

Josiah's Example Is A Call To Young Men

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the story of King Josiah from 2 Chronicles as a powerful example for young men to seek God earnestly and make a decisive commitment to follow Him. It challenges young men to rethink their priorities, repent of their sins, and humbly submit to God's will, highlighting the dangers of pride, foolishness, and worldly distractions. The urgency of seeking God, considering eternity, and embracing the truth of the Gospel is emphasized, urging young men to be like Josiah who sought the God of David with all his heart.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 34:1, Proverbs 16:18, Matthew 7:13, John 14:6, James 4:8, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 1:7

Topics: "Commitment to God", "Overcoming Distractions"

Description

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Transcript

So I had mentioned a couple of weeks back that before I left the minor prophet Zephaniah, I had a message that I specifically wanted to target towards the young men. And I want to do that. I want you to turn here in your Bibles is 2 Chronicles.

2 Chronicles chapter 34. And there's a reason and there's a connection with Zephaniah. Zephaniah, we are very specifically told was written in the days of Josiah.

And I have mentioned that in the last two weeks. And the goal here and having you turned to 2 Chronicles is I want you to see what's happening in the life of Josiah at the time Zephaniah is prophesying. So here you are, 2 Chronicles.

And let's pray before we dive in. Father, I ask you, please help now as we come to handle your word, the very word of God, living, abiding, may it be so. May it equip, may it help, may it pierce, may it do the work that your word has been sent forth to achieve.

We ask that it not be idle, it not be useless, it not be an unprofitable endeavor, but that it may be rich and fruitful. I ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Okay, Josiah. Let's get a feel. Josiah.

This is 2 Chronicles 34 verse 1. Josiah was eight years old. Now young men pay attention. We've got a number of young men here today.

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign. So we've got some eight year olds probably here. Can you imagine eight years old, he began to reign as king.

He reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of David, his father. And he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

For in the eighth year of his reign, now that's eight plus eight, right? He was eight years when he began to reign and eight years into his reign, he's now 16. It says, while he was yet a boy, God doesn't even regard him as being a man yet. While still a boy, he began to seek the God of David, his father.

And that's it, young men. That is the very basis from which I want to preach today. When he was eight years old, plus eight years into the reign, 16 years old, yet a boy.

I mean, even in our society, 18 years old or 21 years old, we talk about, you know, a boy becoming a man. He's 16. God doesn't even regard him as being a man yet.

And he's seeking the God of David, his father. And then in the 12th year, you can add 12 plus eight. Now he's 20 years old.

How old he was when he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places and the ashram and the carved and the metal images. So this is when he gets radical. Now drop down to verse eight.

Now in the 18th year of his reign, how old is he here? Eight plus 18. He's now 26 years old. Now when he's 26, he has already cleansed the land and the house of God.

And he sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah and Maasiah, the governor of the city and Joah, the son of Joahaz, the recorder to repair the house of the Lord, his God. They came to Hilkiyah, the high priest, gave him the money that had been brought into the house of God, which Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They gave it to the workmen who were working in the house of the Lord.

So you see what's happening when he's 26 years old. He has extensive work being paid for, this work to be done in the house of the Lord. And the workmen who were working in the house of the Lord gave it for repairing, restoring the house.

They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, timber for the binders, beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin. So you see why he's doing this. The house of God had come to ruin.

Not only has he sought the God of David with all of his heart and he's cleansed the land. Now he's having the house of God brought out of its ruinous state. Verse 12, and the men did the work faithfully.

Over them were set Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites and the sons of Mererai and Zechariah and Mishalom and the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. The Levites, all who were skillful with

instruments of music, were over the burden bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service. And some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers.

While they were bringing out the money that they had been brought into the house of the Lord, here's what I want you to get, Hilkiah the priest. See what's happening. You start cleaning up the house of the Lord and there's closets and there's compartments and there's probably piles of stuff and there's cubby holes and there's, you can imagine what it might be like, bookshelves, little attic spaces.

I mean, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord. In other words, they hadn't had it. In other words, this King Josiah was seeking the Lord and he didn't even have the word of God.

Now all of a sudden it's discovered when he's 26 years old. The one that was given through Moses. Verse 15, then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, I found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.

Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. Shaphan brought the book to the King and further reported to the King, all that was committed to your servants they're doing. They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the Lord and have given it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen.

Then Shaphan the secretary told the King, Hilkiah the priest has given me a book and Shaphan read from it before the King. And when the King heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes. We don't do that.

But that was an expression of grief, of heavy emotion. The King commanded Hilkiah, the son of Shaphan, the son of Micah, Shaphan, the secretary and Isaiah the King's servant saying, go inquire of the Lord. You see the first thing he does is go seek out a prophet.

In this case, it's a prophetess. We need to hear from the Lord because he is afraid about what he's just heard from this book. Go inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah concerning the words of the book that 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's written in this book. So Hilkiah and those whom the King had sent went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tokath, son of Hazra, keeper of the wardrobe. Now she lived 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, now you need to get this. He's humbled himself.

He's been seeking God since he was 16 years old. He's now 26 for the last 10 years. He has been leading this nation in reforms.

And yet listen to what God says. I will bring disaster on this place. It's like, it doesn't matter what Josiah is doing.

It doesn't matter the reforms he's brought to this land. I am going to 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, they might provoke me to anger.

And with 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 inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel regarding the words that you have heard, because you're listening to this young men, you want to get this because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God. When 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 the disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants.

And they brought back word to the King. Now you see what God has said, Josiah is going to be spared, but the nation is not. You know, there are times when you can find that the prophet was told, I think of Jeremiah, prophet is told to go stand outside the temple on the Sabbath.

As everybody's entering, the King comes in, stand there and declare the word of the Lord. You can imagine in Josiah's day, Zephaniah is standing before this house of the Lord that is under refurbishment. It's being resurrected.

The decay, the ruin is being fixed. It's being corrected. And here's Zephaniah and what's he saying? Thus says the Lord, I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth.

I'm reading from Zephaniah. I will sweep away man and beast. I will sweep away the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, the rubble, the wicked.

I will cut off mankind. Those who've turned back from following the Lord, who do not seek the Lord or inquire of him. God's going to sweep them all away.

The great day of the Lord is near, near, that hastening fast. The sound of the day of the Lord is bitter. The mighty man cries aloud.

Their day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry. I will bring distress on mankind so that they shall walk like the blind because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood shall be poured out like dust, their flesh like dung.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on that day, the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth. While these reforms are taking place, this hold of the prophets has said it, God's going to destroy them.

Zephaniah is over here. He says it. Now here's the thing.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine Zephaniah there? I mean, you just imagine. Go down to Manchester and say that. Judgment's coming.

It's going to be bitter, a great day, wrath, distress, anguish, ruin, devastation, darkness, gloom. And this is coming. And it's a reality.

They're going to look at you. They're going to hate you. They're going to stone you.

And it's not surprising that they've killed the prophets and they've killed the men of God that have arisen right before we came here today. It took Abraham to see where John Wesley down at the bottom of the hill preached. They threw stones at him.

They bloodied his head. In those days, they beat people. They killed people.

They tormented people who sought to preach the truth. Young men, you want to pay attention to this. Why would Zephaniah pronounce such utter destruction? Well, it says because they've sinned against the Lord.

And I dealt with this last week. They don't seek the Lord. They don't inquire of him.

That's why Micah, Jesse, Caleb, Joshua, whoever you're hiding, I still haven't seen you in here. Oh, but Enzel and Lucas and Kevin, Benji, the other young men that are in this place, you want to pay attention. The multitudes obviously were under the wrath of God.

And you think about this. Here's a 16-year-old king. You know what this tells me? The vast majority of his advisors, the vast majority of the people, maybe even the priests, maybe even the temple singers, the temple had gone to ruin.

Remember who his father was? Manasseh had been in the land not too long before this. And then his own father, what was it, Ammon? I mean, folks, the country was in a bad way. And let me tell you, this 16-year-old, he went against the grain.

Multitudes under the wrath of God and multitudes today are under the wrath of God. But you know what? Josiah was different. Can I tell you this, young men? Only those who are different end up pleasing God and being delivered from the devastation to come.

It's being different. It's not being like the rest of them. Young men, different.

The question to you is, are you, young man, are you different than all the other young men? While yet a boy, Josiah was remarkable. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David, his father. And you know what? Josiah was not among a bunch of good people.

He was not among a bunch of neutral people. Sometimes we imagine that, you know, kind of the world, people smiling, people, people just basically neutral. No, that's not it.

God is threatening judgment because these are bad people and they're doing wicked things. And they've, remember how we defined wickedness last week? It's just basically don't inquire of the Lord. Don't call upon him.

Just live your life and do your thing and forget him. That's it. So God is bringing disaster because these people are not seeking him.

And then there's Josiah. You see what Josiah is doing? He's going against the grain. Oh, it is so easy to jump in a river and go in the direction of the river.

You know, you can swim in the ocean where there's big surf and the wind and the waves can come in at an angle. And you play in those waters and they will take you down the beach. My buddies and I, we went to Fort Lauderdale.

We were out there swimming in the surf. It was coming in at an angle. After we'd been out there an hour or two, we looked up and everything looked different on the beach.

Hey, where'd our blankets go? Where'd our towels go? They were way down the beach. Actually, I think it was that. How'd that happen? It's the current.

It took us away. That's what happens in life. If you just jump into the current, the current of this world, it's called the course of this world.

It just follows the prince of the power of the air. It's a very easy way to go. He just swept along by it, but he went against the grain.

While Zephaniah is out there condemning the vast majority of the rest of the world, including the very people that Josiah was ruling over, young men seeking the God of David is what Josiah did as a boy. That's not just something old people do. You know what? Sometimes we get young men in the church and it's like, well, religion is for older people.

Why? Because there's a lot of older people typically in the church. A lot of people older than you. And so you can just say, wow, that's for older people.

That's for old women. You better rethink that. Josiah went against the whole grain.

Look around. You just look around. Look around in this world.

You answer me this question. How many young men are seeking the God of David in Manchester on this day in 2022? You full well know the answer to that. How many young men take up their cross and follow Christ? How many are really doing that? How many seek the God of David? And let me tell you, young men, death and judgment are waiting for young men.

You may have quick minds. You know what happens when you're a young man? You begin to come into puberty and your muscles begin to develop and you feel strong. And you know what? Comparatively, you are.

You get strong. You're young. Your mind works fast.

Oh, my mind as a 25 year old when I was in college from 18 to whenever, my mind doesn't work the same way now. What happens? You get older. What happens when you're young? You start to get handsome.

You start to get muscles. You're quick with the mind. Young men, you better remember something.

No matter how good you feel, no matter how, you know, you look at your mom, you look at your dad. Well, they're starting to get old and, you know, they got problems and they start to get overweight and they got pains here and all their back hurts and everything. And you just think what? That's not going to happen to you? Let me tell you something, young men.

It is appointed for you to die. And then the judgment, no matter how strong, no matter how healthy you think you might be. And I'll tell you this, God did not give you muscle and youth to simply run around and wow the young ladies.

He gave you that energy and he gave you that mind to worship him with. And that's what Josiah did. And see how God commends him for humbling himself before him.

The preacher says, and it's sarcasm. I hope you realize that about Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is a very odd book in our Bibles, but it's written by Solomon at such a time when he looks at things from just a humanistic perspective.

And he says this, Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. Let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart.

He's just saying do whatever you want. Go after your lusts. Go after your passions.

Go after what your eyes desire. But just know this, young men, just know this, for all these things, God will bring you into judgment. Let me ask you something.

Where's Josiah? He was 16. We see about it. And he was 20.

We see what he did. Now he was 26. And guess what? He reigned 31 years.

After eight, that's 39 years. He's gone. He lived.

He came. He died. He's gone.

He was a young man once, just like you. But he didn't stay like that. Youth is very fleeting.

It's here. It's gone. And a lot of people don't even make it through.

They die. Job had 10 children. They died.

Remember the 40 that made fun of Elisha? They didn't get too far. He came. Josiah, he came.

He went in a moment. What do you think, young men? What do you think? Do you imagine that, well, I'm young. I'm going to live it up now.

But when I get old, then I'm going to take care of it. What a fool I was. Because that's how I thought.

Cruising along with a buddy, going to the beach, Lake Michigan, trunk full of beer, driving by church on a Sunday. I saw those people going in there. I got to get that right one day.

God could have easily let me have a head-on collision right there on that highway and thrown me into hell in that moment. What do you think? Do you imagine that you're going to pay attention to the matters of your soul some other day? Do you really think that? Someday. Just not today, right? Listen to me, young men.

That's what the devil tells you. Tomorrow. Just not today.

And then you know what happens when you get old? My grandfather told me this. And the devil says, you're too old. My grandfather said, I'm too old.

Let me tell you something. Bunyan, his grave is over here in London. I've been there.

Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress. And there is a place where Christian, that's the main character in Pilgrim's Progress, he comes to the house of one who is named Interpreter. And Interpreter took Christian into a very dark room.

Bunyan captured this so well. Young men, you should pay attention to this. This man was in an iron cage.

And he was very sad. And his eyes looked down, sighing as if he would break his heart. And the man in that cage said, I am now a man of despair.

And I'm shut up in despair, as in an iron cage. I can't get out. Oh, I cannot.

And Christian says to him, how did you get into this condition? The man said, I left off watching and being sober. And I laid the reins upon the neck of my lust. I sinned against the light of the word and the goodness of God.

And now I've grieved the spirit and he's gone. I tempted the devil and he's come. I provoked God to anger and he's left me.

I'm so hard in my heart that I can't repent. Then said Christian to Interpreter, but is there no hope for such a man as this? The man said, no, there is no hope at all. Interpreter said, why? The son of the blessed is very pitiful.

The man in the cage said, I've crucified Christ to myself afresh. I've despised his person. I've despised his righteousness.

I've counted his blood an unholy thing. Therefore I've shut myself out of all of his promises. And there now remains to me nothing but threatenings, dreadful threatenings, fearful threatenings of certain judgment and fire indignation, which shall devour me as an adversary.

Interpreter said to him, for what did you bring yourself into this condition? The man said, for lust, for pleasure, for the profits of this world, the enjoyment of which I promised myself much delight. But now every one of those things bites me and gnaws me like a burning worm. Interpreter says, but can you not now repent and turn? The man says, God has denied me repentance.

When I go to his word, it gives me no encouragement to believe. God has shut me up in this iron cage and nor can all the men in the world let me out. Oh, eternity, eternity.

How shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity? Young men, don't be deceived. Don't think you can at will serve your lusts, your friends, sex, money, and that someday in your life, you're going to all of a sudden decide to turn and serve God with ease later in life. Don't you believe that? Because you'll end up like that man in the iron cage.

Bunyan didn't invent that. He knew that from real people. You come under the light of this truth.

You better fear it like Josiah did. Tear your clothes, repent and turn and serve and seek the God of David while you have life and while you have breath, because it'll run out soon. And I can imagine Josiah thought he'd live longer than just to the age of 39.

Folks, young men, you know, Felix, Felix heard the truth. Well, it stirred him, it convicted him. But not now, not yet.

Tomorrow is the devil's day. Believe me. Today, God says, today is God's day.

Today is the day of salvation. That's what scripture says. Felix, he hoped that there'd be a more convenient time.

Did that convenient time ever come? Young men, you better lay hold of this. Your time is short. You'll soon be gone.

And I'll tell you this, most people that get saved, get saved young. There are exceptions. There are.

There are exceptions in this room. But I'll tell you this, anybody that's pastored for any amount of time, they recognize it. Most people get saved young.

You know why? Because people that are exposed to the truth when they're young, and then they harden their hearts and they lay those reins to their lust. And they say, I'm going to, I'm going to go live it up with my friends. I'll get things right with God later on.

You know what? Never happens. Doesn't happen. I know there are exceptions, but not many.

And I'll tell you this, when death comes, it is utterly vain to talk about tomorrow. Your soul will be required of you right then. Young men, have you ever thought about this? Why would the writer of Ecclesiastes single out young men to live it up? But no, there's judgment.

Why would the whole book of Proverbs be written to a son? Why? Because scripture knows. Listen to this. Proverbs written to young men, because I've called you and you refuse to listen.

It stretched out my hand and no one has heeded. Isn't that amazing? No one has heeded. Do you see how few actually heeded for God to say that? No one has heeded because you've ignored all my counsel.

And with none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you. You see when you end up in that cage and then, and then what? God gives you no hope at all.

You find no hope in any of his promises in the word. I'll tell you what happens. You begin to look at scripture and all you find is condemnation on every single page.

And you can't change the reality of that. Young men, young men, think about the day in which we live. Think about the country in which we live.

It's an effeminate day. Masculinity is scorned. You know what I found? I was surprised.

You guys corrected me at first on this. I said something about, you know, the suicide rate among young women. And somebody said here, I think Para, maybe you did, said the suicide rate was actually higher among men here.

And I began to look at it. You know what? Suicide rate is more than three times higher for men than women in this country. What's happening? I'll tell you what's happening.

Men are bailing out. When the going gets rough, young men are checking out. Why? Look what they're doing.

Look what's happening. Young men, they sit in front of their phones all day. They sit in front of their computers all day.

TV screens, immersed in video games, immersed in pornography. What an empty, useless, vain, pathetic existence. Most of the... I've told you this before.

We found, without exception, every single young man that got saved at GCC. They had been addicted to porn. Everyone, without exception.

Young men, you know what? Young men are staying at home longer and longer, letting mom pick up their room, letting mom cook their meals, letting mom do their laundry. Longer and longer, playing video games. No drive, no direction.

And they sit there under the wrath of God, and they know it not. Whole nation of young men in this United Kingdom, under the wrath of God. With all men are voices shouting at them.

It's best if you don't really know you're a young man. Best you not be so convinced about your gender at all. Young men who want to be feminine.

You just walked into some place in Manchester. You did Abraham a toothbrush. There's a guy in there, long hair, effeminate, dressed in pink clothes.

What a pathetic way to just shrink and shirk your male responsibilities. Young men, we need men. We need those full of masculinity, full of manliness, by not having to be like every other young man in this country, who are going to be like Josiah.

When the whole current's going that way, they say, they point their head in another direction. And they say, I'm going after the God of David. I'm going in this direction.

You guys can go in that direction, but I'm going in this direction. Even though they laugh at you, even though they make fun at you, even though they scorn. That's what we need.

We need men daring enough to be different, brave enough to seek and pursue this God of scripture, brave enough to seek eternal life. While the rest of this young men in this country simply sag down and rest in the beds of their own destruction. That's what's happening all around us.

We're surrounded by young men. Listen, when we look in scripture, there are categories, right? Categories. There's lost young men and there's saved young men.

And saved young men, you know what they look like? They look like Josiah. And we just need to say it. There are young men who stand out.

Some, like Josiah, young men who break rank. There are. They break rank with the rest of the perishing crowd.

They go in search of that eternal crown. Bunyan, again, I want to go back to Bunyan. He so well captures the essence of the typical young man that we see all around us today.

Again, it's interpreters house. But guess what? This is the next part. This is where Christian's wife, Christiana is now pursuing the celestial city.

She comes to interpreters house. Listen to this. Interpreter takes Christiana into a room where there's a man that could look no way but downwards with a muckrake in hand.

A muckrake is just raking muck. There stood one over his head. Imagine this, an angel floating overhead or Christ floating overhead with a crown, the eternal crown of life.

There stood over this man with a celestial crown in his hand, offering to give him that crown in exchange for his muckrake. Just give me your muckrake. I'll give you the crown.

But the man didn't either look up nor give regard, but raked on, raking straw, sticks, dust. Then said Christiana to Christiana, I persuade myself that I know the meaning of this. This is a figure of the man of this world.

Is it not good, sir? Interpreter said, thou has said right. And his muckrake shows his worldly mind. He would rather give heed to rake straw sticks and the dust of the floor than listen to him who offers the celestial crown.

Shows that heaven is but a fable to some and that things here are counted as the only thing substantial. He looks no way but downward. Earthly things carry their hearts away from God.

Listen to this. Then said Christianity. Oh, deliver me from this muckrake.

That prayer said interpreter is scarce. The prayer of one in 10,000. There are 10,000 young men in this city.

All I heard about the muckrake. And I'm afraid there's young men in this room too. It doesn't matter what name you bear.

Look at your hand carrying the muckrake. You can't look up. Let me tell you something.

It's easy to go to hell. Easy. Just do nothing.

Absorb yourself in the stuff of this world. Just rake on. Live for the iPhone.

Live for girls. Live for your buddies, your friends. Just absorb yourself with your muscles, your music, your bikes, your cars, your motorcycles, your houses, your gardens, your tools, girls, sex, computers, education, job, family, and ignore the God of David.

Just do that. Easy enough. The broad way leads to destruction.

Many there be that go in there at why? Because it's easy. It's easy religion. It's just easy.

Folks, young men, what you don't want to do, don't be passive and just sit there and wait. Don't wait for God to do something. He's already doing something.

He's calling you to seek him. Why do you think he gives you examples like this? Why do you think he tells you like through the prophet Jeremiah? You will seek me and find me when you seek with me with all your heart. Something's expected of you.

Seeking always means that you actually do something. You do seek. It means you set your mind on finding the God of David.

That's what Josiah did. If you would seek God, what do you do? Well, you turn from the known sin. You turn from it.

You cry out to him to reveal himself to you. You go to his word in search of him and you actually respond to what's said in this book. That's what Josiah did.

Josiah read there and he said, wow, God is serious. And he tore his clothes. He humbled himself.

That means he went low. That means God got big when he read this book and he got small. He took the low position.

That's what it means. That's it, folks, young men. I plead with you.

Live like you have an eternal soul. Live like there's a heaven to be gained. Live like there's a hell to be avoided at all costs.

Live for your highest good. Live for the highest life. Live for the highest being.

Live for the highest, the highest bridegroom. Live for the highest intimacy with him. Live for the more abundant life.

Live for the highest joy. Why would you not? Be wise. Live wisely.

Those who sit and wait passively, you know what happens to them? They perish. Go after God like you mean to find him. Call upon the Lord.

Seek him on your knees. Give him no rest and give yourself no rest. What you want to be is modern day Josias.

Why? Because modern day Josias are on the right path. And if you're not like that, then you're like the rest of those that were in Israel in his day. And Zephaniah had a word for him and his word for them was not a good word.

It was disaster. It was doom and it was destruction. And don't believe it's any different today.

And you can say, well, this is just doom and gloom. I'll tell you, this is coming out of the word of God, folks. And I'm not making this up.

You know that. Young men, you ought to think the devil is real. And I'll tell you this, you better wake up because you have an enemy.

And you know what Jesus said? Jesus says he's a murderer. And I guarantee you this. He wants to murder your soul.

Be sure of this. Be sure of this. You know what I'm sure of? It's just like in a battle.

You know, there was a time when the U.S. military, we shot Yamamoto's plane down. We'd broken their code. We heard that probably one of their greatest generals was going to be on a flight over certain South Pacific islands.

And we took him down. You know what? You're fighting the enemy. You want to take the head off.

You don't want to just shoot the privates if you got a chance to get the general or the admiral. You know what the devil knows? What we know. Who grows up to lead countries, corporations, families, churches? I mean, who should be when our genders are properly put on display? And the devil knows full well who it is.

Young men, you grew up to be just those kind of people. The devil uses special diligence to destroy the souls of young men, and most young men are totally clueless to it. They just walk around in the world seeking fun, seeking pleasure.

Paul specifically wrote to the young man, Timothy, flee youthful passions, pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with all those who call on the Lord. Wouldn't you like that? Be one of those like Josiah who calls on the Lord, who seeks the Lord. To Titus, another young man, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

Self-controlled. Why do you think the whole book of Proverbs, originally written to young men, warned against the temptations that young men face? Have you ever thought about what do the Proverbs especially take themselves up with? We're not ignorant of the devil's schemes. He strives to keep you from seeing the way things really are.

What do the Proverbs give themselves? How do you handle money? How you handle your mouth? How you handle women? Stuff like that. How you handle friends, companions, your mates. You know what the devil wants you to do? He's a liar.

He's a deceiver. Last thing he wants you young men to do is see things as they really are. Oh, he wants to keep you obsessed with money, friends, women.

Young men, you're the up-and-coming leaders. You should lead churches in the future and lead families in the future and lead in workplaces in the future. I hope a number of you young men, you have your own businesses in the future.

Maybe even some that God would raise up to be modern day Wilberforces. But that's the issue. The devil seeks to make you effeminate, to make you weak.

He wants you fascinated and consumed with pleasure. You know what he does? He hides the eternal crown. He does everything in his power to keep you from seeing the beauty and the glory in Jesus Christ.

He promises you everything. That again, you go back to Bunyan. You go back to Pilgrim's Progress.

You remember when he came against Apollyon? Apollyon said, you just serve me. I'll give you everything I can. I'll pay the wages.

He promises everything if you but serve him. He tells you it's too soon to serve God. You can do it later.

It's not yet. Don't do it yet. Young men, you don't know the danger you are in.

I just recently read Job. God says to the devil, where have you been? Well, from going to and fro on the earth, from walking up and down in it. He's moving.

He's looking. For what? For people to take to hell with him. That's what he wanted of Job.

He wanted to do to Job what he could to Job, so that Job would curse God and die. That's what he wanted. You don't know the danger you're in.

He, you know, the last thing he wants is for you to be like Josiah. You know what he wants you like? The 10,000 other guys out there in this city, just easily in the flow of the course of this world. And that river flows towards a cliff.

And he wants to keep you blind to the cliff. Oh, God's, God, he's probably not real. If he is, it'll all work out in the end.

Don't you worry about it now. Live it up. Live it up.

And you see what Josiah did? He humbled himself. You know one of the great dangers is pride. You know how often Proverbs talks about pride? Remember Proverbs being written to a young man? Yeah, young men, you're the ones that are probably most given to pride.

And the devil's not unaware of that. He's been studying mankind for 6,000 years. He knows what you're made of.

Scripture says, pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. That's what God says. I hate pride.

Ladies, you're capable of this too. Proverbs 11, when pride comes, then comes disgrace. Proverbs 16, pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 29, one's pride will bring him low. And you know what Peter said? God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. You know what pride says? I don't need God.

I'm okay. I don't need him. Pride causes you to trust in your own ideas, your own opinions, makes you content with yourself.

You're good enough. Refusing advice, common for young men to be proud of their strength and their learning, unwilling to hear counsel. Young men tend to be rude.

It's common for young men to be independent, know-it-alls. They can't be taught anything. They think older people are stupid.

Remember a great example, Rehoboam listens to the counsel of the old men who are wise, then listens to the counsel of his stupid young friends, his mates. And guess what he did, the stupid thing. He listened to his stupid young friends.

And then the result of being stupid happened. That's, brethren, these things are given for our instruction. That's why they're there.

And you think about Christ, the perfect man, the prototype man, the greatest man who ever lived, the firstborn, the Lord Jesus Christ. What did he say? Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly. And we know he pleased his father.

No spot, no blemish, no wrinkle. You know what happens when you go out on the streets of Manchester? What do you find? What do you find? I can speak to this. I know what it was like when I was a young man

running around with all my friends.

It's often young men that are just so obviously show their contempt for Christ. Young men, let me tell you something. Don't laugh at and mock Christ and Christianity.

That is the straight road to hell. I mean, if you want to be on that road, but do that. Young men tend to be thoughtless.

They tend to be careless. They tend to lack self-control. That's why Paul told Titus, teach the young men to be self-controlled because you know what kind of young men we tend to get all around us? Like Esau.

Esau is a young man. What did he do? He sold his birthright for what? Satisfy one of the lusts of the body and appetite? How many young men sell their souls for sex, for food, for pleasure, for money, to sell their souls outright for a follower? Josiah, let me tell you this. Josiah didn't wait to be saved.

As a young man, he sought the God of David. That's the way to be safe. That's the way to be saved.

Be serious. Young men tend to be fools. And I know I was one of those fools.

Be serious. I'll tell you this. When you read about God in Scripture, God is serious, judging sinners.

When you read Zephaniah and hear God pronouncing all these judgments, you get an idea that's pretty serious. Christ, what do you think? As he looked towards that cross coming, you think he was pretty serious? You don't see him there in the garden of Gethsemane, laughing and hooting it up and hollering with his buddies. You think the spirit of God is serious, convicting men of judgment, of righteousness, of sin.

You think so? You think the Bible is serious? You think the damned in hell are serious this day? You think the third of the fallen angels who pursue your soul are serious? Don't be a fool. Listen, you have friends. Your friends are fools.

So many of our young, your friends may be foolish. So what? So what? Are you going to go to hell with them? Are you going to save face with them and go to hell? Is that what you're going to do? I'll tell you what Josiah did. It went in the opposite direction of a lot of other people.

You want to be different? You want to be on the narrow way? You're going to be different. You want to carry your cross for Christ? You're going to be different. You want to be those that seek the God of David? You're going to be different.

Are you going to go to hell with them? I just ask you this. What do you give in exchange for your soul? Remember, it's possible to be a young man and serve the Lord like Josiah did. Again, let me go back.

I'm almost done here, folks. But listen, I want to go back to Pilgrim's Progress again, because go back to the first book. These illustrations are just timeless.

You know what? In the first book, Christian goes to Interpreter's house where he saw the man in the iron cage. Let me tell you something else he saw. It says, Interpreter took Christian and led him into a pleasant place.

I love that. Pleasant place. And there was built a stately palace, beautiful to behold, at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted.

He saw also upon the ramparts of this palace, people walking all coiled in gold. Then said, Christian, may we go in? Interpreter took him and led him up towards the door that went into the palace. And behold, at the door stood a great company of men who desired to go in, but they dared not.

There sat a man a little distance away from the door at a table with a book and an ink horn before him to take the names of those who would enter in. Christian saw that in the doorway, the reason that all those men stood back at a distance was because there were many men in armor standing in the doorway resolved to resist the men who would enter. Those men sought to do whatever hurt and mischief they could to any who tried to enter.

Christian was amazed. At last, when every man stayed back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw one man of a very stout countenance. And he came up to the man that sat there and he said, set down my name, sir.

And then he saw that man draw his sword. He put a helmet on his head and he rushed towards the door upon the armed men who laid upon him with deadly force. But that man, not at all discouraged, felt a cutting and hacking most fiercely.

So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all and pressed forward into the palace at which there was a shout heard from those who walked upon the top of the palace walls saying, come in, come in, eternal glory, thou shalt win. Young men, any of you gonna be like that guy? See, that's how Josiah was. Set my name down, sir.

I'm going in. I don't care how much I have to be hacked upon or how much I have to hack on others. I'm getting through that doorway.

You remember what scripture says from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent take it by force, strive to enter in through the narrow door. Young men, I'll tell you this, Jesus calls you to repent. And you know what that means? That means you better do something with your brain.

It means to rethink. It means to think again. It means to change your mind.

You've got to think. Young men don't like to think. Young men are often dull in their thinking, stupid video games, stuff, mindless things.

Just take men's minds off of eternity and off the value of their souls. You've got to rethink. You know what too many young men are thinking right now? Well, everything's okay.

You better rethink that. Think again. People have small thoughts.

You know what? The people, the young men running around this city, they don't have very high thoughts of Christ. You know what? They better think that again because they're going to find out one day when he comes to judge all mankind, he is no small one to deal with. This is the Lord of glory.

This is the one who is going to come and judge all men. This is the one who we saw is before that throne, one who is slain like a lamb, one who is now alive forevermore and he holds the keys. And this is the Lord

of lords.

This is the king of kings. This is not one to be trifled with. You kiss the son lest he be angry.

You better change. You know what? The devil is trying to lead you to believe all sorts of things that aren't real. He doesn't want you in tune with reality.

You know what repentance is? It's getting your mind along the lines of what is true, along the lines of reality, the way things really are. You know what? Young men have been fooled. They've been duped.

They've been diluted. Change your mind. You need to think.

You need to think. You need to think. Young men like to think that Christians are just mindless idiots.

I'll tell you, it's the young men that are by and large the mindless idiots. They think that Christians don't think, but it's just the opposite. What you need to do is start looking at the facts.

You've got sin. You're going to die. Your life is short.

And Christ came into the world to save sinners. God had sent him for that. Are you prepared to listen? Young men don't like to listen.

You know what Josiah did? He listened. When the word was being spoken, he wasn't talking. Too many young men like to talk when they ought to shut up and listen.

Josiah shut his mouth. And when it was being read, he trembled. He feared.

He tore. He said, go inquire God for me. We're in trouble.

You see, his mouth was stopped. Young men quit talking. Quit talking.

Rethink. Is everything really okay? Are you really good enough? Is God on your side? Is everything okay? You better rethink that. Is Christ really so unimportant as you thought? This Christ who turned water into wine, he raised the dead.

He took the thief immediately with himself into paradise. Is he really so unimportant and insignificant as you've been thinking he is? You better think again. You better admit you've been wrong.

You better close your mouth and put your opinions aside and listen to what God says. It's this God who, you know what Jesus said? Jesus said on the day of judgment, it's my word you're going to have to contend with. Young men, silence yourself and open the word of God and see what Christ says.

He's the one you have to deal with. You're living your life. You think all's well.

You don't think much about your sin. God thinks much about your sin. You think God's smiling at you.

You don't think much about the cross. You better consider that cross. Why would God crush his own son up there on that cross? You better think again about what sin is all about.

Suddenly here's this man. You find him on the pages of scripture and he's healing the leper. He's giving sight to the blind.

He's walking on water. He himself comes forth out of the grave from the dead. You know what the gospel is meant to do? It's meant to change our minds about things.

Has it caused you to rethink your whole worldview? You know, young men, they like to come along. Oh, the Bible's just written by men. Science falsely so-called is said to disprove it.

Oh, it's full of errors. You know, none of those young men can find those errors. Oh, there's, you know, it's can't be trusted.

Why? Yes, men wrote it, but they were men carried along by the spirit of God and no man could have conceived of the Christ that we find in scripture. No man, no man has the wisdom to do that. What you want to do is you want to totally throw in with him so that either you're going to be saved by him or you're going to perish.

Josiah heard that word. It was, you know what it caused him to do? It caused him to come to grips with reality. That's what the gospel ought to cause you to do.

Reconsider your life. Reconsider everything. This Christ who used to think so small, so insignificant.

Have you seen his power? Have you seen his love? Have you seen him? If you will, you can make me clean. I will be clean. Just ask yourself, is it true? Young men, is it true you don't need Christ? Is it true? Is all really well with you? Are you good? I love it when I heard Lloyd-Jones say, bring out the balance sheets.

I love that. Yeah, do that. Bring out the balance sheets.

Look at them. Look at your morality. What's your goodness in the sight of God? You better think again.

Think about your past. Think about what you've done. Think about your future.

Where are you going? What about that? Young men, are you really unafraid to die? Well, you've got youth. You've got health. You think everything's going to go.

Your time's going to run out. Are you so unafraid to die? Are you really? You're so unconcerned about heaven? Are you really ready to go out of the world? Are you really so confident? You're really ready? You've got your little plan. You've got your little way figured out, how you're going to escape hell in the end.

I guarantee you, if we brought up the multitudes of hell right now, they all had their plan too, how they were going to escape hell. You really got it all figured out? Are you so sure? What about judgment? You want to think again. You want to think again.

You want to repent. If you haven't repented, if you haven't rethought, if you haven't changed your mind about this, you are lost. You are lost.

You are lost. Josiah. Be like Josiah.

Intent. Intense. Seeking.

Determined. That's what he was. Don't delay.

Death is coming. Hell is raging. Bunyan used to talk about that hell mouth.

Edwards says that this world you walk on is like rotten cloth. It's barely holding you. All God's got to do is say the word, that thing will tear open and that hell mouth will have you.

It devours young men every day. And the devil just laughs. He laughs.

Listen. Christ came to a young man and he said, I'm Lord. Basically, I'm paraphrasing.

I'm Lord. You're not Lord. You go sell all you have and you come follow me.

You're a treasure. He said, nope. And most young men do exactly the same thing.

Josiah didn't. And I'm calling you young men. Live like you have an eternal soul.

Do what Josiah did. Get on your knees. Plead with the Lord to reveal himself.

Plead with the Lord to forgive your sins. Confess your sins to him. Go to the word of God.

Find him. Trust what you read there. Live on those promises.

You follow him. You take up your cross. You follow him.

And it will be well with you. That's what he told that rich young ruler. It'll be well with you.

You'll have treasure in heaven. He said, nope. My money means more.

Father, I pray young men would become champions of the faith in this place. By the grace and the power of God, may it be so. Pray this in Christ's name.

Amen.

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