

Reformation Needed  
( 2 Kings 22)

Hello Dear Listeners;

Did you have a ghostly time of it, night before last? It was, after all Halloween, the night ghosts and goblins are supposed to be out in force. In some places numerous, hideously or hilariously dressed aficionados of Halloween came crying “Trick or Treat” outside of homes in your neighborhood. Some of those homes resembled graveyards dressed as they were in macabre images of death.

Halloween is obviously a huge event in North America. This year alone it is estimated the people in the U.S will spend more than eight billion on candies and costumes. That amounts to considerable amount of tricks and treats!

The seniors among us will have noticed the way Halloween is celebrated today is a lot different from a generation ago. Then children went door to door shouting “Halloween Apples!” Yes, the pillow case we brought home had a supply of candies all right but the majority of the goodies were apples!. To get them you often had to sing a song.

Last week however many of the ads as well as the paraphernalia on people’s laws were weird and scary. It was a real ‘witches brew’ and that’s no surprise for our society seems to be reverting back to paganism big time.

What threatens to be forgotten is that October 31 actually marks a very important event in the history of the Christian Church. It celebrates the Great Protestant Reformation, a movement that was instrumental in bringing in the church “back to the basics” if you like. The basics of living according to the Word of God, cherishing God’s grace and His gift of faith.

That Reformation was more than just a reaction to the abuses which had crept into the church. Abuses which had submerged the clear call to serve the Lord God according to His Word alone under a mountain of rituals and relics. These were practices which amounted to a spiritual “clinging to straws”. They involved the paying to see those relics, like a ( supposed) tooth of St. Peter or a few hairs of Mary Magdalene. The sale of indulgences, was originally considered the remission of a part or all of the works of satisfaction demanded in the sacrament of penance. Yet by the 13th century, it came to be regarded as a remission of the penalty of sin itself, both here and in purgatory. Later, it was regarded, at least in wide circles, as a release from the guilt of sin as well as from its penalty.

Martin Luther, by 1517 a monk already well-versed in the Bible reacted to the sale of such indulgences. He took issue with the assumed power of the the pope and the bishops to, in effect, promote the *buying of salvation* . He came to see that this was in direct conflict with what the bible teaches concerning God who grants deliverance and salvation by grace alone, through faith alone.

The Lord God used not only Luther but also other men such as John Calvin in France and Switzerland and John Knox in Scotland, in bringing church, and consequently, *society*, back to the Word. For, and this is what we must realize, “ *the Gospel is God’s power for our salvation* “ ( Romans 1:16) and not man’s works, however well-intentioned these might be.

This Protestant Reformation of the 16th century is not the only time in the history of the Church that God saw to a major turnabout that rescued His people from idolatry, and a corrupt way of living . I’m thinking of that reformation which took place in the days of young king Josiah of Judah. We can read about it, in the bible books 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

In 2 Kings 22 we read that Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign. Immediately it is said that “ *He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left*”. ( v. 2). You may know that David was that God-fearing king of Israel to whom God had made wonderful promises. Promises concerning the coming of a king much greater than David, namely, Jesus Christ. David too was a sinful human being yet the bible says he was “ *a man after God’s heart*” ( 1 Samuel 13: 14; Acts 13:22).

Josiah was one of his descendants. It was while he was still quite young that God used him to start a reformation of worship in Judah which saw the temple cleansed from all the idols which had replaced the worship of the one true God. It was during the time of the physical repair of the temple that Hilkiah, the high priest had it reported to the king that the Book of the Law had been found. ( v. 8. )

This can only mean that things had deteriorated spiritually even to the point that The Law, ( which likely means the Book of Deuteronomy) had been lost, or, had been hidden by some faithful person in one of the many rooms or storerooms in the temple. Its obvious when you read on that God’s people didn’t have a clue anymore as to how they were supposed to live in the service of God.

For when this Book of the Law was read in the hearing of the king he was greatly grieved, troubled and ashamed. It says, “ *He tore his robes*”, (v. 11b) which was always was an indication of great grief and shame.

Next we hear the king giving orders to inquire of the Lord as to what was in store for him and his people. On reading the Law of the Lord the king had realized that disaster, in the form of God’s punishment for the sin his people had committed, threatened them.

When the prophetess Huldah was consulted she told them that indeed God was fiercely angry with His people because of the false worship, that had taken the place of godly, blessed worship. God’s own people, no, not the heathen nations round about them, but they themselves, had so angered God even by all they had done and made that he would pour out his anger on them. Said he, by the mouth of the prophetess, “ : *My anger will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.*” ( 2 Chronicles 34: 25).

What follows is the continuation of a wholesale reformation in Judah which saw the celebration of the Passover, the renewal of the covenant, that relationship in which God’s people heard again God’s mighty promises as well as his demands.

Because of Josiah’s faithfulness the Lord said he would not bring his anger down on his people during the king’s lifetime. He, Josiah, would be die in peace!

The sad, sad thing is that whole nations, including God’s people, often quickly forget and even come to despise God’s Word. Its because of man’s deeply ingrained sin and his penchant for a selfish, even an arrogant insistence of living as if there is no God. What does it mean that both God’s blessing and His curse are dismissed.

Is this not why in this beautiful, prosperous “Canada of ours” we see a continual spiritual backsliding? Today a whole generation is growing up which doesn’t hear the name of the Lord mentioned *except as a swear word!* It is all because God’s Word, a “*lamp unto our feet and a light to our path*” is forgotten, rejected. Instead man’s so-called rights, - to do what “ We want”, “We’re owed” are promoted. Atheism as well as the practice of witchcraft and an embracing of the occult is in vogue.

Yet Jesus Christ is not dead nor is He a mirage. He was born into a world full of sin and war and oppression and terrorism and fear. He died on Calvary’s cross

but he was raised from the dead. He ascended on high and is still the Lord, the King of His church. He would reform our lives and the life of the church. By having people bow before His throne and covet the knowledge of His Word.

May there come a return to that Word and to that God and Master in this land. For only in that way is there a great future and a life, a real life also for today . He will not trick you, but will do more than treat you. He will *bless* and give you a peace and security that will not end. Amen and thanks very much for listening.