

Hezekiah

by Ron Bailey

This sermon calls us to open the doors of our lives to God, to be honest with Him, and to come to Him with simplicity, just like Hezekiah did.

Duration: 43:06

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Hezekiah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a passage from the book of Proverbs that uses a formula to describe four things that are difficult to understand. These include an eagle in the air, a snake on a rock, a ship on the sea, and a man with a mate. The speaker emphasizes the importance of logical thinking and not getting caught up in busyness and clutter in our lives. They also talk about the power of new affections and invisible powers at work in our lives, urging listeners to cooperate with these powers and shape themselves according to God's desires. Finally, the speaker encourages the audience to open the doors of their lives if they feel closed off from God and to clear out any rubbish and filth.

Transcript

We're getting, some of us are getting to that age when teenagers begin to mumble. It has nothing at all to do with our hearing, it's just that teenagers begin to mumble, that's the way it is. It's good to be with you on this wonderful sunny day.

It's warm, so if you're hot, feel free to fan yourselves with your tin sheets or whatever, that's fine. Not for preachers of course, preachers aren't allowed to have fans, are they? OK, can I get better now? I've got something on my heart that may seem a little strange, and where I'm going to look to draw the information I want to may seem a little strange too. I want to go into one of the stories of one of the Hebrew kings.

Now I know that that whole area of the scripture often for people is a real muddle, mainly because Hebrew history and ancient history wasn't told in a straight line in the way that modern history is told. It sort of goes in circles and doubles back on itself. But I want to look at one of the men.

I just came across this man in my ordinary reading, and there were things that really spoke strongly to me. I'm going to talk about Hezekiah. Hezekiah is not a book in the Bible, as some people used to think it was.

He's a king, and he was an extraordinary king. There's a little phrase, if I can just, my eye just drops on it. This is just to begin with.

This is 2 Kings chapter 18. And I'll put you in the picture a little bit with this man and what it was he was doing. But it all has the theme in my heart of reclaiming the temple, of cleansing the temple.

You remember that there were two occasions on which the Lord Jesus cleansed the temple. That would have been the court of the Gentiles and cleared everything out to make it more available for people to approach Him in those days and that pattern of things. There were cleansings of the temple in Old Testament days as well.

At least a couple of them, and I'm just going to concentrate on this one by Hezekiah. But it was this phrase that caught my attention. This is 2 Kings chapter 18.

I'll read from the beginning, just so you can get the flavor. It came to pass in the third year of Hoshea, son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. Twenty-five years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places and broke the images and cut down the groves and broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made.

But unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it, and he called it Nehushtan, just that bronze thing. That's putting it in its place, that's what Nehushtan means. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after Him was none like Him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before Him.

For He claimed to the Lord and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments which the Lord commanded Moses, and the Lord was with Him, and He prospered whithersoever He went forth. It was that little phrase that caught my attention. He prospered in wherever He went, whatever He did, whatever He put His hand to in His trusted God, He prospered.

It reminded me immediately of that verse or those verses in 2 Peter where, do you remember Peter puts a little list of things together? And he says you add this to this, and you add this to this, and you add this to this. And he says if you have these things and abandon them, they make you that you will not be barren or unfruitful in Jesus Christ. An absolute guarantee of fruitfulness if we take the steps that God has said that we should take.

I was thinking when, with the hymn and the word of Prophecy Tony is absolutely right, I'm always listening for keys in the meeting, listening for confirmations, listening because the Lord Jesus said, didn't He, I do always those things that my Father does. And anyone who wants to serve the Lord has to have eyes and ears open to see what God is already doing. There's no point in beating off on some track of your own when God has already begun to lay down a clean line.

What was one of the hymns we sang this morning? Come believing, cleanse your garments. What's your reaction to that? Is your reaction, well I can't, I need somebody else to cleanse my garments. I can come believing but no, surely all that is the Lord's work.

He has to do that. And then we had a prophecy which was saying that we should empty of our souls of everything but love. And again maybe the question that rises in your hearts is, how can we? Isn't that the

kind of thing that God has to do? There is an amazing and absolutely necessary cooperation between the things that God does and the things that we do.

God will not twist our arm, He will not force us to do, but He will make things possible that were impossible. And it's the Word of God that changes it. From the moment the Word of God comes, however that is, whether it's a hymn or a prayer or a prophecy or a preacher, whatever it is, from the moment the Word of God comes, the situation is transformed.

Impossible things become possible. And you may have been trapped in a situation and feel that there's absolutely no way out of it, but the Word of God comes and it's all changed. There's a classic example, let me illustrate it, get you used to my voice.

It's a long time since I was here. In fact as we've been praying for these families and children, it's made me realise just how long it is since I was here. The size of the Ray boys and joy.

When they said they were going to pray for joy, I was in Zimbabwe with the Barnaby family 12 years ago, something like that. And when they talked about joy, I thought, yes, I know joy, she's about hip height. I remember seeing her kind of heading off to the compound with her mum with rolls of newspaper and things and wallpaper to do things with the children in their craft sessions.

So I've been away too long, I think. This is the thought that came to mind. You remember the occasion when the Lord Jesus Christ was in a synagogue on the Sabbath day and there was a man there who had a wizzard arm.

And people were watching to see what would happen, but the Lord didn't take too much notice of that. And he simply said to this man with the wizzard arm, stretch forth your hand. Now if the man had just been thinking logically and working just simply according to his experience up until this point, he might well have said, but that's my whole problem, I can't stretch forth this hand.

It's withered. My problem is I can't stretch forth my hand. One of the things that we have to learn to do when God speaks is stop looking at the problem and start looking at the answer.

Start listening to the thing that He has said. When He says something, everything is changed. It doesn't matter how long you have had your withered arm, it doesn't matter how long you haven't been able to do things, the moment the Word of God comes and says, do it, you can do it.

You can do it. Every Word of God has power in it. It makes possible what is impossible.

This man here, Hezekiah, it says, and it says a couple of times in Chronicles, which is where we're going to spend most of our time this morning, it says that things that He did, God caused them to prosper. So I want to preach to you about prosperity. Not the kind that is sometimes preached about, but this genuine biblical prosperity.

Maybe you know that prosperity is used in the life of Joseph as well. I'm not going to give you a complete Bible study, but on the first time it tells you that things that prospered in Joseph's life was when he was Potiphar's servant. And the second time it tells you that everything prospered is when he was the chief prisoner in the prison.

So his prosperity was always when he owned nothing at all and other people were being blessed as a result of his faithfulness. So that's the kind of prosperity that I'm in favor of. And that's the kind of prosperity that Hezekiah brought, not just into his own life, but in an amazing way to the life of the people of Israel, of Judah.

Come with me to 2 Chronicles, which appears a little bit like a Bible study. Well, it's probably because it's a little bit like a Bible study. I remember, this is being reminiscent now, I remember being with many of the folks here from Epsom a long time ago at Fern Bay.

And I was doing, I think, a couple of sessions each day and I remember Tony saying, we'd like you to do a Bible study in the morning and then preach in the evening. And I offered a cash prize for anyone who could tell the difference, but no one ever claimed it. I don't know how to do anything other than what I shall do now.

So we'll see how this opens out. Let's look, first of all, at 2 Chronicles and chapter 28. And I'll put you in the picture.

I won't spend too much time, but it's very important that we understand what it is Hezekiah had to undo. Things have happened which have had a lasting effect upon the people of Judah and upon the temple. Maybe things have happened in your life which have had a lasting effect upon you, upon the temple that is you.

Maybe part of it is your fault. Maybe part of it isn't your fault. One of the things that are growing is that you take ownership of things.

You accept responsibility. You don't say, it was my mother or my father or Adam or somebody else's fault. Like David, you say, it was me.

Against thee and thee only have I sinned. It was my fault. But we'll have a look.

Let's look at chapter 28. This is Ahaz. Remember, we're down in the southern kingdom.

By this time, the people of Israel have been split into two halves. And this is the southern part, which is Judah. And it says, Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem, but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father.

For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and made also molten images for Balaam. As well as that, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom and burnt his children in the fire according to the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. Let me just make sure you understand the significance of that.

One of the things that God said about the people who used to live in the land of Israel before God's people lived there, he said that their lives were so vile. He used this language. He said, the land is vomiting them out.

It's a very strong language. He said, the land is vomiting out. They were poisoning the land to such a degree by their ways that the land itself had this natural instinctive reaction and ejected them.

Yes, it was part of God's judgment. But they had so defiled the land by these very kinds of practices, by causing their children to pass through the fire, by offering their firstborn as burnt sacrifices to the gods that

they worshipped. And here now is a man who is a king of Judah.

The kings of Israel, they were told in the book of Judah, the book of Deuteronomy, that when they became kings, they had to write out for themselves, you can read it there, the law, that's the first five books of Moses. They had to have their own personal copy so that they had written it, they had knowledge of it, they could not say we don't know what's in it, nobody told us, because they had copied it and they were required to meditate in it constantly. These were the patterns for them.

This is Ahab. Verse four, he sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills under every green tree. Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hands of the king of Syria.

And they smote him and carried away a great multitude of them, captured them and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hands of the king of Israel who smote him with a great slaughter. We begin to come now, in the next couple of verses, to some numbers that are given.

Apparently in one of the battles 120,000 men of Judah were slaughtered in one day. I know we've got some historians here. Does anyone know what the worst day's casualty was in the First World War? Do you know what the number was? I think on the first day of the storm it was 60,000 killed and injured.

This is 120,000 slaughtered. This must be one of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of the world. 120.

And they weren't conscripts and volunteers. They were men of valor. This was the flower of Judah.

These were the men equipped for war. These were the men who knew how to fight. And in one day 120,000 of them died.

And not only that, but 200,000 of the people of Judah were actually taken captive by the Northern Kingdom of Israel and taken away to Israel, some of them, and some of them to Damascus. So for those of you who know Bible history, there are certain key dates which are very helpful when you're trying to piece things together. And one of them is what they call the Fall of Samaria.

It's where the Northern King went into captivity 722 BC. But this is about 10 years prior to that. So before Israel went into captivity, there was something happened in Judah which took most of Judah into captivity.

But it was only temporary. God spared them and brought them back. God gave them a second chance.

These are the stories that you read past so quickly in the books of Kings, and they're extraordinary. And it says, Paul writes to the Corinthians, and he says, these things happened to them for example or type. And then he says, and they were written for our admonition.

These things were written not just as a record, not just as a historical archive. These things were written specifically so that the likes of you and me could read them and be warned by them, understand the implications that were working in these days. It goes on.

I won't go through the whole of this, but let me just get down to verse 22. You can read the rest of it yourselves if you will. It went from bad to worse, bad to worse, bad to worse.

And King Ahaz was never chastened in the right way by the things that happened to him. He just went from one degree of rebellion to the next. And then you come here in verse 22, and in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord.

This is that King Ahaz. He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, which smote him. And he said, because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.

But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. And they hath gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the house, the vessels of the house of God and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord. This man closed down opportunities for other men to seek God in the way that God ordained in those times.

People would approach God by coming to the temple, going through certain ceremonies and rituals that God had given. This man closed everything down. Not just his own rebellion, but he silenced the voice of God and he silenced the opportunity of people being in the presence of God for the whole nation.

And he closed the doors. And he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem and in every individual city of Judah. He made high places to burn incense to other gods and to provoke the anger of the Lord God of his fathers.

And finally he died. His first, his eldest son had been killed in battle and the next son was Hezekiah. And Hezekiah comes from this background where there'd been such aggressive rebellion against God, where this isn't someone who's just backslid, who has slowly slid away from some experience of the Lord.

This is a man who has set his will to destroy the true religion that God had trusted to them. This is a man who has set his will to close the doors so that people can't worship in that way. And his son is Hezekiah.

And Hezekiah is one of the most extraordinary kings that the people of Israel ever had. This is how it starts off. Hezekiah began to reign when he was 25 years old and he reigned 9 and 20 years.

And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. For in the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord.

This is a man who, the politicians would say, he hit the ground running. Day one of his reign, year one, month one, he opens up the doors. If your life has become closed, if it's become cluttered and darkened, and you no longer sense that you have the access to God that you once had within yourselves, one of the first things you'll need to do is open the doors.

It might not seem like a very dramatic thing to do, but you'll have to do it. It might not be a very pleasant thing to do. Do you remember Martha, when Jesus said, roll away the stone? She said, he'll stink.

He's been dead four days. When you open the door, you may find all kinds of unpleasant things that you don't really want to draw attention to, but it has to be this way. We have to be honest with God.

There's no point in pointing back to some experience we had, or to our doctrinal purity, and saying, well this and this and this and this, brother and sister, we have to open the doors. We have to come to God with honesty. You know this old saying, that God cannot change the person you're pretending to be.

God cannot change the person you're pretending to be. You'll have to open the doors. You'll have to come very simple.

Do you remember how the Lord Jesus said to the worst example of a church in the book? He came up to the church of Laodicea, and he says, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, if anyone, if any

individual, hears my voice and opens the door. These are Christians, aren't they? Yes. But somehow the door has got closed, and I'm not trying to point the finger.

I'm not trying to say who's responsible. I'm just simply saying, if this is the situation you find yourself to be in, where somehow things have become darkened and cluttered and closed down, and you know you're not experiencing the presence of God, the love of God, the consciousness of God, in the way that you knew you had in the past. The first step, brothers and sisters, now, day one, month one, year one, open the doors.

Let God into it. Stop making excuses. Stop blaming other people.

Stop saying, I've tried it before and it didn't work. Open the doors. Open the doors.

The first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the Lord and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together in the east street and said to them, here me, you Levites, sanctify now yourselves and sanctify the house of the Lord for your fathers and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. If we had time to read through all this, you'd see that they set up a system which was consistent with the things that God had revealed to them.

For example, only priests were allowed into the holy place, so the Levites didn't clean the holy place, they cleaned the outer courts. But the priests were allowed into the holy place, so they cleaned the holy place. And you've got a sort of, one of these bucket brigade things happening.

You've got people cleaning rubbish out of the holy place, putting it into the courtyard, so that the Levites can take it from the courtyard and clean it out. I don't know what it was. I'm glad I don't know what it was.

It serves my purpose better this morning not to have to put a label on it. A later king, a man named Manasseh, he defiled the temple too. But he brought things into it and we know what he brought into it.

He actually brought false images into it that people should worship. But we don't know what this was. But it was filthiness.

It had no place in this life. So let's just use that as our label. Things that really have no place in your life.

Things that ought not to be there. I'm not asking why they're there, how they got there. I'm just saying things that you know have no place there.

You know that the temple was God's house. It wasn't a church in the way that we imagine a church with seats and places for congregation. It was God's house.

It was a place where God lived. It was a place where people could visit Him and serve Him. And it was filthy.

It was full of faulty things and they had to go through this process of taking these things out. There always has to be this cooperation between me and God in these things. Let's see if I can find a verse quickly.

I think it's in Peter. It is 1 Peter chapter 1. 1 Peter chapter 1. This is interesting because in this passage too Peter is telling us that so many of the things that were written he's not using quite that language but so many of the things that were written were actually not just written for the people who did the writing but they were written for the likes of you and me who have received this grace which is now given to us. It

was written with us in mind.

And he speaks of these things and then he speaks of the people who did the writing and how in their hearts they sought God diligently wanting to understand the implications of the things that they were saying. And then he says in verse 12 unto whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to us they did minister the things which are now reported to you by them that have preached the gospel to you that the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore, good at the loins of your mind that is so old-fashioned, isn't it? Maybe I'm one of the few who is still only using this AV, the archaic version but one of the reasons I do it is because of such terms as that.

Good at the loins of your mind. Now if you had a more modern version it would explain it to you and it would probably explain it far better than these words would on their own. It would probably say you've got to be prepared or something like that.

But you lose the link. You lose the link way back in Israel's history at a crucial time when there were captives and there seemed to be no way out when they were in Egypt God gave to them a sacrifice and a pattern of life that they called the Passover. And they had to eat the Passover in a certain way.

They had to eat it not sitting down but standing up. They had to eat it not relaxed but on their feet with their sandals on. They had to eat it with their packs on their back the staff in their hands and they had to eat it with their loins girded about.

In other words, ready to go. Not sitting and waiting so that when the word of God comes you say, oh well I've got one or two things I need to finish off and we must do this and this and probably in a day or two we can actually get the show on the road. These people were ready.

In heart they were ready. And what Peter is saying is in this pilgrimage that we are part of we Christians, we too we need to be ready. Mentally, spiritually, our mindset needs to be people who are on their feet with their shoes on their feet their staff in their hands you know what this girding about the loins means.

In the days when people wore long robes long robes aren't conducive to running or bash running or those things so what they would do is they would simply bend down they'd put their hands between their legs they'd get the back of their robe they'd pull it through and they'd tuck it into their belt which meant that their legs were now free they could run, they could find, they could do whatever they needed to. It was treating the deck for action that's what it was doing. So Peter here says my language have your deck treated for action.

Be ready. You're a pilgrim. You're not supposed to be putting roots down you're supposed to be with your sandals on your feet and your loins girded back.

You're ready to go. Gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober and hope to the end for the grace that's to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And then he says this as obedient children not fashioning yourselves according to the former strong desires in your ignorance. You may have the word lust the Bible word lust doesn't always mean a bad thing. Jesus used this word when he said with desire I have desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

It just means a very very strong thing. Now we have some very very strong passions, desires powers within us that are part of a former existence part of a former mindset part of a former pattern of things. And here Peter says you're not to shape yourselves according to the dynamic of those things.

You're not to let those be the engine which drives you forward into doing this and this and this. And I think there's something by implication in here. If you're not going to fashion yourself according to former lusts which lusts are you going to fashion yourself according to? Which lusts, which strong desires are you going to cooperate with? No.

Those of the Spirit. Those that God has given doesn't it say in Galatians? Cooperate with Him so that we shape ourselves according to new powers new possibilities new new things. Even if I don't get back let me go just along this route and bring out another thing that may help.

In the book of Proverbs the person who's doing the writing there's a particular point that he gets to and he uses this little formula and he says there are three things no there are four. And there's one or two little things and one of the three or four things that he refers to is something that he we would say in English now he can't get his head around. There are certain things that he he can't fathom.

There are four things that make him wonder. I think. If I can't remember all four you can remind me.

One is, he says, an eagle in the air. One is a snake on a rock. One is a ship in the sea.

And the other is a man with a maid. Now why should he pick those four things? What do they have in common? Well if you're someone who just goes according to what you can see what they have in common is invisible extraordinary powers. You see, these people who wrote these things had seen that the eagle and some of them can fly at 40,000 feet the eagle does not get there by flapping its wings.

It gets there by cooperating with invisible powers. It gets there by cooperating with the thermals that take him up effortless it is. But he must cooperate.

He can't do it when he wants to or where he wants to. He has to do it where the thermal is rising. And then they'd seen the snake.

How does it do that? It's got no legs. How does this, where does this invisible movement come from? And the ship and the sea see how it goes? Where did that power come from? And the way of a man with a maid. This extraordinary thing that parents of teenagers observe of young men where up to 16 you can't get them in the bathroom and after 16 you can't get them out of the bathroom.

And it's kind of this expulsive power of a new affection and something happens and it's really, to watch it you think, if you've not seen it to watch it is extraordinary when you see it happen. Someone that you thought you knew suddenly becomes someone quite different. What's happening is there are invisible powers at work.

Invisible powers that you were never able to tap into as a parent but somebody else has tapped into and now things are really moving. We have to learn, brothers and sisters to cooperate with invisible powers. We have to learn to shape ourselves, it's our responsibility but according to new strong desires that God has given to us.

We have to do part of this clearing out of the rubbish and the filth ourselves. God's direction, we have to do it but we have to do it ourselves. We have to put our hands to the work.

We have to clear the way. Let's go back quickly to 2 Chronicles. Maybe we'll pursue this tonight if it seems right.

Let me get to where in case we don't get back to this tonight and you can finish it off yourselves. At the bottom of this is an intention that Hezekiah has. He's seen something, he's seen the significance of something and he comes to it here in verse 10.

He says, now it's in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. Of course these people were already part of a covenant but there's something in Hezekiah's heart he wants to make an event of this. When we ask Him to come forward or raise a hand or there's something he wants to put a pin in the ground.

He wants to do something of which he can then say that was the day. It's very helpful to us human beings to have something in which we can say that was the day. That was the day that I made that choice.

That was the day that I resolved to do that. So he's going to make a covenant with God and then he says this and he's speaking to the priest and he says, my sons, be not now negligent for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, that you should minister to Him and that you should burn sacrifice. If you look at your margins, it's not just incense, it's sacrifice.

These people have been, they have been hindered from being the kind of people that God had intended them to be. God had chosen these people for a unique function. He'd chosen them so that they could stand before Him.

First thing, comes a long time before the preaching, comes a long time before the witnessing. Remember how Jesus chose twelve that they should be with Him and that He should send them forth to preach. So notice the order.

Twelve that they should be with Him. And look at this here. Hezekiah says, God chose you to be with Him.

He chose you to stand before Him. He chose you to have a closeness to Him that other people do not have. Maybe you've been occupied with lots of other things.

You've been busy doing this and this and this and this. But this is reminding you what your original job definition was. This is reminding you what God had in His mind when He chose you.

It was so that you could be with Him. What will you have to say to anybody if you haven't been with Him? How are you going to be a messenger if you've not received the message? How shall they go unless they are sent? How can you be sent unless you're already with someone who will then send you? I mean they're just straightforward logical statements but it's so easy to miss the logical things and to become so involved in business and things which clutter our lives. Some of them maybe were good when they started off.

Like Nehushtan, the bronze servant. Things that were a reminder of what God did in the past. Things that were well we know what God is like.

Look we've still got this. This is our testament. This is our record.

Look at Nehushtan. Nehushtan became a snare. The thing that had been a blessing.

The thing that had been a picture of Christ. As the serpents on the pole became a curse to these people because they forgot what their real priority was. Their real priority was to stand before Him and to serve Him.

Come bless the Lord all you servants of the Lord who stand by night in the house of the Lord. You know in the house of the Lord isn't where the sin offerings and the trespass offerings are going on. That's a necessary function but that's not where you stand in the house of the Lord.

In the house of the Lord is just being in God's presence. Available to Him. That you should minister to Him and that you should burn offerings.

That you should be people whose life is whose life is summed up in a constant givenness without any expectation of taking anything back. That's what the picture of the burnt offering is. It's our old English phrase of burning your bridges behind you.

You know if you burn something you can't change your mind afterwards and say well we'll rethink this because I think I need it now. And these offerings that were given to God, they were reckless. They were irreversible.

They were ways of saying this is what I'm like in my heart. I'm giving myself to you with absolute abandonment without any thought of the implications, without any contingency plans, without any planning for what will happen if it doesn't go the way I think it should happen. Here's another English phrase, this is all your eggs in one basket.

Do you remember how it began to introduce Hezekiah? It says he trusted in the Lord. That's where it all starts. It all starts with this simple trust.

That takes the word that God speaks to the heart and embraces it and says I believe you. That puts all your eggs in one basket. It's Abraham.

He believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. This absolute confidence in him. We'll go on later maybe at another time to some of these other things but I want to bring this word, I want to focus it now in case that confuses you what I'm trying to say.

Are you conscious of the same intimacy with the Lord that you've always had? Are you conscious of His presence? Are you hearing His word with the clarity that you used to hear it? Are you at peace with Him? Are you comfortable in His presence and He in yours? Or has something begun to clutter it up? Has something begun to make it so that you can no longer actually be the man or the woman that God chose you to be? Well your first step is honesty. Your first step is opening the doors. Let God get at it.

Don't hide it from Him. Bring it to Him. He can do wonderful, this is an old, old saying He can do wonderful things with broken hearts as long as you give Him all the pieces.

He can do wonderful things with messed up lives as long as you give Him all the pieces. As long as you're honest with Him, you open the door and you say, here it is. Wide open.

Come and do what you will do. And then let Him renew your commission. Let Him speak to you again and remind you why He chose you.

Not just for great exploits, not even just for going out to Zimbabwe or Khartoum or any of these places. That flows on from this first thing. Notice the order.

Satan tested Jesus trying to get Him to bow down and worship and Jesus said, get behind me. It's written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve. Notice the order.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve. The service will flow naturally from worship. But if a service gets in the wrong place, it will become part of the clutter.

It will be part of the clutter, it will obscure the very one that you're seeking to serve. So, be honest and be encouraged to, if you feel you've been captured in that way for a long time, the people of Israel have been without this opportunity maybe for a dozen years or more. Day one, month one, year one, it all starts now with the decision that says, we're going to open the door and let God handle this.

Let's pray. Lord, you're so good to us. You've been so gracious to us throughout our lives.

You've done so many wonderful things for us. You've blessed us. You've enriched us.

You've made us fruitful. But primarily you chose us for fellowship. You chose us for worship.

You chose us to be with you and to be those who constantly poured out their lives to you in the same way that you pour out yours to us. And we know this has to be the heart of it, Lord, and if we lose this, the rest becomes... Just go to the motions. Lord, thank you that you always speak to our condition and you always speak to remedy it.

Thank you whenever you put your finger on something, it's never to leave it dead in the dust, but always to raise it. Thank you, Lord, for the way you come and speak into our lives. Help us, Lord, to be honest with you.

Help us to bring out the rubbish, even if it's a mahushtam. Even if it's some great victory you wrought in our lives at some time in the past that we've begun to put overdue confidence in. Give us the courage, Lord, to root it out with the rest and to come back to our original commission.

You chose us that we should stand before you, that we should minister to you, as we should pour out our lives in sacrifice. Take us on, Lord, and let this house, that's to say, the house that's each one of us, let it be a house of prayer for the nations. Begin here, Lord, and do what you will in the ends of the earth.

Amen.

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