

Beams From The Lighthouse

2 Chronicles 30:6-9

When I was a small child, my family traveled many times from our home in Mobile, Alabama, to my grandparents' home in New Orleans. A highlight of the trip along Highway 90 which relieved the monotony of riding for us four boys in the car was the sight of the lighthouse situated on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. We would eagerly watch for it, and then turn around and look from the back windows of the car as we rode past. I often wondered just how far the beams from that light could be seen at night.

It was built in 1848, and is the only one remaining of ten original lighthouses that were built to mark the Gulf Coast. Constructed of cast iron with a brick lining, the Biloxi Lighthouse has withstood hurricanes and time. After Hurricane Katrina damaged the brick lining in 2005, the lighthouse underwent a \$400,000 renovation and is now open for public tours.

I remember when I discovered quite by accident that that particular lighthouse wasn't the only lighthouse in the world. In fact, the very first lighthouse was built three hundred years before Christ just off the coast of Egypt, and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Since then, lighthouses have taken many shapes and sizes, and have utilized different methods of lighting. But they all have a common purpose: to send a piercing beam of light out into the darkness to guide the way to safety for those who sail on the water.

When Hezekiah was 25 years old, he became king of Israel. In 2 Chronicles 29:3 we read that in the very first month of his reign he ordered that the Temple of the Lord be repaired. It had fallen into a state of disrepair when his father Ahaz had been king. Now, through Hezekiah's leadership, the Temple was repaired, the priests were consecrated, and the worship of God was re-established. But much more needed to be done. It was one thing to repair and cleanse the Temple, but it was quite another thing to prepare the hearts of the people to worship God in that Temple.

More than ever before, that renovated Temple was like a lighthouse sending out beams to the people of God. Now that it was clean and restored, it served to call the people to go further in their walk with the Lord God.

So King Hezekiah sent out a letter to all the people of Israel and Judah. In that letter, he said to them, "The Temple has been restored! Its very presence now calls

us to take positive steps toward restoring a vital element of our experience with God—the Passover Feast.” The wording of that letter is preserved for us in 2 Chronicles 30:6-9:

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There is a church building on Highway 49 south of Jackson near Florence which was constructed to look like a lighthouse. In a figurative sense, our church is a lighthouse, too! There is no tower from which a powerful light beams, but we are a lighthouse just the same. Imagine with me that from this newly-refurbished lighthouse shine five fresh beams of light which call us anew to do five very important things.

1 **There is the beam which calls us to return to the Lord, v. 6**
Hezekiah’s letter began, *People of Israel, return to the Lord.*” Now that the Temple had been restored, it was time for the people to restore their relationships with God. They had not been worshipping the Lord God for a number of years, as long as Ahaz had been king. Under his influence they had begun to worship false gods and idols. The Temple had not been used. The light from the lighthouse had gone out.

But now the light was shining again! Anyone passing by could not help but notice that something important was happening around the Temple area. All the hustle and bustle of cleaning and purifying and sacrificing clearly spoke to say that the beam was stabbing through the darkness of idolatry. Just the sight of the restored Temple was enough to remind the people that it was time to get right with the Lord God, forsake all other gods, and return to Him.

Every good thing God does or gives is a call to repentance. When we have wandered away from the Lord, when we have rebelled against His plan for our lives, He pleads with us to return to Him through every portion of His creation. Every demonstration of His goodness toward us calls us to repent of personal sin in our lives. Because God is a good God, He makes it possible for us to repent and receive forgiveness.

When the people in Joel’s day were at the point of destruction, God said, *“Even now...return to Me with all your heart...”* (2:12). It is His very goodness which allows us to repent in the first place. None of us deserve what God has done for us.

Yet we are called to “*repent and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord*” (Acts 3:19).

God has been so good to us! He has truly blessed His people, and that blessing calls us to repentance. This is the place where the call goes out to repent of our sins. Now that our Sanctuary and building have been restored and refurbished, the light from the lighthouse shines brighter than ever. That beam of light calls us to return to God. It cuts through all the heartache of running away from God and pretending to be righteous and holy. The beam from this lighthouse pierces to a point deep inside ourselves, where the soul and spirit join together.

Can you feel it this moment?

2 **There is the beam which calls us to be faithful to the Lord, v.7**
Hezekiah’s letter continues in verse seven: “*Do not be like your fathers and brothers, who were unfaithful to the Lord, the God of their fathers...*” In other words, be faithful to God. If God allows us to return to Him, then surely our faithfulness is the least we can give in return.

The Temple would remind them of the need for their faithfulness to God. It was a visual aid to help the people remember that God’s presence was with them. It was considered by the people to be the place where God lived among His people. The awareness of that presence should have called the Hebrew people to remain faithful to God all along. But they were not faithful always. Many times through the years they had fallen away, enticed by the allurements of the world culture around them. They had allowed aspects of false religion to creep into their worship of God, until their hearts were completely drawn away from Him. That was why the Temple had to be restored in the first place.

Now that it had been restored, it was time to call the people to be faithful to God, to be totally different from their ancestors who had rebelled against the sovereignty of God.

Our ancestors may or may not have been faithful to God. The point is that the restoration of our Sanctuary and building sends out a beam of light to call us to remain faithful to Almighty God. This is the place where we will be called time and again to be faithful to the Lord. Through the years, the dirt and grime had accumulated, as it would in any building. Through the years, sin may have blackened your soul and hardened your heart. And the freshness and brightness which fills our eyes this morning sends out a beam of light from God’s Holy Spirit,

which calls us to be faithful to our God. Our faithfulness is the least we could give to a God who has been so good to us.

Do you hear the call of God to be faithful to Him?

3 **There is the beam which calls us to surrender to the Lord, v. 8a**
Next, Hezekiah said to the people in his letter, *“Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the Lord.”* “Stiff-necked” is an interesting term.

It comes from two Hebrew words which mean “neck” and “to be hard.” There is the picture here of an ox whose neck muscles bulge and become hard when he refuses to turn in a particular direction.

Many times in Scripture this metaphor is used to describe someone who is rebellious and unteachable. For example, Proverbs 29:1 reads, *“A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed without remedy.”* Most of the time, when this term is used, it describes the Hebrew people who refused the direction of God in their lives.

And some of the time, it could describe us.

But get this: Stephen used it in his sermon in the Book of Acts to describe people who **resisted the Holy Spirit!** Is there right now such a struggle in your life that you have stiffened your neck when God has attempted to lead you in paths of righteousness?

The beam which went out from the Temple called the people to be faithful to God, but there was only one way that could happen. Being faithful to the Lord was impossible unless and until the people learned how to surrender to God. They had to submit to the Lord. Nothing else could be accomplished until this was done in their individual hearts.

Folks, this is the place where we will be called to surrender to the Lord, and for that reason, it is a special place. This place has always been used by God to call people to surrender to Jesus as Lord, but now, it is as though the fresh paint and the new lights and the new doors and the new carpet call out to us in a fresh way. Surrender is still the way to the life in Christ.

Until I come to the place where I give in to Christ, and give up everything which stands in the way, I cannot be faithful to Him. And the only way I can ever be able to be faithful to the Lord is to fully, totally, completely surrender to Him. Because

as long as I am unsundered, then the only one I'm going to be faithful to is myself. It certainly won't be God. All the freshness of this newly refurbished building is like a beam of light which calls us to surrender more completely to the Lord than ever before.

4 There is the beam which calls us to worship the Lord, v. 8b

Next, Hezekiah's letter said to the people in the middle portion of verse eight, "*Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever.*" For so long, even those who wanted to, could not worship God in the Temple. Ahaz had seen to that. With deliberate scheming, he had destroyed the Temple furnishings and had the doors of the Temple sealed shut. The message which he sent to the people of Israel was loud and clear: "We are not going to worship this God any longer. We are going to worship the gods of the Syrians instead."

Hezekiah's action in opening the Temple doors and repairing them, and in ordering the priests to prepare themselves to make sacrifices for sin, was another message. The opened, cleansed, restored Temple was sending out a beam of light to the people that the Lord God was once again to be worshipped in the land. For quite a number of years, the people had not observed the Passover Feast as they had been commanded by God. Verse one of chapter thirty says that Hezekiah sent letters to all the people, "*that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord the God of Israel.*"

All that has gone before now prepares them to worship God. Worshipping God is the natural overflow of a heart that has returned to the Lord, been faithful to the Lord, and surrendered to the Lord. You try it sometime, if you haven't already. Completely surrender to God this morning, and see if you aren't automatically led to worship Him in the beauty of His holiness.

This is the place where we will be called again and again to worship God. That is one reason we could call this room our "Worship Center." That is a term which would remind us what actually is supposed to happen in this room. It is the central place of worship. If you have been attending worship services here for quite a while, you may have grown so familiar with this building that somehow it has lost that "specialness" of being the place where God is worshipped.

But the very act of restoration has been like a beam of light, calling us back to the basics of worship, without all the trappings and false piety so prevalent in today's brand of Christianity. And we are reminded that to truly worship God, we must return to Him, be faithful to Him, and surrender to Him. On that basis, can you

worship God this morning? Or is there something which has to change before you can say you've truly worshipped?

5 The final beam calls us to serve the Lord, v. 8c

One of the last things Hezekiah said to the people is found in the last phrase of verse eight: "*Serve the Lord your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.*"

The Temple was not intended to be a monument. It was never God's intention that it should merely be a thing of beauty. It was God's intention all along that the Temple should be the place where God would come down to meet with man. When man truly had an experience with God, their relationship would be different. Now that the Temple had been restored and reopened, it served as a lighthouse, calling the people to serve the Lord God once again.

This is the place where we will be equipped to serve the Lord. It certainly is not the only place we are to serve Him, but it must begin here. Our effectiveness as witnesses and servants out there in the world is going to be determined by our faithfulness to serve Him *here*.

You see, there is a natural order here. Each of these beams from the lighthouse intensifies the one before it. When we return to the Lord, then we can be faithful to Him. When we have been faithful to Him, then surrendering to Him will follow. Having surrendered to Him, we find it is instinctive in us to worship Him. And having done all those things, we find that serving God is unpremeditated and unprompted. The person who truly worships is the person who doesn't have to be begged to serve. It comes naturally and spontaneously.

Serving God is what He has intended all along. While the Hebrew people had still been wandering in the wilderness, God had said through Moses, "*And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul...?*" (Deuteronomy 10:12).

Skip across the ages, until you come to Paul's words to the Ephesians: "***Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men***" (Ephesians 6:7).

Today we are grateful for what God has done for His people, in allowing this worship center and building to be a place of reverence and joy and celebration and

fellowship. We are grateful for the blessings God has lavished upon us in making this restoration possible. May it all be to His Glory.

But this newly-refurbished lighthouse is sending out five beams of light, calling to those of us who are still searching for the Way:

1. There is the beam which calls us **to return to the Lord.**
2. There is the beam which calls us **to be faithful to the Lord.**
3. There is the beam which calls us **to surrender to the Lord.**
4. There is the beam which calls us **to worship the Lord.**
5. There is the beam which calls us **to serve the Lord.**

We can read in verses ten and eleven of two different reactions the couriers received as they took this letter around the country. Verse ten tells us the sad fact that many of the people who heard the letter read “*scorned and ridiculed*” the couriers. But in verse eleven, we see that some did in fact humble themselves and go to Jerusalem to observe the Passover.

It is a shame that verse ten ever had to be written. In the Name of Jesus, I plead with you this morning not to let verse ten be true of you. Instead, follow the example of the people in verse eleven, and humble yourself to worship the Lord God.

*Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse evermore,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.*

--Philip P. Bliss