

## The Weekly Word

June 10-16, 2019

I pray you are having a great week. Being regularly in God's Word helps... Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

### **Monday, June 10: Jeremiah 5 – Grace received... will it be given as well...**

God is angry with Judah and Israel and His list of grievances is long. This entire chapter is an indictment from beginning to end. It is difficult reading. It is like sitting in on a parent disciplining a child.

It is also difficult for me to find a morsel for meditation. Only one verse seemed to hold a ray of light for my weary soul. In the middle of the chapter comes verse 18: *"Yet even in those days," declares the LORD, "I will not destroy you completely... a sliver of light in a dark and foreboding chapter.*

It is almost as if God is saying, 'punishment is coming but it should be much worse'.

A sliver of grace in a difficult confrontational moment. Still there it is, a moment of grace, *I will not destroy you completely.*

At any moment God could rightfully squash me like bug for the sins I have committed or for the attitudes I hold or for the thoughts I have entertained. I deserve no good thing from the Lord. Still over and over again God grants me grace. A sliver here, a slice there, an enormous bucket at other times. Each sliver, slice or bucket bought and paid for by Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross.

It is Monday; a long week lies before me. No telling how much grace I will receive this week; whatever the amount it will be way more than I deserve. Who knows how many people whose paths I cross are in need of grace or its' cousin 'mercy' from me. Will I be a mature enough Christ follower to give it? This is the thought that courses through my mind. Jesus' line from Matthew 10:8 pops into my head: *Freely you have received, freely give.*

Oh, my, have I freely and lavishly received grace and mercy...

*Lord, give me Your strength so that I can give what I have received from You. I know I do not have it in my own strength to do this, but with Your help, I pray I can live a grace and mercy giving life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

### **Tuesday, June 11: Jeremiah 6 – Look to God and find rest...**

Yet another bleak chapter. Israel and Judah are not responding to God and God is laying out what will happen. As so often with the Lord, He continues to hold out hand to His people in an offer to return home...

*This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your soul (16a).*

What a promise God offers... look for God and He will offer you rest!

Those are words to my soul. I am tired and weary. Life feels too busy. As fast and hard as I work, I don't seem to be making headway...

I sit and ponder these words... I look for the Lord. I want to walk on His path... I feel my blood pressure decreasing (literally) as I sit and picture this verse and see myself standing and looking for the Lord, my God.

God is extending His hand, I reach for it and He says, "Come walk with me." I rest in His presence. I am comfortable because I know He knows the way. I am not lost; I am with the Maker of heaven and earth.

My soul rests in God. I can do all things through Him (the Lord Jesus) who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13); all things that He assigns to me, that is.

I linger in this place of presence... I breathe slowly and allow His peace to envelop me. I am His and my beloved is mine! What a blessing to know the presence and love of the Lord.

Sadly, in Jeremiah 6 Israel turned its back on the Lord. Verse 6 concludes: *But you said, 'We will not walk in it' (16b).*

*Lord, Thank You for opening my eyes and heart to You. Without the Spirit's promptings I, too, would turn from You. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for pursuing me. Thank You for grabbing hold of me... thank You for being my safe place. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

\*We sing a wonderful worship song built on this verse, *You Who Are The Way* (Angelo Natalie © 2007 Buon Natalie Music). Here are the lyrics:

Stand by the roads and look  
Ask for the ancient paths  
Where the good way is  
And walk in it  
And find rest for your souls

Set up signs on the road  
Put up your posts to guide  
Mark well the pathway  
By which you came  
And return to your home

You who are the Way, we follow You  
You who are the Truth, we believe in You  
You who are the Life, we draw our breath from You

You who are the Way, we walk with You  
You who are the Truth, we will sing of You  
You who are the Life, we'll rise again in You

### **Wednesday, June 12: Jeremiah 7 - ...**

The imagery of God's opening salvo through Jeremiah captured my attention:

*This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message: " 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!" If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent*

*blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.*

*“ Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD (1-11).*

I found myself imagining what I and others would do if the Lord’s prophet stood at the doors of my church this coming Sunday and announced our hidden sins. Yikes. The image, albeit a bit extreme, was scary.

My thoughts were extreme because Israel at the time was desecrating the Lord. Jeremiah goes on to excoriate the Tophet, a heinous practice where children were sacrificed! I do not believe that most churches are sin-filled to that extreme.

Still the prospect of God video projecting the sins of today’s church is scary. We may not be as debased as Israel was in Jeremiah’s day but we certainly fall short of God’s hopes. Our sins are not as heinous, but complacency is rampant. And sin is sin, period.

Just today I heard that regular church attendance has dropped to between one and two Sunday’s a month.\* I have heard that statistic cited by numerous outlets.

It is easy to muse and point my fingers at ‘other church people’ but this is my time with the Lord. What would God’s prophet say to me??? Selfless faithfulness continues to escape me.

As important as my personal reflections are an equally important question is, how would I respond to God’s rebuke?

Israel turned her back on the Lord. She wouldn’t listen. Would I? Will I?

*I sit, Lord... speak. Help me see my ways that I might repent and return to You.*

\*“Even with a broader definition of church attendance, classifying a regular attendee as someone who shows up at least three out of every eight Sundays, only 23–25 percent of Americans would fit this category.” (<https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html>).

Note: regular church attendance is considered 3 of 8 Sundays

### **Thursday, June 13: Jeremiah 8 – Remaining faithful...**

How horrendous it must have been to be Jeremiah. He has the unfortunate calling to speak God’s judgment to God’s people. The leaders of Judah must have despised him for the words God gave him to speak.

Today is yet another chapter of doom and gloom. God has made up His mind. Judgment is on its way and Jeremiah is the one to speak God’s Words of woe to the people.

Jeremiah was faithful to God and God’s call. He did as God directed. He spoke what God said to him. He was God’s man, God’s mouthpiece. God’s prophet.

Sometimes God calls and assigns to us difficult tasks. Are we faithful?

Am I faithful?

This question burrows deep into my soul. Am I faithful to the tasks God’s gives, particularly the difficult ones?... The tasks that cost me?

They may have monetary costs or time costs or prestige costs... Am I willing to bear the burden of God’s direction and call? Am I???

The content of Jeremiah's book is difficult to read. They weigh on me as God's judgments mount against the people. How they must have weighed on Jeremiah who had to speak them. Still he remained faithful. I pray that I, too, will remain faithful...

*I pray, Lord, that I remain faithful to You, every day, and in every task You give. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

### **Friday, June 14: Jeremiah 9 – Watch your boasting...**

A sprig of refreshment, a word to consider:

*This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. (23-24)*

In many places the Scripture calls for wise and sober judgment and for humility. The Lord pounds this drum in the sentence above.

Yes, some of us are wise... but don't boast in wisdom.

Yes, some humans are strong, be warned don't boast in your strength.

And, yes, some people are wealthy; again do not boast of your wealth. When I boast in something about myself, pride blossoms and the writer of Proverbs is correct, *pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall* (Pr 16:18).

Pride rightly placed, reminds Jeremiah, is in the Lord. God alone is our true wisdom, strength and security.

God alone is my true wisdom, strength and security... may I never forget and may I never disregard this.

*Oh, Lord, purge me with hyssop and I will be clean, wash me and I will be whiter than snow. Forgive me, Lord, when I put myself before You. Forgive me, Lord, when I think my abilities can save me, others, or rectify a wrong.*

*Create in me a pure heart Oh, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

*Through Jesus, my Savior's name, I pray. Amen.*

### **Saturday, June 15: Jeremiah 10 – Who am I emulating?...**

God's opening statement grabbed me. *This is what the LORD says: "Do not learn the ways of the nations... (2a).*

Who do I watch and follow? Who do I emulate? Who are my life heroes?

God says, "Choose wisely! Don't choose people who follow other gods."

This seems like such a no brainer. Still it is not as simple as it sounds. My world is multicultural not monolithic in its life approach. Am I only to follow self-professed Christians? What about areas that are amoral, don't people of other faiths have some good ideas and habits?

Jeremiah is specifically addressing cultic behaviors. I get that. I must guard myself from including non-Christian practices into my worship. Even here, I wonder is some non-Christian traditions be redeemed from their pagan roots? Christmas trees might be an example. Then, again, I don't worship Christmas trees, I simply decorate with them, so this example is probably beyond the scope Jeremiah has in view.

If I were to paraphrase God's instruction it might go like this: Do no incorporate non-Christian beliefs/faith practices into your life.

I pray this is how I am living...

*Oh, God, may I keep Your Word as my guide for faith and practice... in Jesus' name I pray. Amen/*

**Sunday, June 16, 2019, 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 Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@LivingHopeCT.org](mailto:office@LivingHopeCT.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.