

Word of God

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Just want to reiterate what Kunle said earlier. If you are feeling hot and! distracted by that, in the downstairs meeting room there is air conditioning and a live stream! for you to enjoy the service and pay attention. We value God's word and the listening of it.

And if it will help you to be there, I promise you I will not take offense if you get up right now and walk right out of here because I know where you're going. I trust. So, just wanted to reiterate that. As we turn to God's word, let me pray and ask for God's help this morning. Lord, I thank you for this time to look into your word. Lord, I pray that you would be with us by your spirit. Lord, I want to pray that the words of Psalm 19 would be ours this morning. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Lord, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. So, can you name the top 10 influencers on social media in 2024? Anybody? I can't. I'm sure I couldn't. I looked it up. The internet does not agree on who they are because there are so many different platforms and algorithms. But here's a list.

Forbes Magazine. I thought this was a little better than some of the other sources I found. Forbes Magazine listed these 10. Mr. Beast, Dar Mann, Matt Rife, Charlie D'Amelio, the Stokes Twins, Dixie D'Amelio, Mark Rober, Alex Cooper, Rhett and Link of Good Mythic Morning, and Cabby Lane. How many of you know those people? Oh, come on. A few of you.

A few. Yeah? A few. You guys don't know who Mr. Beast is? He does these great, like, internet things and, like, gives away money and, you know, if you win the \$100,000 if you're the last guy to survive keeping your hand on the car, you know, for, like, five days or whatever. And Mark Rober, by the way, does really cool science. If you're ever interested, if you're homeschooling, Mark Rober does cool science. But I will say this. These people, as much as we here maybe don't want to admit it, they have a lot of influence in our world. Their voices are speaking loud. I added up the estimated combined followers of these people. It's 1.4 billion plus people follow these 10 influencers. And we know that there's more out there, right? And this isn't even including people like Cristiano Ronaldo, the famous soccer player, who by himself has more than 1 billion followers over multiple platforms. Unbelievable. We live in a world where there are a lot of people with a lot of followers and a lot of voices speaking into our ears every day. Now, maybe social media isn't your thing. What about news media? Some of you listen to Newsmax or CNN. Some of you listen to

[3 : 37] Fox News or CBS. Some of you read the New York Times. Some of you read the Wall Street Journal. And my guess is that many of you listen to a podcast. Some of you may listen to talk show hosts.

The voices in our lives have multiplied in the last 30 years. Consider the fact that social media didn't exist in the year 2000. It just didn't. The internet barely existed. It did. Okay, it did. But not as a common phenomenon, not in our pockets. There are so many voices. And we can now, because of our lovely little handheld devices that we call phones, we can now have this in our cars, in our workplace, in our homes. Wherever we go, we can be listening to these voices. And listen, you know me. I am not a professional on these things. I am about as Luddite as you get. Although I can tell you about Adam Cleary and his analysis of British Premier League soccer and the Pony, the Prancing Pony podcast and its analysis of the Lord of the Rings. Because those are things that I listen to. So, that's my entertainment. That's my...

But the fact is that there are a lot of voices out there. And not all of them are bad. But we need to be aware of the fact that the voices we listen to have the power to influence how we think about important things. How do we think about human beings? How do we think about what's going on in the world?

What we think is important to talk about, to think about, to set our minds on? What we think is right and what is wrong. So many voices. How are we to think about this as Christians? Well, there are

lots of things to say. But I'm hoping this morning the passage that we're going to look at today will put it into some... will give us some perspective on that question. We're continuing in our series in 2 Chronicles. If you haven't been here or if you're visiting, we're in 2 Chronicles chapter 34 today. So, 2 Chronicles, that's page 358 in your pew Bible. If you want to turn there, we will be looking at it. And as we look at it together, my hope and prayer is that it will give us some perspective on these questions about voices. Now, as we turn there, let's remind ourselves a little bit.

This is in the retelling, right? Chronicles is the retelling of the history of the kingdom period in Israel when from David to the exile of Babylon, roughly 800 to 586 BC. Roughly, it covers that span of time. And it's talking about the different kings of Israel and how they led people. And if you remember from last week, right, we read in chapter 33 about terrible kings. There were two successive terrible kings, Manasseh and Ammon, and combined 57 years of kingship that led the people and the nation of Israel away from seeking God and trusting God. They led them on other paths to worship other gods, to listen to other voices, to trust in other things. And it is in this context that Josiah, as a six-year-old, comes to the throne. I had a whole other introduction about how to come from a broken family background, because, man, think about it. His father was killed by his servants in the palace because he was such a bad leader. Can you imagine coming to the throne in that context? That's a sight of... Anyway, he came in in remarkable circumstances, and he was young. And yet, the beginning of 2 Chronicles chapter 34 tells us that he was a good king. That, say, verse 2, it says, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

[8 : 08] He did not turn aside to the right hand or the left. He began to seek the God of David his father, and he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of various forms of idolatry. And 1 through 13 tells us of this great plan, and Josiah was zealous. He didn't just tear down these places. He took the idols, and he burned them until they were ashes, and then he scattered the ashes so they could never be repaired. He was so zealous to try to restore the kingdom again. And if you've been here for a while, or if you... We've gone over that passage a lot, or that theme quite a bit already in this kind of how God restored the turning from idolatry back to God. And so, what I want to focus on this morning is what happens next. Because in verse 14, something remarkable happens. So, let's look at that together and its implications. So, we're going to start in verse 14 of chapter 34, and we're going to read...

Here it is. Okay. So, 8 through 13 is all about the rebuilding of the temple, and in that context, verse 14 says this, While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiyah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord given through Moses. Then Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan, the secretary, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan brought the book to the king and further reported to the king all that was committed to your servants their doing. They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the Lord and have given it in the hand of the overseers and the workmen.

And then Shaphan, the secretary, told the king, Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book. And Shaphan read from it before the king. They found a book, and not just any book. It was the book of the law.

The book of the law that was recorded from Moses. And the first thing that I want to see here is that how striking it is that they had actually lost this book, right? Hilkiyah knows what it is when he sees it. He says, Oh, look, it is the book of the law of the Lord given through Moses. Now, we don't know exactly what was found. Many commentators speculate that it was a part of Deuteronomy. It might have been all of Deuteronomy. It might have been more than Deuteronomy. It's not clear how big the book was.

But it was clear that it was a book that contained the writing of Moses, which is usually, therefore, we would assume that it came from the first five books of the Bible called the Pentateuch that Moses wrote. And he found this book, and he recognized it. But interestingly, Shaphan didn't think it was very important, did he? Because he said, Oh, yeah, here's my report, king. We did all these things. We got the money. We've continued in a building project. Oh, yeah, and they found a book.

[11 : 37] He didn't think it was important. He was like, I don't know what this is, but the priest gave it to me to show it to you. So, I guess I'll show it to you and see what you think, which is fascinating, isn't it? Because it underscores that for 57 years, it had been lost. And it raises a question in my mind, why? Why would they have lost God's Word in God's temple? Because it was found in the temple.

It wasn't like somehow, you know, the temple got burned down and destroyed, and they found an extra copy somewhere. It was right where it was supposed to be. Now, maybe it was there because it had been hidden by priests at some point for fear that it might be destroyed by the evil kings that had led before. It's possible that it was hidden so that the priests couldn't find it by those kings that it was somehow put away so that the priests couldn't find it and try to bring restoration. It's possible that because the kings led Israel away from the Lord in so many ways, it simply got forgotten, and it wasn't important. Whatever the cause was, the effect was great. Think about it, 57 years.

That's two generations of people that had grown up without the book of the law in its midst. Josiah had grown up without this instruction. All of his impulse to seek the Lord, all of his impulse to follow David wasn't instructed by the book of the law. It was whatever the source it was, it came from other things. And as we will see, God speaks to them important words in this book that is found. But before we get there, let's consider for a minute God's Word in our time. Because friends, God has continued to give us His written Word. This Bible is the collection of it. It is His Word.

And it's very possible for us in our day to lose God's Word in our lives as well. It strikes me there are a couple of reasons why we might do this. First, we might lose God's Word. That is, set it aside and count it as unimportant because we actually lack confidence that it's actually God's Word. We live in a world today, if you go up to the Yale Divinity School and you ask most of the professors up there, they would not tell you that the Bible is God's inerrant and infallible Word, that will bring you life when you read it. They may be interested in it. They may speak well of it.

They study it for a living, at least many of them do. But they don't see it as actually God's Word. Instead, they see it as a human document, corrupted, unreliable, with errors and culturally bound to its time that doesn't really have authority. It might have power to inspire us to think better thoughts, but it doesn't have authority. And so, that might be one reason. Now, there are good responses to that. There are good reasons to believe, as we do here at Trinity, that the Bible really is God's Word, and that it's been preserved for us, and that it really is what God has to say.

[15:11] That would be a whole other sermon. I almost preached that one, but I thought, no, it's too much because there's so much good stuff. If you're asking this question today, can I have confidence in God's Word? I implore you, come talk to me after the service. Talk to one of the elders. If you want to go home and order, Why Trust the Bible by Greg Gilbert, or just Google the Gospel Coalition, Why Can We Trust the Bible, as a starting point for you to begin to engage, because the fact is there are really good answers. Christians are not stupid people who believe superstition for the fun of it or because it makes us feel better. Christians are thoughtful people who've explored and found that there is good reason to believe what we believe in the world. The Bible itself claims that all scriptures are God-breathed. And if you're questioning that, then I implore you to explore it and find good answers to those questions. I think the second reason we might lose God's Word is simply because we don't like what it says. Right? The Bible is always challenging some prevailing values in every culture. Right?

No matter where you go around the world, throughout history, the Bible will find resonance in some parts of culture and then will challenge others and say things that are uncomfortable.

I think the Bible today questions our individualistic spirituality that we just assume is good. It exposes that we live in a world of greed and selfishness that drive our economic activity. It challenges our religious activities and our human desire to say, God, can't we do works good enough for you to accept us on our own merit? It confronts our views of humanity, affirming gender and sexuality without considering God's plan and shaping of it. It offends all of us by calling us to account to the God of the universe for all of us for all of us for all of us for all of us for all that we do. And it humbles us by lifting up God in the midst and saying, the world is not about us, but it is about Him. These are some of the ways the Bible challenges our Western culture here. And every generation seeks to challenge, to avoid God's Word to us. And so I think the second reason why we might lose God's Word is for just because we don't want to hear what it has to say because it's uncomfortable.

A third reason is that the Bible may be drowned out by the many voices of our day. We've already talked about social media and digital society. We didn't talk much about how it tunes our brains to listen to things in a 30-minute sound, 30-second soundbite. And so I'm already, I've lost a third of you already because you're so attuned to social media that you've, you're like, gosh, he goes on and on and on, right? So just recognizing that it does. The thing is that a social media diet is kind of like junk food a lot of times, right? We love it and so we want to keep eating more. It's like Doritos.

You just can't eat a few, right? But it fills us up, but it fills us up with empty things. We don't, and it turns our appetites away. So we like Doritos more and more, but we don't like vegetables, right? And the Bible sits on our shelf ignored while we pick up our phones again to look at something new, to hear some other voice. Now look, I want to acknowledge social media can be used for good. Some of you use social media podcasts that help you seek the Lord, that lead you to God's Word, and we can say praise the

Lord for those things. I am not against all of social media, but we need to recognize how many voices speak of things that aren't leading us to God, and to be aware of how distracted we can be. [19:51] And so this text forces us to consider, have we lost God's Word? And if we have, what steps can we take to find it again? Now I'm going to punt here. Back in May, I preached, or in June, I preached a whole sermon on chapter 17 and 18 about loving God's Word, about loving its teaching, about loving its hearing. And if you want to get a lot of practical advice about how to pursue renewing reading God's Word, I encourage you to go back to our, go to our website and listen to that sermon. Because our text doesn't tell us today how Josiah listened to God's Word and renewed it in his life. It just, it tells us something different. And so we're going to take the rest of the sermon in a direction about what the passage points do. But if you want that application, go back and listen to that sermon again. And yes, that means you'll probably need to use your phone and find our podcast so you can play it. Or you could go to our website, which is also our, and if you really don't want anything, come and talk to me afterwards. I'll take down your email address and I'll email you the notes. All right. So, all right.

Having said that, so they lost God's Word and then it reappears. And we saw at the end of the passage that I read, Shaphan read the Word of God to Josiah. Let's see what happens in response to that. So, now we're in verse 19. Let's read verse 19 to 28. And when the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahicham, the son of Shaphan, Abdon, the son of Micah, Shaphan, the secretary, and Asaiah, the king's servant, saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah concerning the words of the book which has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the Word of the Lord to do according to all that is written in this book. So, Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to Huldah, the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, son of Tokath, son of Hazra, keeper of the wardrobe, now she lives in Jerusalem in the second quarter, and spoke to her to that effect.

And she said to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Tell the man who sent you to me, thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah.

Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched. But to the king of Judah who sent you to a choir of the Lord, thus you shall say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God, and you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord. Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants. And they brought word, and they brought back word, word to the king. In this section we see that God's hard word is listened to. Josiah hears God's words, and it is not comforting. Again, maybe it comes from Deuteronomy. Let me read to you a couple of passages from Deuteronomy 28 that talks about the blessings and curses of being covenant people with

God. This is what God says to those who have forsaken him, the way he described in this passage. So, Deuteronomy chapter 28 verses 36 and 37, we'll put it up on the screen so you can follow along there. And the Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, and you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away.

[25:03] And then skipping down to verse 45, God says this, all these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you. They shall be

a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring forever because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart because of all the abundance of all things. Therefore, you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you in hunger and in thirst and nakedness and lacking everything. He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away from the end of the earth, swooping down like an eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young." There's more, but that gives you a flavor.

The book of Deuteronomy promised that if God's people were unfaithful, that God's judgment would come upon them and that it would be terrible, that it would be frightening, that it would be fearsome. And Josiah hears words, something like this, because his first response is to tear his clothes and to weep and to grieve. And in verse 21 he says, go inquire if I've understood this rightly because it sounds like great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord. He sends to the prophetess to say, did I understand this right? Because if I got this right, we are all in so much trouble and all these reforms and everything that I've been doing, what is it going to, where is it going to lead?

What is God doing? His response showed that he viewed God's Word so highly.

He wanted confirmation. And this is what the chronicler emphasizes, right? Because it gives us Hulda's words. And the word that Hulda gives in response to this is twofold, right? The first part is a confirmation. Yes, you have heard it right. The judgment is coming. The evil that your father and your grandfather have done have so provoked the Lord that that judgment is coming. It is certain. [27 : 43] And God will not be turned away from it. The nation of Israel will be conquered. And we know that this happens a hundred years later when Babylon comes and destroys the nation of Israel and breaks Jerusalem and sacks the temple. And it does happen. But the second part is an unexpected word, perhaps.

Unless we've been reading the whole book of 2 Chronicles, and then we see that God is both judging of evil and merciful and gracious. Because we see in verses 26 through 28 that there is a reprieve for Josiah. Because he has sought the Lord, because he has brokenhearted over the sin of his people and his nation, because he has wept and in repentance torn his clothes, God will grant him a reprieve.

Now, the sense of judgment is not commuted. It is not erased, but it is suspended for a generation. Josiah listens to God's word, and his heart response is right to it. And we see at the end of the chapter, we won't read it, but Josiah then leads the people to a renewal of covenant. He leads them to renew their covenant relationship with God, to commit to loving devotion, humble obedience, and faithful service to God. And we'll see next week to renew a worship that glorifies God.

What about us? I want to start with this question. When we go to God's word, what are we hoping for? I don't know about you, but often what I really want to hear in God's word is comfort and hope an affirmation. I want something to make me feel better about all the things that are wrong in my life and in the world. But God's message is actually harder as well as better than what I often want when I go to God's word. Because friends, the Bible is a story about God's work in a broken and fallen world. And it exposes the reality of how bad the world really is. And not just the world out there, but how bad our hearts really are. And then how God has worked graciously to bring a hope of redemption in the midst of the right judgment against evil that God is carrying out in the world.

Friends, this is the good news of the gospel. Romans chapter 6, verse 23. In one verse, here it is, for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[30 : 57] God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. And we similarly need to hear this hard word.

We are sinners under judgment and deserving of death before God because our hearts are idolatrous and worship other things more than God. Our hearts are faithless and have loved ourselves more than God.

Our hearts are selfish and we have used others for our own benefit. Our hearts are wayward and we have wanted our own way rather than God's way. We have loved darkness rather than light. And friends, we are not all as bad as we could be. But if we are honest with ourselves, we know this is in all of our hearts. And the voices of our culture today, they want to tell us we're all right. And even when they're speaking hard words, they're saying, you can fix this on your own.

But friends, these are lies. They are not true and they are not helpful. Like a patient with cancer that we are unaware of, our ignorance of the truth of our sin and God's judgment will lead to our death.

And our unwillingness to face this reality will lead to our destruction.

[32 : 37] But friends, just like Josiah heard a word that is hard but also unexpectedly good, so the gospel speaks a word that is hard but is unexpectedly good to us. Because God has spoken a better word, a word of hope, clearly. He has spoken to us in Jesus. In fact, he says Jesus is the word of God made flesh who came to save sinners like us. He was the one who went to the cross to bear the judgment, the same judgment that came on the evil of Israel. He bore the judgment for the evil of our sins.

Jesus came not for a reprieve, but to actually give us a pardon so that those sins are judged and taken away.

And instead, we get an invitation. Return to me. You see the seeds of it in Josiah. His humble heart, his weeping over his sin, his repentance. Go back and listen to Pastor Nick's sermon about repentance last week. It was great.

Repentance from sin and turning to God, but recognizing that all of this is a heart response to the fact that God has already spoken the word that we most need to hear in the gospel, that Jesus has come to save sinners like you and me.

This is the good news. This is the hope. This is the word that we most need to hear. And it's okay if you listen to podcasts on your way to work.

[34 : 44] And it's okay to watch the news and to find out what's going on. But do we let this gospel message shape our thoughts more profoundly than any of those things?

Do we see human beings as created in the image of God, fallen because of our sin and in need of and capable of redemption through God's work in their lives?

Do we think that the most important thing that's going on in this world isn't geopolitical politics, it's not economics, but it's that God is doing a work of redemption, saving people from darkness to life? When we think of what is most important, do we count all things as loss? Our self-care, our amassing a future financially, our raising our children's well, our discovering our true selves, whatever it is that the world would say, would we count all those things as loss for the sake of knowing Christ and being found in Him?

Because He has been our salvation. Will we let God's Word tell us what is right and wrong, that good and evil are known through reading His Word?

[36 : 10] Do you see, friends? Whatever we do, what we are to learn from Josiah and his example this morning is that God's Word is so precious and valuable that God has spoken to us and He has spoken most fully and finally in the person and the work of Jesus.

And friends, we would spend the rest of our lives meditating on and learning about and growing in understanding of how precious and beautiful and wonderful this redemption is and how beautiful our Savior is.

And friends, that's the voice we most need to hear. Let's pray. Lord, I pray that by Your Spirit this morning, Lord, You would be speaking to our hearts.

Lord, we pray that You would make us men and women who hunger and thirst for Your Word.

Lord, I pray that where You have convicted us of sin this morning, that we would turn to You in repentance and in faith. Lord, I pray that as we go from here, that You would help us to practice seeking, finding, and treasuring Your Word in our lives.

[37 : 47] For it leads us to Christ, which is what we most need. Thank You, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.