or in the sanctuary, find ways to distance themselves while at school. Maybe some of them are more popular than the others, so at school their church friends get left by the wayside. Then later when they're all back at church, the kids who were ignoring their church friends decide to hang out with them with fewer witnesses around.

In the same way, the King normally associated himself with the false prophets, and now decides he wants a message from the Lord. Elisha tells him to stick with the friends he chose over God, but the King says this is too important to leave to his "friends". What an admission of idiocy! He knew that when it really came down to it, there was only one place to really get God's message; from Elisha who was a constant friend of God. **Are you a constant friend of God? Or can you be around others who cause you to intentionally ignore or bury your faith? You need to realize that God is the greatest friend you'll ever have. Don't try to hide Him from others.**

Read 2 Kings 4

When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. 2 Kings 4:6 I went with my family to the Missouri Tigers spring football game recently. The previous year 12,000 people showed up, though they expected more because of recent success on the field. When the coach was asked how many people he expected, he said 40,000. We arrived at the stadium that holds about 70,000, and noticed that one entire side was roped off so no one could get in. While they said 40,000, but their actions indicated that they didn't believe what they said, or the other side would have been open in preparation.

This widow that met Elisha had a lot of jars and God filled not only enough to cover her debts, but more for her to live on. When she ran out of new jars, it says that oil stopped. God isn't going to waste provision, but gave her what she was prepared for. **When you pray, are you prepared to receive? Do you trust the Lord to answer your prayer and come through when you really need him? Perhaps there is something we want to see happen, but logically we've roped off part of provision God could give because it seems impossible. Be open to trusting God today.**

Read 2 Kings 5

But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' 2 Kings 5:11 When I think of baseball I probably think of homeruns first. There's something exciting about watching someone absolutely crush that little white ball out of the park. But sometimes you get a pitcher's duel. You have two pitchers that are just on their game and they're keeping people off base and runs are hard to come by. Some people don't like watching this kind of game because it lacks excitement. However, I think it's very exciting to see ball players work under the pressure of keeping people off base in a low-scoring game; the pitcher is working hard to get strikeouts, the fielders are staying alert to not allow anything to get past them. It's just as exciting, but it depends on your perspective.

Naaman was looking for some pizzazz as he was cured of his leprosy. He expects Elisha to perform some elaborate ceremony and say magic words. Instead, Elisha tells him to go jump in the river and wash himself. This is a much greater act of God because it required Naaman to choose obedience and faith. God could do everything for us, but He chooses to use us. Many of the ways I've been blessed have been through acts of obedience by other believers. God still did the work, but used a person in the process. **Are you looking for great acts of God to know He's working? Are you maybe overlooking something very simple in your life that's having a very big impact? He can work within your daily devotional time or in your personal acts of selflessness towards another person. Before you say God isn't working in your life, ask Him to help you see all the ways He's involved around you.**

Read 2 Kings 6

He said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it. 2 Kings 6:7 I remember first noticing markers on the floor of television shows. The most common that you can find are on talk shows where the host has an opening monologue of some type. Even though there may be a large stage, the host has to come to that marker to be in the precise spot for the cameras to capture him during that opening. But just getting to the marker is not enough. Once they get there, they now have to do their job.

There are many things of note in this chapter, but I think this lost axe head is very important. The man loses it, not in some shallow creek, but in the Jordan river. We know it was deep and wide, because in chapter 2 we saw Elijah and then Elisha part the river in order to cross. By God's power, Elisha makes this axe head defy physics and float on top of the water. And what is the final part of this miracle? The man who lost it lifts it out. **When God answers our prayers, it's not just us standing on a prayer marker and waiting for Him to dump stuff on us. Are we ready to receive it? Are we prepared to obey God in order to receive it? When Elisha parted the Jordan, by God's power, did he just stand on one side and watch the miracle? No! He had to walk across the dry riverbed to the other side. You might be praying for God to come through for you today. Are you ready to take any steps that He includes in**

that process? Are there some steps you already know you're ignoring (some act of service, some repentance of sin, etc)? You need to be as ready to answer God as you are for Him to answer you.

Read 2 Kings 7

Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent; if we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household." 2 Kings 7:9 The Boston Marathon was recently won, which came to my mind when I read this verse today. A marathon is a race of 26.2 miles, but do you know where that odd distance comes from? It's the distance between the ancient cities of Marathon and Athens. When Greece defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon, a Greek soldier ran nonstop back to Athens and burst into the Senate and exclaimed "We have won", and then died of a heart attack. He gave his life for what he thought was good news to share with everyone.

These lepers also had some good news to share. They could have selfishly carried off everything of value while Israel waited in their city afraid to come out. But, they recognized that this was good, God-given news, and they wanted everyone to rejoice in it. And truly the news brought joy and relief to an entire nation. The best news in the world is that our sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ. And still there are so many in the world who don't know that. In fact, there are many in your town who don't know. They might know about Jesus, but they need your testimony to really know Him. **When is the last time you shared the good news with someone? It's not just good enough to talk about it at church, and keep sharing the news with those who know. It's time to share the news with those who feel hopeless and trapped inside the desperate situations of their lives.**

Read 2 Kings 8

When the king asked the woman, she related it to him. So the king appointed for her a certain officer, saying, "Restore all that was hers and all the produce of the field from the day that she left the land even until now." 2 Kings 8:6 I remember a couple years ago a computer of mine was slowing down a lot. At first I thought it was just getting old, but then one day it stopped allowing me to access programs, and finally it started dumping my files. I took it to a computer repair place who confirmed I had picked up a computer virus. They repaired the computer, and restore all my old files. I was really worried that I wouldn't be able to get back a lot of projects I had worked so hard on, and when they said the computer was completely restored, I almost paid them extra...almost. In fact, I continued to use that computer for another 3 years after it was fixed.

There are few things that impact a person like restoration. This Shunammite woman had followed the Lord's instructions to leave behind her house and land and to go where the famine wouldn't take their lives. When they returned, someone else was claiming that home and land as theirs, since this Shunammite family had been gone for 7 years. However, God didn't just plan for their family to be spared from the famine, but also to

be provided for afterwards. **God doesn't miss details. He knows what we need even before we ask, and yet we still must ask. Today, do you feel a need for restoration from God? Is there a situation in your life that has turned sour due to sin and disobedience? God is ready to restore you and to remove the guilt and shame that causes us to stay away from Him so long.**

Read 2 Kings 9

'You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. 2 Kings 9:7 Do you know the difference between avenge and revenge? To avenge something means that justice has been brought upon a wrong doer. To take revenge, means simply to hurt someone who hurt you, with no thought of whether the act is just or not. That's one reassuring thing about our Lord: He is always just. There are some verdicts that come out of courtrooms today that seem unjust. But with God, every decision has been made by a Holy, Sinless, Perfect God, who takes delight in justice, not in injury.

Jehu was really the perfect guy for this job. As he is made King over Israel, He knows that He is being called by God as the instrument of judgment on the house of Ahab. He doesn't decide it himself but understands from the verse above that God was going to use him to avenge the wicked acts of Ahab, Jezebel, and even their wicked son Jehoram. **Are you bothered by situations where someone wronged you personally? Which would you prefer, to be avenged or to take revenge? The one that you choose can reveal if you are right in your reaction, and it reveals whether you are being sanctified in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Read 2 Kings 10

Jehu went into the house of Baal with Jehonadab the son of Rechab; and he said to the worshipers of Baal, "Search and see that there is here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but only the worshipers of Baal." 2 Kings 10:23 Have you ever realized you were standing in the wrong line? I am a big Cardinals fan, and also a big fan of ballpark food. I could eat at a buffet minutes before the game, and I'm still going to have a hotdog, lemon-ice and maybe some peanuts. During one particular game I was standing in line at a concession stand and just waiting. After being in the line for about 5 minutes I heard someone say "Beer line only". I look ahead and saw a sign that said just that. Even though I didn't want beer, it took me about a minute to get myself to admit I was in the wrong line. So I moved out and all the way to the back of the food line.

Jehu was looking for people that were in the wrong place. He had determined that the days of the Baal prophets were numbered. So he brought all of them in, put bright clothes to easily identify them, and got his soldiers ready outside. Then he gives one last chance as he asks, "There aren't any worshippers of the Lord here are there?" If there was, this was their chance. I hope there wasn't one who had just followed the crowd inside and was too embarrassed to tell the truth. So Baal was destroyed and removed from

Israel. **Are you standing in the wrong line? Do you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, or would you find yourself in someone else's temple? Even if you've been in church for many years, if you know that you have not truly given your life to Jesus, do not hesitate out of fear or embarrassment. The believers of your church will happily welcome you in, and applaud your humility.**

Read 2 Kings 11

Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they would be the LORD'S people, also between the king and the people. 2

Kings 11:17 As I've been watching the presidential primaries this year, the concept of caucuses has been very interesting to me. In the Democratic party, some states hold caucuses instead of secret voting. These people gather in a room under the name of the candidate they support. Then a few people at a time will leave the major candidates as they go to the smaller ones to convince some of those people to come over to their side. They wrangle for a while trying to get people to switch allegiances, which many do, and then they have a final count later in the day. Some people switch because they're embarrassed to be in a smaller group and some switch because they are swayed. They originally claimed to be for one, but found themselves supporting another by the end of the day.

Israel had already broken down the house of Baal in their land and said they weren't going back. Now it was Judah's turn. The people made a covenant that they would be the Lord's people, and then they went to tear down the house of Baal. We don't find them going to the Baal temple and then changing their mind to worship Baal again. This was the end of Baal in the two kingdoms. If only Israel had completely conquered the land when they first came in, they never would have needed to take this step. However, they were influenced a lot more than they influenced others when they first arrived in Canaan. **What about you? Do you find yourself switching allegiances at times? Sometimes you seem fully on board with Jesus, and then later in the day you're making choices that can in no way be associated with Him? Remember, you're not choosing Him as your God; you're choosing to be one of His people. You change for Him, not He for you.**

Read 2 Kings 12

Moreover, they did not require an accounting from the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay to those who did the work, for they dealt faithfully. 2 Kings

12:15 It's amazing how principled people can throw all their convictions out over money. I knew a local pastor who was leading a small church. They suddenly had a very big problem as they found out that nearly \$100,000 had been taken out of their treasury over the years. This was not a church that could easily deal with such a loss, and it soon became clear that a secretary in the church was responsible for the loss. She was stealing money while at the same time taking a paycheck as she worked for the church. Ultimately, she was more interested in working for herself.

Churches today have to keep strict accounting records. It's too bad that we cannot trust each other, but in our materialistic and debt-ridden culture, handling ministry money can be a great temptation. In the case of the temple repairs, there was no accounting. The people who were doing the work, which were mostly local Jews who worshipped in that very temple, could be trusted to use the money in a manner that accomplished the task and glorified the Lord. **Are you dealing fairly in financial practices? Are you delaying on certain payments that you owe? Have you failed to payback people who have loaned you money? Are people unwilling to trust you around their money? Then repair your reputation by paying back those you owe, and by having a new outlook on money. It's a tool that we can use in our service to the Lord.**

Read 2 Kings 13

Then he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground," and he struck it three times and stopped . 2 Kings 13:18 Usually the problem I have with my kids cleaning their room isn't with the part they clean, but the part they don't. It's interesting how every generation of children attempts to see how little they can get away with when it comes to work. The floor might be clean, but nothing else is. It's important to me to teach my children to do a job completely, and not just halfway. If my kids hesitate to let Nikki or I know that they have finished cleaning their room, it's probably because they know they hadn't done it right.

King Joash had the opportunity to completely defeat Aram and to release Israel from the difficulty of constant fighting. When told to strike the ground, Elisha didn't give him any specific instructions, but it was going to have something to do with Aram. Joash strikes the ground three times and then he just stands still, probably looking at Elisha to see if he did the right thing. It indicates he was hesitant that he hadn't really done what he was supposed to. **Is there a job that you aren't completing? Do you maybe bring up Jesus with people, but never really share the entire gospel so they can make a decision? If you teach at church, are you putting all your effort into the lessons, or just attempting to get away with the bare minimum? Make the choice today to do everything completely. Don't try to move on when you still have other jobs to finish.**

Read 2 Kings 14

"You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has become proud. Enjoy your glory and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you, even you, would fall, and Judah with you?" 2 Kings 14:10 The problem with victory is that it often causes the victor to fall. In 2008, the Boston Celtics were the best NBA team in their conference. They got to play the last team to make the playoffs and no one was talking about their seven game series. It was assumed that Boston would win four games in a row, and send the Atlanta Hawks home in a hurry. The problem is that someone forgot to give Atlanta a copy of that script. After being down 2-0 in the series, the Hawks went home and won two games to tie it up. The Celtics players were stunned, with one saying "I guess they want to win." Ya think!?! The old adage is that pride comes before a

fall. When we begin to think too highly of ourselves, we think less of God, and put ourselves in a position to disappoint ourselves.

Amaziah had a great battle and decides that he'll defeat the king of Israel and unite God's people together. The problem with that was that God divided the people when he tore a part away for Jeroboam. So despite the warnings of the wiser Jehoahaz, Amaziah goes to battle and loses big time. Even his enemy tried to talk him out of it. **Is pride blinding your eyes and filling your ears? Are you unable to see a spiritual landmine that is awaiting you because you are so full of yourself? Give glory to God for your victories, because He'll be there when you fall. You don't want to fall, having glorified only yourself, and then calling on God out of desperation. If believers would serve Him out of relationship instead of desperation, they wouldn't feel unable to call on Him when they are in a time of need. He's not your genie, He's your God.**

Read 2 Kings 15

This is the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." And so it was. 2 Kings 15:12 I don't really care much for presidential debates. Very rarely have I heard anything of substance, and it's obvious that things promised in a debate can change once the person gains office. Politicians often come up with plans that sound good on paper, but that they know will never work in practice. But, as long as they can get people to believe a wonderful government program is coming to help them, votes will respond. It's a sad commentary in our country when politicians say anything, and voters already know that most of it is untrue.

Fortunately God can hold no higher position. He doesn't have to lie his way to the top, or say the opposite of what He means. I love the final statement of verse 12, "And so it was." I saw a bumper sticker that says, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." But it doesn't matter what you believe; If God said it, that settles it. Perhaps you have been clinging to a word from the Lord in Scripture. If God said it, then that settles it.

Remember that the promises of Scripture are usually a covenant. It's a promise of the Lord to do something, if we do something. He will bless us, if we seek to honor Him. Are there some promises you've been waiting for from God? Are there some He is waiting on you to fulfill to Him? Remember that the Christian life is a two way street of promises.

Read 2 Kings 16

The covered way for the sabbath which they had built in the house, and the outer entry of the king, he removed from the house of the LORD because of the king of Assyria. 2 Kings 16:18 During college (around 1998), I decided I just had to have a cell phone. It was enormous, and was often plagued with static and cost me about \$80 a month for 400 minutes. There were a few times that I wrote my tithe check, and then held it in my wallet until the end of the month. If at the end of the month I didn't have enough

money to cover the check, I didn't give it. More often than not, the culprit was my cell phone which was more of a status symbol than a helpful tool.

In this case, Israel literally robs from the house of the Lord to pay the king of Assyria. In doing so, they took away from the temple and rededicated those items. Instead of them being dedicated to God, they became dedicated to man. This is truly a sad chapter in the life of Israel. **Are there areas of your life that you are robbing God in order to satisfy man? Have you given up your Sabbath for your job? Do you give to the cable company, cell phone company, car company, and find nothing left for your Lord? Can you find time to coach a sport, help a community committee, but never time to volunteer through your church? You need to evaluate who you really owe.**

Read 2 Kings 17

Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." 2 Kings 17:13 I've shared a little bit that my first pastorate was a difficult one. I soon found out that the problems I was addressing to the church had been addressed by the previous two pastors as well. During one business meeting, I had to hand over a vote to the chairman of the deacons. As he was discussing the matter in the meeting he made a comment that I hoped would get their attention. "This is the third time we've been through this, from three different pastors. It makes me wonder if the problem is with us." I had great hope that the people of the church might all realize the same thing. Instead they voted against the Word of God and against their pastor that night.

In the same way, God says that all the prophets and seers that had spoken to Israel, all told them the same thing "Turn from evil, and obey God." Though their messages contained different elements, all of the prophets included that declaration as they were led by the Lord. There comes a point that when you keep hearing the same message over and over, you have to realize the record isn't broken, but you're ears and heart are. **Is there a repeated message from the Lord that you've been ignoring? You're hearing it over and over, and you've tried to dismiss it. Acknowledge before the Lord that you have heard Him and you will do as He has led.**

Read 2 Kings 18

'Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?' " 2 Kings 18:35 People often want to know why we think Christianity is so special? Just recently I was asked why Christians believe we are going to Heaven and all other religions are going to Hell? Even the way they ask their question illustrates the disconnect between Christianity and all the man-made religions of the world. Non-believers hope that if they mention the hundreds of other religions standing opposed to Christianity, that the Christian will come to his senses and back off such a strong position. But there are only two religious choices

people can make. While it may appear there are hundreds of different religions, but there are simply two: worship Jesus or don't.

The leaders of Assyria grouped all the gods of their conquered lands into one big useless group. The Assyrians truly believed that the God of Judah would be no more victorious against them than any other nation's deity had been. But our God is different. Ours is the God that defeated Egypt in the Red Sea. Ours is the God that brought the walls of Jericho straight down on itself. Ours is the God that saved us from ourselves and our sin. He is great and magnificent, and like no other. **Do you sometimes forget how great your God is? Have you forgotten the salvation He provided for you? Have you forgotten all the times He provided for you when you couldn't take care of yourself? Remember that you serve a God who has handled the problems of His people for thousands of years. There is nothing you can go through that He hasn't seen before.**

Read 2 Kings 19

Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. 2 Kings 19:14 Watching an experienced police officer question a witness or suspect is an interesting process. After listening to the person give their side of the story, an officer will often ask questions that cover details that were already given. But as those questions are answered, new details begin to emerge. Perhaps the witness was excited and forgot some details. Or the suspect may have trouble keeping a lie together as he answers it from different angles. Generally after the questioning is over, the officer has a good idea of what really happened.

When we come before God, we need to lay out everything before Him. Too many people take the helter skelter approach of life to their prayer time as well. They jump around and have a hard time connecting the things they are trying to say to God. I often encourage people to use a prayer list if they have trouble remembering all the requests they want to mention before the Lord, and then lay the whole thing out before Him. **Don't just lay out your concerns, but also your sins and failures in the situation. Is there something you need to lay before the Lord? Some sin you've been hiding or a problem you've been attempting to repair on your own? Spread it out before the Lord...all of it.**

Read 2 Kings 20

Then Isaiah said, "Take a cake of figs." And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. 2 Kings 20:7 How does healing come? Is it wrong to go to doctors instead of trusting in God to bring about healing for us? In Baptist life, I often hear people unsure of how to pray for those that are sick. They know that we are to pray for God's will, and they are afraid of presuming upon God's will. Some people pray for God to do the healing, and others ask for the doctors to have wisdom. It is our responsibility to pray for those that are sick, and to leave the healing in God's hands.

In this passage we see Hezekiah praying for God to heal him. Hezekiah had certainly lived a life that was an example to the people and to future kings on how to lead God's people. And because he asked, God healed him. Notice that Isaiah brings the word to Hezekiah that he will not die, and then they use these figs to bring about a recovery. It seems that both miracle and medicine were applied to the situation. In fact, a professor in seminary one told us that he prays that God would heal "by miracle or by medicine". He saw no conflict in praying that prayer, because in either situation, God was being asked to be the healer. **Have you been praying for healing for yourself or someone else? Are you really praying that God would just heal the person, or are you filling the prayer with conditions? If you're living for the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers, you will not pray outside of God's will.**

Read 2 Kings 21

For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 2 Kings 21:3 In Memphis there are many buildings that need to just come down. A lot of old abandoned real estate caused the coach of the Los Angeles Lakers to comment that Memphis looks like a "war zone". He wasn't far off. But until they have something to put up in its place, the city doesn't go flattening buildings too often. I recall one building that they brought down to build some apartments. But when they built the new building, they didn't use the old rubble. Construction teams used new materials to build a new building to replace the old one.

Rebuilding sin is a sad testimony, and is akin to building a new building out of old rubble. Many of Judah's kings were good, but failed to remove the high places that worshipped false gods. Hezekiah took the step of removing even those. And now his son, Manasseh, rebuilds the very things his father tore down. It was a sad testimony in the life of God's people, but as Christians we can do this very same thing when we revert back to the sin of our old life. **Are you rebuilding rubble? Have you walked away from sin, only to find yourself returning to it? You need to haul off the rubble, by being truly repentant and willing to turn completely from that sin. Build new habits into your life to replace the old sinful habits that have caused you pain and guilt.**

Read 2 Kings 22

"Go, inquire of the LORD for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." 2 Kings 22:13 Have you heard any sermons lately that impacted your life? Pretty much every sermon can, as long as you're yielded to the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the message. My preaching professor in seminary said that sometimes at the end of what he considered one of his worst messages, he saw people come forward in response. It proved to him that the work in the message is done by God and not by man. We recently had someone fill the pulpit in the pastor's absence. The fill-in was a guy who is not a highly confident speaker, and who

doesn't work hard to keep your attention as he preaches. But, I chose to listen and the Holy Spirit gave me an important message on faith and trust, that has helped me over the last few weeks.

Josiah as king could have done like other kings; he could have ignored God's word when it was given, and simply do something else. But Josiah realized that if it weren't for God, Judah would have nothing. So when he's confronted with God's law, he listens to the entire book be read. Then he has the priests go to the Lord to inquire as to whether it is too late to do anything about their sin. **Are you like Josiah? Are you listening to the Lord through His Word? When you are confronted with your sin, are you ready to make a change? Don't attempt to ignore conviction. Ignoring conviction is ignoring God.**

Read 2 Kings 23

He did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which was in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. 2 Kings 23:11 I think one of the clearest indications of a new believer's commitment to the Lord, is in the things that he gives up. I've seen some that won't give up their friends that continue to lead them astray. Some won't give up the drinking that has plagued them for too long already. I see some that won't submit their language to the Lord. The greatest changes in the life of the Christian come not in the things we begin doing for Jesus, but the things we quit doing because of Jesus.

Josiah is going through the nation of Judah not just stopping pagan practices, but destroying them. Idols, temples, and anything else was completely destroyed. The passage above reveals that he also eliminated the horses and chariots of Judah's army that had been dedicated to the sun. We know that Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, worshipped the sun and stars, and it's likely that he dedicated these horses and chariots towards the end of his reign (Josiah's father only reigned two years before Josiah was on the throne). Instead of just rededicating these weapons of war to God, Josiah apparently killed the horses and burned the chariots. He did not just try to turn sin into something for God, but was willing to eliminate some very expensive and important possessions for the Lord. To rededicate these horses and chariots would have been trying to justify sin. **Are there some possessions that you need to get rid of? Don't sell sin to others as you're escaping it; just destroy the stuff. What needs to be torn down in your life, so that godliness and righteousness can take its place?**

Read 2 Kings 24

Surely at the command of the LORD it came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4 and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the LORD would not forgive. 2 Kings 24:3-4 A lot of people feel the need for forgiveness. They deal with the guilt of how they wronged someone, and it constantly

eats away at them. Maybe it was a mistake towards their spouse or children. Perhaps we betrayed the confidence of a friend. When you have made a mistake, and not asked for forgiveness, you are living in a lonely aggravating state of mind.

Here it says that the Lord would not forgive when it came to the sins of Israel. Ultimately, these sins were of the king, but a nation willing to follow an ungodly leader shares the guilt. When the Bible says that God would not forgive, it's because the people didn't want forgiveness. They didn't think they needed forgiveness. Perhaps they had gotten to the point that they weren't falling into sin out of ignorance, but arrogance. They were "God's people" and God was going to come running if they fell. But, God was and is looking for people who ask for forgiveness, not those who expect it. **Are you expecting a forgiveness that you haven't asked for? As Christians we are forgiven of our sins, but our relationship with Jesus should lead us to ask for it. It serves as a reminder to us that every sin that has been atoned for, is important and should not be ignored.**

Read 2 Kings 25

Gedaliah swore to them and their men and said to them, "Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans; live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will be well with you." 2 Kings 25:24 It becomes clear in the military how the drill sergeants pick off people in the platoons. They often don't do it by being mean, but just trying to get the person to give up. Maybe during a grueling run, they tell you to quit and let it all be over. Sometimes a guy will break, and he'll quit. But, most people when faced with these words use it as a motivation to work and try harder. The body is telling you to quit, but the mind pushes you to go forward.

Gedaliah comes in to rule on Babylon's behalf. As he speaks to Judah he tells them to give up and give in. He lets them know the king of Babylon is their king and that they are his servants. Instead of contemplating how they can change the course of their nation, they are encouraged just to give up and embrace the rule of Babylon. The Devil encourages Christians to do the same thing. Stop trying to live for the impossible standards of God. Stop living like you're better than other people. Just make concessions and stop living like a religious nut. **One of the greatest temptations we face as believers is the temptation to stop living a life of conviction. The world wants us to be quiet about standards, and just to accept everyone as they are. Don't give up on the Christian life. Don't give in to the temptations of the world. Choose to stand up today as an unashamed servant of Jesus, and stand against the temptation to give up.**