

The Weekly Word
October 15-21, 2018

The crisp air of Fall wakes me and God's Word carries me. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, October 15: Isaiah 30- Listen up church...

Right out of the gate I was hooked. The imagery of verse one had me... *"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; (1).*

Obviously, this is a word to Israel but yet it gripped me as a word for today, a word to the church, a warning to me as a son of the King... *[T]o those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin*

It is all too easy to think, I've got it. I know what to do and launch off with nary a thought given to the Lord and what He would want. I can solve my problem. I can...

Now it is not that the Lord doesn't want us to use the mind and abilities we have been given by Him, but to venture out only on our best 'wisdom' is to miss the gift God has given us, His Spirit is always with us. And worse yet is when we use our abilities and thoughts while avoiding what God has told us. This is rebellion... *heaping sin upon sin.*

So, the first part of my time with the Lord is processing this word, this warning from the example of Israel.

Yet, this is not the entire story. Throughout the chapter God continually reaches out to His 'children'.

Verse 15: *This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. It is sad that they will have none of it, still God is showing them the way back... repentance and rest. His offer to Israel remains good for all His children in any day and age.*

Verses 18-19: *Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.*

Here is God's heart... longing to be gracious. Just turn to Him. Just turn to Him. Again, this offer still stands. Though we are obstinate, we need only repent and turn to Him and He is there to reclaim and love us again and again.

How many times have I strayed and God welcomed me back with arms open and heart delighted that I have returned?

Lord, thank You for Your ever present grace, always held out and extended that I might reach for it and be drawn close to Your heart. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 16: Isaiah 31- What am I trusting in?...

Again, today it was right out of the gate that the word latched onto my heart. Verse 1: *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their*

chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD (1). Two aspects of this verse caught my eye:

1. Relying on horses, chariots and the strength of armies.
2. NOT relying on the Lord.

Application was immediately apparent to me... we can trust in the strength man can produce or we can trust in the Lord. And how easily I can apply this to myself.

I may not have horses, chariots and armies, but I do have a middle class upbringing, college and advanced degrees, steady employment, a loving family etc., etc. And it comes very naturally to lean of these when trouble comes rather than leaning on the Lord.

I find the word 'but' instructive. God didn't expect Israel to give up horses, chariots and soldiers. What God did expect is that Israel would not rely on those to the exclusion of the Lord.

Now there was one piece God did expect Israel to give up... trusting in Egypt a rival 'god.' Egypt was not a god per se for Israel, but Egypt was a human power Israel turned to instead of God and that was a major breach of faith.

Back to my life, are there human institutions that I turn to so that I can avoid turning to the Lord? This is the question that the text asks of me. This is a question I must probe within myself...

Lord, help me to be honest with myself... honest before You. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 17: Isaiah 32- Yes what a wonderful day that will be ...

Two very different words... still both offer a slice of promise. And it is upon the promises that my heart clings today.

The chapter opens with words that draw me in... *See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land* (1-2).

To have a king who reigns in righteousness, what an anomaly. As I listen to news reports it seems that the more power a leader has the more he/she gets sucked into the vortex of protecting power and privilege. And this is anything but righteousness. Yet Isaiah sees a day where a king will reign in righteousness. And then he built the word pictures of that day... *will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.* How amazing it would be, it will be, to live in that day.

I don't see that day coming led by earthly rulers. But that day will come when Jesus the righteous one, King of kings and Lord of lords reigns. And what a wonderful day that will be. Yes, what a wonderful day that will be.

Then in the second prophecy, the one to the women, my heart connected with verse 15. Bad days will come, *till the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest* (15). The Spirit has come, Pentecost, God is breaking into our world. Through Jesus, I am a person of the Spirit. Through Christ this same Spirit lives in me. It is the guarantee that God will come and bring me into His perfect inheritance where the Spirit will live and the king –Jesus –will reign in righteousness.

Oh, what a day what will be. Yes, what a wonderful day that will be.

Jesus, Father, Holy Spirit, I sit here today content in You and longing for that day, Your day. Come, Lord Jesus, come. In the name of the Triune God I pray. Amen.

Thursday, October 18: Isaiah 33- I would gum up the works...

I struggled finding a connection with today's chapter reading. I read. I sat. I reviewed. I wondered why I'm not connecting. Is there something in my life that is a block? Is my mind and heart preoccupied with other things so I am not truly present to God? Does God want me to sit and struggle?

I don't really know...

I reviewed the chapter again and was drawn to verses 5-6. There was no lightning bolt, simply a nudge. *The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with his justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.*

I pondered a world filled with justice and righteousness. What an amazing world that would be. Then even as I am writing my last line, I realize I would gum up the works because I am not fully just or righteous. God would have to do much work in me to enable me to live in a world filled with God's justice and righteousness. Still how wonderful life in that world would be...

Verse 6 builds and continues closing with a familiar Biblical refrain, *the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure*. To fear You, Lord, to revere You, Lord, to submit to You, Lord, this is the key to the treasure of life with You.

Teach me to fear You, Lord. Holy Spirit, work in my life developing healthy fear of the Lord. Guide me to a depth of understand, love and fear of You, Lord, to the end that I serve You with humility and verve. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, October 19: Isaiah 34- God have mercy on us...

God have mercy on us... O God, have mercy on us.

After reading another word filled with judgment, all my heart could do was cry out for mercy.

All over the world people are living oblivious to the coming judgment. People give little or no heed to God and His Word. They fill their days with anything and everything except the Lord. Some fill it with work. Others fill it with pleasure. Some live basically enjoyable lives and others drudge every step as down trodden people. Few lift their eyes to the Lord. Most lean on anything but the Lord.

The day is coming when God will collect His due.

God have mercy on us... O, God, have mercy on us.

Saturday, October 20: Isaiah 35- The brightness of God on a dreary day...

It is a rainy dismal day outside, yet when I opened to Isaiah 35 my day immediately brightened. Such is the power of the word, and a word of joy and redemption like today's chapter.

As I read verse 1-2: *The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.*

Immediately I pictured this hillside in my town that just blows up in spring with crocuses of every shade and hue. There have to be 1000's of crocuses on this small hillside. It is just beautiful. Last year I stopped to photograph them it was so pretty.

This hillside is a signal of Spring... when the crocuses bloom everyone knows that we have crossed from Winter to Spring. Joy lights hearts to see the beauty in full bloom.

Isaiah, must have a hillside like this in mind as he writes.

What Isaiah sees with his prophetic eye is far more joyous than the annual arrival of springtime. Isaiah is imagining the day when God arrives on His glory. As Isaiah says: *Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert (5-6).*

Isaiah sees the Lord's day and describes the blessing side of God's day. Vengeance and judgment are one side, joy and healing and life the other. I am grateful to be on the Lord's side... His day will be a great day for His family.

After the heaviness of all the judgments, my heart is buoyed by wonder and joy of God's kingdom in all its splendor and delight visiting humanity.

My mind popped to the fact that tomorrow in worship I get to enjoy a taste of the Lord's day as I spend time with God's people in worship...

Oh, Lord, may you display Your power and majesty during our time of worship tomorrow. Come, Lord Jesus, fill the hearts of Your faithful with joy and gladness and a palpable sense of Your nearness. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Sunday, October 21, 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.