

The Weekly Word
July 24-30, 2017

As the summer moves on so does our reading of God's Word. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, July 24: 2Kings 12- Accountability...

Corruption... it is everywhere. This summer while in Nigeria I heard two sermons warning of corruption that is rampant here in Nigeria. The church was calling her people to a higher standard, while at the same time, noting that corruption is everywhere and we must constantly be on our guard.

Corruption, it seems, appears in this morning's passage. The priests when left to themselves were not able to complete the repairs on the temple. *Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money that is brought as sacred offerings to the temple of the LORD—the money collected in the census, the money received from personal vows and the money brought voluntarily to the temple. Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, then use it to repair whatever damage is found in the temple." But by the twenty-third year of King Joash the priests still had not repaired the temple. Therefore King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and asked them, "Why aren't you repairing the damage done to the temple? Take no more money from your treasurers, but hand it over for repairing the temple."* (4-7).

Where was all the money going??? Was it corruption? Graft? Theft by others?

So the priests devised a plan to put the money in a sealed box. When enough was there it was given to workers to complete the work and this plan worked.

The human heart is wicked, even the best of us. To combat our natural tendencies to selfishness, we can learn from the priests and put checks and balances on ourselves to protect us from ourselves.

I am not above corruption. I am not above sin. I need to welcome accountability to help me live a true and faithful life before the Lord and others...

What checks, balances and accountability do you have in your life to help you live faithfully before the Lord?

Lord, give me honesty with myself to see my weaknesses and to confront them so that I live faithfully before you and people of this world. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, July 25: 2Kings 13- God the 'fixer'...

Then Jehoahaz sought the LORD's favor, and the LORD listened to him, for he saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel. The LORD provided a deliverer for Israel, and they escaped from the power of Aram. So the Israelites lived in their own homes as they had before (4-5).

'Good enough for times of trouble,' that's the thought that crossed my mind as I read these sentences. The Lord is good enough to call out to in times of trouble, but once the crisis passes (because the Lord helps you) you return to you old ways. This almost sounds like the times of the Judges.

The northern kingdom of Israel never learned her lesson. She never was able to get out from the error Jeroboam laid upon her when he set up a rival priesthood. Even though the Lord kept calling out to Israel, sending the prophets Elijah and Elisha, Israel never turned away from her idolatrous ways.

I find it curious that Jehoahaz turns to the Lord when everything else fails him, but apparently he only wants an escape from the present pressure. He is not willing to begin serving the Lord.

I see this in contemporary life as well. In a time of national crisis, 9/11 for example, church attendance swells. However, as the weeks and months go by and life returns to normal, people return to their old habits and church attendance returns to what it was before the crisis.

Similar things happen on a personal level. A family crisis occurs, cancer, finance, etc., and people reach out to the church prayer chain or show up in worship. But, again, when the crisis passes the old ways return. God is the great fixer but the idea of truly worshipping Him rarely enters the picture.

Now of course there are exceptions but in the main, this scenario proves true over and over again.

Even believers are susceptible to 'increased devotion' during times of crisis, which does not last after the crisis abates.

God is pressing me this morning to look at my own life. Do I do these things? Do I treat the Lord as a 'fixer' or 'blessing back' someone I turn to when I need a blessing but the rest of my time God is somewhere relegated to the back of my mind?

Lord, I don't think this is the case, but I don't want to be too presumptuous... Search me, show me, reveal to me any places or situations where I treat You less than Your Sovereign Majesty deserves.

Lord, I love You. Direct my ways that I might serve You effectively. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, July 26: 2Kings 14- Pride comes before a fall...

The writer of Proverbs tells us that pride comes before a fall (16:18). That is certainly the case for Amaziah, king of Judah.

Amaziah was a good king who followed the way of his fathers and honored the Lord. But Amaziah was still human. And after he tasted a little success in battle he took on an enemy much bigger than he could handle. *Amaziah was the one who defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela in battle, calling it Joktheel, the name it has to this day. Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, with the challenge: "Come, let us face each other in battle." ... Judah was routed by Israel, and every man fled to his home (7-8, 12).*

Amaziah's mistake is one many of us make, we gain a bit of success and pride sweeps in. The next thing we know we are in over our heads and in trouble.

I wondered, where were his advisors and where were the strategic thinkers who helped him run his government?

Did he surround himself with 'yes men' who only told him what he wanted to hear? Or did he not have advisors at all? The text is silent so my mind swirls with wonderings. No matter the reason, he made a ghastly error and Israel paid dearly for his arrogance.

I am wondering if I have advisors who can help me keep pride in check. Do I have people who can speak truth into my life? Do you?

Think about it.

Lord, thank you for friends and associates who know me, listen to me and can guide me. Holy Spirit, speak to me. When success comes, remind me it is by Your grace not greatness. Put Your words in the mouths of people I trust, that I might follow Your lead and give all glory to You the Father and Jesus. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Thursday, July 27: 2Kings 15- Faithful while sick...

Sometimes we think that Believers should have all things go well in their lives. The story of Azariah, king of Judah, should help dispel that myth.

*In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah began to reign. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem. **He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done.** The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. **The LORD afflicted the king with leprosy until the day he died, and he lived in a separate house. Jotham the king's son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land (1-5).***

The bolded verses are the ones that caught my attention. He was a good king, yet the Lord afflicted him with leprosy. Go figure?!?

Only the Lord knows His reasons for this seemingly strange occurrence. But whatever God's reason, the Lord is sovereign.

The outward circumstances of life are not a reliable indicator of faithfulness to the Lord. Some faithful people are blessed with the things of this world and some struggle mightily. The same goes for unfaithful people.

What matters is how we handle the life circumstances God brings our way...

Some circumstances are the result of life choices; leprosy and many cancers are not.

The question is, how will we handling the life circumstances the Lord allows into our lives? Are we remaining faithful?

Lord, I surrender my life to You. Blessed be Your name, Oh Lord. Blessed be Your name. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, July 28: 2Kings 16- Plenty of fault to go around...

Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. He offered up his burnt offering and grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and splashed the blood of his fellowship offerings against the altar (10-13).

My initial thought was who was really at fault, the king for ordering the construction of a new altar or the priest for carrying it out? But then I realized there was plenty of fault to go around.

The huge issue for Judah was it was both... both the king and the priests turned their backs on the Lord, building a new pagan and unauthorized altar in the Temple of the Lord. Poor Judah, the two institutions that were supposed to protect the people and lead the people in faithfulness to the Lord were, in fact, leading them away from the Lord.

Today we no longer live in a Theocracy, so I do not expect the government to lead us in faithfulness to God. I am thankful that at least in my country, the United States of America, the

government is supposed to protect free access to the religion of one's choice. So government is to be essentially neutral when it comes to religion.

With government out of the religious picture, church leaders –pastors, priests, elders, deacons, etc. –are the God-ordained protectors of the faith for the people... leading the people toward truth and living God's declared way. What frightens me is that I see many sectors of the church leaders constructing new and unauthorized institutions and teachings. They change what God has declared about salvation and morality in order to dovetail more closely with our secular world than God's written and revealed Word.

The priests under Ahaz simply discarded what God had said about the altar and built a 'new fangled' one after the likeness of a pagan altar in Damascus. Sometimes I fear some leaders in the church are doing the same thing today, moving the cross and salvation in Jesus alone to the side in favor of a more eclectic 'way of salvation' with many doors and many ways.

Oh, God, forgive us. Forgive us for disregarding and changing Your Word and Way. Correct Your church before we cease to be Your church. Raise up voices of orthodoxy who can speak to this new generation. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, July 29: 2Kings 17- Judgment day...

The day no one ever thinks will come, came for Israel... Judgment Day. The Lord finally said, 'Enough! You have sinned and sinned. You have rejected my prophets with their call to return to me over and over again. Your sins have piled up and now it is time to pay. Judgment day has come!'

This entire chapter records God's judgment against Israel. God's indictment can be summed up in just a couple of verses:

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. ...

So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence.... (7-8, 18).

Those final 5 words are frightening... God *removed them from his presence*. That is the definition of Hell. Israel experienced hell on earth... a foretaste of the ultimate and eternal judgment. Without God's presence to moderate the sinfulness of humankind, life deteriorates into despair.

We may not like chapters like this, but they are sprinkled through the Bible, a constant reminder that all people will be judged one day for the sins they committed. The only remedy prescribed in the Bible is faith in Jesus Christ. This alone is the answer for our sins. Faith in Christ alone releases us from the penalty of our sin because it places the guilt of our sin on Jesus who pays the judgment we should have paid.

The Apostle's Creed reminds us he descended into Hell... for you and me.

Judgment day is coming... are you prepared?

Think about it...

Oh, God, thank You for Jesus. Jesus, words cannot express my gratitude for Your great love for me and the world. You came willingly and took the sins of all who believe in You. You died so that we could live. Halleluiab! Praise be to You, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Sunday, July 30, 2017, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.