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SERMON TITLE: **Hezekiah Revives the People's Faith**

Series: *Hezekiah the Reformer*

SCRIPTURE: **2 Chronicles 29:20-21, 30:15-23**

DATE: **November 8, 2020**

View online service at [www.fpcd.org/live-stream](http://www.fpcd.org/live-stream)

Read also Hebrews 10:11-12, 16, 21-25

*Do* you have any friends, family, or acquaintances who have been raised in the church but have dropped out? What do you think causes people to drop out of church? How would you reach out to them to help them reconnect to God?

Last week I asked you to invite your friends or acquaintances to church—either online or in person. This is a follow-up . . . Have you done that yet? It's not that easy, is it. We instinctively know there's going to be resistance and even mocking, just as Israel did to Hezekiah's invitation. What is it that causes people to resist returning to church? Have you ever asked anyone?

Hezekiah knew it would be a stretch to get people to return to worship. So before he sent the invitation out to all the people, he first invited the city leaders. Remember now, the temple had been closed for years. But, people had rallied to clean it and get it ready. Let's read 2 Chronicles 29:20-21, 24

Hezekiah invited city leaders and they came. It was a great success. So now the king set his vision to reunite all Israel through a revival of faith. Did you hear it? "The king had specifically commanded that this burnt offering and sin offering should be made for all Israel" (v. 24b).

This is a big vision followed by a strategic plan. Hezekiah wants Judah and all of Israel—the entire divided nation—to reunite before God in worship.

#### **Only the Lord can re-unite a divided nation.**

The initial response of Israel was sparse. Yet Hezekiah and his city officials stood tight. They, along with the people of Judah, had experienced revival by worshiping together, and it was such a moving joyful experience. Unity resulted. They wanted everyone to have it.

When we worship God together, something special happens.

Scripture tells us because the people of Judah turned to God and revived worship, "the hand of God gave the people of Judah **one heart** to follow the commands of the king and city officials." (2 Chronicles 30:12) **Faith in God overcomes division.**

The king reached out to the city officials, and the king and the officials reached out to the people. **God drew them together.**

When you are united in God, division is overcome. Division hurts families, friendships, and our nation. But unity enables a nation to accomplish much more than any of us can do by ourselves.

Judah sent the invitation throughout Israel and at first people mocked. They were not humble or holy or agreeable. But the people of Judah must have persisted. *'Why don't you come along with us?'* And a few people from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun decided to come. Maybe that spurred people to invite others more than once. They might have done some urging. Former neighbors must have had conversations. Perhaps the church people were persistent in calling, friending people on Facebook or posting the event on the Temple website, or texting their friends because suddenly "many people came together in Jerusalem to keep the festival—a very large assembly." (30:13)

Now add the communities of Ephraim and Issachar. Asher is in the far north; Ephraim on the dividing line, and Issachar in the middle. **So people came from all over the northern territory and joined the people in the south for the festival.**

That did not happen automatically! It happened because the Judah Church people took their leaders' request to heart. **When the whole body committed themselves, then invited others, God went to work.** Let's hear the outcome. READ 2 Chronicles 30:15-23

Let's go back to my initial question. Do you have any friends, family, or acquaintances who have been raised in the church but who have dropped out? They may really want to come back! Have you reached out to them? Perhaps our story gives us some answers how:

1. The festival was held one month late because neither the clergy nor the lay leaders were sanctified. That was embarrassing! They could have said, "We can't do it. We're not good enough. We haven't kept the law." But, they said better to hold Passover late than not hold it at all.
  - a. **You start where you are.** Remember Billy Graham's revivals? He would say *get up out of your seat and come forward to receive Christ*. Do you think there were people in those crowds who did not feel that they were good enough? Suddenly that aisle in front of you looks a mile long. But then a song: "Just as I am, without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come . . ." Didn't Dr. Graham say, "I'll wait for you. Your friends will wait for you."
  - b. This honored God and did not hinder the people.

2. The people knew nothing about the sacredness required to sacrifice their animal. (Remember, families sacrificed their own lamb in Exodus.)
  - a. So the Levites stepped in and sacrificed and cooked their lamb for them. **That's grace!**
  - b. Hezekiah then allowed them to eat the Passover meal, even though it was contrary to the Law of Moses that unsanctified people partake. "Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come . . . I come." (30:17)
3. Hezekiah prayed for these newcomers and asked God to accept them. Hezekiah recognized that by coming to worship they were deciding to follow the Lord, even if they were not properly cleansed for the ceremony. (30:18-19)

### **This attitude of grace honors God and draws people in.**

Why was this festival so important? Passover gave an important message:

- ~ We are FREED only through the blood sacrifice
- ~ We are HEALED when covered by the blood
- ~ We LIVE by trusting the blood covering
- ~ We DEFEAT OUR ENEMIES through the power of the blood.

This was their only hope because they were divided and their nation was in trouble.

Do you need to be free? Do you need to trust more? Does our nation need the healing that only Jesus can bring?

We know that their Passover lamb symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews tells us:

The sacrifice of an animal was done year after year under the Old Covenant.

**But, the blood of Jesus covers us once and for all.**

The sacrifice of an animal can never take away sins.

**The sacrifice of Jesus takes away our guilty consciences and makes us clean.**

The sacrifice of an animal cannot give us a new heart.

**The presence of Jesus at the right hand of God gives us new hearts because through forgiveness, you see God's heart.**

John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace" said, "I was blind but now I see."

Sin and bondage is the true state of humanity; but forgiveness comes through Jesus, the Lamb.

Martin Luther struggled with a huge sense of guilt. He became a priest to see if he could live a perfect life. He read his Bible; fasted and prayed; slept on the floor without a blanket in the chilling cold to try to whip his sin nature into shape. He learned Greek and Hebrew to understand the Bible. He tried to be perfect but found that it made him hate God. He wrote this: "I greatly

longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the justice of God' because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust.

Although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him."

But Luther had a yearning to know what Paul meant. Night and day he pondered "the justice of God" and "the just shall live by his faith" (Romans 1:17). Finally he grasped it. It is sheer grace. It is the mercy of Jesus Christ, the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

He said, "Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressively sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate of heaven...."<sup>1</sup>

The festival of Passover pointed to this very thing. This festival tells the story of what faith is really all about: God seeks to rescue and save. But we must respond to the invitation—get up out of our seats and seek Him.

**This is the one thing that has the power to bring a divided nation together.**

Let's go back to my initial question. Do you have any friends, family, or acquaintances who have been raised in the church but who have dropped out?

Do you have a desire to help family members and friends and a nation which has forgotten how to have faith—to revive their faith? Let us not be negligent. For the Lord has chosen you, His Church, to minister to them.

**That is the One Thing that will heal our division.**

AMEN

<sup>1</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. See <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8570008-these-are-luther-s-own-words-i-greatly-longed-to-understand>, accessed November 5, 2020.