

**The Weekly Word**  
August 18-24, 2014

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Grace and Peace, Bill

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**The Weekly Word**  
August 18-24, 2014

Happy Mid August... keep on reading.  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, August 18: 2Kings 17- The law of consequences...**

At first I was simply reading this chapter for information and content. But as the story unfolded, my heart grew heavy... it was the account of God's judgment of the northern kingdom. His people had forsaken Him. God had sent prophets to call them home (13) but they refused to listen. And that's what gave my heart the heaviness.

*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. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns (7-9).*

I was surprised that the Israelites tried to fool God by "secretly" doing things.

Can we hide from God? Can we do things that God cannot see? NO. The Lord knows and sees all things. We cannot hide from God. Oh, we may fool ourselves into thinking that God does not see us.

How foolish we can be... thinking we can do things secretly where God cannot see!?

*Lord, my life is an open book before You. You see and know things about me that I may not even know or admit to myself! Show me, Lord... that I may repent and change my ways. I don't want to be like Israel, I long to be faithful to You. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 19: 2Kings 18- Tumbling thoughts...**

With the account of Hezekiah, we take a deep breath of faithfulness. Here is a king who reigns as unto the Lord. Verse 6: *He [Hezekiah] held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses.*

These words pricked my heart. Do I live like this? Could it be said of me that I held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow Him?

Could this be said of you?

Thoughts kept building in my meditations...

A person has to know the Lord in order to follow Him. A person has to know God's commands in order to keep them.

Can a person know the Lord without knowing His commands?

Questions tumbled...

*Lord, thank You for these words written about Hezekiah. They pierce me. They convict me. They challenge me to be present with You, to study Your Word, Your book, Your Laws and Commands.*

*Grace me, Lord, with the presence of the Holy Spirit, that as I attend to Your Word, the Spirit will instruct me and teach me... This I pray through Jesus, my Lord. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, August 20: 2Kings 19- Honoring the Lord...**

Where Israel (northern kingdom) met its demise at the hands of Assyria, Judah prevails. Judah prevails, not because of superior strength or cunning, it prevails because of God's providential care and the humility and faith of its leader Hezekiah. King Hezekiah knew that the Lord was Judah's only hope, so he fell before the Lord in devotion and desperation.

*When King Hezekiah heard this [Assyria's challenge], he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. They told him, "This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives" (1-4).*

I was impressed with his humility, the sackcloth on the officials. But even more so, Hezekiah's plea to Isaiah shows his depth of love for the Lord and his understanding of the Lord. *[M]ay be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field commander ... sent to ridicule the living God, and that he [God] will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard.*

Hezekiah gets that the Lord protects His honor! We see this also with the case of Elijah on Mt Carmel and Herod's death in Acts 12.

I meditated on the Lord's Honor and began to ask myself... Am I careful to honor the Lord with my life and with my words?

*Lord, I kneel before You. You are holy and perfect. Your attributes are greater than I can ever imagine. The glimpses of heaven in Your Word show those before You, falling before You, in reverence and awe. May I do the same as I live all my days here on earth until You call me home to join the heavenly chorus. Through Jesus, my Savior, I pray. Amen.*

### **Thursday, August 21: 2Kings 20- As well as possible...**

Hezekiah was a faithful king, but as I read this chapter I thought, Hezekiah didn't end well. It almost seems harsh to think this. It is not as if he slid into some great sin. In fact, I'm not sure any action of his in this chapter could be classified as sin.

Maybe I need to temper my comment and say it this way. Hezekiah's legacy didn't end as well as it could have.

During those additional 15 years, he fathered a son named Manasseh who became Judah's next king. Manasseh was a vile faithless king! Also, that whole deal with the Babylonian entourage is a strange account. It seems that Hezekiah was bragging and showing off by showing the foreigners his treasury! Maybe it was kingly custom, but it certainly comes across as showy and a bit boastful.

And his response to Isaiah, when Isaiah pronounces the future judgment on Judah, seems really odd and not particularly faith-filled. *"The word of the LORD you have spoken is good," For he thought, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?" (19).*

As I processed all this, I found myself contemplating endings. I not only want to end well, but how I might end as well as possible.

*Oh, God, how should I live today so that whenever You determine my end should come, I cross over into eternity with grace and trust? Lord, what do I need to be doing today so that my faith will be strong so that I can live my last days as the most faithful days of my life? Teach me, Lord. Show me, Lord. Lead me, Lord. I pray in Jesus' name, through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Friday, August 22: 2Kings 21- Leadership matters...**

My heart cringes when I come to the account of Manasseh. He is vile and evil, the low point of Judah's history. Verse 9 sums him up: *Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.*

Reading scripture devotionally, especially in the Old Testament, I routinely ask myself, "would I like to emulate the person mentioned in the text or would I like to be remembered like the person in the text." With Manasseh I have an immediate and definite NO!

It is bad enough that he committed the sins mentioned in this chapter, but heaping insult on top of injury, Manasseh led the people to practice these detestable practices too!

Manasseh fails as a follower of and leader for the Lord.

Manasseh does remind me of the influence that a leader has for good or for evil.

The people had 29 years of faithful leadership by Hezekiah. I would have thought that Hezekiah godliness might have placed the people on solid footing with the Lord, but Manasseh comes along and undermines all of the godliness Hezekiah put in place.

I am reminded of Jesus' Words, that the people were like sheep without a shepherd. Sheep without a shepherd will follow any shepherd that shows or asserts leadership, whether the leadership is good or bad!

Leadership matters. It mattered back in OT days. It mattered back in NT days. It matters today.

If you are a leader... your leadership matters. You can lead people well or poorly. And you can lead people toward things that are good and things that are bad. Manasseh it seems was a good leader, in that he could rally people to a cause. But the direction of his leadership was ungodly and poor!

Spiritual leaders can lead people toward faithfulness or unfaithfulness.

And so the Lord challenges me to lead **well** and also to lead people **toward ever deepening faithfulness**.

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