

**June 8, 2008**

**“Change We CAN Believe In”**

**2 Chron 29:3-11 NCV**

Hezekiah opened the doors of the Temple of the LORD and repaired them in the first month of the first year he was king. 4 Hezekiah brought in the priests and Levites and gathered them in the courtyard on the east side of the Temple. 5 Hezekiah said, "Listen to me, Levites. Make yourselves ready for the LORD's service, and make holy the Temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove from the Temple everything that makes it impure. 6 Our ancestors were unfaithful to God and did what the LORD said was wrong. They left the LORD and stopped worshiping at the Temple where he lives. They rejected him. 7 They shut the doors of the porch of the Temple, and they let the fire go out in the lamps. They stopped burning incense and offering burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. 8 So the LORD became very angry with the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and he punished them. Other people are frightened and shocked by what he did to them. So they insult the people of Judah. You know these things are true. 9 That is why our ancestors were killed in battle and our sons, daughters, and wives were taken captive. 10 Now I, Hezekiah, have decided to make an agreement with the LORD, the God of Israel, so he will not be angry with us anymore. 11 My sons, don't waste any more time. The LORD chose you to stand before him, to serve him, to be his servants, and to burn incense to him."

A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

Four worms were placed into four separate jars.

The first worm was put into a container of alcohol.

The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke

The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup.

The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol - Dead

The second worm in cigarette smoke - Dead

Third worm in chocolate syrup - Dead

Fourth worm in good clean soil - Alive

So the minister asked the congregation, "What can you learn from this demonstration?"

Maxine was sitting in the back, quickly raised her hand and said, "As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!"

That pretty much ended the service.

She missed the point didn't she? The worms in the wrong environment, doing the wrong thing died. The worm in the right environment, in the good clean soil, lived. What we do effects our lives. Not only are our physical lives at risk, but our spiritual lives will die if we don't keep our selves clean, and do the right things. If what we are doing is hurting us we need to make changes.

I borrowed the title of today's message from one of the presidential candidates: "Change We Can Believe In." Only, I believe that, the change I want to share with you today, a change we can believe in as Christians comes with a guarantee of success.

In our text Hezekiah had just become the 13<sup>th</sup> king of Judah.

1. There were problems in the nation:

(v3-4) Hezekiah opened the doors of the Temple of the LORD and repaired them in the first month of the first year he was king. Hezekiah brought in the priests and Levites and gathered them in the courtyard on the east side of the Temple.

There were problems in the nation as we will see. Yet, Hezekiah's first task was not to deal with the civil matters of his nation. He knew that the first thing he had to deal with to make things better in the nation was religious, spiritual not civil. The first thing he did was to re-open the Temple that had it's doors closed and was in need of repair. Then he called together the ministers, priests, for if they were not right with God, they would have no power to make the people right with God again.

Are you getting how this is relevant to us today? We have a nation that has problems, and our problems are getting worse not better. Our politicians, especially those running for the office of president, are telling us a change is needed. They have been sharing what their agenda would be to make things better...well, at least some of them are. And they have some good ideas, well, at least some of them are. However, our problems are not going to be solved by politicians; our problems are not going to be solved by adding more laws; because our problems are religious and spiritual. Change must begin with the church. Change must begin with the ministers and priests of the church, so that there will be power to change the people attending the churches. For our nation will only be as strong as our churches. Christ is the church, He is the head of the church, we are His body, therefore the church is the hope for our nation, because Jesus always was, always will be and is our only hope.

2. The reasons for problems in the nation:

Here is what Hezekiah said to the religious leaders (v5-7) Hezekiah said, "Listen to me, Levites. Make yourselves ready for the LORD's service, and make holy the Temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove from the Temple everything that makes it impure. Our ancestors were unfaithful to God and did what the LORD said was wrong. They left the LORD and stopped worshiping at the Temple where he lives. They rejected him. They shut the doors of the porch of the Temple, and they let the fire go out in the lamps. They stopped burning incense and offering burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.

They had let what is impure come into their lives and into their temple; They needed to re-consecrate themselves so that they would be ready to serve the Lord and make the Temple a holy place once again. They were unfaithful to God and did what the Lord said was wrong. They left the Lord and stopped worshiping at the place God had designated for worship. They rejected the Lord and let their fire / light go out.

This is what is happening in the churches of our nation today. This is the condition of many people who would consider themselves Christian. The church, it's leaders and it's people have let in what is impure, so that the church, it's leaders, and it's people are not devoted to God with all their heart, ready for the Lord's service. The church has become unfaithful, doing what the Lord says is wrong. Worship and involvement in the church is no longer a priority in people's lives, and this is a rejection of God. We are letting our fire go out, and we are losing our light, even though Jesus said we are to be a light to the world. I'm not saying this is the case of all churches in our nation, but it may very well be the case of most churches in our nation. I'm not saying this is the condition of every Christian, I just don't want it to be your condition. Don't let the fire go out.

### 3. The results of problems in the nation:

(v8 -9) So the LORD became very angry with the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and he punished them. Other people are frightened and shocked by what he did to them. So they insult the people of Judah. You know these things are true. That is why our ancestors were killed in battle and our sons, daughters, and wives were taken captive.

The Lord was angry with the people of the nation of Judah and Jerusalem. And so, they became an object of ridicule. They were losing their battles, and their children and spouses were taken captive by the enemy.

The church is an object of ridicule today in our nation, I think that is plain to see. Why? And why are we as a nation or why are you as an individual, losing battles? Why have our children and spouses been taken captive by the enemy? It's a spiritual problem.

### 4. What the nation needs to do:

(v10-11) Now I, Hezekiah, have decided to make an agreement with the LORD, the God of Israel, so he will not be angry with us anymore. My sons, don't waste any more time. The LORD chose you to stand before him, to serve him, to be his servants, and to burn incense to him."

Here is what needs to be done; don't waste any more time, remove everything that is impure, and serve the Lord once again. Repentance and faith are always the way back to God.

Make an agreement, a covenant with God, that is, admit your sin, put your faith in Christ, and receive the gift of forgiveness.

If you have failed God, don't get discouraged. When you fail God you must immediately do what it says in 1 John 1:9

1 John 1:9 NKJV

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If you fail God don't think you have to allow yourself to be punished for a few days, or a few years. Instantly, confess, for if you confess, in that moment He will forgive and cleanse.

You may have a hidden sin. No one knows but you and God. You may try to rationalize it, or justify it, or even try to deny it. But God knows about it and you know He doesn't like it. Confess it. Admit to God that it is wrong. Things will not change until you confess it. There is a story in the Bible about a man who did what the Lord told him not to do. God's people were being defeated in battle because of this. But as soon as confession was made, and the wrong thing was removed, the Israelites became victorious again. Are you losing some battles in your life? Been taken captive by the enemy. Things will begin to change the moment you admit your hidden sin.

If you have backslidden, so that you are not as devoted to Jesus as you once were, don't waste any more time. Today consecrate or dedicate yourselves to the Lord's service. May your life, your body be a Temple of the Holy Spirit and a holy place once again. Be faithful to God and totally devoted to Him. Don't do what the Lord says is wrong. Worship the Lord with your life and make church attendance a priority. Fan into the flame the spiritual life within you and don't let the fire go out. You are the light of the world.