

The Weekly Word
March 5-11, 2018

Welcome to March, hopefully Spring is right around the corner. The story of Israel continues to challenge me. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, March 5: 2Chronicles 26- ...

The writer of Proverbs reminds us; *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall* (Proverbs 16:18). Uzziah is a poster child for this proverb. *His pride led to his downfall* (16). But interestingly his pride led him to offer incense before the Lord, a task only priests were to do.

I pondered Uzziah's actions.

At the outset I absolutely understand that sin is sin, good motives or not. And Uzziah sinned. He did something that was forbidden to non-priests. We cannot truly comment on his motives, but the chronicler suggests it was built on pride, which is not good or honorable. What I found so interesting is that his pride shows itself with regard to worship. Uzziah's pride didn't cause him to worship other gods, but rather to worship God but in a manner reserved only for priests.

I am trying to wrap my thoughts around this...

Our pride can cause us to worship God inappropriately. What a fascinating idea.

I don't believe we have an inner sanctuary today, as Israel did, that is forbidden for the average person to enter. But possibly pride could cause me to think I have gifts I do not have, thus using them might be wrong. As I thought about this, I was reminded of Paul's word in 1Timothy about elders that they *must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited [prideful] and fall under the same judgment as the devil* (1Timothy 3:6).

I have never really pondered worshipping or serving God in a prideful manner because it can be wrong and lead to dire consequences.

As with most times with the Lord, a shift happens when God begins to probe me in my areas of mediation and pondering. Am I somehow serving or worshipping in a prideful manner...

Oh, God, I pray not. But if in any way I am guilty of this please show me so that I may repent and be forgiven. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 6: 2Chronicles 27- ...

After reading about the last few kings who started off well with the Lord but didn't end well, it was refreshing to read about Jotham. I wish there was more info about him. I would love to know how he lived out his faithfulness.

One verse summed up his life for me, verse 6: *Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God.*

The word 'because' was telling for me.

People can grow powerful through many avenues. Some use political savvy. Others amass wealth and that is their ticket to power. Some have a particular skill. Jotham kept his eyes on the Lord and because of this God increased his power.

In our world of “I did it my way...” I found Jotham refreshing. As the text says, *he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God.*

What would/should that look like for me? Ahh, the Lord has a way of looking deeply into my life. As I sit, here are some thoughts that come to mind...

Maintaining a devotional life... Bible reading, contemplation and prayer. And keeping this time practical and real, not just Bible facts. Instead it needs to me ‘Bible living’.

Looking at my character... am I growing to act instinctively more and more like Jesus would have me act?

Examine how I treat people... those close to me, like my wife and those I happen upon, like a checkout line person.

Thought life... what goes on in the recesses of my interior life, particularly reactions to people who annoy me. How do I handle that???

Lord, it never ceases to amaze me how You take me places during my time with You. Thank You, Lord, for caring enough to show me places for growth. I am continually blessed to be Your son. Praise be to You, Lord God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, March 7: 2Chronicles 28- ...

It seem so unpredictable whether the next generation will be faithful to the Lord or not. Ahaz was 4 when his father began his reign as king. Jothom reigned faithfully for the next 16 years until Ahaz became king. Still Ahaz turned his back on the Lord and pursued other gods... the gods of Israel and later other gods.

As sad and disappointing it was that Ahaz chose the wrong faith-path, the story grew even darker as Ahaz rejected the Lord’s beckoning. Verse 22 tells the story. *In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD.*

The Lord sent Ahaz indicators that He wasn’t pleased. All Ahaz needed to do was humble himself and turn back to the Lord and God would have forgiven him.

As people can turn away from the Lord in later in life so they can turn to the Lord and be forgiven.

But Ahaz didn’t turn to the Lord... In time of trouble he turned everyway but to the Lord even turning to Damascus and prostrating himself to their gods!

Where or to whom do you turn in times of trouble?

God’s arms are always open wide to those who turn to Him. I think of the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). God, the Father, gladly welcomed the prodigal home. One important ingredient in this story is that the son turned and came toward home.

No matter where you have been God will greet you when you turn for home. He greeted me, he greeted Martin Luther, Chuck Colson, and the apostle Paul. God will greet you too. Just come home...

If you haven’t come home, I pray you do. Jesus’ arms are open wide when you do.

Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, praise You that Your open arms have enveloped me. I am forever grateful... Thank you and bless you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, March 8: 2Chronicles 29- ...

I read yesterday that Ahaz chained the temple closed, but it didn’t hit me until today the literal extent of his sin.

Hezekiah understood that first things had to come first, so he purified the temple so that sacrifices and worship of the Lord could be reestablished. After consecrating themselves priests and Levites took 16 days to move methodically through the temple removing all the defilement and returning the Lord's articles. I couldn't get over the fact that it took this horde of workers 16 days to do the necessary work of consecrating. That's a lot of work!

Certainly God could have cleansed it in an instant, but instead He choose to have his workers do it and that took time and effort.

As I think about this it occurred to me the same is true for our lives. God does remove our sin instantly when we confess it. However the lingering effects of the sin often remain and it generally takes time to remove the traces and effects of life long sin. Yes, God can cleanse and purify us in an instant. I know one brother who was instantly freed from drug addiction, but most I know take years of counseling, AA and the like, to conquer the addictions. The same goes for inappropriate language, regular use of lies to keep out of trouble, greed, sex outside of marriage, bitter thoughts, gossip and the like.

It takes time to rid our 'sanctuary' of sin.

God calls us to purity and holiness. Will we put in the effort, with God's help and following His lead, to do what we need to do to honor our Lord and put our house in order?

Maybe it is better to put the question in the present tense. Am I (are you) putting in the effort, with God's help and following His lead, to do what is necessary put our house in order thereby to honoring the Lord?

Lord, reveal to me the work –or at least some of the work –I still need to do to become the man You want me to be. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Friday, March 9: 2Chronicles 30...

Earlier this week I had discussion with a friend on the parable of the sower. We talked about it being our job to sow the seed of God's Gospel, but that many times people will not accept it. Hezekiah discovered this truth as well. In his zeal for the Lord and reinstating the Passover he sent word throughout Judah and Israel. This is a bold move that certainly could have angered the king of Israel. Despite that Hezekiah sent out the invitation. We are told, *The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but people scorned and ridiculed them. Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem* (10-11).

If you were counting numbers it seems like Hezekiah's invitation was a bust. My sense of the account is that most paid the invitation 'no, never mind.' It occurred to me that we could read history another way... some who would never have returned to the Lord on their own did humble themselves and attend the Passover. And this is a great victory for God.

Reflecting on this account, too often I think about those who will not accept and therefore reject me (and yes, the Gospel) rather than on those who will accept it. This hampers me from sowing God's seed widely. I am realizing that it is my being rejected personally, more than people rejecting the Lord and His Gospel, that causes me to be timid and not sow God's seed widely. How sad...

Oh, Lord, I confess my fears of rejection that hold me back from liberally sowing the seed of Your Gospel as widely as I could. Forgive me, Lord. And even more, embolden me, Lord, to be a bold and adventurous sower of Your seed, the word of God and the Gospel of Your salvation. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, March 10: 2Chronicles 31- Lives changes and generosity increased...

Yesterday we read about the great Passover that Hezekiah prepared and how people came from all across Israel. It was a revival!

When all this had ended, the Israelites who were there went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh. After they had destroyed all of them, the Israelites returned to their own towns and to their own property. True revivals bear fruit and we witnessed the blossoming of the fruit in today's chapter (1). Beyond this the freewill offerings were enormous.

The revival sparked by faithfulness of Hezekiah bore real fruit. Lives changes and generosity increased. People destroyed the counterfeit worship of the Baals and other false gods. The people did this, not the priests or the king. It is very probable that people destroyed the false gods THEY had been worshipping! That is life changing!

Hmmm... that sounds like a sentence to ponder; Lives changed and generosity increased.

Have I seen that in my life? Do you see this in your life as you press into Jesus?

Life change... where has my love for the Lord and following of the Lord changed my life (your life)?

Generosity... can you point to increased generosity toward the Lord and His work in the world, in your life (in my life,) as a result of following Jesus?

Hmmm... things to ponder on this eve of worship.

Lord, may my life be a blessing to You and Your people... I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, March 11, 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.