

The Weekly Word
February 12-18, 2018

Happy Valentines week. I pray the love of God fills you with God's love as you read
God's word. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, February 12: 2Chronicles 8- Small deviations can become large problems...

Recently I have been reading the story of the US Apollo Moon Project. It was an incredible story of human ingenuity, grit, determination and some fortuitous 'luck.' To reach the moon astronauts would have to perform routine mid-course corrections, small rocket firings at precise times to keep the spacecraft on the correct trajectory. Given the vast distance between the earth and the moon even a small degree off course meant that the spacecraft would miss its orbit by 10s of thousands of miles. Small deviations can become large problems.

Reading this chapter I noticed seemingly incidental small deviations from God's stated will. Although they didn't seem like much, I know that in the history of Israel they created significant problems.

In verse 11, Solomon brings his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, to the palace he built for her saying, "*My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the LORD has entered are holy.*" As I read this I wondered, "What about God's injunction not to marry foreign women??? Didn't this count for a king?" Of course it did. And yet, matter of fact, the text announced what Solomon did.

No correction, no recognition that this was not God's will and over time this small sin grew into a large problem for Solomon who was led astray by his many pagan wives.

Then in verses 7-8 we read how Solomon continued to force the foreign people who were never conquered in the land. *There were still people left from the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these people were not Israelites). Solomon conscripted the descendants of all these people remaining in the land—whom the Israelites had not destroyed—to serve as slave labor, as it is to this day (7-8).* What Solomon did with them seemed wise but I wondered why didn't God command Israel to take the land way back in Joshua. Israel never completed that task... and these peoples were constantly a snare for Israel.

Another small deviation from God's announced will that became a major problem.

Finally, I needed to turn to myself... "Am I allowing small deviations from God's announced will to linger in my life?" If so, they can become snares for me creating larger problems in my life. The answer is mid-course corrections, which in my spiritual life means self-examination, repentance and confession. Never fun. Always spiritually worthwhile...

Think about it.

Open my eyes, Lord, and help me to see myself for who I am... to face my failings and to confess them to You. Help me to live, understanding that spiritual mid-course corrections are what will get me home safely. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Tuesday, February 13: 2Chronicles 9- ...

As I was reading this chapter Solomon's wealth, one might even call it opulence, struck me. The Queen of Sheba was impressed with his wisdom, the lavishness of his palace, and presentation of his food that won her over (3-4). It struck me that there was minimal mention of the temple. For all the beauty of the temple it was Solomon's lifestyle that grabbed her.

I wondered about the lavish displays and the amount of gold pouring in. I wondered if the people lived in poverty or if he cared for them. Power and fame and money have a corruption influence on most humans and his story in Kings suggested that he did in fact succumb to these temptations.

As I was noodling on all this and continuing my read I came to verses 30&31: *Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David his father...*

It hit me, *he rested with his ancestors*. We all face death... the wealthy, the poor, the wise and foolish. Yes, we all face death and in death our wealth & wisdom count for nothing. Only faithfulness to the Lord matters.

We can't buy our way into eternity. We can't argue or talk our way into eternity. The only entrance door to eternity is faith in Jesus. And Jesus requires that we surrender all to Him. So we may be wealthy, but how does He want us to use our wealth? We may be wise, but how does he want us to use our wisdom? These are the kinds of thoughts that should drive us. How can we best serve the Lord who loves us...

And that is a thought worth chewing on today...

Lord, I am Yours, bought with the price of Jesus' sacrifice. How might I best serve You today, and all of my today's? I pray in His name. Amen.

Wednesday, February 14: 2Chronicles 10- ...

I have read about Rehoboam's ascension to the throne of Israel many times and it seems each time I focus and ponder his choice of counselors. But this morning was different. I found myself contemplating a comment about his father, Solomon's governance.

In verse 4 we read Jeroboam's complaint about Solomon: *"Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."* Having just read the chapters on Solomon there was no indication that he put a heavy yoke on this people. Certainly Solomon was a builder, but it seemed like he put the heavy burden of building on the shoulders of the foreigners (see chapter 8). However, this comment said that there was a huge burden put upon everyone. I don't know how Solomon treated his people, but it was clear that the glories of this kingdom came at a price. David was beloved, Solomon was not.

As the account unfolds, the people actually revolt when they do not get word that Jeroboam would ease their burden. Maybe it was taxes. Maybe he required manual service by the men. We don't know but, whatever it was, people were willing to revolt over it!

I found myself wondering about the price the people paid for Solomon's glory. It is sad that many people build their glory on the backs of average people. Solomon apparently did.

Jesus was not fan of this, saying that His disciples weren't to lord it over others but rather serve them (Mark 10:xx)

Am I a server or a user of other people?

Are you? Think about it...

O, God, give me a servant's heart, I pray. In Jesus' name Amen.

Thursday, February 15: 2Chronicles 11- The hand of God...

The opening of this chapter gives me pause...

*When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered Judah and Benjamin—a hundred and eighty thousand able young men—to go to war against Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam. But this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: “Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, ‘This is what the LORD says: Do not go up to fight against your fellow Israelites. Go home, every one of you, **for this is my doing.**’ ” So they obeyed the words of the LORD and turned back from marching against Jeroboam (1-4, bold underling mine).*

So God is behind the splitting up of the kingdom?

When I read things like this I find myself holding tightly to Isaiah’s words about God’s ways and thoughts being higher than mine (Isaiah 55:8) because I don’t really understand. I don’t understand how breaking up His people pushes His will and agenda forward. But God is God and this is one of many instances where surrender and trust come in. I surrender and trust His Word and His will and way.

I know some people who believe that certain countries have the blessing of God upon them and that it is God’s will that they succeed. This might be so, however, when I read passages like the one above I also realize that our human way of seeing and understanding things does not necessarily align with God’s. For a few centuries God used Rome for the birth and great expansion of His New Covenant agenda. But then God brought Rome to an end and His will was still advanced. I don’t see God being tied to any one country or any one people. He lifts up and pulls down as He sees fit to best serve the advance of His kingdom and agenda.

These thoughts remind me that while I love my country, even with its faults and problems, God is not bound to keep us prospering. For my part, and our part, I (we) need to remain faithful to Him and by His grace He will watch over us. Should God choose to reduce us as He did Israel or Rome, I still need to remain faithful. Remaining faithful is my calling as a Christ Follower in good times and in bad.

There are so many things about the Lord and His will and way I do not comprehend, but I cannot let this negatively affect my faithfulness to Him, who saved me by His grace.

Lord, I bow to You. You are Lord God, Almighty; I am not. I am a mere servant, part of Your creation. I will trust in You... Alleluia. Amen.

Friday, February 16: 2Chronicles 12 Masking things...

Right out of the gate we learn of Rehoboam’s faithlessness. *After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD (1).* And the Lord judged him, punishing him by the attack of Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt. As part of God’s judgment Rehoboam became subject to Shishak who carried off all the gold finery from the temple and palace (see 2-8).

I understand that Rehoboam humbled himself before the Lord, so that was good. God’s judgment served its purpose of bringing Israel back to Himself.

There is a curious aspect of the account the got the wheels of my mind and heart turning. *When Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem, he carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. Whenever the king*

went to the LORD's temple, the guards went with him, bearing the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom (9-11).

By making the bronze shields, Rehoboam is masking the pain and punishment of the Lord. He created the illusion that nothing happened, that all is well, that the treasuries of the Lord remain full.

I wonder if Rehoboam's actions don't reveal a human sinful trait. We attempt to minimize God's correction and we try to carry on as if all is okay when it is not.

In the church we can carry on rituals that originated with deep spiritual meaning but now ring hollow. And I can do that personally as well.

The God Father was an acclaimed movie in the 1970s (??). There is a famous scene where the young son, Don Corleone, is taking over the father's business. Two events are happening simultaneously and the movie cuts back and forth between the two. Don's son is being baptized in the church, all the family is gathered around where pledges of fidelity are made to the Lord and Don's henchmen are murdering in cold blood all Don's enemies.

The symbolism is penetrating...

Rehoboam kept the pomp and ceremony of faithfulness, but was he???

I can do that too. Do I? Do I keep the rituals without the spiritual significance embedded in them?

Do you? Think about it.

Lord, unmask my carnal-ness. Help me see myself for who I am so that I can truly repent and walk with You. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, February 17: 2Chronicles 13...

Faithfulness was not completely gone from Israel. In the providence of God, Abijah son of Rehoboam, was a person of deep faith. When a war erupted between him and his father's nemesis, Jeroboam, Abijah proclaimed his allegiance to the Lord and God gave him victory.

Preserving this history was a testimony to all Israel that the Lord reigns and saves His people when they rely on Him.

I found myself wondering, where did Abijah's faith come from? His father was no paragon of faith or wisdom for that matter. His grandfather Solomon was a mixed bag. Since in all likelihood he never met his grandfather, all he knew about him was from stories, which likely highlighted his faithfulness. So this may be a source of his faith. Did it come from his mother? Can't say one way or the other.

Somehow God preserved a flame of faith and caused it to burn in Abijah.

Passing on the faith to the ensuing generations is part faithfulness and part mystery. God works in mysterious ways. My role, however, is clear... live faithfully, speak, teach and model faith and trust in God to take the seed and make it grow.

Lord, I ask You to take my life and use it to spread Your name and fame to people around the world, including my progeny and younger generations. Amen and amen.

Sunday, February 18, 2018, 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.