

OCTOBER 7

In reading the entire Bible, you could get the idea that there is a lot of negativity going on. Obviously there is the constant testimony of God's love and His ongoing work to rescue and redeem mankind, but there is still a lot of judgment. We see it in the prophets, in The Psalms and in the warnings of Proverbs. Then too, we see a lot of caution and commands in the NT to stay awake and not live like when we were lost.

The overwhelming sense we have from the Lord is that this planet is under judgment. Judgment will come. As disciples we know the mercy of Christ and follow Him knowing that the time is drawing to an end. Clouds are building on the horizon for every person, and eventually for the world itself. A time for judgment has been set, for each individual and also for all who are on the earth when the Tribulation begins. When Jesus sent out His disciples, their simple gospel was that the kingdom was coming, that men should turn to God (repent) and come to Christ. The kingdom implies both judgment and joy. It depends on knowing God.

The constant sense of judgment in Scripture is to keep the mature focused and alert. It is reality. A disciple hungers now and weeps now for the world. It is a choice, because what is happening now is urgent and it is coming to an end. Yet, it doesn't weigh us down as we work in the harvest because of the love the Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts. Knowing our Lord brings joy. Seeing new life in Christ brings joy. Seeing those new disciples going out and making disciples, who make disciples brings joy. And then comes the party.

Jeremiah 8:8-9:26

Jeremiah 8:8-22

Vs. 8-12 God takes aim again at the leaders of Judah.

V. 11 This is the second time God has said this about the leaders. You will notice that the image of a wound or incurable sickness will come up again and again.

V. 13 I wonder if Jesus had this in mind when He cursed the fig tree?

Vs. 14-15 The people are running for shelter. Tragically they will call out for help, but it will be too late. God is telling them to turn to Him now.

Vs. 16-17 The coming judgment. Dan was the northernmost tribe, and trouble almost always came from the north.

Vs. 18-22 This seems like the lament of God and of Jeremiah. There is no joy on God's part in punishing the rebellious. We have seen how patient God is. His patience is to give us time to respond to Him.

V. 22 The ironic and tragic truth is that there was a cure but the people didn't choose it.

Jeremiah 9

Vs. 1-2a are Jeremiah's thoughts. This is another example of why he is called the Weeping Prophet. It really must have been tragic seeing the people refusing to follow God and then seeing them punished.

Vs. 2b-6 This is God's charge against the people. Notice that twice it says they refused to know God. Knowing God is not new to the New Testament. It really goes right back to Adam and Eve, and it has always been the basis of saving faith. In the process of not knowing God, they had become corrupt toward each other.

Vs. 7-11 Look at *I will*. This is God mapping out His plan of action.

Vs. 12-16 This is like God pleading His case why He has to do this. Notice the call for the wise man.

Vs. 17-22 The Lord's punishment of the people. It appears that the women are called on to lead the mourning.

Vs. 23-26 Again, who is the *wise man*? That would be v. 24. This sounds a little like those first two chapters of 1 Corinthians. Notice how *steadfast love, justice, and righteousness* are fused together. Notice too that the true measure of a person is understanding and knowing the Lord. It reminds me again that what we are really asking people to do is to know the Lord. It is a personal relationship, not a religious tradition and lifestyle. Knowing Christ is what sets us free.

Colossians 3:1-17

Where Ephesians has six chapters, three that magnify God's grace and three telling us how to live that grace, Colossians has four chapters with the same breakdown. Chapters 1-2 talk about the greatness of salvation in Christ, and now we are entering the application of how to live that truth.

Vs. 1-4 There is an old critical motto that says some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. That isn't what Paul or God is saying here; in fact, the real point here is that if you are too earthly minded you are no earthly good. Based on all of what God has done in Christ alone, our minds, hearts and lives should be captivated and empowered by that truth.

It is interesting that Paul talks about setting our minds on things above. Paul had actually, literally, been there. You can imagine that when things became hard for him, he could close his eyes and remember what he had seen and remember how that was so much more powerful than anything he was facing. That is what is meant for us too. We have the Word and the Spirit, and by faith we can see and live beyond this earth. This is why it is important for us to be in the Word every day, to keep our vision of God fresh and our understanding of His love, grace and justice in balance.

We're here reading these verses, but you have read so much more. Think of what you've read in the OT, and in the Gospels, Acts, and Romans up to here. Based on all of that, how should you live? What kind of joy should you have in life? How should you invest as a disciple in the harvest? If it could "grasp" us, it would change us. The reality is that as disciples we need to be constantly reading and allowing God's Word to remake us.

Vs. 5-11 God's judgment is coming. God's truth saved us and changes us. God opens our eyes. Jesus sets us free. Some of this sounds very similar to Ephesians. I would mention again that loving one another as disciples isn't just a command to be nice to mankind generally. We are called to love all people as God loves them. But the bond in Christ is for that group who are sent into the world by their Savior to bear witness to His work on the cross for mankind. As those saved, who are working together in the harvest, behind enemy lines, we are to cherish our relationships and have a special love for one another. Take away the harvest, and we are just being nice to each other for some general reason.

Vs. 12-17 Here it is. We are God's chosen ones, bearing His message to a dying world. Our group is supposed to reflect the oneness that each of us has with Christ Himself. The entire church is supposed to be unified in our Lord and His grace and His mission. Notice the commands to *put on*, and *let*. All of this centers on Jesus and allowing His Word to dwell in us richly.

There is a lot to grasp and absorb in these verses. It'll take a lifetime. Beyond what we learn or are taught, there has to be a very innocent sense of wonder and gratefulness in what Jesus means to us. That's why a believer with a Bible, yet without an education, in a poor third world country can have a closer relationship to Jesus than any of us, with all our blogs, books and programs. It is a matter of heart and devotion and wonder.

Psalm 78:32-55

V. 32 This is the bridge from the last section (yesterday) into today. Tomorrow will be the same as we get into the next section of Psalm 78. Today will end on a high note, but v. 56 will bring in the sad reality of how they acted.

Vs. 33-36 So God punished them, then they repented and remembered God. This is the cycle seen in the book of Judges. The tragedy was that they remembered God less and less every time they got into trouble.

Vs. 36-37 They only came back to God enough to help themselves and get some relief. Just like us.

Vs. 38-41 It is interesting that they forgot God, but in God's mercy He remembered the depth of their helplessness in sin. In spite of their sin, God still had compassion on them. And He shows us this same grace and forgiveness.

Vs. 42-55 Specifically, Israel did not remember how God rescued them from Egypt. Notice that vs. 42-43 set up the context of the deliverance from Egypt. Then in vs. 44-51, underline *He* to see all that God did for them. In v. 52 you have the deliverance, and in 53-55 the fulfillment of His promises to them and their fathers.

Remembering God's goodness and blessing to us is a constant theme in The Psalms, and just a good thing to do when times are tough. So after all of this deliverance and blessing, what did the people do? Tune in tomorrow for the rest of the story.

Proverbs 24:27

Good advice.