

**The Weekly Word**  
September 10-16, 2018

Happy September. May the Lord be with you as you read and study His Word. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, September 10: Acts 28- Pausing to pray ...**

Often when I read my daily chapter, there is a verse or thought that I read in a different way than times I have read it before. This morning my verse was verse 8. *His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him* (8). Paul's actions caught my attention.

Luke reports, *after prayer, [Paul] placed his hands on him and healed him*. Before today I have always figured that Paul began to pray for the man, laid his hand on him and the man was healed. However a slower intentional read of the sequence suggests that Paul prayed and in response to the prayer laid his hands on the man and he was healed.

My sense is that Paul prayed to the Lord, possibly for guidance on what to do, and God's answer was to lay hands and be God's instrument of healing.

Maybe I am straining our gnats, but my understanding of the event is that Paul's prayer was a check in with the Lord about what he should do. Prayer for healing is only one of a number of potentially faith-filled responses Paul could have had to the sick man in bed.

Needs are present around us all the time. I love the thought of Paul pausing to pray to ask God how He would have Paul respond. This is a powerful guiding image for me...

*Lord, help me to pause, to intentionally slow down and seek your guidance as needs are presented to me. To check in with You so that I am led to do what You would have me do and not simply act out of my own fleshly desires or thoughts. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 11: Isaiah 1- God holds out an olive branch...**

As I sit today beginning my two-month sojourn through Isaiah, I wonder where God will take me and what the Lord will show me through this most significant Old Testament prophet.

Israel has been judged for her evil behavior. God has closed His ears to their prayers. Still God will not forsake them forever. He offers an olive branch. He invites them back into His good graces.

*Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.*

*"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword."*

*For the mouth of the LORD has spoken* (16-20).

Stop living sinfully, turn to me and I will wash you clean. I will forgive your sins. I will bless your land. This is God's offer.

After all Israel has done, after the ways she has prostituted herself with foreign gods, God continues to extend His hand to welcome Israel home... if they will turn from their sin and come to Him.

In this offer to Israel, I hear God's offer to everyone. "Turn from your evil ways and seek Me", says the Lord. "I will forgive your sins. I will redeem your life. I will welcome you home."

*Lord God, thank You for Your offer of forgiveness, peace, and love. Thank You for grace, for a second and third chance. Place in me a new heart. A heart that longs to do right, to seek justice and to defend the oppressed. A heart that will take up the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow. A heart that longs for You... that longs to be Your hands and feet in this world. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, September 12: Isaiah 2- Why do we esteem humans over the Lord? ...**

Honestly, I found this chapter a bit confusing. And I found myself thinking as I read, "Lord, help me. Give me understanding. Give me a morsel of your word to chew and meditate on." After reading much of the chapter more than once, my heart settled onto the closing verse of the chapter.

*Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem? (22)*

The verses preceding speak of the day of the Lord, when *The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear* (17-18). That will be a dreadful day. Human folly and arrogance will be laid bare and exposed as God is shown for whom He is, majestic and wonderful in His nature.

Isaiah ends the chapter with the words that grabbed hold of me. *Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem? (22)*

Why do we esteem humans over the Lord? I pondered this question.

Is it because I can relate to humans and God is so far removed from me? Is it that sin with its strong grip pulls my heart to worldly things instead of aspiring to the lofty ideals of the Lord? I am not sure of the answer. Likely it is what I mentioned and more all jumbled together.

Whatever the root, we humans find it difficult to trust wholeheartedly the Lord God Almighty. So Isaiah speaks a theme that surfaces many times in the Bible. *Stop trusting in mere humans...*

Friends, family, and associates are all important in life, but they must never replace the Lord, who is the only One ultimately deserving our trust.

*Lord, show me if I have replaced You in any way by trusting more in people than You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Thursday, September 13: Isaiah 3- A glimmer of hope ...**

The day of the Lord will not be pretty. Isaiah provides one glimmer of hope for the day of the Lord. It is for the righteous. In the middle of this dour word of God's judgement comes one ray of light for a few. *Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds* (10).

I breathe a sigh of relief... not because I am righteous in myself. I sigh because in Christ, God the Father, has granted me and all who believe and follow Jesus the righteousness of Jesus, God's one and only son.

Here is one more joy of knowing Jesus... protection during the dreadful day of the Lord.

Oh, the wonder and the richest of knowing Jesus Christ and giving one's life to Him and growing in Him and living for Him.

Oh, the joy of knowing Jesus...

*Lord God, thank You for opening my eyes and heart to Jesus... my Lord, my Savior and my God. Praise be to You, Jesus, along with the Father and the Spirit. Three persons, one God over all. Amen and amen.*

### **Friday, September 14: Isaiah 4- Restoration...**

Judgment isn't the end of the story. Verses 2-6 picture a restoration of cleaned and redeemed people. I focused on descriptors in these verses.

- *beautiful and glorious,*
- *Those who are left ... will be called holy,*
- *The Lord will wash away the filth*
- *a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything ... It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.*

The last descriptor is reminiscent of the protection God gave to the people of Israel as they fled Egypt following the Passover. The cloud of smoke and fire by night was a manifestation of God's presence that guided and protected the people for the 40 years in the wilderness.

God is restoring things... His protection will again be over His people.

The judgment of the last day will purge and cleanse His people so His joy can be restored in fullness and completeness.

Oh, to long for the day when God restores all things. Until then I need to live as a child of God, a righteous one obedient to Jesus and following the Lord with heart and soul and mind and strength.

*Oh, God, give me the strength I need to honor You all the days of my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Saturday, September 15: Isaiah 5- Keeping the main thing the main thing...**

Matthew, Mark and Luke quote Jesus saying, *What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?* (Luke 9:25, version) It is a strong and I'll admit a bit frightening word. In one way or another we all keep score of what we have gained. We record our bank account(s). We know the valuation in our homes, if we own one. We insure our vehicles, which means we place a value on them and so on. We all keep score of what we have gained. Jesus reminds us that that we can amass gobs of stuff, even the whole world, but none of it is any good if we lose our self, our soul.

Ultimately, Jesus' word is a comment on priorities. Stuff is secondary to God.

Isaiah has a similar thought in verse 12: *They have harps and lyres at their banquets, pipes and timbrels and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands* (12). We can hold the most lavish events, we can throw parties that are the envy of the neighborhood, but if we don't have respect for the Lord and the work of His hands, what good is it?

Isaiah and Jesus are reminding me to examine my priorities... in order to keep God the main thing that drives my life. This requires that I spend some time in quiet personal contemplation...

Will you join me?

*Lord, meet me in the quiet. Instruct me in the deepest places. Lead me to You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

## **Sunday, September 16, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

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