

2 Kings 22: 1-20; “I have Found the Book”, A Sermon for Reformation Sunday, October 31st, 2010, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall In the Morning Worship Service.

It is very important for us as God’s people, and even for those who do not as yet have faith, to see that God accomplishes all that He does by His Word. He spoke the world into being by His Word, and He even now sustains it by the Word of His power. (Hebrews 1: 3) But in His dealings with men, as regards His instruction and the salvation of men, He has committed His word to men to write it down and encapsulate it in a book. He speaks authoritatively and definitively to men and to kings in the written revelation of Himself and His will.” Today we are living in days when the Church of Jesus Christ desperately needs to be reformed so that God might be glorified in His worship, and so that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ might advance in truth. And so we must ask ourselves; how shall that reformation come for which we long? The text that I have just read to you asserts to us that Reformation of the Church comes from the discovery of the Book of the Law, or what we now know as the Bible. True Reformation is a discovery, or a re-discovery of God’s book and a reforming our practice in terms of our involvement with the church that we attend. God reforms the Church through our attention being drawn to His Word, to do it and to keep it. I hope that you know that the Old Testament Scriptures are, in many places called “the Law”, or “the book of the Law”. It is not legalism to read in it, or abide in the truth of it. This was the Bible of Josiah’s day. It has lessons for us today also. It was the discovery of this book that led Josiah to see his need of repentance, and then through his deliberate actions of obedience to God’s Word came the reformation of the nation.

This morning I want to link Josiah’s reformation of Judah in the Old Testament with the Reformation of the Church in New Testament times and in doing so, show you the great desirability of being a member of a Reformed Church in our own day. To be a Reformed Christian, or more specifically in our case, a Reformed Baptist; means that you have come to see the importance of placing yourself under the preaching of the Bible so that you will reform your life and practice; to bring it into line with God’s revealed will. When whole churches of people begin to do this, then some very good changes take place in families and in all of society which are glorifying to God. That is Reformation. So I would like to set before you this morning this truth to consider and remember: The discovery of the book of the law, as God’s revelation of Himself and His will, was the most significant event in the lives of the people of Judah and Jerusalem in that day. It always has been the key to reforming the worship of God, and the practice of people who would serve God. You see this at various points in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. To open up this truth further I would like to ask – Why is this discovery of the book of the law of such immense significance to us here today? It is important for the following reasons.

1st – It is important because God Himself is forgotten without it.

(Chapter 21, verses 19-24)

How does a nation come to this fearful condition of forgetfulness of God? It is no doubt the deceitfulness of sin, but the specific sin was the leaders of the nation neglecting of the Book and the commandments in that book which had been given to the nation of Israel as a people. This was surely taking place in the days of Josiah's father's reign. His father's name was Amon, and it says in verse 20 of Chapter 21, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, even as his father Manasseh had done." Verse 22 says, "He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord." It was not as though the kings had not been given the responsibility to remember God's Word and walk in His ways. Turn with me to Deuteronomy 17, verse 14. "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' "you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother." "But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'" "Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself." "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write a book for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites." "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

You can see here, can you not, what it is that causes a leader of a nation or the people of that nation as well, to forget God and not keep His commandments? It is worldliness and the boastful pride of life. It is in multiplying horses so that you think that you are strong because you have them. It is multiplying silver and gold for yourself, and trusting in that as though that is what is going to bring you true satisfaction and happiness in life. It is going back to Egypt in your heart to think about what everyone else in the world is doing to please themselves, when you have been called unto holiness and to be a peculiar people unto the Lord, and to obey Him. For the kings of those days it was the multiplication of wives, as though it would take more than one to satisfy all of their desires for companionship and intimacy. God had only intended one, and knew it would only take one wife; even from the Beginning. He knew what was right and declared it.

But notice what specifically the kings of that day were commanded to do. When he was sitting upon his throne, as a part of his kingly duty, he was to "write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the

Levites, and he was to “read it all the days of his life” in order that he might fear God. Now brethren, you see why God would be forgotten and why the people of the nation would end up forgetting and neglecting His Word? It would be, to a great extent because the king did not have the Book and read it to do it. “This is terrible,” you say, and I agree with you. But can you see the application for yourself this morning? How is it that anyone; king or peasant learns to fear the Lord and keep His commandments? It is by your getting a copy of the Bible for yourself and then “reading it every day of your life.” It is “being careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes.” The Christian of our day is to do the very same thing. This is not legalism. It is obedience. God, in the New Covenant has made you kings and priests unto Himself through Jesus Christ your Lord. You most certainly come to know, if you read your Bible carefully, that you have only been saved through the grace and merit of Christ. You can add nothing to the perfect righteousness of His life, and you can add nothing to the sufferings of His sacrificial death for your sins, when you believe in Him. You can add nothing to all that Christ has done for you by your good works or your commandment-keeping in the sight of God. You will know this when you read it in the Bible.

But you will also know if you read carefully, that you were “saved unto good works which God prepared beforehand that you should walk in them.” And good works are only those things which God commands. It is possible to have a selective memory in regard to the Bible. It is possible to think that you have taken the salvation of the gospel and yet not to let that truth of what God’s grace can do, lead you to a greater and greater obedience to God. It is possible to think that you have taken Christ, and then, as you live your life, you forget God because the World is far too interesting. You forget to read the Bible; you neglect to read it when you know that you should, and then the decline of your own religion and that of your family and society begins. Oh, how I plead with you now not to forget to read the Bible which God has given to you. Some societies have very few copies. Some people groups in the World have none. But you have every opportunity. Have you discovered the Book? Or have you forgotten God. Let these verses from God’s book be remembered by us. Psalm 9, verse 17: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” “For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.” Who are the needy in this passage? Is it not those who see their need of God’s wisdom and His help and power to do His will? Whereas, those who forget God do not see their need of Him, or His help? Those who are needy have discovered the Book and they are clinging to God and to His promises. Do not let any man pry your fingers from this Book. For without it, reformation and the gospel’s advance can never come. Therefore it says in verse 19 – “Arise O Lord, do not let man prevail; let the nations be judged in Your sight.” “Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” And this leads me to state my second reason why this discovery of the Book of the Law was so significant.

2ndly – The Discovery of the Book is important because what is most important in life is revealed. (Verses 8-17)

Now, things had gone so far down in Josiah's day that not only did the king not have a copy of the book of the Law, but the priests themselves were ignorant of the Book. It seems apparent from the reaction of Hilkiah the priest, when he found the Book, that there were probably few total copies of the book and indeed this one was probably the original. Some commentators believe that there were other copies of the Book of the Law in existence at that time, but that they were abstracts or small portions of the originals. It is very important to have a whole Bible. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Let me ask you this question. Do you read the entire Bible? Do you read the parts of the Bible that warn you as well as encourage you? If you do not, it will be hard for you to reform your life from worldly practices. It does take grace, and the key is this question. Do you want to be faithful to God? Thank God there were still people in Judah who were surrounding the young king who wanted to be faithful. Dear young people. Consider it a great mercy to you if you have older people around you who are trying to do the right thing, and they are trying to be faithful with what is set before them. They are trying to be faithful before God, and they are trying to be faithful in regard to your doing the right thing. This is God's blessing upon you. In the first seven verses of our text you see that not only was young Josiah was trying to do the right thing; not turning aside to the right hand or to the left as it says in verse 2, but Shaphan the scribe and Hilkiah the high priest wanted to do the right thing as well. Ask yourself this morning; do I want to do the right thing? Do I want to keep on the straight and narrow path of righteousness and not turn to the right hand or the left? The king sent Shaphan the scribe to the house of the Lord in order to count the money which had been brought into the house of the Lord, and collected by the doorkeepers. He wanted them to deliver the money into the hand of those doing the work on the temple, those who were the overseers in the house of the Lord. He wanted them to give the money to those who were doing work to repair the damages of the house. He wanted the money given to the carpenters and builders and masons so that they could buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. Notice this now, in verse 7; "However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully."

Here is another indication of grace at work. Men who are faithful men; having had money entrusted to them; do not need someone standing over them to hold them accountable. It is not that they are unwilling to be held accountable. And it is not as though that any of us should be adverse to good accounting practices or verification of money which is taken in to the collection box. But these men knew who they were ultimately accountable to; and it was obvious to all that they were

laboring to be faithful with what had been entrusted to them. They knew that they were serving God, and not mammon. This is not always the case with any man, or any group of men. To be reformed means that you want to be faithful to God in everything; even how you use the money that has been entrusted to you. Those who have been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon can be entrusted the true and eternal riches. This is why God had mercy upon them and let them discover the Book of the Law. Oh, I know that it was all of grace and in accordance with His eternal purpose; but it was also a blessing upon the faithfulness of the men whom He had already shown grace to. “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” (Luke 16: 10-12) But these men had been faithful with the unrighteous mammon. And so, the true riches; the Word of God would be discovered to them. Let this be a lesson to us. Faithfulness in the lives of God’s people is built in stages and degrees. God will test your faithfulness at many points where no will see it except God. And when God sees faithfulness, He rewards it with the ability to be entrusted with more. Oh, may each of us learn this important lesson while we are young. These men were faithful in the lesser thing and they were given the greater. Faithfulness in the smaller thing of money led to the discovery of the greater thing in the Book. Faithfulness in the King of Judah to repair the house of the Lord led to the discovery of the book.

Verse 8 says, “Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.’” “And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan and he read it himself. And then he took it to the king, “bringing the king word...” He did not keep it to himself, but he brought it to the person who would do the most good by reading it. He brought it to the king. In order to proclaim and share the Word of God you must have read it for yourself and believed its words. Once you have read it and believed it for yourself, you should want to share it with others. The Word of God should be brought to kings, whether it is by prophets, or priests, or scribes; or even ordinary people who want to be faithful. Let the political rulers know what is the right thing to do. The right thing to do is to believe that God exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins when we repent of them. This is the one most needful thing to understand in all of life; for without it, people perish for their lack of knowledge. It is the duty of Christians to tell those in government what is right and wrong; to tell them where they are right and where they are wrong; and then to direct them to the right thing to do. And surely, if they can, they should also tell them of the one and only way which leads to eternal life; the fact that Christ died for sinners and for sins.

But in that day Christ had not come into the world yet; and so Shaphan read the Book before the king. He read him the words from the Book of the Law about

the Lord's judgment coming upon the disobedient, and what do you think happened? The king, when he heard it, tore his clothes. Shaphan probably read to him some of the verses from the book of Deuteronomy; Chapters 28-30. Especially verses like Deuteronomy 29: 14 and following. "I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but with him who stands here with us today before the Lord our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today (for you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by, and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them—wood and stone and silver and gold); so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; and it may not happen when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart'—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober." "The Lord would not spare him; for the anger of the Lord and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven." And verse 24 – "All nations would say, 'Why has the Lord done so to this land?' "What does the heat of this anger mean?" "Then people would say: 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their father which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them.'"

Now let me ask you, now that we have gotten this far; Is the Christian, once he has been forgiven of his sins by faith in God's promises, ever to feel conviction of sin ever again? The answer is, "Yes, beloved." He is most certainly forgiven of all of his sins if when he believes that he also finds in his heart that he has the grace of repentance with it. Have you found the grace of repentance? It is possible for even true Christians to fall very far off of the obedience that God has called them to in His blessed Word. That is why both they, and their churches, need to be reformed. And how are they ever to come back from their disobedience to God's Word if they cannot feel convicted that their course in life has not measured up to the standard of God's Word? No, the true discovery of the Book is the discovery that is accompanied by the power of God to see the depth of our sinfulness. We all fall short; we all stumble in many ways." (James 3: 2) "There is not a just man upon the earth who does good and does not sin." (Ecclesiastes 7: 20) This is why Josiah tore his clothes. What God is asking for from you and me is that we would rend our hearts and not our garments. This leads to repentance; this leads to reformation. Listen to Joel 2: 12 and following – "Now, therefore, says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.'" "So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from

doing harm.” “Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him....?” This is how Josiah, who was already a believer in God and His goodness; God and His righteousness; thought to himself.

Let’s apply this to our own day. When God intends a work of Reformation in His churches, He will most of the time begin with the pastors, the deacons, and those who would be faithful. This is what He did here. This is what I expect will be true of us in this church and also in other churches where there are faithful men, whether they call themselves Reformed or not. Those who lead must themselves be taught the reality of the anger of God against sin; and the greatness of God’s power to deal with those in power in both Church and State, who are sinning against Him. What God is looking for, is not to put His people into an idyllic paradise while they are here upon the earth. He is looking to bring His people to see themselves as needing to reform their lives to live in accordance with this book the Bible. What is most important in life; in our life as Christians; is that we be faithful. To be Reformed is nothing other than your publicly declaring your intention to be faithful to God’s Word. And this is a mighty work, which only He is capable of bringing about. But that He can do it; and purposes to do it at critical points in the Church’s history; we should never doubt. When he does do it, He first reveals the significance of the Book. Then He reveals the depth of our sinfulness. And then He reveals His mercy; His willingness to forgive the sins of the past and to give us grace to reform our lives and practice in the church that we attend. This leads me to the final reason why the discovery of the Book in that day is so important to us in our day.

3rdly – It is important because it leads to God’s mercy being show to repentant leaders to do the work of Reformation. (Verses 18-20)

Verse 19 of our text is wonderful. It says, “Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, says the Lord.” “Surely, therefore, 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 calamity which I will bring on this place.” “So they brought back word to the king.” The Lord showed King Josiah mercy because he tore his clothes and wept. When was the last time that you have had feelings such as these? Can you remember times of weeping before the Lord over your own sins and your shortcomings and your wasting of time in your life; not paying attention to the Word of God? Do you see the importance of God’s Spirit working through His Book to bring you to the place where your heart is tender and you humble yourself to consider what he would have you do for His kingdom’s sake? Look at what Josiah did because his heart was tender. Verse 3 of Chapter 23 – “Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the

words of this covenant that were written in this book.” “And all the people took a stand for the covenant.” If you will take a stand to keep God’s commandments, others will often take a stand with you. But even if they do not; God will stand with you. “And so the king commanded that Hilkiah the priest, and all the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers would bring out the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and all the host of heaven; all the false religion; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron.” “He removed the idolatrous priests who burned incense to Baal and to the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all the host of heaven.” “He brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord, took it to the Brook Kidron and burned it there, and threw the ashes on the graves of the common people.” “He tore down the ritual booths and houses of the practicing homosexuals and prostitutes which were in the house of the Lord, and he defiled and broke down the altars of the high places where false worship was offered.” He put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah.” “He also commanded all the people to keep the Passover to the Lord as it was written in the book of the covenant.” “Such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and kings of Judah.” That was reformation. All of this flowed out of the discovery of the book of the Law. Let us pray for more such discoveries.

In closing, I would like to read to you from D’Aubigne’s History of the Reformation concerning Martin Luther, for it is because of what Luther did on October 31st 1517, that a great Reformation took place, the effects of which are still with us today. He nailed the 95 theses to the door of Wittenburg chapel, protesting the Roman Catholic Church’s view of how salvation came to people. But how did it all begin? Where did it start? It actually had its roots way back in 1503. D’Aubigne says - “One day—he had then been two years at Erfurth, and was 20 years old—he opens many books in the library one after another, to learn their writer’s names.” “One volume that he comes to attracts his attention.” “He has never until this hour seen its like.” “He reads the title—it is a Bible!” “A rare book, unknown in those times.” “His interest is greatly excited: he is filled with astonishment at finding other matters than those fragments of the gospels and epistles that the Church has selected to be read to the people during public worship every Sunday through the year.” “Until this day he had imagined that they composed the whole Word of God.” “And now he sees so many pages, so many chapters, so many books of which he had had no idea!” “His heart beats as he holds the divinely inspired volume in his hand,,” “With eagerness and with indescribable emotion he turns over those leaves from God.” “The first glimmerings of a new truth were then beginning to dawn upon his mind.” “Thus had God led him to the discovery of His Word—of that Book of which he was one day to give his fellow-countrymen that admirable translation in which Germany has for three centuries perused the oracles of God.” “Perhaps for the first time this

precious volume has now been taken down from the place it occupied in the library of Erfurth." "This book, deposited upon the unknown shelves of a gloomy hall, is about to become the book of life to a whole nation." "In that Bible the Reformation lay hid."