

SEPTEMBER 28

We have some great portions of Scripture today and we finish Ephesians. It is a little awe inspiring to think that as these words were written to men and women generations ago, God knew you would be reading this today. Wait until you see how the Lord will touch your heart with some of these words.

As a reminder, remember it is more important to be reading your one-year Bible than to be reading these notes. If you have missed some days, weeks or months, just dive in today. It will give you confidence in telling others to do the same, and you will feel good about rebuilding your routine. If you mark the pages, you will be able to go back and catch up if that is important to your psyche, as it apparently is to mine. I put a number for the year at the top of each page. This year (2015), I put a "5." After the number of years I've been doing this, I have a string of numbers along the top of each page. If I miss a day, I know where to go back and read.

Remember, this isn't a religious routine. You are trusting the Lord in faith that He will take the Word and feed your heart. It is spending time with Him. Today you have Isaiah 55, and in it is one of the greatest promises in the Word about the power of the Word. Grab a latte and settle in with the Lord.

Isaiah 54-57:13

Isaiah 54

This blessing is being spoken to all generations of Israel, but is focused on the generation alive when Jesus returns as the conquering king to save and restore Israel. When Jesus reigns, they will multiply in peace and no enemy will threaten them.

Vs. 1-3 Because of sin and paying the price of being an example to mankind, rather than being fruitful, Israel has been desolate. The promise to Abraham will still be fulfilled. They will be like the sand of the sea, and all nations will be blessed through them.

Vs. 4-8 God will bring them to fulfill their destiny with great compassion and love. Cool.

Vs. 9-10 The *days of Noah* probably refers to the year that Noah was on the waters. Afterward God made a covenant that a world flood would never come again and gave a sign for that covenant. God has sworn to Israel that there will be a fulfilling of His love for them.

Vs. 11-14 God will establish Israel in righteousness and with style.

Vs. 15-17 And woe to anyone who picks a fight with Israel. That will be particularly true the last seven years before the Lord returns.

Isaiah 55

As a result of the Savior who will come (Ch. 53) and because of the great promise made to establish and glorify Israel (Ch. 54), now God gives an invitation to come to Him.

This is a great chapter to memorize. Isaiah is speaking to his people in the current day, but it will apply to any generation of Israel. And it applies to you and to any other person on the planet.

V. 1 Jesus stood up in the middle of the Feast of the Tabernacles on the great day at the great moment of the procession and yelled this out. How embarrassing. No, how urgent the time was for Israel. Israel was the failing servant, who needed to grasp who Jesus was. He was their King and Servant of God who would pour out His life for the sins of the world. This was mentioned in John 7:37-39.

Notice that the call is made to all, but will only be heard by those who are thirsty. Actually, we are all dying of thirst, but only some people know it. Notice too, that what God promises is lavish, wine and milk. And it is affordable for 100% of humanity.

V. 2 This is what Jesus told the crowd in John 6:27, the day many of His disciples left Him. It is a good question for all of us, and notice again that what God offers is lavish.

V. 3 Not only does God promise life for those who come to Him, He promises commitment and love. This covenant with David isn't the promise that a son would sit on his throne; rather, it is the promise of God to be with David and to use him. This is what helped David the ten years he was running from Saul.

Vs. 4-5 God did two things with David. First, He used David to give testimony and praise to all the nations. Think of all of the psalms we've read. Second, God brought many nations to David. They were not just in submission to Israel. There were nations that came to David to seek God, because of his testimony for God.

If Israel would turn to God, the nations would come to them too. God would do that because He had raised them up and exalted them. This will happen in the Millennium. For us, once God's light is shining in us and through us, He Himself begins to draw people to us.

Vs. 6-7 This invitation is interesting. God can always be found and He is always near, but it is our need and our sense of needing help that makes a person seek God. If the wicked man is tired of his way, he will turn to the Lord. If the unrighteous man is tired of his thoughts, he will seek the Lord.

Notice the amazing grace, forgiveness and compassion that is offered if people will only turn to the Lord.

As disciples this even applies to us. We are never to stop seeking God or calling on Him. But we are not wicked or unrighteous are we? Do we still need the Lord's help? I only need to think of my driving this past week and the random thoughts that I have caught running through my head this week, to know this applies to me. How can God change all of this?

Vs. 8-9 Not only does God present us with new ways and thoughts by showing us His ways and thoughts, but He knows how to change us. His ways of working and the depth of His wisdom are totally beyond us. How can God effect change and transformation that will make us like Him and make us a testimony to His grace?

Vs. 10-11 Change comes to the heart through the Word of God. Notice that this isn't a cloudburst. It is daily, gradual, persistent rain. This is why we need to read the Bible every day. It waters the earth; it moistens the hard resistant ground through and through. It gives seed for the sower (the harvest) and it gives the sower life and nourishment. Notice too that it *makes* the earth bring forth. The working of the Word is irresistible. We don't have to force it. It naturally produces its fruit in us over time, little by little, as we live in the Word.

V. 12 Going forth in joy is understandable, but notice that they or we will be led forth in peace. There is no sense of being alone or forgotten by God. Just as we go out into the harvest, we are following, and therefore, being led. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who goes before and leads those who are His.

The image of the mountains singing and the trees clapping their hands sounds like something out of a Looney-Tunes cartoon, until you think of what Paul and the Spirit say in Romans 8:19-21. When Israel turns to their Messiah, or when a person turns to follow Christ, it signals the future event of the creation being set free from bondage; therefore, there is singing and clapping in anticipation of that coming event.

V. 13 Regardless of what has been planted in the past of a nation or of a person, God will turn thorns and things that bring injury and pain into cypress trees giving shade and comfort. He will turn briars and agitations into beautiful myrtle trees.

And when God does this, it will bring glory to Him. Why? Because the world can see what He can do, and this change He brings to a nation or a person will not end. It will carry into eternity.

Isaiah 56

Isaiah is saying this to his people, present at that time.

Vs. 1-2 It is hard to wait on the Lord, but God promises that He will do what He promises. In the meantime, those who love and follow the Lord keep obeying and following.

Vs. 3-8 These blessings are spoken to Israel and to Gentiles. Anyone could join themselves to Israel. That was the purpose of Israel as God's servant. As hinted at here and seen later, Israel will again be God's restored servant; and all nations will come to the Lord through them.

V. 3 Eunuchs were excluded from temple worship under the law, but God never, ever excludes anyone who loves Him. It is possible that both Daniel and Nehemiah were eunuchs.

The mention of the Sabbath during the time of the law was really a sign of faith. It took faith to keep the Sabbath when others might have been working on the Sabbath, taking your jobs and making more money than you. It was easy to look around, be jealous of the ungodly, and give up keeping the Sabbath.

Notice that Jesus quoted a part of v. 7 when He cleansed the temple the second time in Matthew 21:13.

Read v. 8 and then compare it to what Jesus said in John 10:16, *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

Vs. 9-12 This punishment is on those in Israel who won't listen, but instead reject the promises God has made in these chapters. This discourse will continue to v. 13 of the next chapter.

Isaiah 57:1-13

Vs. 1-2 Notice that the righteous live alongside the ungodly, and though faced with the same circumstances, they take refuge in the Lord and lie in peace in their beds.

Vs. 3-13 These people seek help in idols and have given themselves to the passions of their flesh. This sounds like the beginning of Ephesians 5. Notice the alternation between idolatry and immorality. Man made gods who allow what man likes. What a great system...not.

V. 11 Their fear was senseless and was a result of not fearing God. What irony.

V. 13 This is a great contrast. Those who cried out to idols would be blown away. Those who took refuge in the Lord would possess the land.

Ephesians 6

Get ready for some great verses and thoughts.

Vs. 1-4 This is walking as saved kids and saved parents.

Vs. 5-9 Imagine being a slave and coming to Christ. This would require a lot of faith. Laura and I saw the movie, "The Help." Just watching the injustice and treatment of these people was jarring. I don't think you can imagine the faith needed to follow Christ in those kinds of circumstances, unless God places you there. Believing masters were to walk by faith in Christ also.

As disciples, the kind of service mentioned here is the least we can do in following Christ in light of what the Lord has done for us.

Vs. 10-18 Putting on the armor in vs. 11 and 13 is commanded, not suggested; and it is used to withstand, not to attack. We don't attack them; we walk, following Christ in the harvest, focused on lost people and making disciples. There is no hint of an idea of being preoccupied with the

spiritual battle. Our job is the rescue, turning our attention to this battle only as we are attacked and they stand in the way. The battle is all around us, so we wear the armor; but our goal is something different. We are to be reaching out to the dying and making disciples, who make disciples. The command to stand in v. 13 has a sense of urgency.

V. 11 Notice the word *schemes*.

V. 12 This adds definition to every other time we have heard the words, *heavenly places*. According to the book of Revelation, Satan doesn't get kicked out of heaven until the middle of the Tribulation.

For my take on the importance of the shoes, you can look at:

<http://fencerail.blogspot.com/2010/10/no-shoes-no-service-no-harvest.html> . This article also appears at the end of this document.

V. 17 I know that all of the pieces of the armor could have books written about them, but I really think being in the Word daily is necessary for all of them. For example, look at *the helmet of salvation*. Think of what we have been reading in Isaiah, how God is our Creator and Redeemer, linking the work of His hands to the love He has for us. I have read that several times, but this last week it has been sinking more and more into my thinking and my heart. That definitely strengthens *the helmet of salvation*. Actually, we have read Ephesians 1-3, and that strengthens our understanding and awe of our own salvation.

We are all too spiritually bi-polar to go a day without the Word. We only kid ourselves if we are not reading it daily, drawing near to God. Without the Word and the Spirit's constant work in our hearts, all of this armor is meaningless and we're just sitting ducks.

Vs. 19-20 This is Paul's present struggle waiting his trial in Rome at the end of Acts.

Vs. 21-22 Paul was always working to strengthen others.

Vs. 23-24 There's a lot of love in these verses. Love and faith are often connected in Paul's thinking; for example, in 1 Timothy 1:14 and 2 Timothy 1:13. Isn't it interesting that Paul makes this last blessing conditional? *Grace be with all who...* These are the ones who live in and truly experience the grace of Jesus Christ.

The word *incorruptible* sounds moral, or maybe industrial, like "rustproof." It is a good word, but doesn't clearly say what it means in this context. I like the RSV and NIV, "undying."

Thinking about undying love, doesn't it seem like that is what God is saying through Isaiah? Finishing up this section of Isaiah on the poured out love of the Messiah, and finishing Ephesians and the limitless grace and love of God in Jesus, what other response should there be from us as His disciples, but undying love and a poured out life, telling of His love in the harvest?

Psalm 70

It's interesting to me that most of the time we don't panic; but when panic comes, even though it is really only in our heads and hearts, all of life seems to be full of desperation and stress. If we really could see the spiritual reality around us, we would all be wrecks. If we could see the dark spiritual forces around us, manipulating us and those around us, taking lives, we would probably lose our minds. But at least we would cry out with real urgency. We would cry out like David does here.

Vs. 1-3 David seems to have been close to those who were threatening him.

Vs. 4-5 God is our great hope, but we are always needy and always in need of His help.

We will always face desperation, so we need to make our hearts submit in faith to the love and purpose of our Father. He proved His love and commitment to us by sending His Son and giving

us His Spirit. If He is our refuge and love, we will live forever with Him and can sleep now in peace. (Is. 57:1-2)

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33) As they say, "It's not what you know. It's Who you know."

Proverbs 24:8

You remember what you just read in Ephesians 6:11, right? I'd say that was an interesting coincidence. ☺