

Huldah: Prophet of Wisdom

Lenny's story starts out the same as many others' stories. After suffering painful injuries from a car accident, he was prescribed oxycodone. Getting hooked on that pain killer, he later began buying illegal opioids to satiate his addiction. It wasn't long after that when he started using heroin. "The thing that was most absent from my life was peace," Lenny explains. He was in and out of rehabilitation centers. It was not until he firmly decided to do whatever it took to break the addiction that the therapy finally helped.

Della's story is that she didn't recognize how arrogantly she judged other people. "I was never introspective enough to see my own faults, but I could all too quickly jump in to tell other people how to fix theirs," she explains. And a deep-seated peace always alluded her because of it. Only when she learned to really listen to another person's point of view did she find she could truly encourage people—and allow others to encourage her as well.

Hunter's story is that he felt outraged over the smallest of disagreements or perceived insults. To say that he had an anger management problem would be an understatement. He didn't simply read Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*; he studied it. "I dove into the book thinking it would help me come up with ways to pay back those people whom I thought had wronged me," he explains. But when he recognized he was emotionally injuring some of the people he loved the most, he resolved to turn his life around. Accepting Christ and then praying for help, he still gets angry sometimes; but he quickly settles back into the newfound peace he has in his soul.

- 1.** *What does it mean to repent when we sin?*
- 2.** *Is it possible to experience God's peace without repentance. If not why?*
- 3.** *Are you experiencing God's peace in your life? If not, why?*

Josiah Inquires of the LORD

2 Kings 22:14, KJV

14 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

2 Kings 22:14, NIV

¹⁴Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

The lone biblical story of the prophet Huldah began with the high priest's discovery of the "Book of the Law" in the temple (2 Kings 22:8). The long-abandoned Word of God symbolized the idolatry and wickedness that characterized the people of Judah at the time Josiah became king. Josiah, however, was much different than the two kings who reigned before him, who ignored the Lord's commands.

Upon hearing the words of the Law, King Josiah "tore his robes" in humble recognition of his and the nation's disobedience as well as in response to the severity of the "Lord's anger" because of their sins. Sensing an urgent need to hear from the Lord, he sent servants to inquire of Him (vss. 8-13).

Hilkiah the high priest along with other royal officials went to Huldah, who lived in "Jerusalem, the New Quarter." The text describes her as the "wife of Shallum . . . keeper of the wardrobe" (vs. 14). The choice of Huldah was not random; Josiah directed the delegation to her (2 Chron. 34:22), perhaps because she resided in Jerusalem where they could quickly find her and bring back a message from the Lord.

Huldah's response to Josiah tells us the king wanted to know if he or the people of Judah could do anything to avert the Lord's judgment. Did Jerusalem have time to repent and avert the disaster spelled out for them in the Law? Had they passed the point of no return?

The choice of Huldah turned out to be a wise choice. As

we will see, she was ready with an answer, one that would later prove 100 percent correct.

4. What prompted King Josiah to seek counsel from the Lord?

Huldah Prophecies the Fate of Judah

2 Kings 22:15-17, KJV

15 And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

16 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

2 Kings 22:15-17, NIV

¹⁵She said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶"This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷

Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' "

The prophet Huldah responded to the king's inquiry with an authoritative message from the Lord. It might seem disrespectful for her to refer to the king as "the man who sent you to me" (vs. 15), but not when we consider that this message came from God, not from her.

Huldah confirmed Josiah's worse fears; God would "bring disaster" on Jerusalem and the "people" (vs. 16). The king likely hoped it was not too late to avert the Lord's wrath, but such was not the case. The dire warnings contained in the Law would prove to be true for the people of Judah.

The idolatry of King Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, was so great that he built altars to foreign gods in the courts of the temple, placed the image of an idol inside the temple

itself, and sacrificed some of his sons to a pagan deity (2 Chron. 33:4-7). Although he repented at a later time in his reign of 55 years, the damage of his wickedness remained.

Second Chronicles 33:9 records this about Manasseh's influence on the people: "But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites." This was the evil that Huldah referenced in her response to Josiah (vs. 17).

Judah had reached the point of no return; God's fury against His people would "not be quenched" (vs. 17). Huldah's prophecy of judgment came to pass decades later as Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, as well as the temple, and took the people captive (2 Kings 25:1-21). This did not mean, however, the Lord would not respond favorably to those who repented, such as King Josiah.

5. *In whose name did the prophet Huldah respond to King Josiah?*

6. *How did Huldah confirm the fears of Josiah?*

7. *Was there anything Judah could do to avert God's judgment?*

Huldah Prophesies the Fate of King Josiah

2 Kings 22:18-20, KJV

18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this

2 Kings 22:18-20, NIV

¹⁸Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: ¹⁹Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and

KJV

place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

NIV

its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. ²⁰Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.”

So they took her answer back to the king.

Because the consequences of disobedience listed in the Law included captivity for the king as well as for the people (Deut. 28:36), Josiah understandably wondered about his fate as well. Huldah responded to his personal concern next, this time addressing him in a more favorable way as “the king of Judah” (vs. 18).

The Lord had seen Josiah’s humble response to His word; He noticed his tears of repentance as he tore his robe. Through Huldah God assured Josiah that He heard his plea (vs. 19). Based on the Lord’s response to the prayer of the king, we can assume he cried out in humble repentance over his sins, as well as those of the people.

As a result of his humble response to God’s Word, the king would not see the disaster that would later come upon Jerusalem (vs. 20). The certainty of future judgment would not keep the Lord from responding favorably to those who turned away from idols and sought forgiveness from Him.

Just as Huldah prophesied, God’s judgment of Jerusalem and Judah came after the death of Josiah. Although he later died in battle (2 Kings 23:28-30), he did not see the Lord’s wrath fall upon the people.

8. *What did the Lord cite as evidence of Josiah’s humble response to hearing the Law?*

9. *How did the Lord reward the king for his repentance?*

No Repentance, No Peace

Pride keeps Marisa from doing what she needs to do. Her life is spiraling downward because of her refusal to admit that she can't control her anger. Whenever any little thing goes wrong, even a simple thing as not being able to put on her eyelashes correctly, Marisa yells at the closest person to her. She never acknowledges that her words are hurting people, especially those close to her. Marisa's self-centeredness keeps her from being sensitive to others' feelings.

Unconfessed sin keeps Marisa from experiencing peace within her heart. Her unorganized life, including her messy bedroom, are the result of her lack of peace, yet she can't see it. Marisa continues to try in her own strength to better her life through exercise, reading self-help books and watching YouTube videos on improving yourself. She experiences small successes by her standard, but never the major progress that can be possible if she humbles herself before God.

Sadly, Marisa grew up in a Christian home and knows what it means to repent. She can't see beyond herself to acknowledge that she has sinned against God and others with her uncontrollable anger. Yes, Marisa often goes to her room and it will flash briefly through her mind what she had said to someone. But her thoughts always go back to what the other person did or said, and not what she does wrong. She is miserable, but pride keeps her from talking to a counselor or even her parents who can guide her back to God.

While no repentance brings no peace, the opposite is also true: know repentance and you can know peace.

10. *List at least three things that keep us from repenting after we have sinned against God or others.*

11. *Why is it important to acknowledge to God and others what you have done wrong against them?*

12. *What does God promise will happen to us if we confess our sins to him and turn away from them (1 John 1:9)?*

Keep Silent or Speak?

David understood the peace that comes from confessing our sins versus keeping them inside us, and he wrote about it in Psalm 32: "... I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.' And you forgave the guilt of my sin" (vs. 5).

► *Are you keeping silent about the sins you've committed and need to speak out? Confess them silently now before God, or confess them to another person in class if you feel so led, or plan this week to talk with someone who has been hurt by your sin.*

KEY VERSE

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. —2 Kings 22:19, KJV

"Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD." —2 Kings 22:19, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 22 through March 28

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Mark 9:2-8—Elijah with Moses and Jesus.

Tues. Mark 9:9-13—John the Baptist, the New Elijah.

Wed. 1 Kings 18:1-4—Elijah Sent to King Ahab.

Thurs. 1 Kings 18:20-26, 30-33, 36-39—Elijah Challenges the Baal Prophets.

Fri. 1 Kings 19:1-8—Elijah in the Wilderness with God.

Sat. 1 Kings 19:9b-15—God Commissions Elijah for a New Work.

Sun. 1 Kings 18:5-18—King Ahab Meets the Prophet Elijah.