

The Weekly Word
September 19-25, 2011

Isaiah's message continues. Thanks for traveling with me as we read the Bible together.
Happy Reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 19: Isaiah 22- A failed game plan...

Finally judgment comes to Jerusalem. And what is their sin? They trusted only in themselves and not in the Lord. After listing some of Jerusalem's preparations in advance of the Assyrian attack, which in and of themselves is not the problem, we come to the crux of their sin in verse 11. *You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago.*

Our ingenuity is never to become a substitute for God... that's the issue for Jerusalem. They are repeating the sin of Babel (the Tower of Babel, that is. Check out Genesis 11). Those people thought they could build a tower to God. We cannot. We will never and can never become God. And when we substitute anything for God, that "thing" becomes a rival god and that's when God disciplines His people. Jerusalem thought they could protect themselves, by themselves, without God. And that's where they missed the mark.

Now it is good to be ingenious and industrious but we need to remember and live, understanding that God provides the harvest (recall September 13 devotional).

Are you experiencing tough times in your life? Those situations that can be exhausting? Yes, there are things I should/can/need to do. But key for me is remembering that God is the One who will provide the way out. I don't want to fall into Jerusalem's trap and find myself relying totally upon myself. That is a game plan sure to fail.

Think about it...

Lord God, I am so thankful that my life and my issues are in Your hands. Help me to do what I can/should/need to do, and to do them at Your leading and through Your power. To You be all the glory. Amen.

Tuesday, September 20: Isaiah 23- Learning Lessons...

Reading this judgment of Tyre, I was saddened because they apparently will not learn.

Verse 17: *At the end of seventy years [years of God's punishment], the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.*

It is one thing to be disciplined by the Lord. It happens to all of us. But it is a sad thing when we don't learn and grow and change. Tyre did not grow...

Reading this caused me to review my own life. I never liked being punished growing up. Truth is I still don't, but I do try to learn from my mistakes and grow to be a better person. I don't always succeed on the first try, but generally I do try to learn and grow from my mistakes and failures.

I try to live the same pattern in my walk with Jesus. I try to learn from God's discipline. I don't always get it the first time but eventually God's discipline sinks in.

How about you? Do you learn and grow from God's disciplines or are you like Tyre? Ponder this before you conclude your time with the Lord this morning.

Lord, even though I don't like it, I do thank You for Your discipline. I want to be a man that brings You honor and glory, and that will only happen if You discipline the chaff out of my life. I am Yours O, Lord. I am Yours. Amen.

Wednesday, September 21: Isaiah 24- Sovereign over all that is...

Not only is God- the God of the Scriptures -sovereign over all nations, God is sovereign over everything, all spiritual realms, over heaven and earth, all that is! Check out verse 21: *In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.*

Reading this, I wonder what in the world possesses me to disobey, to ignore and to disregard Almighty God. I mean really? I might disobey the speed limit thinking I can get a way with it, police can't be everywhere.

I might ignore my body's need for 8 hours of healthy sleep, yeah, I'm generally a bit tired.

I might disregard some people and the things they say, generally not a big deal.

But God Almighty, the one who plots the course of history, who judges men and women and nations and HEAVEN? Am I nuts?

Would I disobey the speed limit if every offender is caught? Would I ignore the body's need for sleep if it shut down without sufficient 'recharge'? Would I disregard that someone if he/she were my boss and would fire me for it?

Thinking about the absolute sovereignty of God and my propensity to go against Him shows me the depth and pervasiveness of sin in my life...

O, God, forgive me. I am a man of unclean lips, unclean thoughts, unclean actions and motivations. Cleanse me that I might not be banished from Your presence but be able to live in harmony and relationship with You. I dare to ask this through Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord. Amen.

Thursday, September 22: Isaiah 25- Perfect faithfulness

As my eyes lit on the page, refreshment flooded into my life. I was weary from judgment, from the doom and gloom of God's wrath. Seeing, and then reading, this chapter was like the delight of a cool autumn morning. Praise is good for the soul and for the rest of the body...

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago. You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin, the foreigners' stronghold a city no more; it will never be rebuilt (1-2).

My eyes kept returning to two words, *perfect faithfulness. I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things.* Perfect faithfulness planned long ago...

Isaiah's trembling before God of chapter 6 has vanished being replaced with praise. God's forgiveness and cleansing of Isaiah in chapter 6 resulted in a connection and relationship that allows Isaiah to exalt God for His perfect faithfulness witnessed in the judgment of those who oppose the Lord.

Because God knows all, He is never surprised or caught off guard so His decisions are perfect... perfectly executing His faithfulness and His love. Because God 'sees' all time at once, His perfect faithfulness was planned long, long ago.

Isaiah sings of this. His soul dances with delight in the Lord his God. Isaiah's dance is contagious. Like a great tune, I find my body and my soul dancing with delight in the Lord as well... dancing in delight in the Lord who is perfect in faithfulness...

My soul sings of Your majesty, O Lord. How unsearchable are Your ways... perfect in every way are You and Your decisions. I exalt thee. I exalt thee. I exalt thee, my Lord... my heart delights in You. You, O Lord, are my rock and my fortress, the one in whom I take refuge and find peace...

To You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I sing my praise. You are perfect in faithfulness and in every other way... My soul sings of Your majesty, O Lord. Amen

Friday, September 23: Isaiah 26-Perfect peace...

I found myself drawn back to verse 3. I read it over and over, then I looked at it in different translations. I wanted it to sink in. There was something about that verse that beckoned me.

NIV: *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

NRSV: *Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace-- in peace because they trust in you.*

NASB: *The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.*

ESV: *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

Wow, I let this soak in. I read it over again in those 4 translations.

Perfect peace is the result, the result of trusting in You. All too often people seek peace but peace is the fruit of a life that trusts in You. Peace is the gift You give to those who trust in You.

My work, my effort as a person, is to keep my mind steadfast... steadfast on You, that is. I need to be training my mind to think on You, to ponder You and Your ways. In need to intentionally bring You with me into life. The by-gone phrase, "What would Jesus do?," is one possible tool to keep myself stayed on You. But there are others. I pondered and these additional phrases/questions emerged:

What did God say on this matter?

What scriptures speak to this concern/issue/situation?

How did post-Pentecost apostles act in situations like this?

All of these phrases/questions necessitate that I know God's Word and know it well. Hmmm, keeping my mind steadfast/stayed on You obviously necessitates that I know Your Word and treasure it in my heart and mind...

"Do you, Bill, do you?" whispers the Holy Spirit.

The words of Psalm 19:7-11 fill my thoughts and become my prayer...

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Amen.

Saturday, September 24: Isaiah 27- Saved to worship...

The last few chapters have been describing the day when the Lord settles accounts, defeats enemies, and restores Israel, His people. The awesome and mighty day of the Lord. The last verse of the chapter provides an intriguing concluding snapshot of 'that day.' *And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem (13).*

The great triumph of that day is that God's people will gather from all across the earth and *worship the LORD!* Worship is our crowning glory and our highest accomplishment/task/duty.

I thought about that picture, 'that day', when the salvation of the Lord is ultimately accomplished and worship will be our delight. 'That day' is the day when no inhibitions or concerns will dampen the worship of the Lord. 'That day' is God's day when the inhabitants of His earth will sing His praise as it was meant to be from the beginning.

Tomorrow we will gather as a community of faith on the Lord's Day to worship God. I caught a glimpse of our worship tomorrow as a rehearsal for the grand and glorious day in the future. Thinking of Sunday worship here on earth as rehearsal for 'that great and awesome day' gives weekly worship an interesting feel...

Think about it as you prepare today for your worship tomorrow.

All glory laud and honor to the redeemer king...

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty the King of creation...

Praise the name of Jesus. Praise the name of Jesus. He's my rock, He's my fortress He's my deliverer in Him will I trust...

O O Praise Him, O O praise Him. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Sunday, September 25, 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.