

## Spiritual Reform

Modern politics often call for reform in health care, welfare, income tax and reforms in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. In various ways, these social systems have grown ineffective and our government leaders constantly pledge initiatives to improve them, but to no avail. In today's Templates of Truth, we consider the steps King Josiah took in bringing about spiritual reform among God's people. These same steps will facilitate spiritual reform in our individual lives, and in our nation as well.

II Kings 22:1 reports that Josiah came to reign over Israel when he was just 8 years old! Scripture says, *while he was still a youth, he began to seek God* (II Chronicles 34:3). While still a very young man, Josiah *began to purge Judah & Jerusalem* (II Chronicles 34:3). We are never too young to seek & serve God. God has a will, plan and purpose for the life of each believer, and we can discover what that is and began our ministry calling at even a very young age. God used this young king to begin the process of spiritual reform in the nation that had wandered aimlessly away from Him.

The Biblical account of Josiah's reform can be clearly categorized in steps that serve as a universal formula. It began with a **reading of the Word**. While repairing the Temple, a copy of the book of the law was found, and *Shaphan (the Scribe) read it in the presence of the king* (II Kings 22:8-10). Later, Josiah gathered all the people to the Temple and *he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant* (23:2). Idol worship had so permeated the religious culture that the Word of God had become lost in the shuffle. It was gathering dust somewhere in a corner, on a shelf or in a storeroom. Is the Word of God gathering dust somewhere in your house? I wonder how many other churches have replaced the uncompromised proclamation of the Word of God with motivational speeches, social homilies and positive-thinking lectures? How "lost" is the Word of God in many places of worship today?

When the Word of God was read, it produced a **repentance of their ways** – *And it came about when the king heard the words of the law, that he tore his clothes* (22:11). When we sincerely listen to the teaching of God's Word, it will bring conviction to us about the things in our life that are not pleasing to God. It will produce a godly sorrow in our heart that leads to repentance – *and the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord* (23:3). Repentance means a turn-around, or an about-face. We cease walking in our own ways, and willfully choose to walk in God's ways. Spiritual reform never comes without true & genuine repentance.

An important part of repentance and spiritual reform is a house-cleaning. Josiah engaged all his focus to a national **removal of their wickedness**. Throughout most of chapter 23, we read about the king removing all the artifacts of pagan symbolism and burning them in public view. He tore down high places and shut down temples of idol worship. He removed the mediums and spiritists (the ghost-hunters, psychics & astrologers). He even killed the pagan priests and

destroyed horses & chariots that had been dedicated to paganism. One such altar was even used for the human sacrifice of children, while another for male homosexual pagan worship. What would America be like today if we had a president and all levels of federal, state, county and city government who would rid the land of all the things that are deploring to God? Spiritual reform will never come until we are willing to clean house and purge our lives of all wickedness.

Finally, Josiah led the people to a **reaffirmation of God's principles** and a **reinstitution of God's practices** – *the king...made a covenant...to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant* (23:3). Once we commit to promote God's Word, we are compelled to practice God's ways – *then the king commanded all the people saying, "Celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God as it is written in this book of the covenant* (23:21). True spiritual reform is made manifest in a people who strive to walk holy, blameless and pure according to God's will and ways.

That formula worked for Josiah and the people of God in those ancient days. It is a formula that will still work for God's people in these modern days. We may never see a healthcare reform or a tax reform system that truly works, but spiritual reform is our greatest need and the kind of reform most attainable. To realize it, we will have to find the Book, blow off the dust, and rediscover once again what God demands in order to see spiritual reform come to our life and land.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.