

**The Weekly Word**  
August 25-31, 2014

These are sad days for Israel. The story might be sad, but God is always faithful. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, August 25: 2Kings 23- Absolute faithfulness until his dying day...**

Josiah was an amazing king. His absolute and utter faithfulness to the Lord is astounding. He rid Judah, and even Samaria and Bethel, of all foreign gods. He even destroyed the high places, something no other king had done. In fact, he reached back and rid Israel of idols and false gods that date back to Solomon. Not since the days of David, was there this complete faithfulness to the Lord.

There is not a single indication of faithlessness in Josiah. A babe when he became king, he remained faithful until his dying day.

*Lord, Josiah represents my prayer... faithfulness until my dying day. Oh, God, may it be so. May it be so! Amen.*

Mulling over this chapter, I had some follow up thoughts... reading the list of things Josiah cleaned up; idols in the temple and shrine prostitutes at the temple; pagan priest functioning from the temple and then everything else in and around Jerusalem. It is amazing what Josiah had to do to rid Judah and Israel of all the false gods.

Josiah's reforms illustrate for me how far we can drift from God if we do not have God's Word to keep us on track. I'm sure many people thought all these idols were okay. Maybe some even thought they were honoring of the Lord. How could this be? When the Word is absent to teach and correct us, we can concoct all kinds of things we humans think are okay. Plus, we can incorporate rituals and elements of other religions, thinking that, too, is okay. Without The Word, we can drift so far from the Lord that what we humans create doesn't look at all like what the Lord would have us be and do.

This is a frightening thought for me, as I watch people and churches and denominations drift further and further from the plain and historic teachings of the Word of God.

**Tuesday, August 26: 2Kings 24- Sad, sad words...**

*It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence (20).*

Sad, sad words... God thrust them from His presence.

God's presence was what separated Israel from all other nations. God's presence in the Temple is what made it special. In His anger and wrath God **thrust them from his presence**.

I remember Moses saying to God, "*If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here...*" (Exodus 33:15). Moses understood that it was God's presence that set apart His people from all other peoples. Now today we read that after years of warning and sending prophets to no avail, God does the unthinkable, God removes His people from His presence.

What a disaster. What a punishment...

I am wondering if I (we) understand the gift and wonder of God's presence with us?

I find myself sitting and thanking God, the Holy Spirit, for being with us and in us and never letting us go...

*Oh, Spirit, I thank You for being the distinguishing mark in me. Your presence sets me apart. Your presence marks me as God's own. Your presence gives me life. Your presence makes all the difference. Without You I would be lost. Your presence guarantees my inheritance. Your presence will see me home.*

*I praise and bless You, God, most high. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, August 27: 2Kings 25- The end!...**

*So Judah went into captivity, away from her land (21b).*

And so the Lord rendered His judgment on Judah. Into captivity they went. Temple destroyed, populace dragged away.

God's judgment is not pretty.

We play with fire when we disregard the Lord's Commands. We play with fire when we chase after gods other than the Lord. And if we don't repent when God gives us opportunity, we are pouring gasoline on the fire of our disobedience...

Judah was paying for her disobedience and resistance to the prophet's calls to return.

My heart is sobered as I consider the judgment of God. God's final judgment will come some day just like Judah's judgment came in the reading today.

Are you ready to stand before God and answer for how you have lived your life? Are you ready to have your life examined, word for word, deed for deed, each plumbed to God's Word and Commands? Are you ready for that day?

Judah was not ready. Many people probably thought, "God will never punish us." They were wrong. Are you willing to be wrong, too?

I am not... I have turned to Jesus to be saved on the day of God's judgment. Have you turned to Jesus? Do you confessed Jesus to be Lord? Think about it...

*I surrender all. I surrender all. All to Jesus I surrender. All to Jesus I freely give...*

*Amen.*

### **Thursday, August 28: Ezra 1- God is at work...**

I just love this first verse. *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, **the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:***

Aren't the words bolded wonderful? Our God, the God of heaven and earth, the God of the Bible, moved the heart of a non-believing king. A smile of contentment grows on my face as I think about that statement!

Our God moves believers and unbelievers alike to fulfill His Will.

I sit in awe, blessed, to be numbered among God's family...

I hope and pray that you are part of God's family, too. The doorway to God's family is faith in Jesus Christ.

*Oh, Lord God, Father, Jesus, Spirit, I sit today basking in the wonder of knowing and being known by You. Thank You for saving me. And thank You for saving everyone who calls out to Jesus by faith. I love You. I praise You. I am Yours... Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

### **Friday, August 29: Ezra 2- God who knows me & you...**

This chapter will never make it into the list of most interesting or exciting chapters in the Bible. And yet as I read (probably more honestly scanned) all those names, it seems that the Lord spoke directly into my heart. "People are important." And what I heard in my spirit was not generic "people," as if a lump of humanity was what the Lord was talking about. No, God was speaking to me that people, individual human beings, are important to Him. He knows our names, our birthdates and family lineage. God knows us by name.

As I write this, I am sitting in an airport surrounded by more people than I could count. Each and every one of the people milling around me are individual persons to the Lord. The man with the neck collar... God knows his name. The loud talkers behind me... God knows their names. The nationals and internationals, God knows each of their names.

The God I worship is a God who knows me. And for this I am drawn deeper into worship of my Lord God... The God who knows my name and your name and all of our names...

*Jesus, Father, Spirit... I sit today delighted that I am Yours. You saved me and for this I will be eternally grateful! But even more today after reading this chapter and hearing Your voice, I am amazed, honored and blessed that You know me. You know my name, my family of origin and my own family. And this tells me how much You LOVE me. I am awed that the God of infinite wisdom and majesty knows and loves me. Blown away... that's what I am feeling today. Blown away by You, Lord, God, Almighty. Through Jesus, I pray... Amen.*

### **Saturday, August 30: Ezra 3- Priorities...**

Those who returned to Jerusalem got to work. Your city is in a shambles, walls, roads, building destroyed. Among the rubble lay the temple and its altar. Where does one begin rebuilding when everything is in disarray?

After settling into home, they set out to repair their way of life straight away. They started at the heart; they started with the altar!

The priests recognized that the heart of Israelite life was the altar, the place of sacrifice, honor and worship to the Lord. All efforts were focused on the altar and re-establishing the sacrifices God ordained before they did anything else...

This got me thinking. Do I recognize that worship of the Father, Son and Spirit is the heart of my life? And if I want to retain personal order or I want to reestablish routine after a long trip or intense season of work, I need to start with my heart. I need to start at my core. I need to start by re-ordering my personal rhythm of worship, prayer, scripture and devotion.

Everything in life is supported by the heart. When my heart is connected to the Lord other priorities fall into place.

I faced the challenge of this life lesson recently after returning from a 4-week mission trip. There was so much to do. Laundry, mail, bills, yard work, unpacking, communication with family, mission trip update for church, family and friends, diving back into work. My to-do list seemed endless. On my first morning back I woke early, my mind racing with to do's.

Would I dive into stuff or sit with Jesus?

A little bit here and a little bit there to reestablish life back home, but the first important chunk of time was spent in devotion, Bible reading and prayer.

Ezra 3 was my morning reading. Thank You, Lord, for the reminder connection with You is the core of my life.

*Praise be to You, Lord God. Praise be to You, Father, Jesus, Spirit. My Lord and my God. I adore You and I worship You. Halleluiah. Amen.*

**Sunday, August 31, 2014, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click [here](#) for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.