

The Weekly Word
February 26-March 4, 2018

Two months have flown by and God has taken me on some interesting journeys during my time in His Word. Be blessed and Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, February 26: 2Chronicles 20- Rooted faith trusts God ...

The way in which Jehoshaphat handled his next crisis, the invasion by multiple armies, tells me that his return to the Lord in Chapter 19 was real, that faith had rooted firmly in his heart. I am encouraged by the faith he displayed as he stood before the people and rallied them to the Lord.

Rooted faith trusts God.

Rooted faith is visible to others.

Rooted faith encourages others.

The last verses, however, produce a chink in my enthusiasm. In his last years Jehoshaphat falls back into a sin of his youth. *Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, whose ways were wicked. He agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. After these were built at Ezion Geber, Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade (35-37).*

I am reminded to NEVER become complacent in my faith. None of us will be perfectly faithful this side of eternity. And I am encouraged that Jehoshaphat is described a king who *followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD (32)*. But I am duly warned that sin can rise to bite us at any time, so my only defense is vigilance—a continual seeking after the Lord, studded with honest confession and repentance.

Spurred by this thought I pray...

Oh, Lord, look deep within me and see where there is lingering sin. Root it out, Oh, Lord. Show me my weak areas so that I may admit them and lay them before You honestly.

Forgive my sin; cleanse me from the inside out so that my life might be a beacon of Your love to others. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, February 27: 2Chronicles 21- He passed away, to no one's regret ...

Verse 20 concludes that may be the worst thing that could be said about anyone... *He passed away, to no one's regret.*

That statement seems even worse given the fact that Jehoram reigned as king for 8 years. Nothing he did added any value to his country or his people. Yikes.

On a number of occasions I have read a line about someone and thought, that would make a great epitaph on a tombstone. The comment about Jehoram is the exact opposite. I shudder at the thought that anyone would have this said about them... *he/she passed away, to no one's regret.*

Those words cause me to pause and ask, “How is my life benefiting others?” This is not an ego question but rather a question of life’s substance.

Have you ever asked yourself, “How is my life benefitting others?” It’s worth the ask...

Lord, I submit to You and I pray that my life lived in Your power is a blessing to others. I pray this in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Wednesday, February 28: 2Chronicles 22- When life is darkest God is still at work...

These are bleak days for Israel. Faithlessness is rampant. Treachery and murder dominate life. Sad, so very sad.

The depravity of the day struck me in the opening sentence. *The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram’s youngest son, king in his place, since the raiders, who came with the Arabs into the camp, had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign* (1).

The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah... king. Where is the guidance from the Lord? As we read on, this is obviously the expedient decision, but it is also clear that there was no turning to the Lord for guidance.

How often do I make the expedient or obvious decision without even an inkling of seeking the Lord’s advice? Is that any different than the people of Judah in this case?

For Israel things move from bad to worse as Ahaziah solidifies his connection with the house of Ahab. Faithless leaders make faithless decisions.,

Even in the midst of the treachery and mayhem, following Ahaziah’s death, the Lord is at work upholding His covenant with Israel and bringing life out of death. The chapter ends with a hint of hope as Joash is hidden and protected in the Temple.

That is so like the Lord. Even when life is darkest, He is at work preserving His people and remembering His promises.

There is much darkness in our world, but that does not mean the work of the Lord is extinguished. God’s light is still burning and those of us with His light within need to step up and live heroically as Jehosheba, and her husband the priest Jehoiada, did (see verse 11).

At this point I pause to pray...

Lord, is there some action You want me to take to correct a wrong or confront an injustice or save someone in need or preserve Your truth? Show me, Lord, lead me, Lord... and if not today, I surrender myself to You to deploy me for Your good at any time. I am Yours, assign me as You will. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, March 1: 2Chronicles 23- How do we know the time is ‘right?’...

The chapter opens, *In the seventh year Jehoiada showed his strength. He made a covenant with the commanders of units of a hundred... They went throughout Judah and gathered the Levites and the heads of Israelite families from all the towns. When they came to Jerusalem, the whole assembly made a covenant with the king at the temple of God. Jehoiada said to them, “The king’s son shall reign, as the LORD promised concerning the descendants of David* (1-3).

I found myself wondering, how did Jehoiada know the time was right to make Joash king? This is more of a springboard question than one the text itself answers. And yet I pondered.

So much in life is about timing. Plant a seed in the spring and it will grow, plant the same seed in the winter and it will likely die.

Yes, so much in life is about timing and this is true in our walk with the Lord as well. To understand God's timing, is to know when God is leading us to do something rather than simply venturing out on our own.

Scripture sometimes uses the phrase, 'when the time was fulfilled'.

How can we know when the time is fulfilled? I wish there was a straightforward 4 step process. If there is I haven't found it.

What I do know is that it comes with a prompting of the Lord. Maybe Jehoiada was in prayer. Maybe as priest he sensed the queen was losing power. Maybe God gave him a dream. Maybe Joash's maturity was showing. We don't know. However, God alerted Jehoiada that the time was fulfilled. He knew it and He *showed his strength*. He put a plan into action to put Joash, the rightful king, on the throne.

What I am realizing, as I ponder and write, is that I need to cultivate my relationship with the Lord so that I know when the time is right and God is calling me to do this, that or another thing. I must develop my ability to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit within.

God has given to each Christ-follower the gift of the Holy Spirit to lead, guide and empower. Learning to follow, that is part of my growth and maturing in the Lord.

Oh, Lord, school me in understanding the leading of Your voice. Train me in rightly discerning the time, Your time, to step out in Your strength and execute Your actions. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, March 2: 2Chronicles 24- A bad about face...

There is an ominous comment at the start of the chapter. *Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoiada the priest (2)*. Certainly this statement proved true by the end of the chapter. After Jehoiada's death Joash goes off the rails leaving the Lord and seeking after other gods (see 17-27).

I know this happens. I think of Jim Jones, who started out as an orthodox preacher but drifted so far from the Lord and the Bible that he orchestrated a mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978. Many others in less dramatic fashion slide away from the Lord into heresy.

As I thought about the influence Jehoiada had upon Joash two trails emerged. One was the positive effect Jehoiada had on Joash and I wondered who has positive effects like that on me? Then I wondered if there is anyone I affect positively. Secondly, I wondered why Jehoiada's influence never took root in Joash. And if he didn't truly believe what Jehoiada was saying, why did he follow? After all Joash was king.

Honestly, I am struggling with Joash's complete about face.

I guess if people can convert to God, they can 'convert' away from God, too. But how does that happen? And more importantly, what can I do to keep that from happening in me, and people I love and people I pastor???

The text doesn't have any answers, only raises questions, which drive me to my knees.

Oh, God, protect me. Protect those I love and those I pastor. Show me how I might live so that I can be a Jehoiada to others. But, Lord, show me also how to help people bring love and devotion of You deeply into their hearts.

Lord, not for people to simply follow me, but that they and I would be truly transformed by You in our inner most being. I pray this, Lord, in Jesus my Savior's name. Amen.

Saturday, March 3: 2Chronicles 25...

Another tragic chapter in the life of God's people. Another king sitting on the throne of David walks away from the Lord to serve other gods!

It is as if God is giving readers of Chronicles a long lesson in all the things in life that can draw and push us away from faithfulness.

Amaziah certainly is a strange case. He begins to worship and serve the gods of a people he just defeated in battle. I mean, go figure? Human beings are a strange lot. The Lord even sends a prophet to confront him with this reality. *The anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and he sent a prophet to him, who said, "Why do you consult this people's gods, which could not save their own people from your hand?"* (15). Amaziah, enamored with his new 'god', threatens to kill the prophet if he keeps speaking. Wow, Amaziah has certainly converted away from the Lord!

I can at least understand the impulse to follow the god of a victorious army, but to follow the god of an annihilated army. This one baffles me.

The human heart beats in strange rhythms.

Again today, my take-a-way is to sit and examine my heart. Are there things, issues, responses, inclinations that are drawing me away from the Lord... even ones that 'defy' logic?

What woos my heart, for their lies spiritual danger? Only regular confession and self examination, plumbing myself against the pure and perfect Word of God, can put up an adequate defense against the wiles of the enemy.

This message, Lord, comes through loud and clear.

Father, search me. Search me to the depth of my being. Root out sin in all its forms. Call me to purity and holiness and pour out Your Spirit that I might have His empowerment to defeat the sin within me and live solely for You. I Pray this Jesus' in Your name. Amen

Sunday, March 4, 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.