

2018 Defenders Bible Reading Plan Study Notes

Below are study notes from each day's readings of "The Defenders Bible Reading Plan" in 2018. The notes are in reverse chronological order. Use a word search to find a particular week, day or verse.

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 7, Sunday, 30 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=mal+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+30%3B+psalm+150>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 30 December 18:

1. Malachi 3:1 -- "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts." The messenger goes out in advance to announce the coming of the King so that the people can prepare for His coming. However, many who say they seek the Lord's return will be surprised to find themselves subject to God's judgment. The Good News of the Gospel will not be good news for those who rejected the gifts of salvation through faith in Jesus. "The Lord... will suddenly come to His temple (the true believers are the temple)." Everyone will be surprised by His return, but some will instantly rejoice in Jesus, while others will be overcome with woe.

- Matthew 7:21-23 -- "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

- Luke 6:46 -- "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

- 1 Corinthians 13:2 -- And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

- Romans 16:17-18 -- I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

- 1 Timothy 6:4-5 -- He is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

- Jude 1:4, 5, 12-21 -- "For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.... These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam,

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prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.... It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life."

- Ezekiel 33:31 -- And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain.

- 1 John 3:6 -- No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

- Titus 1:16 -- They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

- Luke 12:1 -- In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

- 1 Timothy 5:8 -- But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

- 2 Peter 2:1-22 -- But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ...

- 1 John 2:4-6 -- Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

- 2 Timothy 3:1-4:22 -- But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people....

2. Malachi 3:2 -- "But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." No one can stand before the Lord on their own righteousness, which to the Lord is unrighteousness. You must be credited with the righteousness of

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Jesus who is your salvation. Many people ask, “Are you saved?” But they often don’t understand from what we are saved. We are not saved from our sins. We are saved from the wrath of Almighty God on the Day of Judgment. Only through the righteousness of Christ credited to us can we be saved.

3. Malachi 3:3 – “He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord.” The quality of our worship is not in the activity but rather the heart behind the activity. Worship is a response to relationship. Religious activity is not a substitute for relationship. The Levites were the worship leaders of their day. God told them that in order to be leaders in worship, they first had to be right in relationship with Him. Someone once said, “Leaders know the way and show the way.” Jesus said, “I am the Way.” Worship leaders must know Jesus and show Jesus, and this does not require better music, a more impressive building, or a better marketing plan. We tend to look for external ways to improve worship, but God says, look internally, at our hearts. The problem is not the worship environment, it is the worship desire-ment. How does the way you currently worship reveal what is really in your heart?

4. Malachi 3:5 – “Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.” God will swiftly judge people, not just for what they do, but more importantly why they do what they do, their true motivations, what is truly in their hearts, whether or not they truly honored God as Lord of their lives in surrendered, humble, faithful obedience. The Bible does not try to list every sin that will be punished by God on the Day of Judgment but merely gives examples of sins committed directly against Him (like sorcery) and sins committed indirectly against Him and directly against others (like adultery and usury). All sin is a lack of love for God and fear of God, violating the First Commandment and the Great Commandment. Jesus not only said that we would be held accountable for every careless word that came out of our mouths (Matthew 12:36), He went even further and said that we would be found guilty for our sinful thoughts (Matthew 5). Why? Because before we have sinned in word or deed, we have sinned by not loving God as we should in our hearts, desiring only what honors Him. Our thoughts have convicted us before anyone else can. The humble Christian recognizes his total dependence on the grace of God for salvation and righteousness, and pursues righteousness as an act of worship before the Lord, not as an effort to earn salvation (which can only be freely given through Jesus) but through a genuine desire to glorify God and draw closer to Him in love.

5. Malachi 3:7 – “Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.” We return to the Lord through repentance and subsequent obedience. Again, we didn’t choose God; He chose us (Mark 9:9), and it is He who first loved us (1 John 4:19) that we could love at all. God is the One who loved; we are the ones who left, who created the distance and disunity with Him. He took the initiative in loving; we must take the initiative in returning, though He enables us to do it through the Holy Spirit.

6. Malachi 3:10 – “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” God says to test Him on tithing (giving the first 10% of what you make to Him) and see what happens.

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7. Malachi 3:16 -- "Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name."

- We were saved into a family. God intends for His family to be united, "one" with Him and "one" with each other in love, which is our Greatest Commandment (see John 17). We are to be members of one body where Christ is the Head, stones of the Temple of God, where Christ is the Cornerstone, and members of one Kingdom where Christ is the LORD and KING. Jesus said that our unity and love for each other (as opposed to love of the world) would be the product of our relationship with Him, would be the way we love Him, and would be the proof that we are truly His disciples. We were created for interdependence, not independence or dependence, and God works mightily through our unity (Matthew 18:19-20). When God's true followers join together in a corporate commitment to obey Him, there is great power. However, unity can only come through conformity to Christ, alignment with his commands. The Cornerstone determines the right order of the stones. We have a saying in the Marine Corps, "Adversity unites." Malachi describes a situation where, during tribulations, as God prepared to judge a sinful land, God's true followers were drawn together in fellowship while the rest of society had decided, "It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?" I pray that in the upcoming year, God will inspire you to become more connected to the body of believers, to love your brothers and sisters in Christ as family. Of course, group Bible study is a great way to start 'speaking with one another'. God's word reveals that God responds in a special way when His children come together talk about Him and to seek Him:

- Matthew 18:20 – For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

- Matthew 20:30 -- And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

- Luke 24:13-15 -- That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

8. Malachi 4:1 -- "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." Dictionaries define arrogance as "having an exaggerated sense of one's own importance or abilities." More critically, arrogance is undervaluing the holiness and authority of God, not honoring, glorifying, and serving God wholeheartedly. All sin, even the smallest one, is an act of cosmic treason, an attempt to dethrone the Almighty in our lives, if but for just a moment. How could we dare sin if we truly appreciated the holiness of God, the reality of our utter depravity, and the incredible gift of grace He has bestowed upon us through Jesus? Pray that God will help you see sin the way He sees it and that you would be truly amazed by grace.

9. Malachi 4:6 – "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." God fixes nations by fixing families. A godly family is a united family. God is the answer to your family problems. Jesus is the answer to our national problems. There is no other answer.

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10. Proverbs 30:4 – “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!” The name is Jesus Christ, and there is no other name by which man must be saved.

11. Proverbs 30:20 – “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” People have an amazing ability to make light of their sin or to excuse it. God sees sin for what it is, treason against His Holy, Sovereign LORD-ship, a crime deserving of eternal death. This is why the Gospel is the Good News! But salvation requires a heart of true repentance.

12. Psalm 150:6 – “Praise the Lord!” After many long prayers and songs about all of life’s major ups and downs, successes and failures, blessings and curses, wins and losses, joys and sorrows, after it all, the Book of Psalms concludes with this summation: “Praise the Lord!” In fact, in this very short and final Psalm, the word praise is used 13 times! Can you look back on this year, with all its ups and downs, and joyfully sing God’s praises with a Romans 8:28 perspective? At the close of this year, are you enthusiastic about proclaiming the praises of God to all you know? Recommit today to begin every day of the next year in prayerful study and application of God’s word and see if your joy and praises don’t grow.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 Dec 18: “Praise the Lord” today for all that God had done in your life, and commit to a closer walk with God in the upcoming year! (Psalm 150:6) Congratulations to those who read the whole Bible this year and also to those who read more than they did last year! As you read the whole Bible again, watch and see with excitement what God reveals to you in His word that you didn’t see last time.

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 6, Saturday, 29 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=mal+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+29%3B+psalm+149>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 29 December 18:

Note: Here is a short video overview of Malachi: <https://youtu.be/HPGShWZ4Jvk>

1. Malachi 1:2 – “But you say, ‘How have you loved us?’” When people drift from God, they often think that God’s love has changed, but God’s love never changes. Never lose sight of God’s perfect love. If God seems distant, it is not Him that has moved away; we drift from God in our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions. God does not travel down the path of sin to accomplish our purposes. He calls us to follow Jesus and to seek ever increasing holiness for His purposes and His glory.

2. Malachi 1:4 – “If Edom says, ‘We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,’ the Lord of hosts says, ‘They may build, but I will tear down...’” If the Lord is not behind your endeavors, they are ultimately meaningless and doomed for failure. Solomon learned this the hard way and wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes. What you do for self is ultimately meaningless. What you do for God has eternal value.

3. Malachi 1:5 – “Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, ‘Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!’” God has a purpose far greater than us, but He desires that we join Him in what He is doing. We must remember that it is not about us. Do you want the world to remember you or Jesus? What was John the Baptist’s idea of Legacy? “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)

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4. Malachi 1:6, 11, 14 -- "'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?' says the Lord Almighty.... 'My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun.... For I am a great king,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and my name is to be feared among the nations.'"

- How we respond to God's commands reveals what we truly believe about God and whether or not we truly believe that our Savior is Lord, with complete authority over our lives. A servant obeys his master as a matter of expectation: "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" (Luke 17:10) And children with childlike faith (not childish faith) trust and obey their father without doubting. So, why is the church so casual about sin? True faith trusts enough to obey. True faith loves enough to hate what God abhors. The Marines have a saying, "What is interesting to the commander is fascinating to me!" We should be driven, inspired to do far more than the minimum for our Savior.

- In Malachi, the Lord rebukes His priests for failing to honor Him and Glorify Him as King through reverence and obedience. Through their behavior, they were showing contempt for the King before a watching world. Because of their lack of fidelity and integrity, the world only saw in them a powerless religion full of hypocrites and liars --- their behavior, rather than glorifying God, caused many people to stumble, and instead of calling people to repentance and obedience, they proclaimed "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them (Malachi 2:7-9, 17)." This statement reminds me of Paul's statement in Romans 1: "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them (1:32)."

- God contrasts the despicable priests with the upright behavior of Levi: "He revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin. (Malachi 2:5, 6). In reverence to the King, Levi obeyed the Lord to the best of his ability and taught others to obey ALL of God's commands just as Jesus told his disciples to do in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20). Levi understood the importance of knowing, walking in, and teaching from the Word of God as is written in today's Proverbs readings: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law (Proverbs 29:18)." God's people are to proclaim the King and testify to the Truth from God's Word. Jesus said, "In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me (John 18:37)." In today's Psalms we read: "May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord." What is the double-edged sword? The Word of God:

-- Hebrews 4:12 -- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

-- Revelation 1:16 -- In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.

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-- 2 Timothy 2:15 -- "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." How skilled are you with your sword? Are you ready for battle today, to attack the strongholds?

-- 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 -- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

-- Ephesians 6:10-18 -- Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

5. Malachi 1:6-14 -- Fear, pride, greed, and a false sense of duty tempts us to give more honor to others than to God. We are often more interested in what others think than what God thinks. In verses 6-14, God points out that, though His people call Him Lord, they treat earthly leaders with more respect and honor than they do Him, and they are more interested in earthly pursuits than Kingdom pursuits. Consider the different spirit people bring to church than they would bring if invited to the White House to meet the President or if they were invited to the home of a very famous person. God says, that with a complacent heart, no worship is acceptable.

6. Malachi 1:8 -- "Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts." We must give God our very best. Do you put as much effort in serving God and bringing Him glory as you do other things? Where you spend your time, money, energy, and effort reveals what is most important to you. God doesn't want what is left over.

7. Malachi 1:13 -- "But you say, 'What a weariness this is,'" Bible study, prayer, obedience, worship, and sacrifice should never feel wearisome to you. If it does, you have a perspective problem, a heart problem. Be honest with God and with yourself about how you really feel, about what you really care about most. Pray for wholeheartedness.

8. Malachi 2:2 -- "If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings." Worship starts with the heart, not with empty actions. You must set your heart to honor and love God.

9. Malachi 2:5-7 -- "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from

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iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” Christians are called to be Priests who fear and follow God wholeheartedly and who speak truth to others from a life of integrity.

10. Malachi 2:6 – “He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity.” Walking with God involves turning away from iniquity. Peace is found in unity with Jesus and uprightness. Ungodly people talk about peace all the time, but peace starts and ends with peace with God – forgiveness, worship, and obedience. God is The God of Justice, Mercy, Peace, Love, and Joy. Apart from Him, none of these things are possible. The religion of humanism preaches that through enough education and effort, man can achieve these things apart from God. However, our Founding Fathers reminded us that truth is “self-evident,” that we rely on Divine Providence (God), and that God defines our Liberty (the obligations of freedom to obey His Supreme Law above human laws).

11. Malachi 2:9 – “I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.” God does not honor the lukewarm or halfhearted Christian who intentionally only obeys some of the commands some of the time.

12. Malachi 2:13-16 – “He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, ‘Why does he not?’ Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.” The most important earthly institution to God is the marriage, and the purpose of marriage is not to simply bring fulfillment to the husband and wife but to raise godly children. God expects marriage to be holy and pure and to be the schoolhouse of godly character for the next generation of His people. God does not bless His people while they are dishonoring this most sacred institution. If the church lacks power, look at the families. If you are a parent, your most important ministry or occupation on this earth is to raise up godly children.

13. Proverbs 29:9 – “If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.” Don’t waste your time arguing with a fool.

14. Proverbs 29:17 – “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” The world looks for leaders with vision, people who can imagine a ‘better’ future and show people how to turn imagination into reality. However, Christians live by revelation, God’s plan revealed in His word. God’s people arrange and live their lives in accordance with God’s word, whether it seems to make sense or not, whether it appears prosperous, and whether it is comfortable. God does intend for us to imagine our future or to create it in our minds and then with our efforts. He knows our future and has already established plans to prosper us. He just wants our loving obedience. His plans for us will be radically different than what we would imagine or even desire. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) Whenever people follow their own dreams rather than God, they “cast off restraint.” They do “what is right in their own eyes.” (see Judges) They set goals for themselves, build their Towers of Babel, and perhaps pray to God to bless their efforts. You don’t discover God’s will for your life; He reveals it to you, and He does that primarily through prayerful, diligent study and application of His word, one day at a time. “Blessed is he who keeps the law.”

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15. Proverbs 29:23 – “One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.”

Pride is the source of all sin – an overly high opinion of yourself. Pride is your enemy, seeking to reduce in your mind the infinite divide between God’s holiness and your sinfulness, reducing your amazement of the grace you have received through Christ and the reality of your complete dependence on His grace. Pride will cause you to demand justice from others (your perception of justice) rather than giving grace to others. Pride will isolate you from both God and others, causing you to violate the Great Commandment of love. Humility is the opposite of pride and positions you to receive the fullness of God’s blessings in your life, to freely receive and give the love of Christ. Don’t be complacent about the pride in your life. Examine yourself carefully, repent, and pray for God to cleanse you of the pride that remains in your life, trusting in His grace where you continue to make self an idol.

16. Proverbs 29:10 – “Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.”

Some people will hate you simply because you are good. There is nothing you can do to please them.

17. Psalm 149:1-4 – “Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.” Great verses for us to meditate upon this Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Put your heart into worship this weekend.

18. Psalm 149:4 – “For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.” The humble are saved. God’s people are humble.

19. Psalm 149:6 – “Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands.”

Both Hebrews 4:12 and Revelation 1:16 teach that the two-edged sword is the word of God: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) “...from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.” (Revelation 1:16) Bible study, memorization, and application are essential to your relationship with God and your relationships with others. You cannot study and apply God’s word enough. Note from Hebrews 4:12 that the first place God’s word is applied is within your own heart.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 Dec 18: Honor God today by honoring your family. Love God today by loving your family. Heal all wounds. Strive to make your family a beacon before the world of God’s love, mercy, grace, peace, and joy. Some wounds are beyond your ability to heal; dedicate those to prayer, continual prayer, that God would move mightily in those areas. Where you have not been faithful to others in the past, commit to being faithful in prayer. Prayer is not your last resort, it is your most powerful weapon. Begin or continue a godly heritage in your family. (Malachi 2:13-16)

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 5, Friday, 28 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+28%3B+rev+22>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 28 December 18:

1. Zechariah 13:1 “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”

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-- Revelation 22:1 -- "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city"

- Bible prophecy is often hard to read and understand, but what stands out is the clear message of the "Good News" of Jesus Christ our KING. As we struggle to understand and apply God's word to our lives, we must not forget that the Bible is not provided just to make us 'better people' but rather to bring us into a fuller, real love relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit (John 17). It is not for sake of knowing 'about' God; it is about 'knowing God' better than we know anyone else. It is not about 'believing in God'; it is about 'believing God', trusting Him wholeheartedly to walk with Him. It is essential that we study and apply God's word daily, not just for knowledge, but for the purpose of abiding in the Word, the Vine, Jesus Christ (where knowledge becomes understanding and truly knowing personally). Some 'religious' people will make the Bible the 'end' or the goal rather than the 'means' or instrument to obtain the ultimate goal of Christ. Jesus warned the Pharisees -- "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me." (John 5:39) Jesus says, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) Today's OT and NT prophecies (as with many others we have read) both talk about the 'water of life.' Jesus made it clear: "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.... Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 4:14; John 7:38) Of Jesus, whose voice is like "the roar of many waters," the Bible says, "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 1:15; Revelation 7:17) Much Bible prophecy speaks to future events, but eternal life and living water is fully available, immediately, to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ -- "Whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." (John 3:15-21) Receive the Living Water today, and allow from your heart to flow "rivers of living water" to all around you.

2. Zechariah 13:2 -- "I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness." When you are in intimate relationship with God, you don't need someone else to tell you what He is saying.

3. Zechariah 13:3 -- "And if anyone again prophesies, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the Lord.'" Many who claim to speak for God are selfishly motivated and enemies of God.

4. Zechariah 13:8, 9 -- "In the whole land, declares the Lord, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'" God's people remain faithful through the refining process. In the end, they come out purer and more valuable.

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5. Zechariah 14:9 – “And the Lord will be king over all the earth.” God will establish a physical Kingdom on a new Earth.

6. Zechariah 14:16 – “Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.” The Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) was celebrated by Jesus and remains an essential part of future worship. It is to be celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month, Tishrei (varies from late September to late October), when for a week (7 or 8 days, depending on the year), the people live in temporary shelters at the end of the harvest season, as a reminder of God’s provision, particularly during the 40-year Jewish exodus out of Egypt enroute to the Promised Land. Additionally, this yearly experience brought the people closer to God and to each other, keep the people proficient in basic survival skills, and enabled people to keep riches and worldly concerns in perspective. Can you imagine everyone in your community camping out for a week together with a focus on God’s provision and interpersonal relationships? Would families benefit from a week-long camping experience every year, away from TVs, social media devices, etc? Perhaps Christians should celebrate the Feast of Booths which has a prophetic message of God in “tabernacle” with us.

7. Proverbs 28:4 – “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them.” God commands forgiveness in personal relationships but also demands justice in the legal system which maintains order within society. Many times people confuse the relationship between accountability and forgiveness. You may forgive a criminal and show them mercy in punishment, but the criminal must be held accountable to society and make restitution.

8. Proverbs 28:5 -- “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.” God is a merciful God, but He is also a just God. Love and justice go together. Those who love God also love justice and pursue it.

9. Proverbs 28:7 – “The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.” Gluttony is shameful and related to a spirit of lawlessness because it demonstrates a lack of self-control. Christians often take alcohol abuse seriously but not food abuse. The Bible takes gluttony very seriously.

10. Proverbs 28:9 – “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” Your conduct affects your prayer life.

11. Proverbs 28:13 – “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Humility required for personal character development includes open honesty about your limitations and failures.

12. Proverbs 28:14 – “Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” Following God is not a part time commitment. Partial obedience is disobedience.

13. Proverbs 28:19 – “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.” People waste a lot of time doing things that ultimately don’t matter at all. Just because you can achieve it doesn’t mean God ever wanted you to.

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14. Proverbs 28:21 – “To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.” Everyone must be held accountable equally, but mercy considers the factors that contributed to a person’s wrongdoing.

15. Proverbs 28:26 – “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” When you think you have it figured out, that is when you are really in trouble. You need to pour into God’s word every day, regardless of how educated and experienced you feel that you are.

16. Revelation 22 – Compare the visions of God’s earthly reign in Rev 22 with the visions in Zech 14.

17. Revelation 22:1, 3, 5 -- “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.... The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.... There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

- Jesus offers living water. Remember what he said to the woman at the well: “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.... Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.... A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:10, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24).” Later in Jesus’ ministry, the “Living Water” is further explained: “On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-39).” Jesus proclaims: “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life (Revelation 22:17).”

- Also, Jesus is the Light: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12).” God’s word is “a lamp to [your] feet and a light for [your] path (Psalm 119:105). As Christ’s Ambassadors, God calls us to be “salt and light.” Salt makes you thirsty, light exposes darkness – both actions point to Christ our Savior.

18. Revelation 22:9 -- “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” Many people have a tendency to focus too much attention on pastors and teachers rather than on Jesus. A true teacher always points you towards Jesus, drawing no attention to themselves. Instead of selling you a book, they should be giving you a Bible. Instead of constantly saying “I” and “me,” they should only be saying “Him” and “Jesus Christ.”

19. Revelation 22:17 – “And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” The Gift of Jesus Christ is free to any thirsty person who wants to take it, but it must be taken to actually be possessed. To the sinful woman at the well, Jesus said, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you

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living water.... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:10, 14) Jesus made clear in John 3:3 and John 7:27 that with faith in Him comes "living water," which is the Spirit that dwells only in those who have been "born again" or born spiritually through Jesus Christ. Without the Spirit, a person is dead to sin. We are made alive in Christ -- this is the message of the Bible. The final verse in the Bible is the conclusion of the matter: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." I pray that all of our loved ones will be counted among "God's people" who have taken the free gift, who have chosen life, and who have surrendered their lives on earth to the Lord.

20. Revelation 22:20 – “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Jesus keeps His promises. The Book of Revelation is provided with great urgency, because every person will face final judgement, which is coming “soon” in the context of the spiritual realm. Tell someone about Jesus today.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 Dec 18: Fully receive the Living Water today.

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 4, Thursday, 27 December 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+11%2C+12%3B+pro+27%3B+revelation+21>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 27 December 18:

1. Zechariah 11:4-6 -- “Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the Lord, I have become rich,’ and their own shepherds have no pity on them. For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of this land, declares the Lord. Behold, I will cause each of them to fall into the hand of his neighbor, and each into the hand of his king, and they shall crush the land, and I will deliver none from their hand.” God judges nations by allowing them to drift into corruption, injustice, and lawlessness. Leaders will exploit the people, and neighbors will not be able to trust neighbors. Everyone (including God’s people) suffers when God removes His favor, and injustice and unethical behavior becomes the norm. Understand that these things are the consequence of the infidelity of God’s people first. The problem with the nation is not bad politicians, it is a compromised church which ceased to be salt and light to preserve and to expose darkness. Individual and corporate repentance and revival is the key to national prosperity.

2. Zechariah 11:7-9 – “So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staffs, one I named Favor, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep. In one month, I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. So I said, ‘I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another.’”

- Evil leaders think they are good and still practice religion.

- God and only God rightly shepherds His people.

- “In one month, I destroyed the three shepherds.” God judges unfaithful leaders. God overcomes human leaders to lead His faithful people.

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- Through Christ we have favor and unity with God, along with blessings and protection. When we reject God, He turns us over to our own devices and their naturally destructive consequences. God is The God of justice and peace. Apart from God there can be no justice or peace.

3. Zechariah 11:11-14 – “So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep traders, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord. Then I said to them, ‘If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.’ And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter. Then I broke my second staff Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.” Jesus was betrayed by Judas for thirty pieces and silver, given him by the chief priests, the church, that Jesus might be executed by the state, the Roman government. Judas was filled with remorse and returned the money to the chief priests before hanging himself. The chief priests decided that they could not put it into the temple treasury as it was considered blood money, and so with it they bought the Potter's Field. (Matthew 27) The church had been so compromised that it did the work of Satan, in partnership with the ungodly government, all in the name of religion. The religious leaders were willing to crucify Christ but not allow blood money into the Temple, which was considered holy. Consider these things in context with the condition of the church and state in America today.

4. Zechariah 12:1 – “The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus declares the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him....” God continually reminds us that He is the Creator and our source of life and spirit.

5. Zechariah 12:10 -- “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.” There are some great verses for us to consider during the Christmas season and a new year. This morning, Zechariah is given the prophecy of the First Coming of Jesus, the ‘Only Child’ and his Grace and Mercy for those who ‘plea’ for Grace and Mercy from a truly mournful, repentance spirit. Powerful! And Revelation gives us the prophecy of the Second Coming of Jesus: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” We are in the time between the prophecies with every reason to have joy today in faith (complete trust in God), hope (complete confidence in God’s promised future), and love (oneness with God today). This is “Good News”! This is a time where God’s Spirit brings humility and grace required for repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior. Celebrate it today; proclaim it today; live it today! Prepare for Christ’s return.

-- Matthew 25:46 -- And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

-- Mark 10:28-31 -- Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

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-- John 3:15, 16 -- Whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

-- John 4:14 -- But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

-- John 4:36 -- Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

-- John 6:27 -- Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.

-- John 6:68 -- Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,

-- John 10:28 -- I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

-- John 12:25 -- Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

-- John 12:50 -- And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

-- John 17:2 -- since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

-- John 17:3 -- And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

-- Romans 5:21 -- so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

-- Romans 6:22 -- But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

-- Romans 6:23 -- For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

-- Galatians 6:8 -- For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

-- 1 Timothy 1:16 -- But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

-- 1 Timothy 6:12 -- Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

-- Titus 1:2 -- in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began

-- Titus 3:7 -- so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

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-- 1 John 1:2 -- the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—

-- 1 John 5:13 -- I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

-- 1 John 5:20 -- And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

-- Jude 1:21 -- keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

-- 1 John 1:4 -- And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

- Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:14)" as opposed to the wicked and worthless shepherds described in Zechariah 11. But in Zechariah, the Good Shepherd is rejected and the people send him off with the payment of "thirty pieces of silver." God responds: "'Throw it to the potter'—the handsome price at which they priced me (Zechariah 11:13)!" This foretells what would happen in Matthew 27:8-10: 8: "That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.'" This is an amazing prophecy of Jesus that is missed by most since few will read the Book of Zechariah. Congratulations to you for your commitment to remain in God's Word.

6. Proverbs 27:1 – "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Do not be complacent with today. Serve God today as if today were your last.

7. Proverbs 27:17 – "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." God's will for your life is that you are in close relationship with other committed.

8. Proverbs 27:5 – "Better is open rebuke than hidden love." If you don't tell others about Jesus, you either don't really care about them, or you are a coward.

9. Proverbs 27:6 – "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." If you only tell people what they want to hear, you are their enemy. In a loving way, though at times firm, Jesus held people accountable for their sin. He wanted them to be uncomfortable in their sin because He loved them too much to let them continue in sin. Kisses are more pleasant than wounds, but they can be devastating if they give people a false sense of comfort. Even in love, the truth hurts, but you can't fix what you aren't willing to be honest about. To be silent before sin is unloving, hateful, though we don't want to see it that way. If you don't warn your friends about the penalty for sin, you will be held accountable by God. (see Ezekiel 33:6). True love is willing to do the hard thing for another and sometimes nothing seems harder than confronting someone with the truth.

10. Proverbs 27:12 – "The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it." Only the wise can see what is going on around them.

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11. Revelation 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” The Christian life is a hard road. Sometimes we all need someone else to help carry our load, so God calls us to encouraging, mutually supportive friendships in Christ – this is not a suggestion, it is a requirement. There is no such thing as a Christian loaner, and God did not intend for your relationships to be merely superficial. A godly friend challenges you to be all that God intended you to be, helping to draw you closer to Christ day by day. Often they must “sharpen” you with the truth, and sharpening requires friction, heat, and resistance (see Proverbs 27:6). Be careful how you choose your friends. Jesus chose his closest friends very wisely, and He walked day by day with them. He did not look for perfect friends but friends truly committed to following God. As a friend, you are called to put their needs ahead of yours (Proverbs 17:17), and they are called to do the same. There is real power in this kind of relationship.

12. Proverbs 27:23-27 – “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations? When the grass is gone and the new growth appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field. There will be enough goats’ milk for your food, for the food of your household and maintenance for your girls.” Spend your productive years building production capacity so that you possess the ability to be financially self-sufficient.

13. Revelation 21:6 – “And he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.’” God’s provision is free and unending for those who accept it.

14. Revelation 21:7 – “The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Eternal life is enjoying a childlike love relationship with God.

15. Revelation 21:8 – “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

- Fear and disbelief prevent you from sharing in God’s inheritance.

- Second death is death after resurrection for judgment and is shared by all unbelievers. If you are born twice (physical birth and spiritual birth through salvation in Jesus) you will die once (the physical death). If you are born once (physical birth) you will die twice (physical death, and permanently dead in spirit, as you are born).

16. Revelation 21:10-21 – “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” You are part of the holy new Jerusalem with all its glory and beauty.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 Dec 18: Make relationship with Jesus your ultimate goal today and every day. (Revelation 21:7)

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 3, Wednesday, 26 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+26%3B+rev+20>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 26 December 18:

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1. Zechariah 9:9, 10, 13, 16, 17 -- "Rejoice greatly... Shout aloud.... Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he... and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.... The Lord Will Save His People.... On that day the Lord their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!"

- "Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim" Compare this verse with Matthew 21:6-11 when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey.

-- Psalm 118:24 -- This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

2. Zechariah 9:16 -- "On that day the Lord their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land." God's ultimate plan is salvation.

3. Zechariah 10:1, 2, 12 -- "Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring rain, from the Lord who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field. For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd.... 'I will make them strong in the Lord,

and they shall walk in his name,' declares the Lord."

- Do not be deceived by leaders, teachers, scholars, and preachers who proclaim a "truth" apart from the Truth (Jesus) and who offer hope apart from the Lord. Do not walk with these robbers who disguise themselves as shepherds but rather walk with the Good Shepherd, Jesus (see John 10:7-17):

-- Genesis 5:24 -- Enoch walked with God.

-- Genesis 6:9 -- This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

-- Deuteronomy 10:12, 13 -- What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

-- Joshua 22:5 -- Love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.

-- 2 Chronicles 17:3 -- The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because in his early years he walked in the ways his father David had followed. He did not consult the Baals.

-- Jeremiah 7:23 -- Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you.

-- Micah 6:8 -- And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

-- 2 Corinthians 6:16 -- What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

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- It is amazing to see where people will turn for answers to life's questions, and it is even more amazing to see how in man's search for meaning, God's Truth is so aggressively rejected. The world prefers a lie over the Truth, and Zechariah says, "Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd." In Matthew 9:35-37 it says, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.' Notice that Zechariah continues with, 'My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD Almighty will care for his flock, the house of Judah.... From Judah will come the cornerstone.... I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them.... I will strengthen them in the LORD and in his name they will walk,' declares the LORD. In light of this prophecy, consider Jesus' (the cornerstone) words in John 10 when he says, 'I am the good shepherd.' He didn't say he was the shepherd, he said he was the 'good shepherd,' in contrast to the shepherds described in Zechariah and condemned by Jesus as the 'brood of vipers,' and 'white-washed tombs.' Jesus described who would walk in the name of the Lord: 'The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.' The world has its shepherds; we have ours, the One, True, Good Shepherd, Jesus.

4. Zechariah 10:3 -- "My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah." God punishes false teachers that lead His people astray with false doctrines.

5. Proverbs 26:7 -- "Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Knowledge is no good to a person who doesn't have the discipline to consistently apply that knowledge. Again, wisdom is knowledge rightly applied.

6. Proverbs 26:8, 10 -- "Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool.... Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard. Like a dog that returns to his vomit

is a fool who repeats his folly." Do not partner with fools because their ways are only hurtful, unpredictable, and unreliable.

7. Proverbs 26:11 -- "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." Those you know who can't seem to change their destructive ways are living by the flesh and not by the Spirit. Read Galatians 5 and John 15 to see what it takes to have true self-control.

8. Proverbs 26:12 -- "Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Perhaps the most defining trait of the fool is his inability to be humbly self-aware, introspective, and teachable. The Bible reveals the holiness of God, the reality of the human condition, and the Way to bridge the great divide between God and Man, which is Jesus. Only the power of the Holy Spirit, received through faith in Jesus can enable you to see what is impossible to see through mere intellect.

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9. Proverbs 26:13 – “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!’” The fool always seems to have an excuse for what he doesn’t do or isn’t willing to stop doing.

10. Revelation 20:4-6 -- “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.” Some, not all, of those who go to heaven will be rewarded with the opportunity to reign with Christ on earth for 1,000 years. These are they who remained faithfully obedient to Jesus and did not compromise to the world but endured through the trials that Jesus said would definitely come – “if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.” (2 Timothy 2:12) Like the story of Gideon, many will be worthy to be in the ‘army’ (saved and heavenly bound) but will have to stay home for the big mission (to reign with Jesus). Paul, who was beheaded for Christ, was certainly not ‘disqualified for the prize.’ Who among us today will reign on the new earth with Christ for 1000 years? Who will faithfully serve the Kingdom on earth today? In Zechariah today, God condemns the leaders of the ‘church’ because they have failed to lead His people: “Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders.” So, God gave His people The Good Shepherd – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 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.” (John 10:11-16) The Kingdom on earth today is called to be a “kingdom of priests” and a nation among the nations (now!) united under one KING, “No king but KING Jesus.” Zechariah says, “The Lord of hosts cares for his flock... and will make them like his majestic steeds in battle. From him shall come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler—all of them together. They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall fight because the Lord is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.” He is the Cornerstone, and we are to be the stones of the Temple of God. All authority has been given to Jesus, and He has already given us the mission of ‘making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all that the KING has commanded, not through our power but through his.’ We are not called for comfort; we are called to commitment to Christ, to deny self, pick up our cross daily (the identity of the KING as his Ambassadors), and follow him (to listen ONLY to his voice). Church, Assemble! The Kingdom of God is near. Be faithful with what little you have been given now, and you might hear from the master, “Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.”

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Dec 18: Walk with a follow Jesus today and from this day forward. Do not follow anyone else. (Zech 10)

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 2, Tuesday, 25 December 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+25%3B+rev+19>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 25 December 18:

1. Zechariah 7:5 -- "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?" We can worship and pray in a self-centered and selfish way or in a God-centered, God serving way. When our prayers seek God's glory and God's will over our own desires, they are powerful. Jesus taught us a model for prayer in what we often call "The Lord's Prayer" -- "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:9-18) In this He taught us to approach God in prayer with great reverence and humility, seeking His will first, and asking for only what we need to serve Him and others. In love, we should desire Him over merely what He can give us. God knows the difference between God-centered worship and self-centered worship. Self-centered religion only wants God's blessings, not to honor God out of reverence and love.

2. Zechariah 7:9, 10 -- "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.'" How we treat others reveals how we really feel about God. We cannot approach the God of love and expect blessings when we don't walk in love. Again, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," to make that point that we should expect God to respond to us how we respond to others. The Greatest Commandment is love. To be one with the God who IS love, we must live love. This is God's will for us. Show mercy, grace, and peace, and receive mercy, grace, and peace. When you want what God wants, you will pray for what you want and get what you want. God will only deny you what isn't best.

3. Zechariah 7:11-13 -- "But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts. 'As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,' says the Lord of hosts." They would not hear until they could not hear. Therefore, when they called, God would not hear them. Intentionally disobeying God hardens the heart and deadens the spiritual senses. Like being drunk or being asleep, the sinner loses situational awareness (in this case spiritual awareness) and his faculties to the point where they can no longer converse with God. Note in today's readings from Zechariah that when God is talking about 'hearing,' He is actually requiring 'doing': "Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." Christianity is not simply about reading God's word; it is about living by every word that proceeds from God's mouth -- it is about denying self, picking up the cross daily, and actually following Jesus, one day at a time. The 'believers' in Zechariah's day were theoretical believers and practical atheists. They had the word but did not live the word, which requires faith, hope, and love (the greatest being love). Like the old adage, "Use it or lose it." If we have God's word but refuse to follow God's word, we can permanently damage our ability to serve God on this earth and to experience the fullness of His joy.

4. Zechariah 7:12 -- "They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets." Don't be surprised when

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sinners refuse to acknowledge the truth of their sin and can't perceive the inevitable train wreck coming in their lives. As the old coach says, "You can't fix what you aren't willing to be honest about."

5. Zechariah 8:16, 17 -- "Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord." Honesty is critically important to God. God hates all forms of deceit. God's people are expected to have unimpeachable integrity. As noted above, the first level of deception starts with self-deception, motivated by pride and/or insecurity. Humility comes before honor.

6. Zechariah 8:19 -- "Therefore love truth and peace."

-- "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress... and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.'" (Zechariah 7:9, 10).... and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city (Zechariah 8:3).... Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord (Zechariah 8:16, 17).... Therefore love truth and peace.'" (Zechariah 8:19)

- When the people asked the Lord how they should worship Him he responded with the above verses. God's response here is a shorter version of His response in Isaiah 58 -- an entire chapter worthy of regular review: "For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please... You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?" God desires worship that is true not just idle words. Jesus said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.... But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth (John 4:23, 24; 16:13)." We are called to worship the Lord and glorify God every day with our entire selves -- "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)." We are called to mirror as best we can the character of Christ, and Revelation today reveals that he is called "Faithful and True." Live out fidelity and truthfulness for the glory of God. Merry Christmas!

"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great! Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!"

7. Zechariah 8:23 -- "Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" God empowers you with the Holy Spirit so that others will recognize His power in you and seek Him too. God's presence in your life should be obvious to others. God's intent is to draw you closer to Him more and more each day that you might have the fullness of joy in Him; but it's not just about you. He intends for your life to be a beacon to people to all people, from every tribe. You were born again into a new

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family in Christ and also into a mission. Are people drawn to you because they sense God's presence in your life? And when people come to you, do you deny self and only point to Christ?

8. Proverbs 25:1 – "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out." We were designed to constantly seek personal growth and greater knowledge and understanding; it keeps us healthy to be in constant pursuit of unmet goals.

9. Proverbs 25:4 – "Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel...." What remains in your life that is keeping you from being used by God as you should? Remove the dross from your life.

10. Proverbs 25:9 – "Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret." When you are offended by another person or are in conflict with someone, keep it between you and them whenever possible. This is the loving thing to do. Don't try to justify gossip by saying that you are only seeking the advice of others or their encouragement. You are strong enough to handle the matter while protecting the dignity of the offender while preventing the situation from escalating.

11. Proverbs 25:20 – "Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda." Empathy and thoughtfulness are critical attributes of a Christian.

12. Proverbs 25:26 – "Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked." It doesn't take much pollution in a well before you would refuse to drink from it, neither does it take much defilement for your character to be compromised. How many lies does a person have to tell before they are characterized as a liar? How many thefts make a person a thief – even one, and your character is in doubt. It is hard to build a good reputation, but it is very easy to lose. Guard your purity and fidelity with all your might.

13. Proverbs 25:28 – "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." Most sins deal with a lack of self-control. Most needless pain for most people is self-induced, emanating from their lack of self-control – they do what they know they shouldn't. Soon, many will make their New Year's resolutions, recommitting to take control of a certain aspect of their lives; the vast majority will not fulfill their vows they made to themselves because they lack self-control. Here is the secret to self-control found in Galatians 5 – It comes from the Spirit of God. Self-control is a spiritual issue, not a mental issue.

14. Revelation 19:2 – "...for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." We should pursue truth and justice because God does.

15. Revelation 19:10 -- "Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.' For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." We must not give honor to others that belongs only to Jesus. We must not follow others only Jesus. All Christians have equal access to Jesus and all maintain a direct relationship with Him. We need no person to be our intermediary. Regardless of social status or position, no Christian has special rights or special access to God over another. If you are a Christian, you are empowered by the Holy Spirit, you have God's word, and you have the opportunity to draw near to Him in obedience. What you do with what you have been given is up to you, and your relationship with God is between you and God. Other mature Christians should help you in

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your growth, but they don't cause your growth. Jesus said, "Follow me," not "Follow someone else who is following me." The reality of human nature and human pride has inspired some religious sects to establish human 'gatekeepers,' so called religious authorities who claim that they are the entry point to the Father and the administrators of grace. This should never be! Jesus was clear, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Dec 18: Practice total mercy, grace, forgiveness, peace, and love today because that is what you have received and continue to receive through Jesus. Worship Jesus today and show your gratitude to Him today in how you treat the sinners who offend you today. Deny yourself, take up your cross in relationships today, and truly follow the example of Jesus. Be an agent of love, and draw others towards the source of love, Jesus. This is your calling and purpose. (Zech 7:5, 9, 10; Zech 8:16, 17)

DBRP - WEEK 52, Day 1, Monday, 24 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+24%3B+rev+18>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 24 December 18:

1. Zechariah 5:1-4 – "Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a flying scroll! And he said to me, 'What do you see?' I answered, 'I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits.' Then he said to me, 'This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land. For everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side. I will send it out, declares the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.'" Those who disobey God's laws are cursed.

2. Zechariah 5:1-11 – That which doesn't meet God's standards is wickedness and evil and has great destructive power that God must judge.

3. Zechariah:6:9-15 – "...if you will diligently obey..." God will bring peace through The Messiah who will rule in peace. While we await His triumphant return, diligent obedience is required of God's people (v15). According to Webster's, the word diligent means, "characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort." Is that how others would describe your obedience to God's commands?

4. Zechariah 6:11-13 "Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.'"

- We were already introduced the BRANCH in Zechariah 3:8 referring to the Messiah, Jesus. It is interesting to me that "Joshua" and "Jesus" are the same name translated from different languages -- "Yehosuah," "Iesous," "Yeshua." Setting the crown on Joshua son of Jehozadak was intended to symbolize the Lordship of Christ and this Crown was to be handed down from earthly king to earthly king as a visible reminder of who IS KING of kings and of the eventual physical reign of Christ on earth. "In the Hebrew text the prophecy begins 'Behold the Man,' the very words Pilate used to present the beaten Christ to the people of Jerusalem: 'Ecce homo! (Boice)' "The Branch will rebuild the temple - not

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the same temple Zerubbabel worked on, but the temple of His people (Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5). Note that the BRANCH “will rule on His throne [and] be a priest on His throne” -- an unthinkable concept previously in Israel because priests did not sit on thrones and kings did not serve as priests. Remember when King Saul was cursed for overstepping his authority and serving in Samuel’s priestly role? (1 Samuel 13) As we see in Zechariah, Joshua son of Jehozadak served as priest while Zerubbabel served as ‘king’ (governor) in the line of David. However, under our Savior and LORD there will no longer be a need for separation of Church and State in God’s Kingdom (“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”). We serve as Ambassadors of the Kingdom of Christ among earthly kingdoms which are doomed for destruction as described in today’s readings from Revelation: “For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her.... (Revelation 18:3).” In Revelation, God commands His people: Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes (Revelation 18:4, 5).” I think it is important that the Church not become overly entangled with the corrupt systems of the world. We should also understand the tendency for governments to overstep their authority and seek to usurp priestly responsibilities and authorities, demanding allegiance to the government over God. This pattern is revealed in Daniel and Revelation with nations depicted as beasts. Will you follow the beast or the Lamb?

5. Zechariah 6:15 – “And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.” Many of God’s promises are conditional.

6. Proverbs 24:3, 4, 5 – “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled.... A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might.” Wisdom and knowledge are not the same thing. Wisdom is the ability to rightly apply knowledge in accordance with God’s will. Wisdom must be the foundation of knowledge for knowledge to be valuable. Knowledge that is not grounded in wisdom is ultimately destructive. God wants His people to acquire as much knowledge as possible, but wisdom is more important than knowledge. There are many very knowledgeable people in the world, but few with wisdom.

-- Psalm 111:10 -- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

7. Proverbs 24:10 – “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” Internal strength must be built up before you need it or you won’t have it when you need it. Adversity reveals what you are truly made of.

8. Proverbs 24:11, 12 – “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Behold, we did not know this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” God expects you to proclaim His truth to those you know need it, and He will hold you accountable for neglecting to tell others the truth they need.

9. Revelation 18:3 – “For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.” Sin and ungodliness are particularly associated with sexual immorality – sex outside the union of marriage between one man and one woman. How is the sanctity of marriage treated in America today?

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10. Revelation 18:4 -- "Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.'" You must choose between the success the world offers or the final victory God promises. The church must decide between syncretism with the world along with the comforts it offers or fidelity before God and eternal life God promises. The world ('Babylon the Great' – the ungodly religious-political-social-economic systems created by humans contrary to God's love; the 'world' which exploits and enslaves mankind) entices with offers of power, wealth, and pleasure. Are these your goals in life? God calls his people to purify themselves from the sinful world. How have you established a life-style that shows you are devoted to God and not to the world? The more entangled we become with the ungodly systems of the world, the more likely we are to compromise ourselves and lose our true power and the harder it is to free ourselves.

11. Revelation 18:5-6 -- "...for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed."

- God does not forget unconfessed sin.

- God will treat you the way you treat others and then some. No Christian has the right to receive the free gift of forgiveness through the blood of Jesus and then withhold forgiveness from anyone else.

12. Revelation 18:7 -- "As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'" Glory in self is sin. Rebellious people put their trust in self rather than God, and rebellious nations to the same. Both are cursed.

13. Revelation 18:9 -- "And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail." In addition to sexual immorality, the ungodly are also associated with luxurious living. God gives us resources to take care of our basic needs and then to take care of others in need, not to live like kings and queens on earth.

- Isaiah 55:2 -- Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

- Matthew 6:25 -- "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

14. Revelation 18:11 -- "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore." The world will make money its idol, and God will tear their idols down.

15. Revelation 18:13 -- "...cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls." Slave trade is part of the evil business practices of the world. Many Christians are enslaved in debt to bankers.

16. Revelation 18:14 -- "The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!" If you focus on material things, life gets quickly out of focus.

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17. Revelation 18:23 – "...and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride

will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery." Evil lives on deception.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 24 Dec 18: Consider what is motivating you to do what you are doing and will do today? Are you motivated mostly by fear, pride, duty, or by the greatest motivation of love? Are you chasing after worldly ambitions or are you truly following Jesus, one step at a time? What are you focused on today? Is it all about Jesus and fulfillment of the Great Commission and Great Commandment? Really? Take time throughout the day today to truly ask yourself, "Why am I really doing what I am doing?"

DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 7, Sunday, 23 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+3%2C+4%3B+pro+23%3B+psalm+148>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 23 December 18:

1. Zechariah 3:2 – "And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?'" Satan, the accuser has no case against the one God has chosen.

2. Zechariah 3:4-7 -- "And the angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.' And I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by. And the angel of the Lord solemnly assured Joshua, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.'"

- "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." Only Jesus can take away our iniquity and make us clean again.

- Joshua was given the free gift of forgiveness by the mercy and grace of God. THEN there was an expectation and demand for Joshua to walk with God and remain obedient to God that Joshua would be worthy for holy service. This conditional "If... Then..." statement is repeated several times in the Bible, revealing the impact that our decisions have on our fruitfulness. We are saved by faith, not by works, but grace is a call to obedience that we might both glorify God as we should and also receive the fulfillment in our purpose, joy.

3. Zechariah 3:8 – "I will bring my servant the Branch." Jesus is both the perfect Priest (Hebrews) and the promised Branch.

4. Zechariah 4:6 -- "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

- God is glorified when He uses us to do things we could never accomplish with human abilities. When there is no question that human talents and abilities had nothing to do with it, God is best revealed. We must be guided and walk by the power of the Spirit rather than the flesh. We must trust in the wisdom of God and follow his commands rather than leaning on our own understanding and doing what seems

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right in our own eyes. What God would have us do is 180-out than what we are being told continually by the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must live by 'every word that proceeds from God's mouth,' day-by-day. Our power is not natural; it is supernatural when we are obedient to God and step into Loins' Dens and fiery furnaces in faith, hope, and love. Today we read that Joshua was cleansed from sin and clothed in purity by the power of God – new clothes, not cleaned clothes, gifted not earned. But then we read that Joshua, after grace, is given the conditions for service and position in the Kingdom – "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts." It takes faith to obey; without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith trust in the power of God rather than human power. Only the power of God could enable an unconfident, poorly spoken, fugitive like Moses to lead the greatest exodus in human history; only the power of God could enable 300 foot-mobile farmers to defeat an innumerable multitude of heavily armed, experienced, ruthless, camel riding marauders. So, when Jesus commanded His small group of very imperfect followers to make disciples of all nations, was that possible? Certainly, if Jesus said it was, but not through their power, but through His, which is why He reminded them that all authority on heaven and on earth had been given to Him and that He would be with them always. When Jesus told his disciples to love their enemies, was He being realistic? Of course, because He was the One who would achieve reconciliation through them. It is faith that believes that when God gives an assignment it is no longer impossible but rather an absolute certainty. Yet a lack of faith can cause us to modify God's word to find an interpretation that seems more plausible to us. In Jeremiah 32:27, God challenges us: "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?" So, when God calls you for an impossible or seemingly irrelevant or insignificant task, how do you respond? Stories like that of Moses remind us that no task given to us by God is too big for us, but we must also remember that no task God gives us is too small for us either. Jesus said, that He did only what the Father led him to do; notice that Jesus (much to the dismay of his disciples) spent much of His time ministering to nobodies, talking to people who no one else would talk to, noticing who everyone else had long forgotten. Why? Because the Father commanded Him. Isn't that how you should transform the world around you? Absolutely. We cannot comprehend the power of the small, seemingly insignificant things we do in faith and obedience to God, because God's measurements are not our measurements. Led by love for Jesus, a woman humbly and quietly performs a simple act of anointing Jesus' feet with perfume, nothing spectacular, no miracles, no performances, no sermons, just an act of love seen by very few; yet Jesus proclaimed, "truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." The Bible tells us that the small gifts we give to others in the name of Christ are "a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- God's word came to His people at a critical time. They were a despondent, disillusioned people who faced a daunting task. They had been exiled in Babylon for seventy years. During this time they had witnessed the strength of the most dominant military power in their world. They had watched the Babylonian army marching off to conquer other nations. They had seen the wealth and splendor of the Babylonian king. When Babylon was in turn conquered by the Persians, the Israelites saw an even greater superpower emerging on the world stage. They lost heart when they compared their own weakness and captivity with the enormous strength and wealth of the superpowers of their day. As the Israelites returned to Jerusalem after seventy years in captivity, they found their city in ruins. Their magnificent temple had been destroyed. The city walls had been torn down. They had no resources to rebuild their splendid city. As these former refugees looked at the mammoth task before them, they realized their poverty and weakness, and they became greatly dismayed. Then came God's

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word! He promised that they would, indeed, rebuild their city. But, He told them, the rebuilding would not be accomplished by their own power and resources but by His Spirit. As long as they had God's Spirit, they had everything they needed. There will be times when obeying God will lead you to impossible situations. If you look at your own skills, knowledge, and resources, you will become discouraged. However, when you became a Christian, God placed His Spirit within you. You now have the resources of heaven at your disposal. The success of your endeavors will not depend on the way you use your own resources but on how you obey the Spirit of God.

5. Zechariah 4:6-10 – Completion of the temple would show that Zechariah is a true prophet.

6. Zechariah 4:10 – “For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- The world loves the spectacular. God has proven that He is certainly capable of the extraordinary, but He often chooses to work through the ordinary and seemingly insignificant. In this way He demonstrates His love and His power. Throughout history, God's answer to a critical time was to send a baby. Isaac, Moses, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Jesus were all born as answers to a time of need.... When Jesus selected His first disciples, He could have enlisted a multitude to follow Him, but He chose twelve. It was not the number of disciples but the quality of their walk with Him that would determine how they affected their world. When Jesus fed a multitude, five loaves of bread and two fish from a boy's lunch were sufficient in the hands of the Lord. Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32). The mustard seed was the smallest seed known to the Jews, yet it grew into an enormous tree. He also likened God's kingdom to leaven that is hardly noticeable but raises the entire batch of dough (Matt. 13:33). When children came to Jesus, His disciples assumed they were an annoyance and chased them away (Matt. 19:13-15). But Jesus said that in order to enter His kingdom, people must approach God as a child. Christians often accept the adage “the bigger the better.” We measure success by the number of people involved in our ministry. We seek spectacular displays of God's power. We must learn to view success as God does. God is interested in the heart; He is pleased with obedience.

7. Proverbs 23:4 -- "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist." If your pursuit of productivity gets in the way of your relationship with God and others, your productivity, your accomplishments, have become your idol – sin to you. Don't sacrifice what matters for what ultimately doesn't matter.

8. Proverbs 23:17 -- "Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day."

- Following Jesus is a daily endeavor that requires self-control. Galatians 5:19-21 says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Notice how these sins involve a lack of self-control. However, Galatians 5:22 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Notice that self-control comes from the Spirit, not merely human will. Note that the key to self-control is belonging to Christ and being crucified with Him and being born again into a new creation:

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-- Galatians 2:20 -- I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

-- 2 Corinthians 5:17 -- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

-- Galatians 6:15 -- For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

-- Luke 9:23 -- And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

-- Luke 14:27 -- Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

- The Bible describes envy as one of the most dangerous of emotions. It involves resentment over the wealth, blessings, talents, good fortune, or achievements of another. The envious person feels a deep sense of injustice that can only be directed at God who provides all things to all people. This verse points out that envy is a deep spiritual sin which tempts you into a tantrum of rebellion against God. Be very careful not to be envious of others, but rather be thankful for what God is doing in your life to bless you.

9. Proverbs 23:20, 21 -- "Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags." It is interesting that the Bible places alcoholism and excessive eating into the same category -- what do they have in common? They both demonstrate a lack of self-control, and idolatrous dependency, misdirected emotions, escapism, and destructive behavior. God wants you to have self-control through the Spirit, and to desire and depend on Him that you might experience the fullness of life and joy.

10. Psalm 148:5 -- "Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded and they were created." The creation praises God and brings glory to God by fulfilling the purpose God intended for it. We were created to love Him and others, and we praise Him and bring glory to Him when we obey the Great Command of love. Will you praise God today and glorify Him by fulfilling your purpose of love?

11. Psalm 148:14 -- "He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the Lord!" He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the Lord!" God has chosen you and your church to be instruments of praise so all the world can praise Him.

12. Psalm 148 -- One of God's primary commands for you is to praise Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 23 Dec 18: Focus on your relationships today, your relationship with Jesus and your relationships with others. Strive to love selflessly and unconditionally. Love those who are hard to love. Love sacrificially. Do not seek anything for yourself. Take on the role of a humble servant in all of your relationships. Deny yourself, take up your cross in relationships, and follow Jesus. (see today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 6, Saturday, 22 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zech+1%2C+2%3B+pro+22%3B+psalm+147>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 22 December 18:

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Note: Here is a short video overview of Zechariah: https://youtu.be/_106IfO6Kc0

1. Zechariah 1:3 -- "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Return to Me,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I will return to you,'" The Father drew you to Jesus Christ, but you must choose to continue to follow Him. Your salvation is secure in His perfect, unyielding love, and you have received the Holy Spirit; but the Bible warns that, in sin, you can "grieve" the Holy Spirit, "quench" the Holy Spirit, and get out of "step" with the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thes 5:19; Gal 5:25) – Don't do that! Your response to Jesus in your life will set the conditions for everything else in your life. In a practical sense, sin moves you away from Jesus, causing separation from Him, but you can return to Him by repenting and rejecting your sin. Returning to the Lord involves turning away from evil and following Him again in loving, wholehearted obedience. Nearness to God is not a distance in the physical realm, but rather distance in the spiritual realm. When we choose to sin, we are choosing to distance ourselves from God who, as a Holy God, cannot partner with or bless sin. If you have drifted from God, His call is to return to Him. God promises that if you will return, He will immediately renew His relationship with you. James 4:8 promises that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Matthew 7:7 guarantees that if we seek Christ, we will find Him. Much of the Christian life rests upon our response and our desire to experience God to the fullest.

-- Matthew 16:24 -- If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

-- 1 John 1:9 -- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Why is it that some Christians seem to go so much deeper in their walk with God than others? Why have some had such powerful intercessory prayer ministries that have changed the courses of nations? Why has God chosen to anoint the words of some so that, when they speak or pray or preach, it is obvious that their words are consecrated by God? It is because these individuals have committed themselves to pursue God until His presence is powerfully real in their lives. They have decided to settle for nothing less than a vibrant relationship with God, and He has honored their desire. Have you become complacent with your relationship with God, or are you hungering for more? Don't become satisfied with a relationship with God that is broken by sin and void of the power of the Holy Spirit. You have just as much of God's powerful presence available to you as the greatest saint in Christian history! Return to God. There is so much more in store for you if you will return to Him. He awaits your response.

2. Zechariah 1:5, 6 -- "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?" People come and go, but God's word stands forever. It is the height of pride and arrogance to think, in our fleeting existence, with our so very limited intellect and experiences, we can somehow become too smart for God's word or that we can somehow understand God and His will from our own perceptions. Obey God and His word, and don't rely on your own feeble understanding or on advice from other blind guides.

3. Proverbs 22:6 -- "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Habit patterns instilled in childhood are VERY hard to break. The strength of the family unit is vital to

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national strength. You may have bad habits that started from your upbringing, they are hard to break, but the Spirit is greater than the flesh.

4. Proverbs 22:7 -- "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender." Avoid all debt because God's people should not be slaves to the world.

5. Proverbs 22:9 -- "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor." Giving and generosity is all about perspective. What you really believe about God will be revealed in how you give. Fear makes people stingy.

6. Proverbs 22:11 -- "He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend." Your mouth reflects what is in your heart and affects all of your relationships.

7. Proverbs 22:24, 25 -- "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare." Anger is a snare that will needlessly entangle you.

8. Psalm 147:1 -- "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting." Singing praises to God is a healthy habit you should develop. Learn Christian songs to sing to yourself throughout the day to keep your spirits up and to keep you focused.

9. Psalm 147:6, 11 -- "The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.... but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love."

- The Lord blessed the humble and curses the prideful. The world honors the prideful and views humility as weakness.

- The wicked are those who have not humbled themselves before the Lord, surrendering to His rule and His sovereignty over their lives -- the wicked are in rebellion. "Rebellion is the inborn tendency to give in to the lies of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-focus. It results in a habitual violation of God-given boundaries. Autonomy says, 'I have the right to do what I want when I want to do it.' Self-sufficiency says, 'I have everything I need in myself, so I don't need to depend on or submit to anyone.' Self-focus says, 'I am the center of the world. It is my right to live for myself and to do only what brings me happiness.' These are the lies of the Garden, the same lies Satan has whispered in generation after generation of willing ears. They deny our basic makeup as human beings. We were not created to be autonomous. We were designed to be in daily submission to God and to live for His glory. Living outside this design will never work. Independence, self-sufficiency and self-absorption lead us to think of ourselves first and to climb over the fences between ourselves and our desires. We want control and hate being controlled. We want to make up the rules and change them whenever it suits us. Essentially we want to be God, ruling the world according to our will. No matter what else we are rebelling against, our rebellion is ultimately directed at God. We refuse to recognize His authority, robbing him of his glory and usurping his right to rule." (Paul David Tripp) We want a Savior, but we often don't want a Lord and Savior. However, to love Him is to fear Him and to obey Him. One is impossible without the other.

10. Psalm 147:20 -- "They do not know his rules."

- The rules in the Bible are not merely a list of dos and don'ts intended to control your behavior. They are intended to help you understand the ways of God, to help you develop the mind of Christ, to help convict you of sin, to help you appreciate the grace and mercy you have received, to change your heart,

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and to draw you closer and closer to Jesus. God intends for us to follow His commands, but he doesn't want just your duty, but rather your heart. God wants us to truly love Him to the point where the rules become a non-issue because you naturally obey. Jesus was the model of obedience to the rules, and Jesus said, that He did not come to abolish the law, but rather to fulfill it. Pure love obeys naturally without the need of rules. You don't need a law to tell you to do what you love doing or not to do what you hate doing. If your heart is right, the rules are not needed, but where your heart is not right, the rules become a needed guide and control to keep you from sinning.

- God expects all nations to obey His rules, and He punishes those who don't.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 Dec 18: Humbly obey God's word today, and consider deeply where obedience was difficult for you and why. Search your heart to consider what made obedience hard. Discern where you are still not perfected in love, and pray that God will help you surrender more and more to His love. Love makes obedience easy and joyful. (see today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 5, Friday, 21 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=haggai+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+21%3B+Revelation+17>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 21 December 18:

Note: Here is a short video overview of Haggai: https://youtu.be/juPvv_xcX-U

1. Haggai 1:1 -- "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest." The day God spoke to Haggai and to Joshua was recorded as a historic event on a specific day. Have you recorded the dates when God has clearly worked in your life?

2. Haggai 1:4-6, 9 -- "'Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?' Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it. 'Why?' declares the Lord Almighty. 'Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.'"

- The Great Commission has been hindered because God's people have prioritized themselves over God. Many can't seem to find time for Bible study, prayer, fellowship, evangelism, and ministry, but they seem to have time for everything else. They can't afford to tithe, but they do have plenty of debt, a large TV, a nice car, and a communications bill (cable, cell phone, satellite TV, internet, etc) well over \$100 per month. It is about choices today just like it was in Haggai's time.

- We were created to serve God, glorify Him, and enjoy Him forever. To do anything else is to defy our very nature and purpose, leaving us like fish out of water. Solomon discovered this when he sought to define his own purpose and direction only to determine that anything apart from God's Will was "meaningless, meaningless, meaningless." At the end of his misadventure, he came to the following conclusion: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13)." If we choose to seek our own kingdoms on earth rather seeking "first the Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33);" and if we

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allow “the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth (Matthew 13:22)” to distract us from God’s purpose, we will not only remain personally unfulfilled, we will also live unfruitful, meaningless lives. In the church of America, less than four percent of “committed” Christians tithe while the average adult spends somewhere above 30% of their monthly income paying back debt. Have we surrendered the Great Commission to our pursuit of the American Dream? Haggai declares that it is time to focus on the Mission and declares: “Be strong, all you people of the land,” declares the Lord, “and work. For I am with you,” declares the Lord Almighty (Haggai 2:4).”

3. Haggai 1:13, 14 -- “I am with you, declares the LORD.’ And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.” When you finally decide to put God first in your life, He will empower you to accomplish great things for His glory, not for your glory.

4. Haggai 2:4-9 -- “Yet now be strong.... Be strong.... Be strong, all you people.... Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts.... My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.... I will shake the heavens and the earth.... I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.” God’s plans are god-sized and will be impossible for you to accomplish through your own power and resources. God will ALWAYS ask you to do what you cannot do so that He can reveal His power to the world rather than your power, leaving no doubt who did the work, and bringing glory to Himself. It takes complete faith and obedience to follow God, but He will provide beyond your wildest imaginations in ways than can only be described as miraculous. The Spirit will empower you if you keep in step with the Spirit and do not quench the Spirit.

5. Haggai 2:17 -- “I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord.” In hard times, God expects you to consider your ways to see how you might be sinning against Him. God brings glory to Himself by forgiving sin, but not by blessing sin. God forgives graciously and then demands justice and righteousness to follow.

6. Proverbs 21:1 -- “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.” God is in control of all the world’s leaders to accomplish His purposes. God can use leaders as instruments of blessing or as instruments of punishment.

7. Proverbs 21:2 -- “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.” God knows your heart better than you do. If you want to know the truth of yourself, ask God to reveal it to you.

8. Proverbs 21:3 -- “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” God is not looking for empty ritual. He wants obedience motivated by genuine love for Him.

9. Proverbs 21:4 -- “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.” Your heart directs your focus and what you prioritize in life. A bad heart leads to bad daily decisions. As the old Pastor says, “The heart of man’s problem is the problem with man’s heart.”

-- Ezekiel 11:19 -- And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

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-- Ezekiel 18:31 -- Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

-- Ezekiel 36:26 -- And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

10. Proverbs 21:16 -- "One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead." True leaders guide you down the right path. Only Jesus knows the right path, and you must follow Him. Otherwise, you will wander aimlessly down a different path that leads to destruction. Someone once said, "Leaders know the way and show the way." Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life..." Jesus also said that eternal life is knowing Him (John 17:3). So, true leadership is knowing Jesus and making Him known to others.

11. Proverbs 21:17 -- "Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." Don't become a pleasure seeker.

12. Proverbs 21:27 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." God sees and judges the motives behind your actions. What we might judge as good deeds, God might judge as bad (and vice versa), because we aren't honest with ourselves about the motives behind our actions, but God knows. We are motivated to do things, seemingly good or bad, for many reasons -- fear, greed, pride, duty (because we feel obligated), or love. The Bible says that if the action isn't motivated by love, it is merely a "filthy rag" or a "clanging cymbal" (noise). What motivates you to do the things you do? Before you do something, ask yourself why you are really doing it. Are you motivated by love? Really? Search your heart. Pray that God will show you the truth of your heart that is hard for you to see. Seek the heart of Jesus.

13. Revelation 17:1, 2 -- "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." God will judge all infidelity.

14. Revelation 17:1-14 -- "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." The world's powers offer enjoyment and success, but they are evil, opposed to God, and will not win in the end.

15. Revelation 17:6 -- "And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." The wicked take pleasure in persecuting Christians, and God allows His people to be persecuted for His purposes, but the faithful are honored by God in the end.

16. Revelation 17:7-14 -- World powers are tied to Satan who was defeated at the cross, but still exercises power until end time.

17. Revelation 17:9 -- "This calls for a mind with wisdom." Understanding God's word requires more than just intellect, it requires wisdom. Many have a mind (intellect) without wisdom. Wisdom comes only from God -- it is not something we can achieve without the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Only God can show us what we cannot possibly understand from our own knowledge. You must have Holy Spirit given wisdom to study and understand this book.

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18. Revelation 17:14 -- "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." True followers of Jesus are both chosen and faithful to Him.

19. Revelation 17:17 -- "For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled."

- God's people seek with great daily diligence to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16; Phil 4:7), while the wicked have the mind of Satan. Both groups have unity, the Christians unified in Christ and everyone else unified in Satan. Today, there are many calls for unity, but unity apart from Jesus results in collective destruction.

- God will use evil earthly powers in His plan to defeat evil. He remains in control, allowing the evil to believe that they have succeeded in their plans.

20. Revelation 17:18 -- "And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth." The woman appears to be a world system (government, economic, values, etc.) that controls seven major nations (v9), five nations fall to one major power who reigns under the one-world system for a while and is replaced by another nation who reign under the one-world system for a while. (vs 9, 10) An eighth power will rise with ten kings. (vs 11, 12)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 Dec 18: Commit today to eliminating all personal debt and to giving at least 10% of your income to the church. Keep an accounting of how you use the resources God has given you, endeavoring to use your resources to serve the Kingdom of God and not for self-serving purposes. (Haggai 1:5, 6, 9)

DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 4, Thursday, 20 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=zeph+1-3%3B+proverbs+20%3B+Revelation+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 20 December 18:

Note: Here is a short video summary of Zephaniah: <https://youtu.be/oFZknKPNvz8>

Note: Once again, when was the last time you heard a sermon on Zephaniah? Congratulations again on reading all of God's word this year.

1. Zephaniah 1:4, 5 – "I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom...." Syncretism has always been one of the greatest threats to the church – the blending of beliefs. In Jerusalem, God's people had allowed Baal worship to creep into their religious practices. Today, we allow secular humanism, and sometimes eastern religious ideas, to creep into our churches.

2. Zephaniah 1:7 -- "Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near." Silence before the Lord indicates humble, repentant submission to God's work in your life, including His discipline and testing.

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3. Zephaniah 1:12 -- "I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.'" God punishes the complacent, those who are not willing to take God's commands seriously, those who don't diligently fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

4. Zephaniah 1:17 -- "I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord." Many act as if God will not punish sin. God holds all accountable for sin, whether they claim to believe in God or not.

5. Zephaniah 1:18 -- "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord." Faithfulness to God is the only hope for security. Personal or national strength is an illusion if it is not built upon the foundation of integrity before the Lord.

6. Zephaniah 2:3 -- "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord."

- Seeking the Lord involves humbly obeying His commands. When others drift from God, that is the time to draw even closer to Him. Faithfulness may not keep you from suffering the consequences of communal sin, but God will honor your fidelity nonetheless. Obedience is an act of humility and trust.

- The Bible says that if you seek the Lord with all your heart you will find Him. However, it is impossible to seek the Lord in proud disobedience. Seeking the Lord involves obeying His commands and humbly seeking righteousness. A heart that truly desires God is a heart that desires to do His will. A heart that desires to do His will desires to study God's word diligently and to live by it. How we approach God's word says something about the condition of our hearts.

- Deuteronomy 4:29 -- But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

- 1 Chronicles 16:10 -- Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!

- 1 Chronicles 16:11 -- Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!

- 1 Chronicles 22:19 -- Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God.

- 1 Chronicles 28:8 -- Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God.

- 1 Chronicles 28:9 -- [David's Charge to Solomon] "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

- 2 Chronicles 12:14 -- And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.

- 2 Chronicles 26:5 -- He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

- Psalm 34:10 -- The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

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- Psalm 105:4 -- Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!
- Proverbs 28:5 -- Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.
- Isaiah 51:1 -- "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.
- Isaiah 55:6 -- "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.
- Lamentations 3:25 -- The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.
- Hosea 10:12 -- Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.
- Amos 5:4 -- For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: "Seek me and live;
- 7. Zephaniah 2:9 -- "The remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them." God always preserves His remnant of faithful to restore the order of His will on earth.
- 8. Zephaniah 2:15 -- "This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, 'I am, and there is no one else.' What a desolation she has become." In security and prosperity, people have a tendency to turn from God. Those who are not faithful with little will not be faithful with much. Often prosperity magnifies what you already had in your heart, giving you more capacity to sin in ways you did not have the freedom to do previously. To strengthen an unfaithful person only makes them a more capable devil and speeds destruction. God might test your heart with trials but also with prosperity and comfort. The easy life ruins the half-hearted.
- 9. Zephaniah 3:2 -- "She does not trust in the Lord; she does not draw near to her God." Your goal in life should be to trust in the Lord more and more by drawing closer and closer to Him each day. We draw closer to God when we increasingly love Him and trust Him to obey Him. You will not obey who you do not trust, and you will not trust who you do not love. Conversely, the more you obey Him, the more you learn to trust Him and love Him.
- 10. Zephaniah 3:4 -- "Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men; her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the law." When a nation's religious leaders do not remain true to God's word, the nation goes from bad to worse. God holds religious leaders accountable for their lack of spiritual leadership within a nation.
- 11. Zephaniah 3:5 -- "The Lord within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame." Distance from God is our fault, not God's. He doesn't wander off, we do. God remains faithful and desires the same from us.
- 12. Zephaniah 3:6-7 -- "I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant. I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.' But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt." God did everything to bring His people to trust Him.

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13. Zephaniah 3:9 -- "For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord." God's plan is to convert the nations. However, He knows that they will not willingly change their hearts, though His witnesses have always been dispersed within their midst as examples to them, as faithful priests, as messengers of His truth.

14. Zephaniah 3:9-13 – Judgment leads to purifying of a humble remnant to serve God.

15. Zephaniah 3:12, 13 -- "But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

- In the midst of judgment, God's faithful followers are humble, lowly, and unafraid.

- In the Marine Corps there is a saying often repeated: "Complacency kills." In our readings today, Zephaniah reveals how complacency led to the destruction of Israel (Zephaniah 1:12). Merriam-Webster defines complacency as "self-satisfaction... accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies." In their comfort, security, and wealth, the nation had forgotten God's Word, despite God's many warnings: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:8)." They became guilty of the sin of syncretism, and casual sin became the norm (Zephaniah 1:4, 5, 12). Zephaniah pleads to the "shameful nation" to repent but laments that "She obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord (In God we Trust?), she does not draw near to her God (Zephaniah 3:2)." He is careful to point out that both the government officials and the religious leaders were complicit in the downfall of the nation (Zephaniah 3:3, 4). Watching the nation fall apart Zephaniah (in Zephaniah 3:12-13 -- the verse provided above) calls upon God's true followers who actually attempt to obey God's commands to continue to pursue righteousness, apart from the pattern of the world around them:

- Zephaniah 2:3 -- Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger....

- Matthew 6:33 -- "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness."

- Hebrews 10:23-31 -- "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'It is mine to

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avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

16. Zephaniah 3:19 -- "Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors." There is a time of oppression before God brings judgment against those who persecute God's people.

17. Proverbs 20:3 -- "It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling." To be clear, quarrelling is a sign of foolishness, a lack of wisdom and ungodliness.

18. Proverbs 20:6 -- "Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?" Fidelity is proof of love and one of the most valuable character traits.

19. Proverbs 20:9 -- "Who can say, 'I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin'?" The humble Christian who recognizes their own sin and their need for mercy, grace, and forgiveness from God through Jesus, finds it easy to forgive others. It is false pride that makes forgiveness hard.

20. Proverbs 20:11 -- "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright." What you do reveals what you really believe.

21. Proverbs 20:15 -- "There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel." Few people truly speak wisdom, and truly wise people use words most sparingly.

22. Proverbs 20:22 -- "Do not say, 'I will repay evil'; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you."

- When someone hurts you, is your first thought is to get back at them? Do look at the situation selfishly and with a prideful spirit? In the heat of the moment, do you forget that God knows exactly what is going on and has allowed the offense in question to occur for purposes you cannot understand? Your responsibility is to glorify God in your response (response-able-ty), trusting Him to honor your obedience. Do you tend to demand "justice" upon others who have offended you because you have forgotten your complete guilt and dependence on God's grace? It is when you think of yourself as "good," wise, and innocent that you tend respond to others inappropriately. However, it is when you have been humbled by the Lord that you tend to be more loving and forgiving toward others. This was the case with David. When he felt honorable, he tended to inappropriately defend his own honor. However, after he had sinned terribly with Bathsheba, he had not the heart to defend himself, recognizing in humility the true state of his unrighteousness -- see 2 Samuel 16. I pray the God will continue to strengthen my faith that I might trust Him with my defense rather than sinning in pride.

- It is not our place to get even, play tit for tat, or to settle the score. We are called to return good for evil, to bless those who curse us, and to take up our cross in all relationships. Yes, this is extremely difficult, unless the Cross of Christ is a true reality in our hearts. Nothing we suffer in our forgiveness of others will come close in comparison to what Jesus suffered in forgiveness of us. When you offer mercy, grace, peace, and love to others in the midst of persecution, you are in fellowship with Jesus, drawing closer to Him. It is quite an honor God have given you. Can you see restraint as an act of strength rather than an act of weakness?

23. Proverbs 20:30 -- "Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts." Some people can only learn the hard way.

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24. Revelation 16:6 -- "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets." God allows the persecution of His people that sinners might come either to repentance or judgment. God's people are perfectly loved and blessed by God nonetheless. Our reward is not prosperity on earth; our reward is Him.

25. Revelation 16:7 -- "And I heard the altar saying, 'Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!'" God's judging acts are true to His character and promises, and righteous in restoring justice.

26. Revelation 16:10, 11 -- "People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds." The unrepentant sinner receives the consequences of his sins and blames God.

27. Revelation 16:12-16 -- "The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ('Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!') And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." God prepares the way for the final battle in the Valley of Megiddo.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 20 Dec 18: Be a true leader today; lead people to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, the Life.

DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 3, Wednesday, 19 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hab+1-3%3B+prov+19%3B+revelation+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 19 December 18:

Note: Here is a video overview of Habakkuk: <https://youtu.be/OPMaRqGJPUU>

Note: When was the last time you heard a sermon from Habakkuk? Congratulations on reading all of God's word this year.

1. Habakkuk 1:1-4 -- "O Lord.... Why?..." God's plans won't always make sense to us, and God will often leave our questions unanswered. During the exam, the Professor is silent.

2. Habakkuk 1:3 -- "Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?" In times of desperation, even the most faithful will question why God allows injustice, iniquity, and suffering. God values honest prayers.

3. Habakkuk 1:5 -- "Look among the nations and watch--Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you." From Henry T. Blackaby -- Christians habitually seek God's voice through prayer, through His word, or through His messengers. Yet sometimes we fail to hear God speak through His activity, even though He is working all around us. Unbelievers see God's activity without understanding what they see. God encourages His people to watch for His activity so they will know how they should respond and adjust their lives. The disciples discovered much about God's power by witnessing Jesus calming a raging storm with a command. Seeing Jesus dine with the notorious sinner, Zacchaeus, taught them a poignant message about God's

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love for sinners. Watching Jesus hang upon the cross communicated a compelling message of what God was willing to do to free people from sin. Discovering the empty tomb revealed an astounding truth of God's victory over death. To those with spiritual discernment, God's activity is a significant revelation about His heart and His will. If you are sensitive to what God is doing around you, He will clearly speak to you through His activity. You will know that God is at work, because what you see will astound you, and human power and wisdom will not explain it. If things happen that are direct answers to your prayers, God is speaking to you. When you experience events that surpass your understanding and ability, it may be that God is communicating a critical message to you. If you want to hear God's voice, look around you to see what He is doing. When you are watching for God at work, what you see will reveal His character, and you will have a fresh understanding of how to respond to Him.

4. Habakkuk 1:6 -- "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own." God uses evil nations and people to accomplish His good purposes.

5. Habakkuk 2:1 -- "I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected."

- Life is full of hard questions. Too rarely do Christians wait for God's answer rather than choosing their own answer, often convincing themselves in their impatience that it is from God when it isn't. The world would say, "Don't just stand there; do something!" But God says, "Don't just do something; stand there, and wait on me." Getting ahead of God results in sin (missing the mark). As the old Marine Corps saying goes, "Go with what you know." Keep doing what you know God told you to do until you understand clearly what His next directions are; but, make sure you are really listening. Don't let emotions drag you away from your watch post.

- The watchman's job was vital. An approaching army left residents of an ancient city precious little time to flee or to prepare for battle. Everyone's life depended on the alert watchman as he peered into the horizon for the earliest glimpse of an approaching threat. It was critical that the people be alerted as soon as possible to what was coming. As a Christian, God places you as a watchman for yourself, your friends, your family, and your church family. It is essential that you be attentive to what God is saying. It may be that a friend is in crisis and needs God's word. As you study your Bible, God may choose to give you words of encouragement to share with your friend. It may be that as your children face difficult challenges, God will speak to you as you pray and reveal how you can help them. If you are spiritually alert, you may receive a warning from God that addresses specific dangers that those around you are facing. If you are careless, on the other hand, your family may be struggling, but the answers God has for them will go unheard. If you are oblivious to God's message, those around you may miss the encouraging promise from God that He wanted to share through you. God holds His watchmen accountable for their diligence (Ezek. 33:6). Strive to be attentive to every word that comes to you from God. Your diligence will benefit you and those around you as you heed God's warnings and follow His commands.

6. Habakkuk 2:2-4 -- "And the Lord answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.'" Habakkuk the prophet complained to the Lord because wickedness and injustice seemed to prevail while the Lord appeared to stand idly by. Yet, God

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reminded Habakkuk that, in fact, He was still God and His perfect timing was not Habakkuk's. "If it seems slow, wait for it." As the old pastor says, "The Mills of God's justice grind slowly, but exceedingly fine." When Habakkuk reconsiders the Mightiness and Sovereignty of the God He serves, he is left with but one conclusion: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places." (Habakkuk 3:17-19) Do you have the faith to wait of the Lord?

- Psalm 37:7 -- Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

- Psalm 37:34 -- Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

- Isaiah 25:9 -- It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

- Lamentations 3:26 -- It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

7. Habakkuk 2:6 -- "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own— for how long? — and loads himself with pledges!" God will hold all evil doers accountable in His time. God will not be mocked. We cannot understand what God is doing; we must trust and obey.

8. Habakkuk 2:12-17 -- "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!... You will have your fill of shame instead of glory." Terrible judgement awaits those who take advantage of others.

9. Habakkuk 2:20 "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him." Habakkuk had a complaint for the Lord that may sound like what you hear from many today: "Why do you tolerate wrong (Habakkuk 1:3)...? Why... do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves (1:13)?" God explains that He intends to glorify His name before the kingdoms of men, "guilty men, whose own strength is their god (1:11)." Man wants to rule themselves apart from God, and God turns them over to the consequences of their own wickedness: "Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:13, 14)." God tells Habakkuk that His judgment comes in due course: "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it." (Habakkuk 2:3). In the New Testament 2 Peter 2:3 also gives perspective on God's delay in judgment: "In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation....' The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.... You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.... So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation...."Your King is King, and His plan is in

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work. Trust in God. Make the most of every opportunity that remains to spread the Good News of His Kingdom. "The righteous will live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4)."

- Revelation 15:3, 4 -- "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

10. Habakkuk 3:2 -- "O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear."

- Habakkuk had heard about the works and ways of God and feared God because of what he had heard. But now Habakkuk is having a personal encounter with God, now making him a true witness. You are a witness of what you have experienced from God first-hand, not merely a person who talks about what you have heard. If you have a hard time witnessing to others, it may be because you have not had or fully appreciated personal encounters with God. Experience comes through faith and obedience as God reveals to you His power and faithfulness in your life.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Only God can restore life to something that has died. If you find that your heart has grown cold to God, that the spiritual life of your family or church has waned, call out to God to revive you, for only He can give life. It is not your activity but your relationship with God that brings life! Spiritual fervor can ebb if left unattended. We all begin our walk with the Lord enthusiastically, with an excited sense of anticipation. But over time, busyness creeps in. We become distracted and let our sin go unchallenged. We may take our relationship with God for granted and not notice the gradual decline until we find ourselves drained of spiritual vitality. This descent can happen in your church just as it does in your personal life. Do you remember a time when the Holy Spirit was moving mightily in your church, and the members sensed God leading in an exciting direction? Are the services now lifeless and the power of God only a memory? At a time like this it is futile to try to bring back life yourself. You can organize many activities and exhort those around you, but only God can resurrect what is dead. If God has initiated something in your life, or family, or church, only He can sustain it or revive it. If you sense that the spiritual vigor has gone out of your life or the life of your church, this is God's invitation to pray. He wants you to intercede with Him so that He might revive His work. Jesus said that He is Life. It is unnecessary to remain spiritually lifeless when He has promised vibrant, abundant life if you will claim it.

11. Habakkuk 3:18 -- "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Only God can provide salvation. What God gives, no one can take away. Rejoice in the security of your salvation.

12. Habakkuk 3:17-18 -- "Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls--Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." From Henry T. Blackaby -- At times it seems that everything around you is collapsing. Endeavors you invested in may fail. People to whom you minister may disappoint you. The business or career you worked hard to build may crumble. These times, as difficult as they are, are opportunities to stop and examine what is truly important to you. Habakkuk witnessed the collapse of most of what mattered to him. Yet through the loss, failure, and disappointment, he was able to distinguish between what was precious to him and what was transitory and empty. He came to the point where he could sincerely say that even if everything around him failed, he still would rejoice in God. If the fig tree bore no fruit; if the vine produced no grapes; if the flocks and herds stopped reproducing; he would still praise God. His praise might not come easily, as he watched everything fall short of his expectations, but he would

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praise God nonetheless. Habakkuk could not make fig trees produce figs. He could not control the productivity of the flocks and herds, but he could control his own response to God. He chose to praise the Lord. Do things seem to be falling apart around you? You can still praise God. Your praise for Him does not depend on the success of your endeavors but on God's nature and His love and faithfulness to you. Ask God to help you look past worldly concerns to understand the reasons you have to praise Him.

13. Proverbs 19:2 -- "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." A goal without a realistic plan is just a dream.

14. Proverbs 19:9 -- "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish." A false witness offers hope in something other than Jesus. We were not created to be ambassadors of organizations, philosophies, theories, morality, or bright ideas. We were created to be ambassadors of Jesus. People don't need another self-help program, another positive motivational speaker, or a personal guru. They need Jesus.

15. Proverbs 19:11 -- "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." God expects us to show mercy and grace to people as He has shown us mercy and grace. Mercy is not giving people the punishment they deserve, and grace is giving them the forgiveness they don't deserve. Do you have good sense?

16. Proverbs 19:14 -- "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." Character is more valuable than riches, and it cannot be transferred from one person to another. It comes from a life that chooses to follow Jesus one day at a time over time. Noble character only comes from God.

17. Proverbs 19:15 -- "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger." God expects you to be a hard worker. He does not bless laziness.

18. Proverbs 19:23 -- "The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied." Godly people are satisfied with what God has given them and content. Ungodly people are never satisfied.

19. Revelation 15:2 -- "And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands." It would appear that God's people encounter the beast and conquer him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Dec 18: Tell people today how you have personally experienced God, not just what you have read or heard about Him. It is helpful to write down all the ways God has worked in your life. Tell your story as a first-hand witness. (Habakkuk 3:2)

DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 2, Tuesday, 18 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=nahum+1-3%3B+proverbs+18%3B+Revelation+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 18 December 18:

Note: Here is a short video overview of Nahum: <https://youtu.be/Y30DanA5EhU>

1. Nahum 1:2 -- "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God." Many act as if this statement only applies to the "Old Testament God." However, James says, "Do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture

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says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us' (James 4:5) God does not change. It is important to understand that God's jealousy is not the same as human jealousy which is condemned in Galatians 5:20. In human jealousy, people desire to selfishly protect what isn't rightfully theirs at the expense of another. But God perfectly protects what is rightfully His to the benefit of all. God knows He is our life, and He intends for nothing to get between us and Him. Most people are sinfully jealous, but not always. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:2, "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ." Note that Paul's motive was the same as God's, to let nothing get between others and God, rather than himself. In His righteous jealousy, God hates our idols, those things we allow to distract us from Him. God will tear down our idols, often in painful ways, for our good and His glory – "When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him (Psalm 39:11).

2. Nahum 1:3 -- "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty." God is patient but will also hold all accountable. Through grace, we have forgiveness of our sins, but grace is not an excuse to continue in sin. With His children, God punishes but does not condemn. God's discipline is intended to draw us closer to Him, not further away, that we would truly know Him in unity and have the abundance of life. Be thankful for God's discipline.

- Psalm 118:18 -- The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.
- Proverbs 3:11 -- My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof,
- Proverbs 6:23 -- For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,
- Proverbs 12:1 -- Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.
- Proverbs 13:24 -- Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
- Proverbs 19:18 -- Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.
- Proverbs 22:15 -- Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
- 1 Corinthians 11:32 -- But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
- Hebrews 12:6-11 -- For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

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3. Nahum 1:7, 8 – “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.”

- Jesus is no better friend but no worse enemy.

- The subject of Nahum's prophecy is the approaching complete and final destruction of Nineveh, the capital of the great and at that time flourishing Assyrian empire. Nineveh was a city of vast extent, and was then the center of the civilization and commerce of the world, a "bloody city all full of lies and robbery" (Nahum 3:1), for it had robbed and plundered all the neighboring nations. It was strongly fortified on every side, bidding defiance to every enemy. Massive walls were eight miles in circumference. It had a water aqueduct, palaces and a library with 20,000 clay tablets, including accounts of a creation in Enuma Elish and a flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

- We just read about Nineveh in Jonah when God, in His mercy and grace, offers Nineveh a chance to repent and spares Nineveh from His wrath, much to the dismay of Jonah who had witnessed first-hand the evils of the Assyrian Empire. In Jonah we see that God is “slow to anger.” (Nahum 1:3). Yet, after their repentance and God’s forgiveness, Nineveh returns to its wicked ways, defying the mercy, grace, sovereignty, and holiness of God. Spiritually, they become adulterous, and now in Nahum God will reveal His wrath, something that isn’t talked much about anymore. (Nahum 3:4) Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” Nineveh is about to learn this the hard way. In our forgiveness, we must be very cautious not to mock God and denigrate Jesus’s sacrifice for our sins by continuing in the sins for which we have been forgiven.

4. Nahum 1:15 -- "Fulfill your vows." God expects Christians to walk in complete integrity. Jesus said, "Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'". Most importantly, we must fulfill our vow to Him as His bride and walk in faithfulness and purity as His and His alone.

5. Nahum 2:3 – “The shield of his mighty men is red; his soldiers are clothed in scarlet. The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them; the cypress spears are brandished.” Nineveh had great pride in their riches and military might, and Nineveh put their trust in their own abilities. All fell before God’s anger. You have faith in whatever you trust, depend, and rely. Where is your faith really?

6. Nahum 2:13 -- "Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke...." The wicked may appear very powerful before God utterly destroys them. We cannot possibly comprehend how small mankind's strength is before God.

7. Nahum 3:18 -- "Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber." Wicked nations have leaders who are oblivious to God's looming wrath, judgment, and destruction. The Assyrians did not believe in The One True God, but they were held accountable by Him nonetheless. God is still God whether one believes in Him or not, and God will act according to His will, not according to the way others think He should act.

8. Proverbs 18:1 – “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” You were created for relationships, to love God and others. This is your purpose. Isolation is a product of selfishness, fear, and pride. It is a sign of spiritual immaturity. Life is about relationships, and we have been given the mission of reconciliation. One way people deal with disagreeable people is to avoid them; Christians cannot do that.

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9. Proverbs 18:2 – “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.” One of the most important habits of a reconciler is to seek first to understand before being understood. Whether the other person is right or wrong, the reconciler must truly understand what is behind their position. Why are they doing what they are doing? Only then is there hope to address the heart of the matter at hand. All relational problems are, at their core, spiritual problems, disunity with Jesus. The world hates those who are hateful. Christians see beyond the issues and seek to draw the hateful to Jesus in love.

10. Proverbs 18:10-12 -- “The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it a wall too high to scale. Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.”

- Nahum’s prophesy of Nineveh’s is particularly brutal, which is somewhat ironic since Nahum’s name means “The Lord comforts” or “comfort of the Lord.” However, God’s wrath would mean comfort to the victims of Nineveh – one of the reasons God hates sin is because it victimizes others. As you recall, Jonah warned Nineveh of God’s impending judgment, and they repented for a time. However, they soon returned to their evil ways. Jesus used Nineveh as an example to describe the destructiveness of returning to previously forgiven sin: “And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation (Matthew 12:45).” In fact, Nineveh had reached a place of no return: “Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal (Nahum 3:19).” Nahum’s prophesy mirrors the verses from Proverbs above concerning the Lord’s mercy and judgment: “The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness (Nahum 1:7, 8).” Nineveh rejected the Lord and placed its trust in its own power and great riches. Nineveh became a victimizing city (Nahum 3:1), destroying lives through its wickedness; God would tolerate it no longer: “‘I am against you,’ declares the Lord Almighty (Nahum 2:13).” Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, is an example of how God preserves a nation through the influence of His people (Jonah in this case) and judges a nation after patient warnings. What can we learn from the story of Nineveh?

11. Proverbs 18 – Notice how much the Bible has to say about the words that come out of your mouth. Do your words project the character of Jesus? Your words will reveal whether you are selfish or selfless.

12. Revelation 14:1 -- “Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.” God’s people are marked with the Father’s name. They are the property of the Father, and God does not surrender His property.

13. Revelation 14:4 -- “It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.” God’s people follow Jesus wherever He goes. Look and see -- everyone in the Bible who was used mightily by God had to leave their planned course to go where God led them, an unplanned path with a destination that had not yet been revealed to them. This is the walk of faith. Without faith to walk into the unknown because God told you to, it is impossible to please God.

14. Revelation 14:4, 7, 12 -- “It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.... Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.... Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.” God’s sheep follow their Shepherd, Jesus, ‘wherever he goes,’ and glorify God, not simply by believing in Jesus but rather by believing AND keeping “the

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commandments of God” with saintly endurance, even unto death. This is genuine worship. True faith is obedient faith. We cannot obey both the Truth and unrighteousness. We are called to obey Christ “with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart,” and to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.” Even our thought-life must be obedient. The fact that we fall down doesn’t give us an excuse not to get up.

- John 3:36 -- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- Acts 5:29 -- But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.

- Acts 5:32 -- And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

- Romans 2:8 -- but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

- Romans 6:12 -- Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

- Romans 6:16 -- Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

- 2 Corinthians 10:5 -- We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

- Galatians 5:7 -- You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

- Ephesians 6:1 -- Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

- Ephesians 6:5 -- Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,

- Philippians 2:12 -- Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

- Colossians 3:20 -- Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

- Colossians 3:22 -- Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

- 2 Thessalonians 1:8 -- in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:14 -- If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

- Hebrews 5:9 -- And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

- Hebrews 11:8 -- By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

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- 1 Peter 4:17 -- For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

- 1 John 5:2 -- By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

15. Revelation 14:5 -- "Their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless." Again, notice how much the Bible has to say about the words that come out of your mouth.

16. Revelation 14:6 -- "Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people." All people will have a chance to hear the Gospel.

17. Revelation 14:7, 8 -- "And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.' Another angel, a second, followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.'"

- It is never too late to Fear the Lord and worship Him.

- Fearing God and giving Him glory involves controlling your passions and urges to sin and obeying Him rather than submitting to temptation.

18. Revelation 14:9, 10 -- "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath." Every person is either marked by the beast or by the Father. There is no middle ground. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." (Luke 11:23) "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:16)

19. Revelation 14:12, 13 -- "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'" The Christian life requires endurance in obedience through suffering. Life is not about temporary comforts; it is about fidelity to Jesus. The lovingly obedient are blessed and find rest.

20. Revelation 14:12, 13 -- "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'" God's people will patiently obey God's commands and remain faithful to Jesus while the whole world turns to evil and persecutes them. Many will die for the Lord and will be called blessed.

21. Revelation 14:19 -- "So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." In God's time, He will separate His true followers from the wicked, including those who pretend to be Christians but really are not.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Dec 18: Follow Jesus today wherever He goes. (Revelation 14:4)

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DBRP - WEEK 51, Day 1, Monday, 17 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Micah+6%2C+7%3B+proverbs+17%3B+Revelation+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 17 December 18:

1. Micah 6:6-8 – “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

- The Israelites were continually ignoring God’s commands, ceremonially asking for forgiveness without real repentance, and then expecting that God their religiosity would make up for their unloving hearts and disobedience. However, Micah points out what is reiterated in Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” – “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil (Micah 6:7)?” Religious ceremony has no value apart from a humble heart, genuine surrender, genuine commitment, and the fruit of repentance – “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23).” Jesus said “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks (John 4:23).” Worship and loving service go hand-in-hand -- “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only (Luke 4:8).’” Paul said it this way: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1).” And James said it this way: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).” Our word “worship” comes from the Old English word “weorthscipe” which means worth + ship or worthiness. Our behavior reflects to the world what sort of honor we believe the Lord is “worth” in our eyes -- “And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).”

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- God never conceals His expectations from us. We never have to guess how we should live. In response to the misguided ways in which people sought to please God, the prophet Micah clearly explained what God does and does not expect. The people asked: Should we come to God with many offerings? Should we bring a thousand rams and ten thousand rivers of oil? Would God be pleased if we gave our firstborn child to Him to express our devotion? (Mic. 6:6-7). Micah’s response was straightforward: “He has shown you, O man, what is good.” Micah listed three things God desires. First, He wants us to show justice. The desire to receive justice is not enough. We must also be absolutely just in the way we treat others. If we have given our word, we should keep it with complete integrity. If we have people working for us, we should treat them as fairly as Jesus would. We should act justly in every relationship. Second, we are to love mercy. The knowledge that we have received undeserved mercy from God should motivate us to show mercy to others. We must resist the temptation to retaliate against those who have wronged us, choosing to show them mercy instead. Finally, God requires us to walk humbly with Him. God does not ask us for spectacular acts of service—He asks for humility. At times we try to make the Christian life far more complicated than it is. We may hide behind questions about the Bible or uncertainty about the second coming of Christ. We can allow

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ourselves to become distracted in order to avoid confronting what God has clearly told us to do today. If we strive to be completely obedient in the basics, the more complex assignments will become clear.

2. Micah 6:14 -- "You shall eat, but not be satisfied." Sinners are never satisfied.

3. Micah 7:1, 3, 5, 7 -- "Woe is me...! Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together. Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend. But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Micah laments over the conditions of a society that says, "Where is the Lord your God?" (Micah 7:10) The rich and powerful collude together to take advantage of the weak for their own personal gain, and neighbor cannot trust neighbor. Micah is overcome by woe as he considers God's judgment on His people -- "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him." (Micah 7:9) The psalmist once asked, "if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3) Micah's response is to remain steadfast, obedient, and to trust in the Lord who "does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love." (Micah 7:18) "In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, 'Flee like a bird to your mountain.'" (Psalm 11:1) "The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." (Proverbs 15:29)

4. Micah 7:2 -- "The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind." God's people are salt and light. Salt preserves and light prevents stumbling in the darkness. When there are not godly people around, the communities fall apart.

5. Micah 7:4 -- "The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge." The best of the ungodly are hurtful, despite their claims of goodness.

6. Micah 7:5 -- "Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend." The ungodly cannot be trusted no matter how close they are to you. Selfishness will eventually prevail where God isn't honored as Lord.

7. Micah 7:9 -- "I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication." Though overcome with woe, Micah maintains hope in God's forgiveness and restoration. Only Jesus can give you mercy and grace from a position of complete righteousness and justice.

8. Micah 7:18-20 -- "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old."

- We are passed over in judgment because we are marked with the blood of Jesus.

- God's love, compassion, and forgiveness are models for us to follow. How are you doing?

9. Proverbs 17:3 -- "The Lord tests hearts." How has the Lord tested your heart?

10. Revelation 13:7-10 -- "Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth

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will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints." Popular interpretations of revelation say that the saints won't suffer persecution. For a time, the saints are conquered by the beast and will require patient endurance. Revelation warns the saints to grow in endurance through persecution in order to be ready for greater persecutions and greater opportunities to glorify Him.

11. Revelation 13:8 – "...and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." Only God's people oppose satanic systems. Are you opposing the satanic system or relying on it?

12. Revelation 13:16, 17 – "Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name." Satan's ungodly system involves control of commerce. To trade, people will have to endorse sin. Most people will tell themselves they are still godly.

13. Revelation 13:18 -- "This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666." There are many theories about what the number 666 really means. Don't worry too much about it.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Dec 18: Give thanks to God for the grace that you have received through Jesus, and show your gratitude and love for Him by obeying Him regardless the personal cost. (see today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 50, Day 7, Sunday, 16 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=micah+4%2C+5%3B+pro+16%3B+psalm+146>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 16 December 18:

1. Micah 4:1-5 -- "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." In the latter days, God governs the world but still gives people a choice as to whether or not they will follow Him. God's people are those who are committed to serving and obeying only Him while everyone else chases after self-interest.

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2. Micah 4:13 – “Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote their gain to the Lord, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.” Our strength does not rely on military, economic, or political might. Our strength is in God and the power of the Gospel – “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

3. Micah 5:7, 8 – “Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.” God has spread His people amongst the nations to infiltrate their worldly systems, subverting the powers of evil, and tearing down spiritual strongholds with spiritual weapons. Christians operate “behind enemy lines” to seize territory in the Name of the Lord, not by military might but by the power of God through the Gospel and transformed lives committed to living for Him as King. “Be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth.” God has called His priests and Ambassadors to be united in purpose, across the globe as a Kingdom among the kingdoms of men, conducting ‘distributed operations’ with unity of effort and unity of action, making disciples from among the nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey God, all under the authority and power of Jesus Christ. All of Christianity should see themselves as a ‘people’ on a mission for the King, working in unison to prepare the way for the return of the King and His physical reign on earth. Of course, His people will never be fully united and the Kingdom will not be fully established on earth until, “then.... In that day” when Jesus returns, but blessed are those who the King finds doing His will when He does return, those diligently working towards “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.” So why don’t Christians today feel connected to a powerful, global Kingdom that is advancing God’s Kingdom, one heart at a time across the planet, tearing down evil strongholds, usurping evil empires, and defeating their adversaries? Perhaps, in part because the church has trusted in the strength and protection of the earthly kingdoms in which they live (confused Ambassadors); because the ‘priests’ of God’s Kingdom have ‘bowed down to the works of their own hands’ and have been consumed by the ‘worries of the world.’ We don’t see ourselves as, first and foremost, Kingdom People. We do not see ourselves as truly ‘on mission’ day-by-day to “be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth.” We are not united as a Kingdom as ‘stones of the Temple.’ Too often we see our faith as a means to achieve the ‘American dream’ rather than a call to serve the Master at all costs. God is at work, accomplishing His plan, with or without you. Are you part of our generation’s Gideon’s army, or did you skip the fight to go back to the comfort of your house? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17; spoken by Jesus not to the ‘unchurched,’ but to those who claimed to be God’s people).

4. Micah 5 -- In Micah the Lord challenges His people who are being punished and exiled: “Why do you now cry aloud— have you no king? Has your counselor perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor?” (Micah 4:9) As the Magi understood, the King of kings is Jesus, born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6). “He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord (Micah 5:4).” Until Christ’s return, His ambassadors, His kingdom of priests, will be “in the midst of many peoples like

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dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for man or linger for mankind (Micah 5:7)." The Kingdom People "will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which mauls and mangles as it goes, and no one can rescue (Micah 5:8)." This is not a passive, weak, compromised church that has lost its saltiness and hides the light under a bowl – this is a bold church that powerfully proclaims the Gospel throughout the entire world, making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey ALL that the King commands (Matthew 28:19). This is not a church that surrenders to the enemy the institutions of influence such as media, schools, arts, government, etc. but rather dominates them in order to "tear down all your strongholds (Micah 5:11)." Again, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (stated in 2 Corinthians 10:4)." God's people are a Kingdom among kingdoms, and they serve the King of kings. They "do not put [their] trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save (Psalm 146:3)." God's people "seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness." Kingdom People: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28)." Your King is king – "The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations Praise the Lord (Psalm 146:10)." It is time for the Church to come out from the caves and face the enemy.

-- "Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, 'Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few (1 Samuel 14:6).'"

5. Proverbs 16:1, 2 -- "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit."

- When you humbly study God's word. The Holy Spirit will challenge you by revealing to you the difference between what you are doing and what He wants you to do and by revealing the truth of your heart, showing to you the difference between how He sees you and how you have seen yourself.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- How quick we are to question the motives of others, yet we are so slow to question our own! When others harm us, we may assume the worst of intentions. When we are guilty, we often excuse our offenses, concluding that others are far too sensitive! Regardless of how we monitor our motives, God weighs them in His scales of righteousness. It is futile to try to deceive God with our pious justifications, for He sees our hearts. Is it possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason? Of course! You can attend worship services with a heart that is far from worshipful (Isa. 1:10-17). Could you show concern for the poor and yet have a heart that is opposed to God? Judas did (John 12:4-8). Could you make bold statements of love for Christ and actually be aiding the work of Satan? Peter did (Matt. 16:21-23). Could you offer sacrifices to God and be in total disobedience to Him? King Saul did (1 Sam. 13:8-9). Could you pray with the wrong motives? James said you can (James 4:3). Many things cause us to do what we do. We can be motivated by good things, such as love for God, compassion, generosity, and faith. Or our actions can come from unhealthy motives such as pride, insecurity, ambition, lust, greed, guilt, anger, fear, and hurt. It is even possible to do the best things based on the worst motives. When the Lord measures our motives, He looks for one thing: love. All that we do should proceed from our love for God and for others (1 Cor. 13). Take time to look past your actions to what lies behind them. Ask God to show you what He sees when He examines your motives.

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6. Proverbs 16:3 -- "The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." God's plan accounts for human nature and free choice. No one's choices or actions can change God's plan. God brings all things together for His ultimate good. Even evil people who attempt to rebel against God are a part of His plan.

7. Proverbs 16:9 -- "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Though people may choose to reject God and go their own way, God is still in control of their lives.

8. Proverbs 16:20 -- "Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." When you are willing to study God's word and walk in it in trust to God, you will be blessed.

9. Proverbs 16:25 -- "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." From Henry T. Blackaby -- Things are not always what they seem. Proverbs warns that we can be deceived into believing we are going down the right path and yet be heading toward death, the opposite direction from God's will. People do not naturally seek God or pursue righteousness (Rom. 3:10-18). Only as the Spirit awakens our hearts to the Person of Christ are we able to desire God's will. If we make decisions apart from the guidance of the Spirit of God, we will be like a ship trying to sail without a compass. We will do what makes the most sense, based on our own wisdom. But what looks attractive may actually lead to sin, ultimately destroying what is precious to us, for our most profound human thinking is mere foolishness to God (1 Cor. 1:18-20). Only God knows the way that leads to life, and He wants to lead us to walk in it (Matt. 7:13-14). Don't assume every opportunity that arises is from God. Satan will disguise himself as an "angel of light," and his invitations will seem to be in your best interest (2 Cor. 11:14). Yet his way leads only to death (John 8:44). The word of God will be like a light to your path, guiding you in the ways of righteousness (Ps. 119:105). It can be perilous to follow a path that seems right without first consulting the Holy Spirit for guidance (John 16:13). Take time to seek the Holy Spirit's direction when you face decisions. He knows the full ramifications of your choices. The Holy Spirit will assist you to understand truth and to experience abundant life. Trust Him as He leads you.

10. Psalm 146:3 -- "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation."

- There is no hope in the world's political systems and politicians. While everyone else is lifting up politicians and political platforms, lift up only Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

- Micah 4 proclaims that there shall not be peace and security on earth until the nations submit to the Lord and "walk in his paths." Though "all the peoples walk each in the name of its god," Christians proclaim that salvation comes only through Christ in accordance with God's will, mercy, and grace. Until the world accepts that truth, the world will "assemble" against God's people because, "they do not know the thoughts of the Lord; they do not understand his plan." (Micah 4:12) Until Christ returns to reign on earth, "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord.... And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples (Micah 5:7, 8)." God's loyal subjects currently serve as "ambassadors" of God's Kingdom to the kingdoms of the world where God's people live as foreigners or strangers. Are you a loyal subject in the Kingdom of God?

11. Psalm 146:5 -- "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Let's campaign for Jesus during the next election cycle.

12. Psalm 146:7-9 -- "[God] who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed

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down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.”

- Only God can rightly balance justice and mercy to defend victims and no how/when to forgive victimizers. God’s ways always protect the weak and defenseless.

- This is a theme in today’s readings. Jesus said we must worship both in spirit and in truth. True worship is living righteously. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” You don’t love and worship Jesus in truth if you are not obeying Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Dec 18: Worship the Lord on this Sunday by living righteously, obeying Him, and proclaiming Him as the only Way, Truth, and Life. Reveal the character of Jesus to others today by your actions, but don’t let people praise you for your good works but rather your Father in Heaven and His One and Only Son, Jesus. (See today’s readings)

DBRP - WEEK 50, Day 6, Saturday, 15 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=micah+1-3%3B+pro+15%3B+psalm+145>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 15 December 18:

Note: Here is a short video overview of the book of Micah: <https://youtu.be/MFEUEcylwLc>

1. Micah 1:2 – “Pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.” God is calling out to the whole world, to anyone who will pay attention.

2. Micah 1:8 – “For this I will lament and wail.” Neither God nor God’s people want to see anyone condemned. However, God gives everyone freedom to choose.

3. Micah 2:1, 2 – “Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.” Powerful money handlers place the poor in debt to them and then foreclose on their properties, leaving them with nothing. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.

4. Micah 2:6-7, 11; 3:5 – “Do not preach, —thus they preach— ‘one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us.’ Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Has the Lord grown impatient? Are these his deeds?... If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, ‘I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,’

he would be the preacher for this people!... Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry ‘Peace’ when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.”

- Most people don’t want to hear the truth, and they surround themselves with people who will tell them what they want to hear.

- The congregation tried to pick the sermon topics in order to only hear what interested them rather than what they needed to hear from God. False preachers provide false security.

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- “Thus says the Lord the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry ‘Peace’ when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.” Many people turn the Gospel into a money-making venture, preaching what is profitable to them rather than what is profitable for the soul. Too many preachers are talented motivational speakers who turn the Bible into a self-help book that promises a better life on earth.

5. Micah 2:8 – “But lately my people have risen up as an enemy; you strip the rich robe from those who pass by trustingly.”

- When we don’t treat people the way God wants us to, we become God’s enemies.

- Micah had a message that God’s people didn’t want to hear – the Lord was preparing to punish his people because of their sin – disaster was coming! They had compromised their holiness to the world around them and were now part of the problem in God’s eyes. They had been infected by society, and now there was no cure (Micah 1:9). Meanwhile, the “preachers” and “pastors” were failing to address the sin but were rather preaching a “positive, more uplifting message.” But in the face of criticism from the “church” Micah responds: “Do not my words do good to the one whose ways are upright.... Should you not embrace justice, you who hate good and love evil; (Micah 2:7; 3:2)?” More importantly, God responds: “As for the prophets who lead my people astray, they proclaim ‘peace’ if they have something to eat.... Therefore night will come over you, without visions, and darkness.... The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them.... They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God (Micah 3:5-7).” Micah, however, stood out as holy among the “preachers” because he was “filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin (Micah 3:8).” Today’s readings from Psalms talk about exalting and praising the Lord before the world. An important part of that proclamation is God’s demand for righteousness, justice and obedience to His commands as Lord of all – this call to obedience reveals the need for God’s mercy, grace, and salvation through Jesus. However, we don’t talk much of sin anymore – let me know if you hear the word in church today. More and more the church is failing to serve as the conscience of the nation, and it shows. As the Bible says, “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Tim 4:3).” Perhaps this is a good time to “weep and wail,” to “go about barefoot and naked,” to “howl like a jackal,” and to “moan like an owl (Micah 1:8).”

6. Micah 3:4 – “Then they will cry to the Lord, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil.” A person’s sins can cause their prayers to be rejected.

7. Micah 3:7 – “There is no answer from God.” Sin prevents you from hearing God.

8. Micah 3:8 – “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.” The powerful one is the one filled with the Holy Spirit because of their fidelity to God. Micah’s message was not his own but came from the Holy Spirit which had filled Him.

9. Micah 3:11, 12 -- “Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the Lord and say, ‘Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No

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disaster shall come upon us.' Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'"

- Today we have career politicians and career preachers who make tremendous amounts of money and who are worth tens of millions of dollars.

- God says that national destruction is precipitated by BOTH corrupt political leaders and corrupt spiritual leaders. Concerning corrupt politicians, God says they are driven by personal gain. Question: At the national level, are you familiar with any poor politicians? But politicians today are an easy target. So, what about our Nation's spiritual leaders? In Micah, God condemns spiritual leaders who "teach for a price" and who "lead my people astray" by declaring 'Peace' (with God) when there is really enmity between God and the people due to their sin. Of these religious leaders, God says, "Therefore it shall be night for you, without vision.... for there is no answer from God." They might be popular, but they are powerless, void of true spiritual vision and revelation or the Power of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, Micah could boldly proclaim, "But as for me, I am filled with the power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. Faithful Old Testament religious leaders, preachers, and prophets delivered the same 'message' as John the Baptist and Jesus – "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.... Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.... repent and believe in the gospel.... I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.... unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.... go, and from now on sin no more." Sermons on sin, humility, repentance, submission, surrender, selflessness, sacrifice, and suffering don't sell well. Therefore, you won't hear many sermons on the 's'-word (sin) or repentance. Most sermons in the popular churches today preach some form of self-actualization, self-help, or personal success model using Bible verses as validation. For example, looking at the website of one of our Nation's most popular preachers what first popped up was a pre-selected opportunity to receive his latest sermon series and to "invest in his ministry" for \$125.00 – "Are you ready to enjoy your life more? Let this motivating message give you the spiritual tools to know exactly what you should let go of and how to let it go so you can walk in joy and reach your full potential in a relaxed way...." How much did Jesus charge people to hear the word of God? Jesus warned, "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark." (Matthew 24:37, 38) The 'church' had lost all sensitivity to the spiritual reality around them, were completely blind to the truth of God's pending judgment, and preached 'Peace' when there was no peace. But Noah stood out as different – "He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5) Noah, one of eight to get on the ark, was a 'herald of righteousness' who 'walked with God' and dedicated his whole life to serving God. Who are our heralds of righteousness today who are walking with God and proclaiming the Truth of the Gospel? Are you one of them?

10. Proverbs 15:1 – "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Emotional intelligence is popular topic today which many believe is the primary predictor of a person's success. Emotional intelligence is basically a person's ability to control their emotions and the emotions of others. The Bible tells you what you need to know on the matter.

11. Proverbs 15:1, 18 -- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Do your words bring peace or escalate strife?

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12. Proverbs 15:4 -- "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." Do your words bring healing or pain?

13. Proverbs 15:7 -- "The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools." Do your words instruct or distract?

14. Proverbs 15:8 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." Don't ask for things from God while you knowingly continue to disrespect Him in sin.

15. Proverbs 15:10 -- "There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die." Discipline is pain delivered in love designed to protect you from destruction.

16. Proverbs 15:13 -- "A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed." Do your words lift people up or tear them down?

17. Proverbs 15:14 -- "The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly." Do you talk when you should be listening and learning?

18. Proverbs 15:23 -- "To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!" Do you know when to speak and when to be silent? Do you have a good, constructive sense of timing when providing advice to others?

19. Proverbs 15:24, 29 -- "The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.... The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." Sanctification is a life journey that will naturally make your worldly friendships grow distant.

20. Proverbs 15:26 -- "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure." Are your words gracious, always seeking the best for the other person rather than your own personal interests?

21. Proverbs 15:28 -- "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." Do you think before you speak?

22. Proverbs 15:31 -- "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise." Do you receive correction well?

23. Psalm 145:4 -- "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." We are called to pass our faith on to the next generation.

24. Psalm 145:18, 20 -- "The Lord is near to all who call on him.... The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy."

- This is a conditional statement. The Lord is not near to everyone, not even to everyone who calls on Him, only to those who call on Him in truth.

- You cannot approach God in falsehood and half-heartedness. God knows the difference between love and flattery.

25. Psalm 145:20 -- "The Lord preserves all who love him." Who does God save?

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 Dec 18: Love God today in truth by loving all around you, walking in holiness, and declaring His mighty works. (See today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 50, Day 5, Friday, 14 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jonah+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+14%3B+Rev+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 14 December 18:

1. Jonah 3:1 – “Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time....” From Henry T. Blackaby -- Jonah didn't like the assignment God gave him. God directed him to leave his homeland and go to the enemy city of Nineveh, a hostile and evil center of idol worship. There Jonah was to warn the people of God's impending judgment and urge them to repent. The Hebrews hated the people of Nineveh, so the rebellious prophet fled in the opposite direction, hoping for a different word from God that was more to his liking. Instead, God was determined that his word to Jonah would be obeyed (Isa. 55:11). He spoke to Jonah again. His second message was the same as the first. However, during the interval, Jonah had been buffeted by storms and had traveled in the stomach of a fish for three days. This time, he was prepared to hear God again and do His bidding. God also spoke to the prophet Jeremiah two times (Jer. 33:1-3). But Jeremiah accepted God's word to him the first time. The second time God spoke to him was to give him a fuller revelation of what He had first told him. What God says to us next will depend on how we responded to His previous word to us. If, like Jonah, we disobeyed His earlier instructions, God will give them a second time. If we obeyed His first directive, as Jeremiah did, He will give us a fresh and deeper expression of His will (Matt. 25:23). If you have not received a fresh word from God, return to the last thing God told you and examine your obedience. Is the Lord still waiting for your obedience? Seek to be like Jeremiah, and properly respond to your Lord's instructions the first time.

2. Jonah 3:5-9 -- “And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, ‘By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.’”

- God wants all to come to repentance and wants none to perish. God is ready to forgive any who will humble themselves, repent, and have faith in His Son, Jesus.

- Leaders should lead the way in humility, repentance, and submission to God. The strongest and greatest leaders are the humblest before the Lord.

- Religious awakening stirred Nineveh when they believed God's word, expressed sorrow openly, prayed, and changed their way of life. Jesus said it: “Repent, and sin no more.” Notice that Nineveh did not presumptuously take God's mercy and grace for granted.

3. Jonah 3:10 – “When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.” God changed His announced plans when Nineveh repented.

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4. Jonah 4:1-4 -- "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the Lord said, 'Do you do well to be angry?'"

- We often want God to give mercy and grace to us but justice and judgment to those who offend us. Our unforgiveness and resentment hinder our relationship with God and puts our desires at odds with His desires. Unforgiveness and resentment are very powerful and self-destructive emotions that hurt us more than the object of our hate. We have no right to stand in the way of God's mercy and grace for others. On the contrary, we are called by God to be His instruments of mercy and grace to those who might terribly hurt us.

- Jonah was so bitter he wanted to die because God had blessed Jonah's enemies though they didn't deserve His mercy and grace. Here again we see the pattern of how God works in our lives – while He is using His relationship with us to impact others for His glory, He is simultaneously working on us too. Jonah was being used by God to reach Nineveh, but God was also using Nineveh to address the anger, bitterness, and un-forgiveness in Jonah's heart. Jonah's resentment of Nineveh was standing in the way of Jonah's relationship with God and robbing Jonah of his joy. Sure, from a worldly point of view, Jonah had a "right" to hate Nineveh, but from a spiritual point of view, Jonah depended on the grace of God just as much as anyone else, and Jonah, above all else, had been commanded by God to love and to be on the mission of reconciliation. Jonah should have been compelled by appreciation for the grace that he had received from God and by love to desire that same grace for others and to display that grace to others. However contrarily, it was Jonah's personal knowledge and faith in God's mercy and grace that inspired him to run from God – He knew that his enemies might receive from God the forgiveness he himself was not willing to give Nineveh. He was at odds with God, and it was tearing him apart. Who is God using today to test your heart and to reveal the ungodly attitudes you are holding on to, attitudes that are standing in the way of your relationship with God and robbing you of complete joy? "Do you do well to be angry?"

BTW: Notice in Jonah's self-induced misery, God only intentionally increased his misery in order to drive Jonah to surrender. God did this not simply to "win" but to bring Jonah back to a right relationship with Him and to ultimately restore Jonah's joy.

-- Matthew 5:23-24 -- So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

- Knowing God's nature, we should become like Him.

5. Jonah 4:1-11 – Doing God's work should not displease God's people.

6. Jonah 4:10, 11 -- "And the Lord said, 'You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?'"

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- Our human nature inclines us to care about all the wrong things and to be self-centered rather than selfless. We must strive to have the mind of Christ, to see all of our circumstances and relationships from God's perspective rather than our own. Remember, we are ambassadors for Jesus, not for ourselves. We must never represent our own interests but only the interests of Jesus. Strive to remove yourself from the situations you are involved in -- die unto self and live for Christ alone. Learn to love as Jesus loves. Again, we have no right to stand in the way of God's mercy and grace for others. On the contrary, we are called by God to be His instruments of mercy and grace to those who might terribly hurt us.

- In review, it can be hard to show mercy and compassion for sinners, particularly those who have sinned directly against us and have caused us pain and suffering. Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrians who had continually warred against the Israelites. It is impossible for us to understand the pain and suffering the Assyrians caused the Israelites and perhaps Jonah directly. What we do know is that Jonah preferred death over seeing the Ninevites forgiven by God (Jonah 4:3). Even after receiving God's mercy (admittedly undeservingly) in a miraculous way, Jonah wanted God's justice, not mercy, for his enemies. God had a mission for Jonah, and I think God's target for that mission was not only Nineveh but also Jonah. God was working through Jonah but also, simultaneously, on Jonah because Jonah had a forgiveness problem. This forgiveness problem was contrary to God's character and will and unacceptable for one of God's ambassadors. At the heart of our faith is forgiveness. It is "the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7) in which we place our faith and hope. In fact, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)." Forgiveness of the undeserving is how God showed His love, and this is how we show our love and reflect the character of Christ before the world. Of course, Jesus had much to say about the requirement for forgiveness, but to me some of his most powerful statements are those that tell us that we should forgive to the same degree we desire to be forgiven by God: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins (Mark 11:25)." I cannot count how many times in church I have recited these words from the Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us." Not only did Jesus teach on unconditional forgiveness, He lived out the ultimate example -- "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'" Who do you need to forgive today?

- God's love and mercy may make Him appear unreliable as He gives mercy, grace, and forgiveness to people we do not accept.

- God loves your enemies. Do you? What kind of love does God expect from us?

-- Matthew 5:43, 44 -- You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

-- Luke 6:27 -- But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

-- Luke 6:35 -- But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

7. Proverbs 14:1 -- "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down." Our words and deeds will either build up or destroy.

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8. Proverbs 14:2 – “Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him.” Your actions reveal what you really think about God.

9. Proverbs 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” Man’s version of righteousness is doomed.

10. Revelation 12:11 – “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” God uses your faithful testimony to defeat Satan.

11. Revelation 12:17 -- “Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” You are in a spiritual battle in a war that has already been won by Jesus. You will remain in a struggle with evil as long as you live, unless Jesus returns in your lifetime. Do not be surprised by the enemy’s actions in your life. You are on a mission and must stand as a mighty spiritual warrior for Jesus. Semper Fidelis Coram Deo -- Always Faithful Before the Face of God!

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Dec 18: Who do you need to forgive? From whom do you need forgiveness? Where have you failed to seek reconciliation as commanded by God? Today, forgive those who are hard to forgive because you love Jesus and because He has called you to pour out His love to the unloving and hard to love. Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus in all of your relationships and circumstances. (Jonah 3, 4)

DBRP - WEEK 50, Day 3, Wednesday, 12 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=amos+7%2C+8%2C+9%3B+proverbs+12%3B+Rev+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 12 December 18:

1. Amos 7:2-6 – “O Lord God, please forgive!” God hears your intercession and forgives His truly repentant people.

2. Amos 7:7-9 -- “This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, ‘Amos, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘A plumb line.’ Then the Lord said, ‘Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.’” Here God’s Spiritual Laws are compared with natural laws – in this case, the law of gravity. God’s Spiritual Laws have consequences as predictable as God’s natural laws, even more predictable. God’s Spiritual Laws not only reflect His perfect truth, character, and wisdom, they also align to His perfect order and justice which is unchanging. There are inevitable consequences for drifting away from God’s will and order – the walls come tumbling down. Yes, you can build on disobedience for a while, but it’s a house of cards. What do you do when you realize that your walls have drifted from the plumb line? You must tear them down and start over, this time using the plumb line the whole time you build. As Jesus told the adulterous woman – “Repent, and sin no more.”

3. Amos 7:7, 8 – “Amos, what do you see?” God’s people are called to be priests on earth, experts on God’s word and messengers of God’s word to others, within the context of current situations. God’s word is the plumb line from which everyone is measured and held accountable. The prophet is given

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God's word to proclaim to others in order to hold them accountable. With God's word as the measure, the prophet reveals sin to others, not as their judge, but as a messenger of God who is the Judge. As ambassadors for Jesus, we are called to lovingly proclaim God's truth to all people, whether they desire to hear it or not, that some would repent and turn to the Savior.

4. Amos 7:10 – “Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.” Because Amos spoke God's truth about the nation, he was deemed a traitor. The religious leaders were the first to condemn Amos. Amos became the king's enemy because the king was God's enemy. Amaziah sided with his employer rather than God and Amos. To whom are you most loyal? By whom or by what are you most influenced? Will you obey God at all costs, when it doesn't seem at all practical, and if no one else is willing to stand with you?

5. Amos 7:14, 15 -- “I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

- Amos did not intend to be a prophet, but God called him from his profession, his livelihood. He hadn't gone to seminary and had established no credibility within the church. He was chosen by God, and that was all the credibility and validation he needed. You are an ambassador for Jesus. You don't need the approval of anyone else to do what God has called you to do.

- An interesting trend throughout the Bible is that God takes people away from their plans, goals, careers, and aspirations to accomplish His purposes. We have our plans, but God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. I wonder how many people have walked away from a calling because it did not make sense from a worldly perspective, because it was too risky, or because friends and family did not support it. Another trend is that God's faithful servants often appear to be unsuccessful as the world measures success. Amos was called to prophesy to the Israelites, but their response was, “Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching....” He left his job to be a preacher, but no one wanted to hear him preach – I wonder how many preachers have left the pulpit discouraged under similar circumstances. Amos' measure of success was fidelity to the Lord while others thought his primary motivation was to earn a living – “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there.” Amos sought first the Kingdom. What motivates you to do what you do? What are you seeking first, above all else? How have you failed due to fear or pride to accomplish what God would have had you do? These are questions I ask myself.

6. Amos 8:4-8 – “Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end.... and deal deceitfully with false balances, that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?” The nation became more concerned about making money than obeying God and His law of love. The political/economic scene has not changed much over the centuries. Jesus warned that a person has to choose between God and money. Many people say that they have chosen God but, in reality, still prioritize self-interest. In a sinful nation, economics (prosperity and security) becomes god, the top priority for decisions, and the poor get poorer while the rich get richer. A godless society is doomed – destruction is inevitable, quick, and unexpected.

7. Amos 8:10, 14; 9:1 – I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only

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son and the end of it like a bitter day.... Those who swear by the Guilt of Samaria, and say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' and, 'As the Way of Beersheba lives,' they shall fall, and never rise again. I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said: 'Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people; and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape.'" Israel continued in extravagant worship even though God had announced judgment – the priests and the people were completely oblivious to what God was doing though they had convinced themselves otherwise. The proof of their relationship with God was revealed in their behavior. The true prophet and worshipper display the character of Jesus and selfless, loving obedience. God had to go to shepherds to find such a person in Amos.

8. Amos 8:11 – "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord God, 'when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'"

- The religious leaders within the land continued to preach, but they heard nothing really from God. The nation was spiritually starved because there was no nourishment from the true word of God. The religious leaders merely told people what they wanted to hear, words that accommodated and validated their sin. The body relies on food to survive. The spirit relies on God's word to survive. A famine is a terrible thing. Are you hungry for God's word today? Have you been missing meals? Man does not live on bread alone....

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- One way God communicates is through silence. The Israelites blatantly ignored and rejected God's word to them, and God responded by sending a famine. This famine was far more severe than a shortage of food and water. Instead, they were deprived of His words of life. God's silence may be hardly noticeable at first. You may still remember times when God spoke to you, but you gradually realize you've not heard His voice for a long time. If you realize you are in a "drought," immediately seek God and ask Him what adjustments your life requires so you can once again enjoy fellowship with Him. It may be that you disobeyed His last instructions to you and that He is waiting on your obedience before giving you a new direction. It may be that there is unconfessed sin in your life or that you have a damaged relationship (Isa. 1:15; 1 Pet. 3:7). It is possible that you have done too much talking in your prayer times and that He wants you to listen. God's silences can be powerful times for Him to communicate with you. God is God! Because He is God, when He speaks, He expects a listening ear and an eager response. He will not be mocked! (Gal. 6:7). When we ignore Him, He may withhold His voice until we repent and get right with Him. The prophet Isaiah assured King Asa, "The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."

9. Amos 9:7 – "'Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?' declares the Lord. 'Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?'" What defines a nation is its level of fidelity to God. God judges and will judge all nations, including ours.

10. Amos 9:10 – "All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.'" Note that God is talking about the judgment of 'His people,' or what we might call the church. The concept of "cheap grace," believing that God is somehow ok with sin, has always been around, and today, many churchy people continue in sin as if God won't judge. Proud sin makes you think God will judge someone else and not you.

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11. Proverbs 12:2 -- "A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of evil devices he condemns." The important points of the Bible are really not hard to understand. Many debate over complicated doctrines but aren't willing to simply obey what is plainly clear. Walk in what you understand, and then God will show you the deeper things.

12. Proverbs 12:5 -- "The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful." Don't waste your time seeking advice from those who do not walk in the word.

13. Proverbs 12:23 -- "A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly." Wise people possess a humility that allows them to question their own wisdom, while fools always believe they are right.

14. Revelation 10:4 -- "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." God has not revealed everything to us about End Times. Be very wary of those who say they have it all figured out.

15. Revelation 10:10, 11 -- "And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. And I was told, 'You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.'" God's prophecy is usually hard for the prophet to stomach, and prophesying judgment to people you genuinely care about is very difficult. The prophet rejoices in God's righteousness and hungers for God's sweet word, but finds no joy in seeing the sinner reject God's word and face condemnation. So, God's word is bitter sweet. It proclaims grace and eternal life for some but also eternal damnation for others. Christians should mourn deeply over those who will reject God, and we should do everything within our power to reach the lost. A loving heart has a passion for evangelism.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 Dec 18: Today, lovingly proclaim God's truth through His word to all people, whether they profess faith or not, that they might draw closer to Jesus through repentance and faith in Jesus, a faith that surrenders and obeys. All the while keep a humble repentant heart as you measure your own life against the plumb line of God's word. God is the judge, you are the messenger. (See today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 50, Day 2, Tuesday, 11 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=amos+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+11%3B+rev+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 11 December 18:

1. Amos 5:1 -- "Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel." Amos delivered a "fire and brimstone" message from a genuine heart of compassion and concern. How would such a message be received today?

2. Amos 5:6 -- "Seek the Lord and live." Life is a continual seeking of the Lord.

3. Amos 5:10 -- "They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth."

- Are you willing to be the hated one because you love others so much you are willing to tell the truth?

- A wicked nation refuses to listen to dissenting views and seeks to silence opposing voices.

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4. Amos 5:11 – “Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.” A wicked nation unfairly taxes the people.

5. Amos 5:13 – “Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.” There is a time to remain silent.

6. Amos 5:14, 15, 18, 21, 23 -- “Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. Hate evil, and love good.... I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.... Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light.... Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.”

- This is a warning to those who claim to be Christians but live worldly lives. A trend we see throughout the Bible is that often those who feel most religious are those most abhorrent to God. Today’s readings describe ‘churchy’ people eagerly awaiting God’s judgment on earth, as if they would escape it. God’s answer to these disobedient, self-righteous sinners is “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!” Why? Because they did not “hate evil and love good.” Jesus said it this way, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46) “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:7, 8) “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.” (1 John 5:2) Is this hard to understand? Meditate upon the below verses:

-- John 3:36 -- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

-- Acts 5:29 -- But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.

-- Acts 5:32 -- And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

-- Romans 2:8 -- but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

-- Hebrews 5:9 -- And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

-- Hebrews 11:8 -- By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

7. Amos 5:14 - "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live." Seeking the Lord involves seeking good and not evil. God is Good. Goodness starts and ends with God. We draw closer to Him when we seek to do His will from a right heart – “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”

8. Amos 5:18 -- "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light."

- Many outwardly religious people are hoping for End Times, wishing God's punishment on those they would like to see get punished, rather than desperately hoping to save those sinners from eternal

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separation from God. God delays that we might have a chance to reach the lost, those that naturally hurt the righteous in their destructive sinfulness. Jesus said that one of the marks of a true believer is a love that far surpasses love the world shows – a love that loves the unloving, that truly loves enemies. God has placed hateful people in your life for a reason, that you might show them the love of Christ and grow closer to Christ in the process. If you can't stand the smell of sheep, you can't be a good shepherd. If you have trouble truly loving your enemy, you have a perspective problem.

- These are powerful words to a people who claimed to be righteous in the Lord, but who had no evidence of righteousness in their lives. The sort of righteousness (a word used in today's readings 16 times) God expects from His people is described in today's readings. Righteousness comes by faith (Romans 4:13) but we are to live out our righteousness as evidence and fruit of our faith -- "that is in keeping with faith (Hebrews 11:7, 1 Peter 2:24)." Amos addressed a people who proclaimed the name of the Lord but who lived in contempt of the Lord and misrepresented His character before a watching world. God says to them, "I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.... Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5:21-24)!" God warns these church-goers: "Seek the Lord and live.... Seek good, not evil.... Hate evil, love good." Proverbs says that the Lord delights in righteousness and abhors unrighteousness. If you are a Christian, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Now that you have been saved, honor God and truly worship Him by seeking to live righteously in your life.

9. Amos 5:21 -- "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies." God rejects the worship of the pridefully unrighteous.

10. Amos 5:23, 24 -- "Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Great church services don't make up for unrighteous living – God is not impressed or deceived. True and acceptable worship is loving obedience.

11. Amos 6:1,6 -- "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.... but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!" God will hold Christians accountable who live in luxury without concern for other Christians who are being martyred.

12. Amos 6:3 -- "O you who put far away the day of disaster and bring near the seat of violence." Will you live today as if Jesus' return is to occur any second?

13. Amos 6:4, 5 -- "Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp." Life is not about being comfortable -- it is about being faithful.

14. Amos 6:12 -- "Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood." Don't be fooled: God doesn't run with the unrighteous. God will not bless unfaithfulness. Everyone reaps what they sow.

15. Proverbs 11:4 -- "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, righteousness delivers from death." Security is found in fidelity.

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16. Proverbs 11:11 – “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.” God’s judgment will destroy the economic system, and money will be worthless. You cannot eat dollars or gold when the economic systems collapse under God’s judgment of nations, and these things have absolutely no value in the after-life. In what do you place your security?

17. Proverbs 11:18 – “The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- There are many ways to invest our lives, but none offers greater reward than devoting ourselves to the pursuit of righteousness. Every area of our lives should reflect the holiness of God that is ours by salvation: our thoughts, so that nothing we think about would be inappropriate for a child of God; our actions, so that our lives demonstrate that we serve a holy God; our integrity, so that we are above reproach in all our relationships. Are you taking God’s righteousness in your life for granted? Righteousness is something you must allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Instead of sowing holy thoughts, are you allowing evil and sinful thoughts to grow in your mind? Are you allowing lust to grow unchecked within you? Does enmity, bitterness, jealousy, or unforgiveness remain in your life? Jesus said if we seek first God and His righteousness, everything else will follow (Matt. 6:33). There is great reward in sowing righteousness. What are you presently doing to plant holiness in your life? (1 Pet. 1:15). How are you putting righteousness in your mind so that your thoughts are holy? How are you cultivating righteousness in your relationships so that you maintain your integrity? Are you instilling righteousness in your activities so that your life is above reproach? If you want to harvest righteousness in your life tomorrow, you must plant seeds of righteousness today.

18. Proverbs 11 – The word righteous is used 13 times in Proverbs 11 to drive home the point that God’s people, though covered over in the righteousness of Jesus, are to live righteous lives on earth as evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit. God honors righteousness and punishes the unrighteousness. Grace is not a license to live un-righteously without fear of discipline. Grace gives us the freedom and power to live righteously, growing more and more righteous each day.

19. Revelation 9:4, 5 – “They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.”

- Only God's seal protects a person during the final tribulation.

- God places limits on the satanic tormentors.

20. Revelation 9:11 -- "Abaddon" and "Apollyn" mean "Destruction" or "Destroyer."

21. Revelation 9:21 – “... nor did they repent of their murders... or their sexual immorality.” The Bible considers sexual immorality to be as destructive as murder. Do you?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 Dec 18: Run with God today and worship Him through loving, faithful obedience, regardless the personal cost. (Amos 6:12)

DBRP - WEEK 50, Day 1, Monday, 10 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=amos+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+11%3B+rev+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 10 December 18:

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1. `Amos 3:2-8 -- "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. 'Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet...? Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it? "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" A father is more concerned, not less, about the behavior of his own children than he is someone else's. God punishes His family when they choose to disobey Him, and that should not be surprising. Walking with God is an opportunity freely given by grace. We have been given access to the "inner place" through Jesus, and can call the Father 'Abba.' (Hebrews 11:13-19) We should take comfort in the Father's love and protection. However, we must be very concerned not to get out of step with Him. What is to be said of the child who blatantly disregards the words and rebuke of the Father? In the Old Testament, a child that could not be controlled by his/her parents was stoned to death. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) Many today point to this command as evidence of a merciless God. However, God's punishment was intended that "all Israel shall hear, and fear." Israel chose to ignore God's commands which seemed 'unjust' or 'unmerciful' to them. The rest is history. Today, we also make light of God's commands. What do we think God is going to do? For generations, the prayers of those victimized by sin have reached heaven; yet, God in His mercy has patiently withheld His just judgment that sinners might repent. Today's readings in Revelation speak to when God ultimately answers the prayers of those persecuted by the actions of the disobedient: "And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake." (Revelation 8:3-5) "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

- Deuteronomy 21:18-21 -- "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

2. Amos 3:3-6 -- There are consequences for sin which are predictable and preventable.

3. Amos 3:6 -- "When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?"

- There are two paths a person can travel, the way of life, and the way of death; the way of blessings and the way of curses. The lighthouse of truth does not move. You are either directed by its light or you crash into the rocks from which it intends to protect you. There are consequences for behavior that are as predictable as natural laws (such as the law of gravity); the wise understand this from Scripture and are perceptive to the signs of destruction. Someone once said that wisdom is understanding what you haven't experienced. The Bible guides you in wisdom. Proverbs points out "The way of the Lord is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil." (Proverbs 10:29) In today's readings, Amos points out to the Israelites that God had given them plenty of warning prior to the total destruction that he was bringing, but despite the many warnings the Lord says, "you have not returned

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to me.... prepare to meet your God, O Israel." The people were living lives dishonoring to God while faithfully continuing in their "religious" practices as if all were good with the Lord (Amos 4:4,5), yet they could not see the signs of the times. Amos says, "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7)." Jesus said, that only a wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign." (Matthew 16:4) I believe part of the point here is that only the spiritually blind and deaf would not see what is going on around them and would require a miraculous sign. Even when signs are given, the spiritually dead ignore them. Today's Revelation readings interestingly talk of the angels sounding trumpets of destruction which caused me to question: "What are the signs of our times?" Are we paying attention to what is going on around us? Should God's people be surprised by circumstances as they unfold? Something to consider....

- Revelation 8:6 -- "Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them."

4. Amos 3:7 -- "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."

- God has made it clear what He will do.

- The Bible says that God provides revelation to His servants the prophets. However, when God's people turn from Him, revelation ceases, and when revelation ceases, lawlessness only grows – it becomes a downward spiral of destruction. Proverbs 29:18 points out, "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." How important is it to live obediently before the Lord? Jumping ahead to Amos chapter 8 (I can't help it), God warns His rebellious people, "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord GOD, 'when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.'" Remember Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Are you feasting on God's word? Are you being guided by the revelation of The Holy Spirit?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Christians spend much time talking about "seeking God's will," as though it were hidden and difficult to find. God does not hide His will. His will is not difficult to discover. We do not have to plead with God to reveal His will to us. He is more eager to reveal His will than we are willing to receive it. We sometimes ask God to do things He has already done! The people in Amos's day became disoriented to God and to His desires. God had revealed His will; the problem was that they had not recognized it or obeyed it. Amos declared that God does nothing in the affairs of humanity without seeking one of His servants to whom He will reveal His activity. Tragically, there are times when no one is walking closely enough with Him to be receptive to His word (Isa. 59:16; 63:5; Ezek. 22:30-31). Jesus walked so intimately with His Father that He was always aware of what the Father was doing around Him (John 5:19-20). Jesus said that if our eyes are pure, they will see God and recognize His activity (Matt. 6:22). If we are not seeing God's activity, the problem is not a lack of revelation. The problem is that our sin prevents us from noticing it. When God is working in your child's life or when He is convicting your coworker, He may reveal His activity to you. His revelation is His invitation for you to join Him in His redemptive work. Be alert to God's activity around you. He will reveal His activity to His servants. If your spiritual eyes are pure, you will be overwhelmed by all that you see God doing around you!

5. Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 11 -- "Yet you did not return to me." God disciplines in hopes that sinners will return to Him, but in His sovereignty, He makes room for free will. Love must be a choice. Our response to discipline should be to draw closer to God.

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6. Amos 4:12 -- "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" Every person will either meet God in peace through Jesus or in judgment.

7. Proverbs 10:21 -- "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense." Those who are faithful to God are the real leaders.

8. Revelation 8:13 -- "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!" There are only two words repeated three times in the New Testament for emphasis: "Holy, holy, holy", and "Woe, woe, woe." Unfortunately, both words are under-emphasized from the pulpits today. God's wrath will be unimaginably horrible to those who don't honor His holiness. This reality should excite all Christians to spread the Gospel to as many as possible. Christians too should not lose sight of the truth that if you do not honor God as Holy, you will experience woe. Grace is not given that a person can safely dishonor God. Grace is given that we can glorify God as Holy.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 10 Dec 18: Honor God as Holy today by being holy -- (1 Peter 1:15, 16). (Rev 8:13)

DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 7, Sunday, 9 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=amos+1%2C+2%2C+3%3B+proverbs+9%3B+psalm+144>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 9 December 18:

1. Amos 1:1 -- "The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa." God did not speak through the priests and prophets; He spoke through a faithful shepherd. God does not honor position; He honors fidelity. Amos was a shepherd called to preach a message to the nations.

2. Amos 1:1-15 -- God holds all nations accountable to justice and mercy.

3. Amos 1:2 -- "The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem." God worked His plan through Jerusalem, though the people who were called to be his "kingdom of priests" there were full of iniquity. He would discipline them before a watching world, but His plan remains unhindered by their infidelity. Remember what Mordecai said to Esther: "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Remember, Lot, a righteous man, did little to influence society while Sodom and Gomorrah went from bad to worse before destruction. Are you doing all that God has called you to do to warn others in our time?

4. Amos 1:6 -- "I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom." God does not provoke sin, but He allows sin for His purposes. God often uses sinful people to discipline His disobedient people, but He still holds the sinful instruments of discipline accountable for their sins. While God disciplines, it may appear, for a time, that sinners prevail.

5. Amos 1:11 -- "I will not revoke the punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever." Don't confuse God's patience with apathy or cheap grace. For the unrepentant sinner, a time will come where God "will not revoke the punishment."

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6. Amos 2:4 – “... they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked.”

- Israel’s neighbors were punished for how they treated others, but God’s people were first judged by how they treated God in their unique relationship with Him. They were meant to be in a loving relationship with God and to serve as priests and ambassadors for Him to the world, but they rejected Him, disobeyed Him, and led others astray. The people of Judah had been taught to sin by their parents, but that was no excuse for continuing in sin. Those who know Him have a unique responsibility to make Him known to others, to glorify Him, in word and deed. If the world becomes darker, it can only be that the light of God’s people (reflecting from their proximity to God) has grown dim.

- Disobedience to God is a rejection of Him and His Sovereignty. Regardless of how we try to make light of sin and justify it, it is cosmic treason against to Almighty. Pray that God will help you see sin the way He sees it.

7. Amos 2:6-8 – “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.’” Israel was judged not just for sexual immorality and idolatry but also because the people made themselves rich by putting other people into financial bondage or debt. Through financial manipulation, they made others poor so that they could live in luxury. God does not want us to get rich on the backs of others.

8. Amos 2:12 -- “But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy.’” A sinful land will not tolerate faithful preachers, and the unfaithful preachers will conform to the current demands of society with watered down, comfortable sermons that tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear.

9. Amos 2:15 – “...he who handles the bow shall not stand....” Sinful nations trust in their man-made might rather than in God. God will knock down that house of cards.

10. Amos 2 – Prosperity achieved in ungodliness will be destroyed by God Himself. Human strength is an illusion.

11. Amos 3:2 -- “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Parents discipline their own kids more than they punish others’ kids. Christians have greater responsibility than others, not less, and God holds them especially accountable. Don’t you expect those who truly love you to respect you more than those who don’t? Shouldn’t our love for God result in heartfelt purity, obedience, and holiness? And don’t parents expect their children to grow in maturity? Don’t expect God to allow His grown children to act like babies who are not part of His family and who don’t bear His name.

12. Amos 3:3 -- “Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?” Decisions produce natural consequences. A decision for Christ is logically followed by a walk with Christ. If you are not walking with Christ, the decision is in question. Jesus said that you are either with Him or against Him; you are either gathering with Him or scattering; you cannot serve two masters; and He spits out the lukewarm. Among

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those who left Egypt during the great exodus, only Joshua and Caleb made it into the Promised Land because only they were “wholehearted.” What have you truly decided? Are you truly walking with Jesus or are you more like Peter after he denied Christ and observed His suffering from a distance?

13. Amos 3:7 -- “For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.” A nation without faithful servants of God have no real prophets and have no clue what God is doing. Still many will claim to speak for God. Does the church know what God is doing now? Do you have the revelation of God as a natural product of your close relationship with Him? In his day, the shepherd Amos was the one God found ready to proclaim truth in a deceived land full of unfaithful government officials and religious leaders.

14. Amos 3:8 – “The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” Faithful followers of Jesus cannot help but proclaim His word.

15. Proverbs 9:4-6 -- “‘Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!’ To him who lacks sense she says, ‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.’” The invitation is out there for anyone willing to repent and to humble themselves before the Lord.

16. Proverbs 9:7-8 – “Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” Jesus told His disciples to invest their time and energy on those who would accept their message and to ‘shake the dust off their feet and walk away’ from those who were clearly not willing to listen -- “And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.” (Matthew 10:14) We are called to proclaim the Gospel to all but most importantly to make disciples of those who would follow Jesus. Pay close attention to Jesus’ Great Commission to us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) Again, God did not call us to just make believers, He called us, you and I, to make disciples, teaching them “to obey all,” to be priests on this earth. (1 Peter 2:5-9) That means the you must first be a good example of a priest, knowing how to rightly divine and to teach God’s word, and you must lead others in walking in the word. It is much, much more than simply sitting in church and in small group Bible studies, it is hitting the streets with fellow believers as the Spirit leads, like Jesus did with His twelve. It means getting dirty and stepping out in faith into the unknown. It means learning how to discern who is already being convicted by the Holy Spirit and then ministering to them. Are you ready to accept the Great Commission? Do you have mentees who are equally committed to following Jesus? As you lead others, remember to lead them as a mere follower of Jesus – it is always about Jesus and not about you. Never, ever point to yourself, always to Jesus.

17. Proverbs 9:10 – “The knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” We are only as wise and spiritual as how well we know Jesus. Jesus explains this in John 17. It is not moralism that saves us. It is Jesus. Jesus doesn’t just want us to live ‘good’ lives and do works of charity so that life might be more comfortable on earth for the lost. Jesus wants us to know Him and lead others to knowing Him.

18. Proverbs 9:12 – “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” The choice is ours. Will we obey God’s word in total, or will we get wrapped up in the worries of the world? Some “scoff” in obvious ways by denying Jesus, but others “scoff” in less obvious ways by ignoring God’s

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Great Commandment and Great Commission, the call to live solely as an ambassador for Jesus. Even the demons believe in Jesus, and many churchgoers scoff – the lukewarm who have lost their light and saltiness.

19. Proverbs 9:15-16 – “The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way.” Folly’s message competes with Wisdom’s (Jesus’) message, inviting all to live for self-interest and pleasure. In the competition of ideas, you are called to proclaim Jesus, not moralism or a message that merely promises better living on earth.

20. Psalm 144 -- “Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. O Lord, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.... rescue me and deliver me... from the hand of foreigners.... I will sing a new song to you, O God.... Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners.... May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace.... Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!” There is an old adage, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” Combat has an incredible way of putting things in perspective. Many promises are made to God before the advance into harm’s way, and national calls for repentance, fasting, and prayer are often proclaimed. What happens after receiving God’s grace, mercy, and blessings? How easy is it to forget and for our gratitude to fade? Are you still amazed by grace?

-- Luke 17:15-19 -- Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

21. Psalm 144:1 – “Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.”

- Humility recognizes that all of your abilities were given to you by God and were intended for you to use them to serve Him, not yourself.

- In love, God trains His people to fight when required. After all of your readings this year, is that still hard for you to understand?

22. Psalm 144:3, 4 -- "O Lord, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow." How incredible is it that the Almighty God, Creator of everything loves each of us personally and perfectly! How can we even comprehend such a thing? How should that truth impact your outlook on life?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 Dec 18: Make a list of all the things you are good at, all the talents and abilities God has given you. Now make a list of all the ways you have used those abilities for God’s service rather than your own and how many times you have publicly given God all the credit for who you are. Do you use your gifts mostly for yourself or for God? (Psalm 144:1)

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DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 6, Saturday, 8 December 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=obadiah+1%3B+proverbs+8%3B+psalm+143>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 8 December 18:

1. Obadiah 1:3 -- "The pride of your heart has deceived you." Pride is most deceptive.
2. Obadiah 1:8 -- "Will I not on that day, declares the LORD, destroy the wise men out of Edom," Man's wisdom is foolishness in God's eyes and will be destroyed. True wisdom comes only from God.
3. Obadiah 1:12 -- "But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress." If you gloat over the misfortune of your enemies, your heart is not right, and you are not being faithful to your mission of reconciliation.
4. Obadiah 1:15 -- "As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head." God will treat you the way you treat others. Do you forgive others the way you want God to forgive you?
5. Proverbs 8:8 -- "All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them." All the teachings of men are twisted and crooked in some way. Only God's word can be trusted completely. God is the Creator of Ethics (unchanging truths and justice), while mankind creates "morals" (from the word mores, which means the commonly accepted ways of the populace, not what is right in God's eyes but what is accepted. Morals are always changing like shifting sands as fickle people drift in a sea of social influences. Likewise, God is the Creator of Principles (unchanging truth about how the Created order works, wisdom), while mankind creates "values" (distorted perceptions of how things work based upon our extremely limited human perceptions and ideas passed along from one imperfect mortal to another. Time and time again, God warns us not to lean on our own understanding but to trust His word, even if it doesn't seem to agree with our current understanding, our values and morals.
6. Proverbs 8:13 -- "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil." If you are comfortable with or tolerant of evil, you are distant from God.
7. Proverbs 8:17 -- "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me."
 - You cannot approach God casually or complacently. Love requires diligent effort.
 - All relationships are two-way. Your character will be revealed in your closest relationships, first and foremost by your relationship with God.
8. Proverbs 8:33-36 -- "Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death." Again, wisdom comes only from God, received through obedience to God's word. Life and blessings are found in obedience; death and destruction come from disobedience.

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9. Psalm 143:5 – “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.” When your faith is weak, meditate upon all the ways God has demonstrated His faithfulness to you, and pray earnestly to Him. He is always faithful.

10. Psalm 143:9-10 -- "Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!" Key to getting through life's challenges is drawing closer to God and obeying Him. Don't focus on your enemy or on the problem, focus on Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Dec 18: Show your love for Jesus today by your faithful obedience.

DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 5, Friday, 7 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=joel+1-3%3B+pro+7%3B+rev+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 7 December 18:

1. Joel 1:5, 11, 13, 14 -- "Awake, you drunkards, and weep.... Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil.... Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar.... Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord." The prophet was calling a nation to repentance that didn't realize they needed to repent. A humble people are in constant repentance. For Christians, the heart of continual repentance isn't an uncertainty of saving forgiveness, which we have assured through faith in Jesus; this continual repentance is a deeply heartfelt desire to remove from our lives those parts of us that remain unloving, hurtful, destructive, and unworthy of the glory of God. This daily repentance is our striving for ever-increasing purity, holiness, and unity with Christ. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) You cannot fix what you aren't willing to be honest about. It starts with daily confession (humble honesty) before God and to others. Repentance involves a godly sorrow, which is different than worldly sorrow – "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2Cor 7:10) We must be honest about the past, learn from it, but not wallow in it. The past is history, the future is a mystery (from our perspective), but the present is your opportunity. As Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Go, and sin no more."

2. Joel 2:12 -- "'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;'" God sees past actions in context with the truth of your heart. Repentance must be from a genuine heart to be accepted, not just a superficial change in behavior. Again, superficial repentance is self-centered regret over getting hurt by the consequences of sin and seeking to avoid future self-inflicted pain and punishment. True repentance focuses on God and others, a heartfelt regret for dishonoring God and causing pain to others. True repentance drives you to humility, unconditional forgiveness, graciousness, and obedience. True repentance is empowered by the Holy Spirit and is a reflection of love.

3. Joel 2:12-13 -- "'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster."

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- God responds to the truly repentant and can replace what has been lost due to sin.

- God sees beyond our actions to examine our hearts. Genuine repentance, love, and faith comes from the heart. In fact, the Great Commandment says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...." (Matthew 22:37). This is why in Matthew 5 Jesus says that if you have anger and lust in your heart, you are already guilty of great sin before the Lord despite having not committed murder or adultery. It is not enough to simply obey the letter of the Law; you must have a heart of obedience that comes from a heart of genuine love. The angry, lustful heart has broken the Greatest Commandment of loving God wholeheartedly. Today's Proverbs tell us that "the Lord hates a heart that devises wicked plans." (Proverbs 6:17) Yes, the God who IS love also hates. How do we fix our sinful hearts? We can't. Only Jesus Christ can give you a new heart. Pray to the Lord that He will purify your heart.

Ezekiel 11:19, 20 -- And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

-- Psalm 51:10 -- Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

-- Psalm 86:11 -- Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.

-- Psalm 119:32 -- I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!

-- Psalm 119:36 -- Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

4. Joel 2:28, 29 -- "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit." The Spirit is poured out to all Christians without distinction of age, sex, occupation, social status, or race. "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13) All people have equal potential access to the Holy Spirit in salvation and obedience. God's Spirit does not discriminate. Christians should have nothing to do with any distinctions related to the flesh; we should not accept them as legitimate in any way; we should only acknowledge the truth of the Spirit. "But avoid foolish controversies." (Titus 3:9) "Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels." (2 Timothy 2:23)

5. Joel 2 -- God used Locust to destroy the land. God uses natural and forces, people, and circumstances to discipline. Most people don't see God's hand in unfolding situations, but God is in complete control and brings all things about for His purposes.

6. Joel 3:17 -- "So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it." God's plan is to glorify Himself and to purify His people to worship Him wholeheartedly.

7. Proverbs 7:6-9 -- "For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness."

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- Truth is self-evident and can be observed in life's circumstances.

- God's people come from all nations and places. Again, Christians don't deal in man-made divisive notions of race, color, or national origin. These concepts are meaningless in the Spiritual realm.

8. Revelation 7:13 -- "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." A great multitude of believers, "more than can be numbered, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" do not escape the great tribulation.

9. Revelation 7:14 -- "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation." God's people come out of the great tribulation because they were in the great tribulation.

10. Revelation 7:15 -- "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence." In a sense, Heaven on earth is experienced being in the presence of God now, serving God in His presence day and night (see John 17). Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) Eternal life begins the day you accept Jesus as your Savior and grow to know Him more and more each day for eternity.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 Dec 18: Search your heart to find where you have grown complacent with certain sins. Repent and remove what is unacceptable from your life.

DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 4, Thursday, 6 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hosea+12-14%3B+pro+6%3B+rev+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 6 December 18:

1. Hosea 12:1 -- "...they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt."

- Falsehoods don't add up, they multiply.

- Nations and people who pursue prosperity over fidelity are doomed. They partner with others who only seek gains only speeds up their destruction.

2. Hosea 12:6 -- "But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always."

- Love and justice go together. If you defend justice, you don't love as you should.

- Upon return to God there should be clear indication of repentance. We are saved by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone. Note the conclusion of Hosea: "Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." God's people walk in God's ways because we love God. Love and righteousness go together. Note in Proverbs today what our God hates: "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers." Proverbs reminds us that God's commands should be bound in our hearts, we should guide our steps like a lamp when we walk in a dark world. Walk in the light, not in darkness.

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- You need God's help to turn to Him and walk with Him. If He is your desire, He will help you.

- Because we live by the mercy and grace of God, we sometimes act as if God does not care about justice and doesn't hold us accountable for our behavior. We rejoice that God is Love, but we often lose sight of the fact that "the Lord is a God of justice." (Isaiah 30:18) We depend on God's mercy and grace, but we also live by His justice. Can you imagine just one day on earth where there was absolutely no justice? Wouldn't that be hellish? By the power of the Holy Spirit we are empowered to pursue justice and righteousness and are commanded to do so. Though we are forgiven of our sins once and for all, Jesus commands us to "repent" and "sin no more." We are not only to hold fast to love, we are to hold fast to justice; in fact, love and justice are inseparable, though the world does not understand this. When Christians neglect obedience, justice, and righteousness, they are demonstrating their unlovingness and are grieving the Spirit of God.

-- Psalm 33:5 -- He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

-- Psalm 37:28 -- For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

-- Psalm 89:14 -- Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

-- Psalm 99:4 -- The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

-- Psalm 101:1 -- I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will make music.

-- Psalm 119:149 -- Hear my voice according to your steadfast love; O Lord, according to your justice give me life.

-- Isaiah 16:5 -- then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.

-- Isaiah 61:8 -- For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

-- Jeremiah 9:24 -- but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.

-- Hosea 2:19 -- And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

-- Amos 5:15 -- Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

-- Micah 6:8 -- He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

-- Luke 11:42 -- But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

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3. Hosea 13:1 -- "Besides me there is no savior." No one can save you but Jesus. Faith in anyone else or anything else is an illusion.

4. Hosea 13:6 -- "But when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me." Sometimes people wonder why God doesn't give them more. Sometimes it is because God knows they will not be faithful with more. The life of ease can ruin a person. Sometimes God has to keep you a bit hungry to keep you faithful. If you desire more, learn to be faithful under any conditions.

5. Hosea 13:10 -- "Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers—those of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'?" Many have placed their hope in politicians. Christians don't do that. While everyone else is talking politics, we are spreading the Gospel.

6. Hosea 13:11 -- "I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath."

- God controls politics for His purposes.

- Bad rulers are from God, an act of judgment on a sinful people.

7. Hosea 14:9 -- "Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them."

- How many times and in how many ways does the Bible say this? This is wisdom. Know the ways of God and walk in the ways of God.

- Wisdom is found in obedience, not in academics.

8. Proverbs 6:6-8 -- "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest." Self-discipline is key to the life of the Christian. No one is going to make you do what God wants you to do, and sometimes it isn't going to be easy. You must be willing to make daily sacrifices for that future harvest.

9. Proverbs 6:23 -- "For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life." God's commands, in part, are intended to protect you from your own behavior. It takes internal discipline or self-control to follow God's commands. A person who lacks internal discipline requires external discipline to stay on the right path. You are doing the sinner a favor when you rebuke them where they lack self-control and self-discipline.

10. Proverbs 6:30, 31 -- "People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house." Everyone paid the same penalty for crimes regardless their circumstances. There was no favoritism.

11. Revelation 6:9-11 -- "'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been."

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- Final Judgment will occur when martyrdom is complete, confirming that some Christians will go through the tribulation. Only the Father knows when their mission will be complete. These martyrs are further spoken of in the next chapter – “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14)

- God does not always protect His faithful servants from persecution, but He holds a special place of honor for them in the Kingdom. Persecution will continue until the End.

12. Revelation 6:15-17 – “Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’” On the Day of Judgment, No one escapes the wrath of God except those who have been covered over by the Blood of Jesus and His righteousness, through faith in Him and salvation.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 Dec 18: Listen carefully to the Holy Spirit's counsel today. The Holy Spirit convicts you of your sins (where you are missing the mark, doing things other than what God would have you do). Ask for forgiveness for the shortcomings the Holy Spirit reveals to you, repent of your sins (turn 180-out; 1 John 1:9), receive and accept God's forgiveness, and move forward, walking closer to Jesus with your eyes affixed on Him, never looking backwards. (Proverbs 1:23-25)
"Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" (Luke 9:62)

DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 3, Wednesday, 5 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hosea+10%2C+11%3B+pro+5%3B+rev+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 5 December 18:

1. Hosea 10:1, 2 – “Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will break down their altars and destroy their pillars.”

- People turn God’s blessings into curses through self-centered disobedience. God will not continue to resource sin in a person’s life or in a nation’s affairs.

- God measures your success by what is in your heart, not by what you produce.

2. Hosea 10:4 -- "They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenants."

- Talk is cheap. Christian character keeps its promises, regardless the cost.

- Teams, organizations, communities, and nations are built on trust. But when integrity is no longer honored, institutions collapse. Consider what dishonesty in institutions has cost you? Consider what we value in politicians today. We value competency over character as did the Israelites in Hosea’s time. The counsel Israel received applies to us today: “It is time to seek the Lord (Hosea 10:12).”

3. Hosea 10:10 – “When I please, I will discipline them.” God will discipline. In His own time, God will hold everyone accountable.

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4. Hosea 10:12 -- "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you." We are made righteous through Jesus, but having been made righteous, we have been called to grow up, or grow into, righteousness. Righteousness is something you develop in your life over time. You don't get a harvest of anything overnight. You must plant the seeds of righteousness and then toil day by day to cultivate it. Break your fallow ground by earnestly seeking the Lord, and then He will make your righteousness grow. Much like crops grow naturally when cared for, the Spirit will grow your righteousness if you maintain the conditions for growth by remaining humble and obedient. Now is the time to pursue righteousness and to seek the Lord. Don't be complacent with a single day.

5. Hosea 10:13 -- "You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way."

- A just nation cannot be built or sustained by sinful people. Organizations and nations are nothing more than a collection of people in agreement who join together to realize a collective goal. Culture is merely the collective character of those people. When a nation wanders from God it is because the people wandered from God. Today, Christians lament over the condition of things without taking responsibility for it. Darkness is a lack of light. If our nation appears to be getting darker, consider what is happening to the light of God's people.

- What you plant grows. Your daily actions are like seeds planted into your character, good or bad, they shape who you are becoming. Your little daily decisions grow to big character traits later. What you do today matters more than you realize. You will make an innumerable number of decisions today. Choose to honor the Lord with every thought, decisions, word, and deed that you might grow in Christ-like character.

6. Hosea 10:13, 14 -- "Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed," When you trust or favor something over God (which is idolatry), God may leave you to your idols for a time that you might discover the falsehood of your idols and the reality of His glory and Sovereignty. When your idols fail you, you might be tempted to pray that God will protect your idols -- He won't. When your idols fail you, you will suffer until you run back into the arms of your Heavenly Father.

7. Hosea 10:13, 15; Hosea 11:5, 6 -- "Because...." One of the most important questions people ask in life is, "Why?" So, when God answers with the indicative relative adverb "because," it is important for us to pay close attention. So, why did the nation's fall? They fell "because [they] trusted in [their] own way" and their own strength.... because of their "own evil".... because they... "refused to return" to God.... because of their "own counsels" (or reasoning). (Hosea 10:13-15; Hosea 11:5-7) Proverbs warns, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil." (Proverbs 3:5-7) To the wise, willing to learn from the mistakes of past generations that God has recorded for us in His word, God says, "it is the time to seek the Lord." (Hosea 10:12) So how do we seek God? The Bible says, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground." (Hosea 10:12) "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you." (Amos 5:14) "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy." (1 Corinthians 14:1) "But as for you, O man of God.... pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness." (1 Timothy 6:11) "So flee youthful passions and pursue

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righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22) "Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it." (1 Peter 3:11) Make no mistake, seeking the Lord and abiding in the Lord takes our full, daily effort, often doing what doesn't make sense in our human understanding but requires faith to do what is foolishness in the eyes of man. This is a battle against self, empowered by the Holy Spirit but executed by us. Are you walking with God in obedience day by day?

8. Hosea 11:3 -- "Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk." God teaches us to walk, and then our proud hearts encourage us to walk away from Him. The Bible says that both Noah and Enoch "walked with God." (Gen 5:22; Gen 6:9) What does the Bible say God desires of us? "To fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord." (Deut 10:12, 13) Who are really God's people, not the "CHINOs" (Christians in name only), but those who walk in God's ways and obey Him. (Jeremiah 7:13) "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" Your goal today is to walk with God and to not go your own way or be led astray. You will walk today one step at a time, one decision at a time. Instead of worrying about what God is going to do with the sum of your life, focus on being faithful to Him right now. If your steps are grounded in loving obedience, you need not worry about where God is taking you.

9. Hosea 11:7 -- "My people are bent on turning away from me." Humbly admit and recognize that you are easily tempted. Pray for the strength of the Holy Spirit to resist temptation, carefully guard your heart, and, relying on God's grace, maintain a repentant and persistent heart.

10. Hosea 11:10 -- "They shall go after the Lord; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west." Faced with God's judgment, many move further away from God, but God's people humbly draw closer to Him. Draw closer to God through your circumstances.

11. Proverbs 5:6 -- "She does not ponder the path of life." Sinners do not stop to truly consider the seriousness of their sin or what they are doing.

12. Proverb 5:11, 12 -- "And at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, 'How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!' You will reap what you sow, and when you do, you cannot change what you planted and cultivated in the past."

13. Revelation 5:9, 10 -- "You were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

- Jesus has saved people all over the globe to be a Kingdom of priests on earth who will ultimately reign upon His return. Do you have wholehearted allegiance to your Kingdom, the Kingdom of God? Are you united with the citizens of the Kingdom of God across the globe? Are you living as a priest on earth and an Ambassador of Jesus and His Kingdom? Don't lose sight of who you are, why you are here, and what God is calling you to be and to do.

- We are called to work as a kingdom on earth, and we are called to be priests. Do you have that perspective?

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 Dec 18: Walk with God today (Hosea 11:3).

DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 2, Tuesday, 4 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hosea+8%2C+9%3B+pro+4%3B+rev+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 4 December 18:

1. Hosea 8:2-4 – “To me they cry, ‘My God, we—Israel—know you.’ Israel has spurned the good.... They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not.” Those who truly know God obey God. Those who disobey God don’t really know Him. To know Him is to love Him; to love Him is to trust and obey Him.

2. Hosea 9:1 – “Rejoice not... for you have played the whore, forsaking your God.” God calls sin spiritual whoredom while we tend to make light of sin. Sin is direct defiance to the Holiness and Sovereignty of God, and to sin after salvation is to trample upon the blood of Christ.

3. Hosea 9:7 -- “The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit is mad, because of your great iniquity and great hatred.” One of the common themes in the Bible is that when a people or nations turn away from God in sin, they eventually lose the spiritual sense to even understand their condition. God’s faithful prophets are considered fools while the prophets of the people truly are fools. The godless reject God’s messengers and surround themselves with false prophets who will tell them what they want to hear. False prophets proclaim ‘peace’ (with God) when there isn’t peace; they claim sin isn’t sin; they make rules that are not from God with the intent of transferring righteousness, glory, honor, and authority from God to men; they muddy the waters of God’s word in order to make room for sin and/or to promote their own agendas. They are disobedient and do not display the ‘fruit of the spirit.’ (See Galatians 5) False prophets and false congregations consider themselves ‘spiritual’ and have influence over the unfaithful but lack any real spiritual power. I wonder what messages were being delivered by talented preachers during Noah’s day right before God flooded the earth. What do you suppose was going on in the ‘churches’ of Sodom and Gomorrah prior to the destruction of those cities? When Jesus was born, most places of worship felt no impact, remaining completely unaware. Concerning his Second Coming Jesus warned, “as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” The vast majority of the very ‘religious’ will be completely unaware of the reality of the Great Judgment Day when it arrives. Now is a good time to be a ‘fool’ for Christ. "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." - Mark Twain

4. Proverbs 4:7 – “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.” If you want to be wise, you have to choose to seek wisdom from God’s word. Many say they want to be wise but hardly crack that Bible. You cannot have true wisdom apart from God’s word.

5. Proverbs 4:14 – “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.” To be wise, you must also choose to reject all that is unwise, all that is sinful, all that God rejects. Have nothing to do with worthless, ungodly things.

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6. Proverbs 4:18, 19 – “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” Everyone is either growing closer to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, the Life, or farther away. No one stays where they are. If you are not getting brighter by reflecting the Light of Jesus as you get closer to Him, you are getting darker as you move farther away from Him. How will your light shine today?

7. Proverbs 4:23-27 – “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.”

- The Bible warns, above all else, to guard your heart, and it tells you how to do it: Watch your mouth; don't gaze upon or ponder sinful things; consider very carefully what you are doing and why, scrutinizing your motives; and walk far away from evil and temptations, keeping your path straight towards Jesus.

- Daily choices impact your heart and your character. How do you guard your heart? Proverbs 4 gives you sound guidance.

8. Revelation 4:8 -- “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.” The only attribute ascribed to God in the Bible that is emphasized in repetition three times is the attribute of holiness. What does this tell you about how you should approach God? What does this tell you about how you should feel about sin?

9. Revelation 4:10 – “They cast their crowns before the throne.” True worshippers surrender all glory to God. As an ambassador for Christ, never, never be caught claiming the glory.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 Dec 18: Today, let your behavior honor and glorify the holiness of God. Your every action should be a reflection of His holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit upon your life. (Revelation 4:8)

DBRP - WEEK 49, Day 1, Monday, 3 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hosea+6%2C+7%3B+pro+3%3B+rev+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 3 December 18:

1. Hosea 6:3 – “Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord.” Don't just know 'about' Him. Press on with all your being to know Him personally.

2. Hosea 6:6 – “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

- God wants you to truly know Him and love Him, not merely to practice religion and morality.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- No amount of activity for God will ever take the place of a heart that is right with Him. Through the ages God's people have been persuaded that they could please Him through their service and their offerings, regardless of their heart condition. King Saul offered generous sacrifices, hoping God would overlook his disobedience (1 Sam. 15:22-23). David may have assumed that after all he had done on God's behalf, God would overlook his sin (2 Sam. 12:7-15). Ananias and Sapphira thought that their generous gift to the church would compensate for their deceitfulness (Acts 5:1-11). Paul was certainly one who had thought his zealousness would please God. After his conversion,

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however, he concluded that even if he had faith to remove mountains, gave all he had to feed the poor, and offered his body to be burned for the sake of God, and yet had a heart that was not right, it would all be for nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). We are susceptible to the same misunderstanding as all of these people were. We can be deceived into assuming God is more interested in our activity for Him than He is in the condition of our heart. God has consistently made it clear that He will not be pacified by even the most generous offerings and zealous service if our hearts are not right with Him (Mic. 6:6-8). No matter how much we do in God's service, regardless of how active we are in our church, no matter how honorable our reputation in the Christian community, He will not overlook a sinful heart. His desire is that we devote ourselves to knowing Him and loving Him with all of our hearts.

3. Hosea 7:3 – “By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery.” Sin might please human leaders, but it will not be tolerated by God.

4. Hosea 7:8, 9 – “Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not.”

- Sin ruins people without them realizing it.

- Today also, the church has partnered with the world at the expense of its strength and power. Many Christians and churches have muddled the waters of the Gospel by mixing it with modern philosophy. Many churches have put their faith in business practices and marketing schemes rather than the power of the Gospel. Many Christians and churches have become too busy for the disciplines and relationships of discipleship. Many Christians and churches have turned to talented leaders rather than Spirit-filled leaders who visibly display all the fruits of the spirit. Many Christians and churches have drifted into materialism in pursuit of the American dream. For example, most Christians as well as most churches are in significant financial debt to ungodly worldly institutions to the point where individuals don't tithe, and churches don't maintain storehouses to support the congregation and missionaries as they should. Christian families suffer from the same problems as ungodly families, and the Christian community doesn't stand out as very bright or salty. Too many Christians have lost their peace, joy, courage, purity, and love. Within the church, we need a movement of repentance and revival.

5. Hosea 7:11-13 – “Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.... Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me!” Some go to the Lord and trust in the Lord for their security and provision; most go to the world and its systems of government and economy. Those that go to the world will compromise their loyalty and fidelity to God.

6. Hosea 7:14 – “They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me.” There is a big difference between being sorry for having to face the consequences of sin (regretting sin because of the pain it causes you) and being truly repentant, regretting sin because of its offensive to God and because of its impact on your relationship with Him. The truly repentant reject sin regardless the earthly consequences because they love the Lord. There is also a big difference between seeking God for His blessings and seeking Him for Him alone. Do you want to know God or just have what He might give you?

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7. Proverbs 1:3 -- "Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart." Love and faithfulness go together. How much you obey Jesus is evidence of how much you really love Him.

8. Proverbs 3:5 -- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Trusting in God is a heart issue, not an intellect issue. Trust is formed in relationship.

9. Proverbs 3:5-7 -- "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil." Again, we cannot trust in our own feelings or intellect, and wisdom comes only from God. God gives us His word to guide us in His wisdom, and we must dig into it. Without God's word, we naturally turn back to our own misguided feelings and beliefs. Obey God's word, and walk with Jesus.

10. Proverbs 3:7, 8 -- "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones." Sin affects you physically, not just spiritually.

11. Proverbs 3:11-12 -- "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." In addition to His word, God uses His discipline to teach us and to grow us. Be thankful for His discipline and grow.

12. Proverbs 3:19 -- "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens." God's moral law and God's natural law go hand-in-hand.

13. Proverbs 3:27, 28 -- "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it'—when you have it with you." See a need, meet the need.

14. Revelation 3:1 -- "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.'" The most popular and active church was spiritually dead though the population knew it not.

15. Revelation 3:2 -- "I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God." Partial obedience is disobedience.

16. Revelation 3:7-12 -- [And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. "'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.]

- The church that was viewed as weak by people received praise without rebuke from God. The powerful church remains faithful to God with perseverance in a world of infidelity -- "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name."

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- Some believe this verse means that the faithful will be protected from tribulation, while others believe this verse says Christians will be kept from final judgment, not worldly tribulations.

17. Revelation 3:15-20 -- “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” The richest church in the earthly sense was the poorest church in God’s eyes. In partnership with the world, they were half-hearted followers of Christ, which really isn’t following at all. You are either walking with Christ or walking somewhere else. Jesus has no part-time employees; you are either working for Him or against Him. He is either your goal today or you are in pursuit of idols. It’s really that simple.

18. Revelation 3:16 – “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” God does not accept the half-hearted ‘Christian.’ Either Jesus is both your Lord and Savior, or He is neither. There is no partial marriage with Jesus.

19. Revelation 3:17 -- “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot...” These are particularly haunting words because the church was blind to its own spiritual condition, believing it was spiritually on fire when, in fact, it was lukewarm and unacceptable to the Lord. Perhaps they wrongly interpreted their financial prosperity as blessings of approval from God. In reality, their comfort only made them complacent. Of note, the only churches that aren’t rebuked by God are the poor and persecuted. It is so very critical that we humbly and continually measure our lives from the plumb line of God’s word while also remaining receptive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the rebukes of other Christians who reveal the truth of our personal ‘blind spots’ – what we can’t or refuse to see in ourselves. To God we should pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!” (Psalm 139:23) We should also have the attitude of the Psalmist from our readings this weekend – “Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it.” (Psalm 141:5) The foundation of your integrity is your ability to be honest with yourself about your fidelity to God — humility. Can you handle the truth?

20. Revelation 3:19 – “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” Be thankful for God’s discipline as it shows He loves you. Your response should be repentance, surrender, and wholehearted obedience.

21. Revelation 3:22 – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Can you hear the Spirit? Only through the counsel of the Spirit can you know what to do in life. Only through the Spirit can you have wisdom. Knowing how to hear the Spirit is critical to your life. To hear the Spirit, you have to truly listen from your heart, desiring God’s will and not your own; you have to walk in faithfulness to what you already know from God’s word, you have to pray without ceasing, and you have to remove the noise of selfishness and sin that keep you from hearing. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 – “Do not quench the Spirit.” Ephesians 4:30 – “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:3 – “Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Galatians 5:25 – “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Dec 18: Be guided by the Spirit today. (Revelation 3:22)

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 7, Sunday, 2 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hosea+4%2C+5%3B+pro+2%3B+psalm+141%2C+142>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 2 December 18:

1. Hosea 4:1-3 -- "There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish."

- Love demands faithfulness. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15)." The evidence of faith is faithfulness in love and obedience. Faithful obedience is an act of love and a testimony before a watching world. In love, obedience is not a chore – when you love someone, you care about what they care about. Jesus also commanded us to make disciples throughout the world and teach them to obey all that God commands. Again, our love for God should compel us to make disciples because in His love, He pursues the lost. We take obedience, evangelism, and disciple-making too lightly:

-- Psalm 85:10 -- Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

-- Galatians 5:22-23 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

-- Proverbs 3:3-4 -- Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

-- Proverbs 16:6 -- By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.

-- Proverbs 20:6 -- Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?

-- Proverbs 20:28 -- Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.

-- Matthew 24:45-47 -- Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

-- Revelation 2:10 -- Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

- What does it mean when God's description of abhorrent godlessness sums up most of the popular TV shows enjoyed by Christians today? How can we be entertained by what God hates? What does that say about the condition of our hearts? What is most shocking is what no longer shocks us. Media entertainment (audio, visual, print) is an idol for God's people. Even in its most benign forms, 'educational' programs preach a secular, humanist message; 'news' programs are biased, not only in

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what they select to cover but also in how they cover it; 'family friendly' shows are like a gateway drug to more ignoble programming and still manage to slip in ungodly values; and commercials are designed to entice us and inflame feelings of lust, pride, envy, jealousy, and greed. At the very least (perhaps the most critical point), the entertainment industry distracts us and wastes our precious time. Many Christians tell themselves that if they disconnect from the medias, they will lose touch with what is going on around them. Well, you won't. Most of what you get from media is irrelevant, and big issues will be what everyone is talking about anyway (relationships provide information). Hearing over and over again about every gruesome sex crime, murder, scandal, or tragedy that has occurred across the planet (through global networks) serves to only depress you over things you cannot even influence. Turn off the TV, radio, and blogs for 30 days and invest that time and focus on your relationship with God, your family, your church, your friends, your neighborhood, and your community and see what happens. When you get in your car, instead of allowing the radio to be the second thing you turn on after the engine, turn on your spiritual receiver and just listen for the Counsel of the Spirit. Meditate upon these verses:

-- Ephesians 5:1-21 -- Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

-- Psalm 101:3 -- I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.

-- Philippians 4:8 -- Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

-- 1 Corinthians 15:33 -- Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

-- Matthew 5:29 -- If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

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-- Galatians 6:8 -- For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

-- 1 Timothy 4:7 -- Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;

-- Galatians 5:19-21 -- Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

-- James 4:4 -- You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

-- Galatians 5:13 -- For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

-- Matthew 6:22 -- "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,

-- Romans 12:2 -- Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

-- 1 John 2:15 -- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

-- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 -- Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

-- 2 Timothy 4:4 -- And will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

-- Matthew 5:28 -- But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

-- Psalm 119:1-176 -- Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

-- John 4:23-24 -- But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

-- Revelation 3:16 -- So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

-- Romans 1:32 -- Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

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-- Psalm 1:1-6 -- Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

-- Exodus 20:7 -- "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

-- Matthew 10:16 -- "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

-- Proverbs 21:4 -- Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

-- Job 31:1 -- "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?

-- Exodus 20:17 -- "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

- "...and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery." The Bible lists swearing and lying, along with murder and adultery, as all being signs of godlessness. Do you see harsh language lying the same way, as nothing but godlessness? Throughout the Bible, we are reminded and warned that what comes out of your mouth reveals what is truly in your heart and will either glorify God or dishonor Him. Be a light of faithfulness, steadfast love, holiness, and purity.

- "Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away." Sin actually affects the environment, not just figuratively, but physically. Try to explain that to a scientist.

2. Hosea 4:4 -- "Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest." The religious tend to point their fingers at unbelievers and blame them for societal problems, but God holds the church accountable for not being a light in the darkness. Christians (God's priests on earth) can be tempted to look at the world's problems as if they have nothing to do with them, pointing the finger at the 'sinful world.' However, God points first at the salt and light that is no longer salty and bright. Repentance must start with the church that has comprised itself and remained largely silent before sin.

3. Hosea 4:6 -- "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge." Bad religious leaders will destroy the land. Who are the great Christian voices in America today? Do an internet search of the most popular, highest paid preachers in America, and consider what impact they are having in America for the Kingdom of God.

4. Hosea 5:4 -- "Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the Lord." You cannot continue in sin and return to the Lord at the same time. If you want to be close to God, repent of your known sins and continue to pray that God will reveal to you your unknown sins.

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5. Hosea 5:6, 7 – “With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them. They have dealt faithlessly with the Lord.” All of the religious activity and sacrifice in the world doesn’t make up for continued faithlessness. God seeks a wholehearted worshipper who worships from a heart of love and relies upon God’s grace, while obeying Him day by day out of love this as opposed to a ‘religious’ person who makes religious sacrifices while continuing in sin.

6. Proverbs 2:1-5 -- "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." The word "if" is used three times in these verses to describe the conditions required to learn how to fear the Lord and to understand His ways, to truly know Jesus -- receive and truly treasure God's commands, exploring God's word daily like a hunt for an invaluable treasure, praying earnestly for understanding, and striving to apply them more and more daily, not just to be a better person but to become more and more united with Jesus. Is that what you are doing every day?

-- Proverbs 3:11 -- My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof,

-- Proverbs 10:13 -- On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense.

-- Proverbs 13:1 -- A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

-- Proverbs 15:10 -- There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.

-- Proverbs 22:15 -- Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

-- Proverbs 26:3 -- A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.

-- Hebrews 12:3-17 -- Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold

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his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

-- Revelation 3:19 -- Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

7. Proverbs 2:6-12 – “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.... Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil.” Again, Proverbs explains the process of sanctification: You study God’s word through the power of the Holy Spirit; then you apply God’s word, and through the process of being a doer of God’s word, you begin to understand through application, and wisdom moves from your head to your heart, helping you to truly desire to obey more and more rather than just obeying out of a sense of duty. The more you desire to obey, the better you obey, and a cycle of excellence continues over time. Daily, Bible reading and application, covered in prayer, changes your heart over time. These are essential daily Christian habits that are more important than eating and drinking.

8. Psalm 141:3, 4 – “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips! Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity, and let me not eat of their delicacies!” Pray to God that He will guard you and give you strength where you are weak and easily tempted by sin. If you can’t seem to control your mouth, pray to God for help. If you are tempted in a certain area of your life, pray that God will guard your heart. If you are easily influenced by others, pray for a greater influencing of the Spirit in your life.

9. Psalm 141:5 -- "Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it." Strong rebukes against sin are a gift often under appreciated.

10. Psalm 142:2 – “I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.” If you are going to complain, complain to God and to no one else.

11. Psalm 142:3 -- "When my spirit faints within me, you know my way!" No matter what you are going through, God knows your situation and will take care of you.

12. Psalm 142:4 – “...there is none who takes notice of me.” When you feel completely alone, God is there for you, the only One who can truly love you unconditionally, the only One who will never abandon you, the only one you can really count on, the only One you really need. Walk with Him through trials, growing closer to Him every day. Trust Him completely.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 Dec 18: Today, as you worship the Lord and seek to get closer to Him, consider carefully how you might be falling short in sin, and though you walk in grace, repent of your sins that they might not quench the Spirit in your life – 1 Thessalonians 5:19 – “Do not quench the Spirit.” Ephesians 4:30 – “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:3 – “Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Galatians 5:25 – “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” (Hosea 5:4)

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 6, Saturday, 1 December 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=hosea+1%2C+2%2C+3%3B+pro+1%3B+psalm+140>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 1 December 18:

Note: Here is a short video overview of Hosea: <https://youtu.be/kE6SZ1ogOVU>

The story of Hosea (and his marriage to Gomer) is absolutely shocking but not nearly as shocking to us to read as it no doubt was to the Israelites who witnessed this minor prophet's verbal and visual testimony and indictment. Hosea's life was a living object lesson to publicly proclaim the awfulness of the infidelity of the adulterous northern kingdom and to proclaim the incredible mercy and fidelity of the Lord God. Imagine the very real pain, shame, and anger that Hosea must have felt. Yet, consider his response to his spouse who deserved death according to the Law. Like a marriage, God established, and has established, a covenant relationship with His people before a watching world, that His people would be faithful and loyal to Him and Him alone. The metaphor of the Church as the Bride of Christ is used several times by Jesus and throughout the New Testament. Does our infidelity to Jesus shock us as much as Gomer's infidelity to Hosea? Do we fully appreciate the grace that we have received as adulterers? If so, what is our response to that grace? I appreciate RC Sproul's comments below that smack in the face of the world's message today:

"That there is a deep and profound chasm that separates believing in the total depravity of man and our own understanding of the depth and scope of our own sin is a potent sign of the depth and scope of our own sin. 'Total depravity' is a true and sound biblical doctrine about how the fall has impacted mankind. We are sinful in every part of our being and utterly unable, precisely because we are unwilling, to embrace the work of Christ on our behalf unless He changes us first. Because we are totally depraved, however, we see this as a doctrine about man, rather than an actual self-description. We distinguish between the problems of 'man' and our own problems. It is safe to speak ill of man, but dangerous and sad business to look too closely into our own hearts of darkness. So instead we think ourselves as partaking in a general sense of this depravity thing, but see it manifest in our own lives in nice, clean ways. We have a high view of God's holiness, of His law, and so confess with all due piety that we are sinners indeed, rebels against the living God, in a nice, clean, abstract sort of way. The living God, however, has a far more accurate and potent picture of what we are. We are whores. We are shameless, self-degrading, crass and crude. We throw ourselves at strangers, selling our dignity for cash. Worse still, after He has redeemed us, washed us, even married us, we go back for more. We turn tricks before the all-seeing eyes of a Husband who suffered hell for us. Again He comes and washes us. He holds us. He confesses His love for us. He promises He will never leave us. He makes us new again.

But because we are still proud, we parade around in the beautiful gown with which He has covered us, suggesting that it surely had a few spots, a wrinkle or two on it before He found us. But they were nice, respectable spots and wrinkles. What we should be confessing is that it was once stained through with our whoredom. The joy of the Lord is not that He took us who were mostly clean and made us wholly clean. The joy of the Lord isn't that because He worked in us no one needs to know our former shame. The joy of the Lord is that while we were out walking the streets, He came for us. While others paid to pollute us, He paid to redeem us.

Our Father told us a story so that we would know what we are. He gave us a prophet, Hosea. And we, sinners that we are, instead of confessing to being Gomer, thought He was telling us to be more like Hosea. 'Oh,' we humbly confess, 'we should be so much more compassionate towards the really bad people. Please forgive us for not being more loving toward the unseemly ones of this world.' The truth is He is confessing that we are the unseemly ones. That's what we are, the people Jesus died for and

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married, the people adopted and loved of the Father, the people indwelt and being cleansed by the Spirit — God in three persons, consorting with such as we.

1. Hosea 1:2 – “When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, ‘Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.’” Throughout the Bible, God calls sin spiritual whoredom. God will use the lives of Hosea and Gomer as a living metaphor to show the people the truth of their sin. Hosea marrying Gomer would have been a shock to the people because Gomer was a prostitute, likely a temple prostitute, but the people who were shocked by Gomer were unmoved by their own sin against God.

2. Hosea 1:9 – “And the Lord said, ‘Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.’” God’s people had sinned to the point where they essentially were no longer God’s people. They were still religious, but their religion had no power.

3. Hosea 1:10 – “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God.’” God did not abandon the unfaithful people and had an ultimate plan of revival and renewal after discipline and repentance.

4. Hosea 2:6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20 -- “I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her.... I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness... I will uncover her lewdness.... I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees.... I will punish her.... Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.... I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.” In His perfect love and fidelity, God deals with us BOTH positively and negatively. We like to praise God’s grace and mercy when He does not give us what our sins deserve but rather ‘allures’ us by ‘speaking tenderly.’ However, we are usually not as joyous when God painfully removes from our lives those things we have allowed to become idols and substitutes for Him; we don’t usually display an attitude of thankfulness when He punishes us for our infidelities. We sometimes forget that God’s discipline is also an act of love, bringing us back to His loving arms. With mercy, God deals with us from His character of righteousness, justice, and faithfulness. He calls us to reflect His righteousness, justice, mercy, steadfast love, and faithfulness in all of our actions, not strictly out of a sense of duty but because we are one with Him, perfectly united in spirit. God who is perfect Love and our Life, cannot respond to you in perfect love while allowing you to chase destructive substitutes for Him that entice you away from perfect love. Hosea 2 starts with a ‘plea’ to those ‘who have received mercy.’ Then there is a transition from a plea to great punishment because some will not listen until there is no other choice, until they hit rock bottom. What does it take for God to get your attention? Is there something getting in the way of your love relationship with God? Will you listen to God’s plea, or do you need more than that?

5. Hosea 2:7 – “She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me than now.’” Returning to the Lord merely to receive blessings when you need them is not enough.

6. Hosea 2:14 – “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.” Though they have sinned terribly against Him, God does everything He can to allure the

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people back to Him. He desires reconciliation. He sent His Son for the purpose of reconciliation, and we have been given the message of reconciliation.

7. Hosea 2:16, 17 -- "And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more." God wants the sinner to have a change of heart and then to forget the past.

8. Hosea 2:18 -- "I will make you lie down in safety." There is security in fidelity.

9. Hosea 2:19, 20 -- "And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness." In our relationship with God, He demands righteousness and justice and will discipline us while showing love and mercy (He won't give us all that we deserve). In our relationship with God, He is always faithful.

10. Hosea 3:1 -- "And the Lord said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.'" From Henry T. Blackaby -- No human can comprehend God's love for His children! Our limited experience of human love hinders us from understanding God's unconditional love for us. We can see a picture of this love in the life of Hosea. Hosea was a righteous man, but God told him to marry a sinful woman. Hosea obeyed and took Gomer as his wife. He cherished her and treated her with dignity and respect. Never before had Gomer experienced this kind of love, but she soon grew dissatisfied. She began giving her affections to other men. She became so involved in adulterous pursuits that finally she abandoned Hosea altogether. Other men used her until she had nothing left to give. Then they sold her into slavery. After this, God gave Hosea an amazing command: "Go and buy her back." Despite the intense pain and hurt that Gomer had inflicted on him, God told Hosea to forgive her and to pay any price to bring her back into his home. God's message is clear: When we reject Him and turn our devotion elsewhere, our rejection carries the same pain as an adulterous betrayal. After all God has done for us, it is incomprehensible that we should reject Him. It is even harder to fathom that God could love us even after we have rejected, ignored, and disobeyed Him. Yet God's love is completely different from ours. His love follows us to the depths of our sinfulness until He has reclaimed us. His love is undaunted when we run from Him, and He continues to pursue us. What incredible love He has demonstrated to us!

11. Proverbs 1:7 -- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." If your education is not grounded in faith in Jesus, you are like the astronomers of old, trying to make the earth the center of the universe.

12. Proverbs 1:19 -- "Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors." Jesus said that he who seeks his own life will lose it. Self-centeredness will destroy you. Jesus said that the first step for those who would follow Him is to deny self.

13. Proverbs 1:23-25 -- "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel." Spiritual growth involves continual humility and repentance. To grow in spirit, we must be willing and eager to listen to and obey the Holy Spirit.

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14. Proverbs 1:28 -- "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." There can come a time when it is too late. Don't take God's warnings and discipline lightly.

15. Proverbs 1:31 -- "Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices." Often God's discipline is giving you what you want so you can experience the consequences and hopefully return to Him.

16. Psalm 140:1, 2 -- "Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually." Compare these verses with Proverbs 26:17-28. God wants us to call on Him to protect us from the ungodly.

17. Psalm 140:11 -- "Let not the slanderer be established in the land; let evil hunt down the violent man speedily!" Eventually evil catches up to the sinner.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 1 Dec 18: Be a peacemaker. Avoid conflict and avoid adding to conflict. Avoid all gossip and flattery, speaking only the words of God. (Proverbs 26:17-28)

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 5, Friday, 30 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=dan+11%2C+12%3B+pro+30%3B+Rev+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 30 November 18:

1. Daniel 11 --- The kingdoms of men will not bring peace to earth and will always be driven by selfishness.

2. Daniel 11:2 -- "And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece." Some of Daniel's prophecies have already occurred, so accurately described by Daniel that many sceptics have tried to suggest that Daniel was written after the events -- it wasn't. Daniel 11:2 speaks of Xerxes, the Persian king who invaded Greece and reigned from 485-464 B.C.

3. Daniel 11:3, 4 -- "Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these." These verses are believed to prophecy about Alexander the Great. Below is an amazing account by Josephus of Alexander the Great's actual entry into Jerusalem and the temple:

- "Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high-priest, when he heard that, was in agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join with him in offering sacrifices to God, whom he besought to protect that nation, and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them; whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced; and declared to all the warning he had received from God. According to the dream

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he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of the king. And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession, with the priests and the multitude of the citizens. The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations. It reached to a place called Sapha; which name, translated in Greek, signifies a prospect, for you have thence a prospect both of Jerusalem and of the temple; and when the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans that followed him, thought they should have liberty to plunder the city, and torment the high-priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, the very reverse of it happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high-priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head having the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high-priest. The Jews also did all together, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about: whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him to be disordered in his mind. However, Parmenio [Alexander's second-in-command] alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass, that when all others adored him, he should adore the high-priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, "I did not adore him, but that God who has honored him with that high-priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios, in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering my vision and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind." And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high-priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city; and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high-priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high-priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him: whereupon the high-priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired: and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired: and when he said to the multitude, that if any of them would enlist themselves in his army on this condition, that they should continue under the laws of their forefathers, and live according to them, he was willing to take them with him, many were ready to accompany him in his wars." (Antiquities 11.8.4-5)

4. Daniel 11:5 – "Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority." Ptolemy I of Egypt exerted his control over the Holy Land. Soon after the division of Alexander's Empire, the Ptolemies dominated this region. Ptolemy I had a prince named Seleucus, who rose to power and took dominion over the region of Syria. He became more powerful than his former Egyptian ruler. The Seleucids are identified with the Kings of the North, and the Ptolemies were the Kings of the South. The dynasties of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies fought for some 130 years. The stronger of the two always held dominion over the Holy Land.

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5. Daniel 11:6 – “After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times.” Antiochus II (of the Seleucids) married Berenice (daughter of Ptolemy II). There was peace for a time because of this marriage, but it was upset when Ptolemy II died. Once Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II put away Berenice and took back his former wife, Laodice. Laodice didn't trust her husband Antiochus II; so she had him poisoned. After the murder of Antiochus II, Laodice had Berenice, her attendants, and an infant son of Antiochus II and Berenice killed. After this reign of terror, Laodice set her son (Seleucus II) on the throne of the Syrian dominion.

6. Daniel 11:30-32 – “For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.” Ungodly kingdoms will inevitably find themselves opposed to the worship of God as His commands will oppose the sinfulness of their ways. A natural next-step is to seek to eliminate worship of God.

7. Daniel 11:32 – “He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.” Knowing about God won't be enough to keep people from being led astray by the seduction of the world; you must truly know God and live Him with all your heart. Those who truly know God will not partner with the world in violation of God's commands.

8. Daniel 11:33-35 – “The wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.” Many will resist the world for a time but will succumb to the pressure that comes from both pain and pleasure. Those who remain faithful until the end will reign with Christ in the new Kingdom of God on earth.

9. Daniel 11:36 – “And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.” Daniel transitions to End Times.

10. For an explanation of the remainder of the prophetic verses in Daniel 11, go to https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/studyguide_dan/dan_11.cfm

11. Daniel 12:4 – “But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” People are getting busier and busier, and human knowledge is increasing exponentially on earth, but wisdom is decreasing just as fast. While the ungodly pride themselves in their knowledge, they become increasingly capable of evil and destructiveness. Our global technologies have become our Tower of Babel – our rapid progress is rapidly progressing us towards catastrophic consequences as mankind seeks their own global kingdom on earth rather than the Kingdom of God.

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12. Daniel 12:9 -- "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end." End Times prophecy is mostly intended to be understood when it is revealed, to give confidence throughout all times that God is in control and has a plan and to give confirmation to those who witness the fulfillment of prophecy that God always fulfills His word. Daniel 11:1-36 shows us that God fulfills His word, and we can have complete confidence that God will fulfill His End Times prophecy – only the Father knows when.

13. Daniel 12:10 – "Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand." You are either purifying yourself as one of God's holy people or not. You are either giving your allegiance to this world or to God. The world will be distinctly divided between true Christians and the ungodly. Only the true followers of Christ will have the spiritual discernment to understand what is going on. The wicked cannot understand the gravity of what is happening around them right now.

14. Daniel 12:13 – "But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days." Daniel would die before the end of the days, but there is a position awaiting him when Christ returns to establish His Kingdom on earth.

15. Proverbs 30:1-3 -- "I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One."

- It takes a lot for some people to finally realize how much they need God and to humble themselves before the Lord.

- One of the first steps to wisdom is acknowledging that you know nothing and that you are totally reliant on God for understanding.

16. Proverbs 30:5, 6 – "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar."

- We should only communicate the word of God to ourselves and to others. Don't try to prove your wisdom by adding to it.

- Many feel they are too smart for the Bible, and many think they need more than God's word. Many people trust in their own intellect rather than the mind of God. God will be glorified in the consequences the proud will inevitably face. Trust in God's word, not in your own understanding.

17. Proverbs 30:7-9 – "Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." Trust God to give you what you need, not what you want.

18. Proverbs 30:10 -- "Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty." Don't judge the worth of others; you don't have God's perspective on their lives. God is the judge of people. We can only judge behavior. You can speak to whether or not a person is doing what is right or wrong, but you cannot judge the value of the person. What a person does today isn't the sum total of who they are or who they are becoming. At one point, both Moses and David were murderers, but God was making them into people after His own heart. You have to assume that God is doing great things in the lives of every person you meet, even the difficult people.

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19. Proverbs 30:12 – “There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.” If you don’t think you need it, you won’t ask for it, and your need will remain unfilled to your loss.

20. Proverbs 30:18, 19 – “Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.” You never know what a person might do under certain circumstances. Everyone can be tempted to do foolish, sinful things when conditions change. You should seek to not only guard your own heart by controlling your environment as best as you can, you should also do the same for others, protecting them from their own weaknesses whenever possible.

21. Proverbs 30:20 – “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” What sins in your life have become so commonplace that you don’t even consider them sinful anymore? How about watching ungodly scenes as entertainment on your television?

22. Proverbs 30:24-28 – “Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; the rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs; the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; the lizard you can take in your hands,

yet it is in kings’ palaces.” You don’t have to be powerful if you are wise. Wisdom comes from God, not through human intellect.

23. Revelation 2:2, 23 -- “I know your deeds.... I will repay each of you according to your deeds.” In today’s reading from Revelation, Jesus commends and rebukes the churches based upon their deeds. The church of Ephesus is commended for its perseverance, refusal to tolerate “wicked men” and false teachers, and for its hatred of evil practices. Yet, it is also rebuked for slipping from its original height and commanded to repent. Meanwhile, Smyrna receives no rebuke, only praise and encouragement to remain faithful through affliction. Jesus commends Pergamum for refusing to renounce their faith under persecution but also rebukes them for immorality including sexual sin. He warns Pergamum that if they don’t deal with their sinful behavior, he will personally “fight against” those who practice such behavior. Thyatira is commended for “love, faith, service, perseverance, and growth. However, Thyatira is also rebuked for tolerating false teaching and immorality. Jesus warns that, without repentance, he will personally punish such behavior that God may be glorified. The end of chapter 2 states, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” – these letters have a message for all of God’s people. My takeaway: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8, 9). However, God holds us accountable for our words and deeds on earth as His ambassadors. God calls His people to repent from false doctrines and immorality which dishonors His Holiness. God does not take sin lightly and will punish His people for sin. Churches that fail to repent lose their “lampstand.” Reward awaits those who persevere and overcome.

24. Revelation 2:3, 4 – “I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”

- You must endure patiently, but you must do it out of genuine love, not merely a sense of duty. You must be patient because you really want to for God and not just because you know you are supposed to.

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- Good deeds are not enough. God is concerned about your heart. Your actions must be the fruit of love, not the fruit of pride, self-righteousness or self-preservation. How can two people do the same deed and one is accepted by God and the other isn't? The answer is that one person is motivated by genuine love and the other isn't. What motivates you to do what you do?

25. Revelation 2:14, 15, 20 -- "You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam... so that they might... practice sexual immorality.... So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.... you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality." God warns his churches that syncretism (the blending of God's truth with the world's lies) will destroy the churches if not stopped. Despite their "toil and... patient endurance... and bearing up"; despite their 'holding fast' to the Name of God and their refusal to deny their faith; despite their ever-increasing "love and faith and service and patient endurance," the influence of the world around them threatens to erode their holiness, salt and light, thereby rendering them powerless and worthless as a church. It starts with 'tolerance' of evil within the church which turns into acceptance of evil within the church. Soon the word of God is filtered by God's people to accommodate their sins which are abhorrent to God and misrepresent His character and His will before the world. The Bible points out over and over again that sexual sin is the most obvious or blatant indicator of infidelity to God. First the church starts to tolerate sexual sin (this usually starts with entertainment); then the church accepts it; then we stop preaching about it or, even worse, we pervert the word of God to justify current cultural norms. We do all this in the name of 'love.' However, the Provider of Grace has a much different message to the churches -- "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." (Revelation 2:5)

- God will not tolerate sexual immorality within the body and will "war" against it. God strictly forbids sex outside the covenant marriage of one man and one woman. All other sexual activity is an abomination. Remember, this is Jesus speaking. Don't let anyone convince you that His grace accommodates unrepentant sin after salvation.

- Again, God forbids you to tolerate any form of sexual immorality. Don't view inappropriate things and then go to the Lord in prayer, expecting God to honor your prayer. Purify yourself.

26. Revelation 2:9 -- "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."

- Christians must be willing to really pay the price for doing the right thing. Wealth obtained in an ungodly way (like taking advantage of others or working for ungodly organizations) is not wealth at all. To be faithful to God, you might have to pass up on opportunities to get what you desire.

- See how many places the Bible points out that the church will go through the tribulation. Many Christians think they will escape the suffering that comes when God judges their nations.

27. Revelation 2:10, 11 -- "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'" God will let His faithful

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servants suffer and die, and He warns them not to be afraid of their earthly demise. He will reward them for eternity. You likely won't hear this message preached in the "seeker sensitive" church.

28. Revelation 2:21 – "...she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality." Once again, God will not tolerate sexual immorality.

29. Revelation 2:26, 27 – "The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father." Those who are most faithful will rule on earth with Jesus in His new Kingdom; not everyone receives a position of leadership in that kingdom.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 Nov 18: Today, purify yourself, and focus your mind on responding to all people, regardless of how they treat you, with love and service. (Rev 2:14-20; Proverbs 25:21, 22)

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 4, Thursday, 29 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=dan+9%2C+10%3B+pro+29%3B+rev+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 29 November 18:

1. Daniel 9:1-3 – "I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years." Daniel went to God's word to understand history, the current situation, and what would happen in the future. Do you?
2. Daniel 9:3 – "Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." Reading God's word drove Daniel to impassioned prayer.
3. Daniel 9:3-19 – Daniel's response to the truth of God's word was mourning, confession, and repentance. The more you appreciate the Holiness of God, the more you understand and appreciate your need for His mercy and grace and the more you earnestly desire to live in obedience to Him.
4. Daniel 9:5-11 – "We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame.... To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.... All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice." Daniel intercedes for a people who had suffered great calamity because they refused to listen to God's word, obey God's commands, and walk in the ways of God. God's word reveals God's holiness; God's commands; the guiltiness of individuals, leaders, and nations; God's righteous condemnation of sinners, and their utter dependence on God's mercy and grace. Daniel exemplifies a proper response as a member of a sinful nation and as God's ambassador – repentance, deep intercessory prayer, personal counter-culture faithfulness, and a willingness to proclaim God's truth to everyone, even to kings, even at the risk of his life, whether anyone will listen or not.

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5. Daniel 9:18 – “For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.” Everything we do rests on God’s continual grace. The more you think in a self-centered way, the worse off your perspective of reality. To self-promote is to work against the Gospel. God cannot share His glory with anyone. You don’t have the answer, Jesus does.

6. Daniel 9:21 – “...while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.” Vision came at worship time.

7. Daniel 9:23 – “At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision.”

- Daniel’s prayer was answered immediately. Daniel was greatly loved not because of his righteous deeds (which were truly impressive), but because of his genuine, humble love of God which inspired his righteous deeds. Daniel was truly wholehearted, and his deeds were the fruit of love, not acts of self-righteousness or even duty.

- Daniel’s supernatural powers emanated from His love relationship with the Lord.

8. Daniel 9:27: “And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” Daniel’s vision revealed a future discipline.

9. Daniel 10: Daniel’s next recorded vision is two years later. How long will you wait and remain obedient before you hear a clear word from God? Many Christians, in their impatience, try to invent words from God in order answer their doubts. Be still and know that God is God.

10. Daniel 10:3 – “I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.”

- How serious are you about following Jesus? How desperately do you want to know His word? Daniel had been in mournful prayer and fasting for twenty-four days (presumably a regular practice for him) before God gave him a vision. Doubtful he would have done this if he were clamoring for political position in the king’s palace, something he had the opportunity to do.

- Though he was surrounded by people, Daniel was alone in his vision, and his personal strength or abilities were meaningless. Nothing that was about to happen was contrived by him or his intellect. The servant of God will likely stand alone and can only transmit (not craft) God’s word.

11. Daniel 10:12 -- “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.”

- Daniel was heard because he was wholehearted and truly humble. As Jesus said would happen, Daniel’s prayers were answered because Daniel asked in His name, not in Daniel’s name. In other words, Daniel’s prayers were totally aligned to God’s will and not selfishly motivated or self-centered. Daniel asked the right things, for the right reasons, in the right way, and at the right time. Why? Because Daniel had “set his heart” and humbled himself.

- The prayers of the wholehearted and humble are powerful.

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12. Daniel 10:15 – “When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute.” God’s word will shut you up.

13. Daniel 10:20 – “But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia.” There is a real spiritual battle occurring that we cannot perceive unless it is revealed to us by the Spirit.

14. Proverbs 29:1 – “He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.” There can come a time when it is too late to escape punishment.

15. Proverbs 29:13 – “The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.” God is in complete control of your life and the lives of others. He knows what you are going through and will work all things together for good if you are living according to His purpose.

16. Proverbs 29:18 – “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” The law gives you boundaries to protect you in areas of your life where you are still not controlled by the love of God. Where love reigns, there is no need for laws.

17. Proverbs 29:25 – “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.” You will either fear people or trust in God. Who has a greater impact on your decisions God or others?

18. Proverbs 29:26 – “Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.” Your hope is not in political leaders or any other human leader. God is your only hope and your only salvation.

Note: Here is a video overview of Revelation 1-11: <https://youtu.be/5nvVVcYD-0w>

19. Revelation 1:1 – “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.” This is not a revelation of John. This is a “revelation of Jesus Christ” – The Father first revealed it to the Son, and then the Son revealed it to John by sending His angel. John’s very first point is that he is only transmitting Jesus’s message, not something inspired by his Christian thinking. He is just a messenger, not a philosopher. Too many Christians are trying to be “teachers” rather than transmitters. The Holy Spirit is the teacher.

20. Revelation 1:3 – “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” We are blessed when we read Revelation and share it with others who in turn are also blessed.

21. Revelation 1:5, 6 – “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

- In our salvation, we are not only freed from our sins, but we have also become subjects in the Kingdom, citizens with all other believers under the rule of Jesus. We have become priests to God with the sole duty of glorifying Him forever. John, though exiled on the island of Patmos, did not see himself as any less of a priest or as having any less of a part in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God does not manifest itself in the way the kingdoms of the world do. John, who identifies himself to the reader as a ‘partner in the kingdom’, also identifies himself as a ‘partner in tribulation.’ John points out that Kingdom people must unite through tribulation. Daniel was a great example of a ‘priest’ of the Kingdom who was being subjugated by earthly rulers. Through intense study of the Scriptures, he understood the

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'signs of the times' which drove him to relentless intercessory prayer and fasting for his people and for himself. Yes, Lions' Den Daniel understood, "we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.... To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame.... To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.... As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth." (Daniel 9:2-13) Daniel felt compelled to fast and mourn for three weeks because of the transgression of God's people and his understanding of the Holiness of God. (Daniel 10:2, 3) Daniel understood from his study of Scripture (Jeremiah) that 70 years of captivity were drawing to an end, but he could not understand how God would fulfill this prophesy based on the current situation. So he went to God in prayer for answers rather than just speculating. This is a good example for us as we begin a quick study of Revelation and the remaining books of prophesy in the Old Testament. Hang on to what you know and pray earnestly about what you don't know with expectation that God will reveal truth to you when you are ready for it. In the meantime, be a faithful 'priest' one day at a time, remaining in intercessory prayer for those around you. Also, remember that you were saved into a Kingdom, to be united with fellow believers. Be a good citizen of the Kingdom of God and join your people. Give your full allegiance to the KING.

- Revelation is a confusing book though it comes with a blessing to those who read it and take it to heart (Revelation 1:3). Since there is so much that I don't understand in Revelation, I try hard to hang on to what I can understand, hoping to comprehend a little more each year. Today, some important points jump out at me: First, This is "Revelation," not "Revelations" as some say. It is a single revelation "of Jesus Christ" intended for "His servants." It is a "testimony of Jesus Christ." So, the first big takeaway: This book further reveals Jesus – an important reason to read it and seek to understand it. The first testimony of Jesus: He is the faithful witness; He is alive, and He IS the ruler of the kings of the earth (your King is King); every eye shall see him in his glory – The Almighty was and is, but He is also "yet to come" (Revelation 1:8). The first big revelation about you: Jesus loves you and has freed you from your sins through His blood. He has made you to be part of His Kingdom, serving God the Father as a priest, yes, a priest (Revelation 1:6). Take this revelation "to heart" as stated in Revelation 1:3 because "the time is near." Consider these words in comparison to the "Lord's Prayer": "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.'" Honor your King as King and give Him all glory. As a priest in the Kingdom, bring glory to God by doing His will on earth, trusting Him and faithfully serving Him, one day at a time without worrying about tomorrow. Seek to be a good steward of today.

22. Revelation 1:7: -- "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'" As Ambassadors and Priests, our bold message is that God is Almighty and will come again to hold all accountable. That is not a popular message. How well are you communicating it?

23. Revelation 1:9 – "I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus." Christians are united in Jesus but also united in tribulation, citizenship, and patient endurance. Adversity strengthens unity.

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24. Revelation 1:10 – “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” In the Spirit, John was no longer limited in the physical sense and could now transcend the physical aspects of time and space. He could also see what is not physically visible but real nonetheless. When we are guided by the Spirit, we move far beyond mere intellect.

25. Revelation 1:14-15 – “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- At times it is tempting to conclude: “If only I could have walked with Jesus, as the twelve disciples did, it would be so much easier to live the Christian life!” This thought reveals that we do not comprehend the greatness of the risen Christ we serve today. The Jesus of the Gospels is often portrayed as One who walked along the seashore, loving children and gently forgiving sinners. Yet the image of Jesus that we see at the close of the New Testament is far more dramatic! He stands in awesome power as He rules all creation. His appearance is so magnificent that when John, His beloved disciple, sees Him, he falls to the ground as though he were dead (Rev. 1:17). We grossly underestimate the God we serve! To ignore God’s word or to disobey a direct command from Him is to ignore the magnificent nature of Christ. Our fear of other people proves that we do not understand the awesome Lord who walks with us. The Christ we serve today is the Lord of all creation. He is vastly more awesome and powerful than the gentle rabbi we often imagine. If you struggle with your obedience to Christ, take a closer look at how He is portrayed in the Book of Revelation. If you are succumbing to temptation, call upon the powerful One who dwells in you. If you have forgotten how great and mighty the Lord is, meet Him through the vision of the beloved disciple. The encounter will dramatically affect the way you live!

26. Revelation 1:17 – “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.”

- Our problems always relate to a limited or superficial perception of Jesus Christ. The reality of Jesus Christ should completely overwhelm us and transform us.

- Jesus’ most repeated prohibition is “Fear not”. We can rest assured because our confidence is in Jesus, the First and the Last.

27. Revelation 1:19 – “Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.” Revelation is not just about the future. It is also an explanation of past and current events.

28. Revelation 1:20 – “As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” Jesus is the Head of the churches, and He is in the midst of the churches. Note that there are seven churches, all different, all with different strengths and weaknesses. When Jesus speaks to the seven churches, He will speak to them all individually.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 Nov 18: Today, make your every response to others loving, patient, kind, gracious, uplifting, and encouraging regardless how they treat you. Treat others greater than yourself regardless how they treat you. As stated in Philippians 2, “In humility count others more significant than yourselves.... Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who... emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant..., he humbled himself by becoming

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obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Deny self, take up your cross in relationships, and follow Jesus – today.

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 3, Wednesday, 28 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=dan+7%2C+8%3B+pro+28%3B+John+21>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 28 November 18:

1. Daniel 7:9 -- "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat." Powerful nations will rise and fall, but God reigns as Sovereign and is in complete control.

2. Daniel 7:12 -- "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time."

- God accomplishes His purposes in His ways and on His timeline, not ours. We cannot understand the mind of God or why He does what He does the way He does it. Prophecy is given to help us trust when we don't understand.

- The fate of the beasts was determined before it was apparent.

3. Daniel 7:21, 22 -- "As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom." From these verses, it would appear that God will allow the saints to suffer until Jesus returns, and then the saints will reign with Jesus.

4. Daniel 7:23 -- "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.'" The fourth kingdom is global.

5. Daniel 8:25 -- "By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand." God wins the final battle, not men. Jesus will destroy the destroyer. "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord." (Proverbs 21:31) We are called to be faithful; victory belongs to God. This was learned by Moses when seemingly trapped by Pharaoh's army. It was learned by Joshua when he faces the walls of Jericho. It was learned by Gideon when he faced the powerful Midianites. It was learned by king Hezekiah when he faced seemingly impossible odds against Sennacherib, king of Assyria; and it will be learned again by the whole world at the Battle of Armageddon – "And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, 'It is done!'" (Revelation 16:16, 17) The kings will form for battle, but God will finish them before it ever begins. Victory is not the question. Will you be like Gideon's army of 300 who were willing to remain faithful and diligent to show up for the fight? Will you be among the ranks of faithful to partake in the great victory which will be handed down by God through His Mighty Hand? Will you be one of his saints who reign with Him in victory? Many are called, but few are chosen. The test of faith – what do you do before impossible odds? Are you willing to lose everything to win EVERYTHING? Your fight might not be glamorous but it is today. What you decide to do with the small, seemingly insignificant decisions of the day defines who you really are, what you really believe, and who is Lord of your life. Trust and Obey; there is no other way....

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6. Daniel 8:27 -- "I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days." The truth can be hard to handle.

7. Proverbs 28:1 -- "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Perspective is everything. Knowing that God loves you beyond your understanding and is in complete control of your life changes everything.

8. Proverbs 28:13 -- "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Pride causes us to hide our sins; humility enables us to confess our sins, have freedom from them, and move on.

9. Proverbs 28:20 -- "A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished." Blessings are conditional upon faithfulness. Selfishness will not be blessed by God.

10. Proverbs 28:26 -- "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered." Wisdom comes only from the word of God and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (as opposed to knowledge which comes from our limited intellect). Only God can show you how to rightly apply knowledge (wisdom) because only God knows the whole truth of any situation. Many think they are smart enough to live their lives without the leading of the Holy Spirit. This is the height of arrogance and foolishness.

11. John 21:3 -- "Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing." Trained for three years as a disciple of Jesus, charged with seeking lost souls, Peter, in fear and doubt, went back to his old business, doing what was comfortable for him, doing what he knew he could do under his own strength rather than doing what now seemed impossible to him.

12. John 21:15 -- "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?'"

From Henry T. Blackaby -- Jesus has a wonderful way of restoring us when we fail Him! He does not humiliate us. He does not criticize us. He does not ask us to make a resolution to try harder. Rather, He takes us aside and asks us to reaffirm our love for Him. Peter miserably failed his Lord when he fled with the other disciples from the Garden of Gethsemane. Later, he publicly denied that he even knew Jesus. Peter must have wondered if he had been capable of being Jesus' disciple when he was unfaithful to Jesus in His most crucial hour.... You may be painfully aware that you have failed your Lord in many ways. Perhaps you were not faithful. Perhaps you disobeyed His word to you. Perhaps you denied Him by the way you lived. Jesus will take you aside, as He did Peter. He will not berate you. He will not humiliate you. He will ask you to examine your love for Him. He asked Peter, "Do you love Me?" If your answer, like Peter's, is "Yes, Lord," He will reaffirm His will for you. If you truly love Him, you will obey Him (John 14:15). Jesus does not need your resolutions, your commitments, or your promises to try harder this year. If your resolve to obey God last year did not help you to be faithful, it will not make you successful this year. Jesus asks for your love. If you truly love Him, your service for Him in the new year will be of the quality that He desires.

13. John 21:15-19 -- Previously Peter denied Jesus three times; here Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him three times. In the original language Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him unconditionally, but Peter, now humbled by the truth of himself, can only say to Jesus that he loves Him as a brother. Jesus accepts Peter's imperfect love and charges Peter to "follow" Him and to "feed [His] sheep." This is Peter's call to

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do more than just work for a living in order to meet his worldly needs. It is his call to accomplish his purpose in life to be Christ's Ambassador. This is your call too.

- "Do you truly love me (John 21:15-17)?" We can all agree that we don't love Jesus perfectly, and every day we fail in our attempts to follow Jesus and to remain obedient in love. So, what do we do in the face of our failures? Don't accept sin or make light of it (God doesn't), but rejoice in your state of grace and keep trying. Seek to enjoy God and glorify Him better each day. Keep pressing forward, not looking backwards but keeping your eyes on the prize, Jesus, one day at a time. "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day (Proverbs 4:18)."

- "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'" When you love someone, you care about what they care about. You earnestly desire to please them. Jesus said that the proof of our love for Him was revealed in our love for others. What could be more loving than to lead someone to Jesus, to disciple them in the Lord?

14. John 21:20-21 – "Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following.... Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, 'But Lord, what about this man?'" From Henry T. Blackaby -- The first thing you do after God speaks to you is critical. Jesus was telling Peter what type of ministry he would have and what type of death he would suffer (vv. 18-19). It was a sacred moment in Peter's life, as his Lord pulled back the curtain to his future. His was not to be an easy life but a life ordained and blessed by his Lord and Master. Rather than responding to what Jesus told him, Peter looked around at his fellow disciples. His glance fell upon John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. "But Lord, what about this man?" Peter asked. Peter had just been given the somber news of his future death. How natural to compare his assignment with that of the others! This is the great temptation of God's servants: to compare our situation with that of others. Did God give my friend a larger house? Did God heal my friend's loved one and not mine? Did God allow my friend to receive appreciation and praise for his work while I remain anonymous? Did God allow another Christian to remain close to her family while I am far removed from mine? Jesus assigned Peter and John to walk two different paths, but both Peter and John have enriched our lives. Jesus knew how dangerous it is when a servant takes his eyes off the master to focus on a fellow servant. Where is your focus? Have you become more concerned with how God is treating someone else than you are with how He is relating to you?

15. John 21:22 -- "Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!'" Jesus does not want you to compare yourself with other Christians or to worry about what God is doing in their lives. Jesus wants you to follow Him one day and a time and to be faithful with the resources, opportunities, and relationships that you have been given.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 Nov 18: Today, don't worry about your circumstances, simply trust God, obey Him, follow Him, and bring the people God has placed in your life closer to Jesus. (John 21:22)

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 2, Tuesday, 27 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=dan+5%2C+6%3B+pro+27%3B+John+20>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 27 November 18:

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1. Daniel 5:1-4 – “Belshazzar... commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.” Belshazzar treated God’s holiness with contempt and would pay the price for it.
2. Daniel 5:11 -- “There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers.” Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel chief of the magicians, but by the time Belshazzar had assumed his reign, Daniel was nowhere to be found. Daniel was not interested in position, power, or prestige and did not desire to partner with the secular government. Daniel’s ambition was oneness with God. What is yours?
3. Daniel 5:14 – “I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.” Is this your reputation? Have people who have never met you heard of your godliness and godly wisdom?
4. Daniel 5:17 -- “Then Daniel answered and said before the king, ‘Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another.’”

- In our previous readings from Daniel, we learned of his amazing character which earned him the special trust and confidence of the king. Daniel was not only excellent in all things, but he also carefully guarded his purity, even with the smallest things. In every way, Daniel gave all honor, praise, and glory to God who had blessed him with special abilities. Daniel’s faithful witness impacted an entire nation, the most influential nation on the planet. Today’s readings from Daniel include two very famous stories: the Writing on the Wall and the Lion’s Den. One of the many important lessons from these stories is the need to avoid becoming unequally yoked and entangled in the systems of the world. Notice that Daniel, having been previously appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as “chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners” was not found at the palace enjoying the privilege and prestige of his position; in fact, the new king Belshazzar apparently hadn’t even heard of him. Daniel could have “had it all” yet he would have none of it. King Belshazzar offers Daniel the position of “third highest ruler in the kingdom.” Who wouldn’t jump at the chance to have such an important position? But Daniel says, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else.” His response is very similar to the response Abraham gave the king of Sodom: “I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich’ (Gen 14:21-23).” Daniel’s response also reminds me of Jesus’ response to Satan in the desert when he reminds Satan that his purpose is to worship God and serve the Kingdom of God rather than the kingdoms of man (Matt 4:10). Conversely, we read of God’s anger with Jehoshaphat for not only supporting the wicked king Ahab but also for going into business with his son King Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:1-40; 2 Chron 18-19). Too often we compromise our holiness for worldly success and pursuit of the American dream. If we were in Daniel or Jehoshaphat’s shoes, we might say, “God could really use my great success,” or “I could use this position and wealth to better spread the Word.” But what is the price in integrity and holiness paid to gain and maintain that position? Note that, despite Daniel’s desire to

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remain set apart, Darius was intent to place Daniel “over the whole kingdom.” Daniel didn’t seek a political position, but once in office, his fidelity to God was tested greater than ever before, and in his fidelity, he impacted the whole nation for God’s glory: “Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: ‘Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.’” (Daniel 6:25, 26) Note that reconciliation between Daniel and the king was only resolved by the king submitting to God’s authority, not by Daniel conceding.

-- “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14)?”

- One way to examine your heart is to consider why you do the things you do. What motivates you? On what are your goals and ambitions based? Do you live for God or for self? Daniel lived for God. When an ordinance was made making worshipping God a crime punishable by death, Daniel boldly and publicly worshipped God even more fervently – he would have rather died horrifically than to fail to worship His God. Though it would have been a simple thing for Daniel to worship in private, Daniel refused to deny God the glory due Him through the life of one of His faithful servants. He refused, even as a captive of the most ruthless king on the planet, to put his light of faith under a bowl regardless the cost. Oh, that we would be so committed and faithful! How many times have I been motivated by, greed, fear, ambition, anger, jealousy, and other worldly passions rather than by love, awe, reverence, and joy for God? I continue to pray for the type of courageous faithfulness displayed by Daniel which only comes from God.

5. Daniel 5:22 – “And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this.” Faith is not inherited. You get no credit or discredit for the decisions of your parents. Your relationship with God is between you and God.

6. Daniel 6:3 -- "Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." Daniel was exceptional and stood out, not merely because he was talented but because of his spirit for the Lord which defined his character and influenced all that he did.

7. Daniel 6:7 – “All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.” Unbelievers will attempt to use the legal process to persecute Christians. In this case, laws were passed to restrict acts of worship. What laws have we accepted in society that restrict our freedom of religion?

8. Daniel 6:10 -- "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." Daniel made it quite clear that he served God over government. Daniel intentionally defied the laws of the government that were in opposition to God’s laws.

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9. Daniel 6:18 – “Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.” Daniel’s response to trouble was continual fasting and prayer.

10. Daniel 6:24 – “The king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions.” God treats you the way you treat others.

11. Daniel 6:26, 27 – Daniel’s fidelity meant that God was honored throughout the land as a matter of law.

12. Daniel 6:28 -- "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian." God protected faithful Daniel and allowed him to prosper; conversely, God didn't prevent John the Baptist from being beheaded, though Jesus said there was no greater man born from woman than John. God's perfect plan for our lives involves hardships and even physical death. His goal for us is that we would glorify Him in life and death, love Him more and more with each day, have greater unity with Him day by day, and be conformed into the image of His Son, Jesus. The wonders of God's eternal plan are far beyond our greatest imaginations, and we can rest assured in His Sovereignty, grace, mercy, and love – nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

13. Proverbs 27:5 – “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.” If you don’t tell others about Jesus, you may not really care about them as much as you should, you may not care about God as much as you should, or you may simply lack the courage you should have. You may say to yourself, “It’s too soon to share Jesus with him/her,” or “(S)he isn’t ready for that yet,” but how much time do you think you have with that person? Either one of you could be dead tomorrow. Make the most of the opportunity you have; you don’t know what tomorrow might bring.

14. Proverbs 27:6 – “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” If you only tell people what they want to hear, you are ultimately their enemy.

15. Proverbs 27:12 – “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” Only the wise can truly see what is going on around them.

16. Proverbs 27:13 – “Take a man’s garment when he has put up security for a stranger.” God wants you to protect the spiritually weak who are tempted by sin.

17. Proverbs 27:23-27 – Spend your productive years building production capacity (industry) so that you possess the ability to be financially self-sufficient.

18. John 20:13 -- Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." -- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Mary Magdalene could vividly remember the day Jesus delivered her from her demonic. She became His devoted follower that day (Luke 8:2). She watched Him heal the sick and teach people about God's love. Her life was transformed as she experienced the joy of being with Jesus. Then her world seemed to fall apart! Her Lord was arrested and brutally murdered. The crowds that had shouted “Hosanna!” at the beginning of the week cried “Crucify him!” by week’s end. A final blow came when she went to anoint Jesus’ body at the tomb. She saw that His tomb was empty. Someone had apparently stolen His body. As she sobbed in despair, angels asked the poignant question, “Why are you weeping?” She was standing before an empty tomb! Jesus had risen, just as He had promised! Knowing that Jesus was alive put everything back into perspective, and Mary joyfully raced to share the good news with others. The

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Christian life is not always easy. There are joyful moments of walking with Jesus, but there are also times when nothing makes sense and when your world seems to be crumbling. The world will mock your Lord, and you may grow discouraged. At those times, you need to peer into the empty tomb. It is the abandoned tomb that gives you hope, for it symbolizes the life that is yours from your risen Lord. The empty tomb promises that nothing, not even death itself, can defeat the purposes of your Lord. Are you weeping beside an empty tomb?

19. John 20:19 – “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’” After the disciples had all abandoned Jesus, now hiding in fear and doubt, Jesus’s first word to them was “Peace.” What is your hope for, attitude towards, and message to those who abandon you, mistreat you, and let you down?

20. John 20:21 -- “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” Yes, you are expected to live like Jesus and only do what He says.

21. John 20:22 -- “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Jesus empowers you to do His work. He doesn't empower you to do your work.

22. John 20:29 – “Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’” Faith involves believing what is unseen more than what is seen.

23. John 20:30, 31 – “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The Bible is given to you to strengthen your faith. Commit to reading it, studying it, meditating upon it, and following it every day of your life from this day forward.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 Nov 18: Today, consider the first words others would use to describe you. Consider for what attributes you are most known. Would you mostly be described by others as a person filled with the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? For what do you want to be most known? (Daniel 5:14)

DBRP - WEEK 48, Day 1, Monday, 26 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=dan+3%2C+4%3B+pro+26%3B+John+19>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 26 November 18:

1. Daniel 3:1-7 – “King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold....” King Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold was intended to enforce loyalty to the government and unity in a diverse society. The idea was that all personal beliefs and priorities should be subordinated to nationalism. Today, in America, Christians are often taught that we must subordinate God’s laws to a ‘greater collective good,’ one that accommodates offenses against God, because unity is considered more important than fidelity. This may seem noble to the ‘intellectual’ person, but God has always called His people to remain holy, set apart, and loyal ambassadors who proclaim Truth to the world, a ‘foreign land.’ As Daniel and his friends will demonstrate, we are to obey earthly authorities until they demand that we disobey God. Daniel will be put to the test as to whether or not he will subordinate God to government or government to God. You

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have already been put to that test whether you realize it or not, and you will be put to that test again and again.

2. Daniel 3:8 – “Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.” Nationalism and other man-made ‘-isms’ will eventually refuse to tolerate a higher fidelity to God, though nationalism is often couched in religious terms. History is replete with examples of governments and other organizations coopting religion for political ends. Sooner or later, everyone will choose between the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of men.

3. Daniel 3:16-18 -- “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.’” Christians, we could learn much from the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They boldly and confidently obeyed the True KING regardless the personal cost, without feeling the need to defend themselves before sinful men, even before a godless king. It is inevitable that God’s people will have to choose between loyalty to the earthly kingdom of their citizenship and the Kingdom of God of their true citizenship. Obey God proudly and boldly. You don’t need to justify your obedience before mere men – don’t cheapen it by acknowledging their complaints. You serve ‘I AM’. We tend to underestimate how powerful uncompromised fidelity to God can be – “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.” (Daniel 4:37)

4. Daniel 3:16-18 -- “But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” For what beliefs are you willing to die? Many military personnel have gone overseas to be killed or maimed in defense of their nation, but how many of those same people would put it all on the line to proclaim Jesus publicly in the streets of their communities, to stand up against immorality, to stand up against abortion, to stand up against governmental injustice?

5. Daniel 3:25 -- “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” Could the fourth man, like a ‘son of gods’ be the Son of God, Jesus?

6. Daniel 3:28-29 – “Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.’ Shadrach’s, Meshack’s, and Abednego’s unyielding devotion to God transformed the mightiest nation on the planet. Though they did not engage in political activities or lead national movements, their actions led to changes in the law that protected their religious freedom.

7. Daniel 3:29 – “Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.”

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- God performs miracles in your life, not primarily for your benefit, but rather to bring glory to Himself before a watching world. Many people want to see miracles for personal reasons or to strengthen their faith, but God doesn't usually operate that way but rather uses miracles for His greater purposes. Those who are fully committed and fully surrendered to God's work will see miracles. "His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; His dominion endures from generation to generation.... acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men.... Renounce your sins by doing what is right (Daniel 4:3, 25, 27)."

- The theme that runs across our readings from the Old Testament through the New Testament is that Jesus is the KING of Kings, and all power and authority has been given to him. Governments receive their authority from God whether they realize it or not, and "the kings of the earth belong to God (Psalm 47:9)." We are subjects of the KING of Kings, and His sovereignty demands our wholehearted fidelity and obedience. His Kingdom is both now and still yet to come in all glory. We serve the King now and are called to proclaim His Lordship across the planet with the boldness of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, regardless of the response of men. Of course Jesus provides the ultimate example of faithful fidelity – "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above (John 19:11)."

8. Daniel 4:18 – "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you." It was evident to the king that the Spirit of God was in Daniel.

9. Daniel 4:25-27 – "...that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. 26 And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity." God intended to humble proud Nebuchadnezzar and teach Him that God is King, and the King demands obedience from all people. Daniel counselled Nebuchadnezzar to obey God above all else – sound counsel for anyone. God will be honored as the Most High and the Sovereign.

10. Daniel 4:34, 37 – "I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever.... Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble." A ruthless king repented. God is always doing two things at once in the life of a person, He is working on His one-on-one relationship with that person, and He is also using that relationship to reveal Himself to a watching world. He is doing these two things in your life too.

11. Proverbs 26:7 – "Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Knowing the words of Jesus is pointless if you are not ready to follow Jesus, which requires first that you deny self. You will act upon what you really believe to be true.

12. Proverbs 26:9 – "Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Those who foolishly handle God's word are more harm than good. The fool approaches God's

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word from a self-centered perspective. Listen carefully, and you will see that “me” is at the center of their presentation rather than “He.” Be very careful not to use God’s word to validate your own selfishness or self-righteousness. The Bible used carelessly can be very hurtful.

13. Proverbs 26:11 – “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” To sin is terrible, to repeat a sin far worse.

14. Proverbs 26:13-15 – “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!’ As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth.” Laziness and complacency are parts of human nature that must be overcome by the Spirit. Christians are hardworking, don’t take shortcuts, and don’t miss an opportunity to do good while they have a chance.

15. Proverbs 26:16 – “The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.” Laziness is a spiritual issue and unacceptable for God’s servants. Spiritually blinded, the lazy usually don’t think they are lazy. Lazy people always seem to have a way of justifying their laziness. The Bible calls this foolishness.

16. Proverbs 26:17-23 – “Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears. Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, ‘I am only joking!’ For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.” God calls us to bring peace into situations, not to add to discourse. We should never get involved in quarreling or gossip.

17. Proverbs 26:23-28 – God wants us to see past a person’s words to understand their heart and motives. The Bible says that no person can ever completely understand another person’s heart or motives, but we can judge the fruit of their lives, and we can also be enlightened by the Spirit which knows every person’s heart.

18. John 19:1-5 – “Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, ‘See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.’ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the man!’” The world will mock and hate the truth. Jesus warns you to be prepared for that.

19. John 19:9 – “But Jesus gave him no answer.” Notice that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego also felt no requirement to justify their fidelity to God and placed their fate in the hands of God. You have no need to defend yourself before scoffers. Simply proclaim the truth, let the scoffers scoff, and take up your cross as you follow Jesus, fellowshiping with Him in persecution.

20. John 19:11 – “Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.’” Our fate is never really in the hands of men. God controls every situation.

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21. John 19:15 – “The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’” What a shocking statement coming from the chief priests. However, a church that remains silent before legalized abortion and other state endorsed abominations has essentially proclaimed the same thing.

22. John 19:19-20 – “Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.” The Cross made clear in everyone’s language who Jesus is.

23. John 19:24 – “This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, ‘They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.’” Read Psalm 22:12-18 to see this prophecy. Read Isaiah 53 too.

24. John 19:25 – “.... but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” -- From Henry T. Blackaby -- There is no Christianity without a cross, for you cannot be a disciple of Jesus without taking up your cross. Crosses are painful, they forever change your life, but sometimes the greatest cost will not be to you but to those you love. You may be prepared to obey the Lord’s commands, whatever they are, because you’ve walked with Him and know that His way is best. Yet there will be those close to you who have not related to Jesus in the same way and have not heard His voice as clearly. Jesus understood that His Father’s will for Him led to a cross. The cross would mean a painful death for Jesus, and it would also bring suffering to those closest to Him. Because of the cross, Jesus’ mother would watch in agony as her son was publicly humiliated, tortured, and murdered. Jesus’ aunt and close friends would witness His excruciating death. His disciples would be scattered in terror and confusion in what would be the longest, darkest night of their lives. Because of Jesus’ obedience, there would also be a cross for each of His disciples. Obedience to your Lord’s commands will affect others (Luke 14:26). Don’t refuse to obey what you know God is asking because you fear the cost to your family will be too great. Beware lest you seek to prevent those you love from taking up the cross God has for them. Don’t ever try to protect those you love by disobeying God. The cost of disobedience is always far greater. Rather, look to Jesus, your model, and see what it cost those around Him for Him to be obedient to His Father.

25. John 19:30 – “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” -- From Henry T. Blackaby -- God always finishes what He begins (Phil. 1:6). God never speaks a word without ensuring that it comes to pass (Isa. 55:11). Christ is both the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev. 1:8, 17). Christ is as much at the end of His work as He is at its beginning. Jesus was given an enormous mandate. He was to live a sinless life, remaining absolutely obedient to His Father. Even the manner of His death was to fulfill numerous prophecies that had been foretold in Scripture (Matt. 26:24, 31, 54, 56; 27:9, 35; 46; John 19:28, 36-37). Yet, despite the extremely complex assignment Jesus received from His Father, He could shout triumphantly from the cross, “It is finished!” Christ now resides within each believer. His assignment today is to complete God’s will in each Christian. He is just as determined to do this in us as He was to complete God’s will for Himself. You will have to resist Christ in order to remain out of the will of God. What is it God wants to do in you? Have you allowed Him to complete what He has begun? He will not force you to receive all that He has for your life. If God’s work has not been brought to fruition in you, it is not that Christ has not been diligently working toward that end. Rather, you may need to release areas of your life to Him and be as determined to see God’s work in you completed as Christ is. Review the things God has said to you over

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this last year. Are there promises God has made to you that you have refused to allow Him to complete? If so, commit to yield your will to God today.

26. John 19:39 – “Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.” This is the same Nicodemus who previously sought Jesus secretly at night (John 3). The life changed by Jesus is no longer ashamed to worship Him in public.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 Nov 18: Be willing to step in the fiery furnace with confidence today by publicly proclaiming Jesus. Be willing to take up your cross today by publicly proclaiming Jesus. Be willing to worship Jesus publicly today like Nicodemus. (see today's notes above)

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 7, Sunday, 25 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=dan+1%2C+2%3B+pro+25%3B+psalm+138%2C+139>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 25 November 18:

Note: Here is a short video overview of Daniel: <https://youtu.be/9cSC9uobtPM>

1. Daniel 1:3, 4 – “Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.” God's faithful servants were excellent in all things (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Colossians 3:23, 24; Ecclesiastes 9:10). They stood out not only spiritually but in every way. Therefore, Daniel and his friends had a unique advantage in service to God. God calls us to be excellent in all things too, increasing our influence that we would bring Him greater glory on earth. Do you strive for excellence in every way?

2. Daniel 1:8 – “But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.”

- Though a captive in a pagan land, Daniel managed to keep himself completely pure before the Lord. He “resolved” to do this. How resolved are you to remain pure?

- Would you dare to believe that God, who called you to Himself and equipped you with His Spirit, could work mightily through you? Have you made the connection between the time and place in which you live and God's call upon you? World events never catch God by surprise. He placed you precisely where you are for a purpose. Daniel did not let the temptations of his day interfere with his relationship to the Lord. He knew that to make his life useful to God he must be obedient in all things. Regardless of what the most powerful king in the world commanded, Daniel refused to compromise what he knew God required of him. History is replete with examples of Christian men and women who believed that God would work through them to make a significant difference for His kingdom. God placed Esther strategically in the king's court at a crucial time when she could save the lives of God's people (Esther 4:14). God placed Joseph strategically to become the most powerful adviser to the pharaoh in Egypt and to save Jacob and his family from a devastating drought (Gen. 41:39-40). Are you allowing your

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surroundings to determine how you invest your life? Or are you letting God use you to make a difference in your generation? Ask God to reveal His purposes for you and His will for your life today.

3. Daniel 1:12 -- “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.” Some popular diet books have tried to suggest that Daniel desired a vegetarian diet to stay healthy, but that wasn’t the case at all. The King’s meat would have been meat sacrificed to idols – the finest meat available, very nutritious. However, Daniel was committed to not defiling himself with meat sacrificed to idols. His harsh, extreme vegetarian diet concerned the “chief of the eunuchs” for good reason, but God honored Daniel’s fidelity. These verses aren’t intended to promote a vegan lifestyle. In fact, after the flood, God desired His people to eat meat, even during religious ceremony, as described and regulated throughout the Bible. Whether we are talking about nutrition, adornment, courtesies, or any other social choices, we must be very careful not to interpret the Bible out of context to validate human wisdom. Don’t allow popular fads restrict from your life what God has blessed.

4. Daniel 1:17-20 – “God gave them learning and skill.... among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore, they stood before the king. And in every matter... he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.”

- God gave Daniel great knowledge but also gave him supernatural understanding, which turns knowledge into wisdom – knowledge rightly applied. God can show His servants what is impossible for them to understand naturally.

- It is God who empowers His servants, and when He does, no one can compare with them. God empowers the faithful.

5. Daniel 2:11 – “The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” Nebuchadnezzar intentionally gave the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans an impossible task because he wanted a supernatural answer rather than a fake miracle from people who claimed a power that really didn’t have.

6. Daniel 2:17, 18 – “Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” In distress and faced with an impossible situation, Daniel went to the Lord, but he did not go alone, he called his friends seek God’s mercy with him. Daniel understood that prayer would be more effective if it were done in companionship. God calls us to worship and pray with other fellow Christians.

7. Daniel 2:20-22 – “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.” Wisdom comes only from God; all power comes from God. Through God, we can know what we would otherwise never be able to know. God will reveal to you what you need to know if you will walk with Him in fidelity.

8. Daniel 2:27, 28, 30 – “Daniel answered the king and said, ‘No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.... But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all

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the living....” Daniel was very careful not to share glory with God or to suggest that he had any knowledge apart from what God had revealed to him. Daniel gave God all of the glory by ensuring the king knew that Daniel was not special. Are you still trying to be special? Are you still trying to give people your opinion as if it has any value? Or, are you saying, “Not me, but Jesus”? Never be a self-promoter.

9. Daniel 2:44, 45 -- “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold.”

- We are subjects of God’s Kingdom, and we are called to be the KING’s ambassadors “in the days of those kings.” Even the United States is one of “those” kingdoms. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God, a much higher calling than any national loyalties. God calls us to obey government, but to remain faithful to Him and His Kingdom above all else.

- God’s Kingdom is ‘set up’ in the days of the worldly kingdoms; it is not like other kingdoms and will never be destroyed. God’s kingdom destroys the other kingdoms on earth. Jesus announced, “the kingdom of God has come upon you.... The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.... The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” (Matthew 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 17:20, 21) Furthermore, concerning God’s true church, the Bible says He has “made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:10) God’s people “are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” among the nations, preparing the way for the return of the King. (1 Peter 2:9) Micah 5:7-9 describes a global, spiritual insurgency for the Lord – “Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.” Of course, this insurgency is not violent like that envisioned by the Islamists but rather is spiritual – “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” (2 Corinthians 10:4) What role are you playing in the advancement of the Kingdom?

10. Daniel 2:47, 48 – “The king answered and said to Daniel, ‘Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.’ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.”

- Do you want to impact the world? We need merely to be faithful and un-comprising ambassadors and let the true power of God be revealed through us.

- Daniel remained faithful to God and trusted God, regardless the personal risk, and was given power he never could have imagined, not for his comfort and prestige but rather so that he could be placed in a position to have an even greater impact for God’s glory. Daniel’s new position would only increase his challenges.

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11. Proverbs 25:2 – “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” The government-run education system in our country is based upon the assumption that one can acquire knowledge and wisdom without God as part of the equation, and today, the “enlightened” class more and more reject God, pursuing more and more knowledge for their own glory. However, God in His glory withholds truth for the His followers, truth that can only be obtained through the Spirit. Man’s ‘knowledge’ is foolishness in God’s eyes.

12. Proverbs 25:7, 8 – “What your eyes have seen do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?” Human discernment is always deceiving because we cannot see the whole picture that only God sees, hence the reason we should not judge others because we do not know what God knows about them and about the situation at hand. 1 Corinthians 4:5 says, “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”

13. Proverbs 25:21, 22 – “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” God wants you to treat those who offend you with nothing but kindness. This is hard to do, particularly when you are caught off guard by bad behavior. Often our first response is to push back against offenders. Often our first, unguarded response reveals what is really in our hearts. Pay attention to your first responses, and pray for a genuinely loving heart that automatically loves the sinner who hurts us.

14. Proverbs 25:26 – “Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.” Don’t let the wicked influence your behavior. Prepare yourself to meet the wicked today by reading God’s word, praying for strength in obedience, and resolving in your heart not to sin at the moment of decision.

15. Proverbs 25:27, 28 – “It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one’s own glory. A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” Do not let your selfish desires and pride get the best of you today. Apply self-control which is given to you by the Spirit (not your own will power). When tempted, turn to the Spirit for strength. Today, you will be tempted to follow your urges and passions rather than the Spirit. Prepare yourself for the challenge and set your mind before the challenge. Be a selfless servant of Jesus today.

16. Psalm 138:1 – “I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart.” Half-heartedness doesn’t do God justice.

17. Psalm 138:6 – “For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.” God being Spirit is not subject to distance in the physical sense. Nearness or farness from God relates to fellowship, love, and obedience. The prideful, disobedient, and unrepentant are far from God spiritually.

18. Psalm 138:8 – “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.” No matter what you are going through, you can have complete confidence in the fact that God will fulfill His purpose for your life. Trust and obey Him through all things.

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19. Psalm 139:1-4 – “O Lord, you have searched me and known me...! You discern my thoughts from afar. You... are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.” God knows the real you, seeing beyond your actions to the motives behind your actions. Seek to honestly see about yourself what God sees, and strive to grow in genuine love and selflessness. Strive for purity and holiness.

20. Psalm 139:16 – “Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” God cherishes the unborn baby.

21. Psalm 139:17 – “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!” Seek to make your thoughts God’s thoughts, to have the mind of Christ.

22. Psalm 139:21, 22 – “Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.” Not all hate is bad.

23. Psalm 139: 23, 24 – “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” The Holy Spirit can reveal to you what you refuse to see in yourself, and the Holy Spirit can reveal to you what you need to change in your life. However, if you refuse to listen or change, your ability to hear the Holy Spirit will diminish, your heart will harden, and you will be destroyed by your disobedience. Pray that God will reveal to you where your heart is not right and that He will guide you to greater holiness, purity, and love.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Nov 18: Today, in prayer, search your heart and consider the true motives behind your actions. Seek to walk selflessly, guided by the Spirit. When you catch yourself acting selfishly, stop, dig deeply within you, and consider why. Where are harboring idols (things that have more influence over you at times than God)? Where are you harboring pride? Where are you doubting God? Seek to identify the heart of your sin, the problem with your heart. Pray for God’s strength in overcoming your selfishness, and rest in God’s grace when you fail, understanding that He loves you perfectly despite your failures.

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 6, Saturday, 24 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+47%2C+48%3B+pro+24%3B+psalm+137>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 24 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 47:1-12 – “Behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple.... And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.... Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” The river of life flows from the temple, bringing life to all who draw near to it and providing all that is needed for life. Jesus is the Living Water, and true followers of Christ are now the temple (more on this topic below). Our job is to allow the living water of Jesus to flow through us, not to attempt to create our own ‘water’ to give to others. We should not seek to share mere ‘good ideas’ with others, our personal opinions, or the latest humanistic answers to life’s problems; nor should we merely seek to make people feel a bit more comfortable apart from Jesus. Our mission is to speak as Ambassadors for Christ, using

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only His words, not ours. Of those who exchange the Gospel for moralism, concepts of ethics, or fuzzy ideas of an all-accepting god, the Bible says, “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Jeremiah 2:13) The only thing we have to offer the world is Jesus, nothing else matters.

2. Ezekiel 47:6, 9 -- “Son of man, have you seen this?... wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live.” Much of Ezekiel’s prophecies (chapters 34-48) deal with the future Kingdom of God on earth and should be studied in unison and in context with the other prophecies in the Bible related to the same topic. Similar to how Bible prophecy enabled the ‘wise men’ and Herod’s religious scholars to determine the time and location of Jesus’ birth, diligent study of Bible prophecy can give us a good understanding of what will happen in the future; however, most prophecy is written in such a manner that you will ‘know it when you see it.’ Most of it is intended so that current believers can maintain hope while they wait and so that future believers who will experience these events first-hand will be able to recognize the ‘signs of the times.’ Jesus warned that no one knew when He would return but the Father. Of course, we must be careful not to attempt to make prophecy ‘fit’ with current circumstances where it really doesn’t. I once witnessed a patrol of troops (having been air-dropped at night in the wrong location) navigate confidently several miles from a map of an entirely different area, all the while convincing themselves that what they saw around them was what was portrayed on the map, though it wasn’t. Their problem was that they continually made course adjustments from their perceptions of where they were, based off of what they were interpreting from the wrong map – their decisions were guided by their imaginations and false interpretations rather than the truth. There was nothing wrong with the map; it accurately depicted the intended terrain. The patrol simply applied the map out of context and used their imaginations to make it fit their current location and situation. We don’t want to do that with Bible prophecy. We must judge all prophecy from the context of the whole Bible which is why it is so important to diligently study the whole Bible, not just morsels from daily devotionals or sermons. And the Holy Spirit, rather than our imaginations, must guide our understanding as to how prophecy applies to our current situation.

3. Ezekiel 47:15-20 -- The divided land is similar to Numbers 34 but does not include land east of the Jordan so that the people are unified.

4. Ezekiel 47:22, 23 – “You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the sojourners who reside among you and have had children among you. They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel. With you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the sojourner resides, there you shall assign him his inheritance, declares the Lord God.” God commanded that the aliens who lived among the Jews and who assimilated into the faith and culture were to be taken in as part of the family. God’s plan treats settled aliens as native-born.

5. Ezekiel 48 -- God rearranged the land so that the sons of Leah and Rachel are closer to the temple and the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah are farther away. Do you understand why?

6. Ezekiel 48:1-7, 24-28 -- God gave each tribe equal land.

7. Ezekiel 48:14 – “They shall not sell or exchange any of it. They shall not alienate this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the Lord.” God gave man no rights over the temple property. You are God’s temple. No other person has rights over God’s temple which is your body. You have no independent rights over yourself or your body either – it is solely dedicated for God’s will on earth. Your authority

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over your body is only to do God's will with your body. Most unbelievers could neither understand such a statement nor tolerate it.

8. Ezekiel 48:11 – “This shall be for the consecrated priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept my charge, who did not go astray when the people of Israel went astray, as the Levites did. And it shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites.”

- Ezekiel extols the sons of Zadok as staunch opponents of paganism during the era of its pagan worship and indicates their birthright to unique duties and privileges in the future temple (Ezekiel 42:13, 43:19). Because of their faithfulness, they earned praise and responsibilities over the Levites.

- The choicest position, a most holy place, is given to the faithful sons of Zadok who remained faithfully obedient to God despite the fact that all the other priests didn't. Ezekiel mentions the sons of Zadok three times, despite the fact that he was not a descendant of Zadok. You can review the story of Zadok's faithfulness in opposition to popular opinion in 2 Samuel 15-1 Kings 4. Do we have the faith in God and the substance of character to go the way we think is right even if everyone else goes the other direction? That was the resolve of Zadok, and we are in desperate need of that kind of leadership right now. Where are the voices like John the Baptist who would challenge the Herods of our day?

9. Ezekiel 48:35 – “The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord Is There.” One of our challenges is that Bible prophesy uses a lot of symbolism. Ezekiel 47 and 48 use a lot of symbolism when describing the future Temple and Holy City where the Lord will dwell – “And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord Is There.” One important example of that symbolism is that of the Life-Giving Water. We are very fortunate because we as Christians have been given the greater revelation that the Life-Giving Water is the Spirit which flows from Jesus – “...but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.... Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 4:14; John 7:37-39) From our more enlightened position, we can learn more from Ezekiel than people could have when it was written. Consider what Ezekiel reveals about the Spirit flowing from Jesus – a small ‘trickle’ emanating from the Temple turns into a mighty river (swimming depths) which follows a geographically impossible path (countering gravity) and brings incredible life to everything it touches. Compare this picture with the parables Jesus gives about the Kingdom. In the prophesy the river “flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea” – impossible. (v. 47:8) The sea is the Dead Sea, and to get there from Jerusalem via the route Ezekiel describes, it would have to flow down to the Kidron Valley, up over the Mount of Olives, and then cross through a series of other valleys and mountain ranges. Gravity and other forces and pressures make this impossible for an ordinary river, but this is no ordinary river, and that is further confirmed by what happens when the river reaches the Dead Sea. The salinity of the Dead Sea is so great that nothing lives in it. But when the river from the temple reaches it, the water is instantly transformed and can support fish “of very many kinds” (vv. 47:8–10). Fruit trees line the river that flows through what was a desert in Ezekiel's era and remains so today (v. 47:12). This vision describes the power of the Spirit flowing from Jesus and merely ‘trickling’ down the walls of the Temple – Wow! One

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day, God will rebuild His Temple (literally and/or figuratively) on a New Earth, but until that day, what does the New Testament say about the temple on earth?

-- 1 Corinthians 3:16 -- Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

-- 1 Corinthians 3:17 -- If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

-- 1 Corinthians 6:19 -- Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

-- 2 Corinthians 3:3 -- And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

-- Ephesians 2:18-22 -- For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

-- Revelation 3:12 -- The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

10. Proverbs 24:10 – “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” You don’t know what you are made of until you are tested. Strength is something you must build up before you need it.

11. Proverbs 24:21 – “My son, fear the Lord and the king.” Christians strive to obey all authority. Christians only defy authority when that authority demands disobedience to God. Christians obey God above all else.

12. Proverbs 24:29 – “Do not say, ‘I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.’” This is easy to understand but often hard to do. It is easier for us to imagine obeying this command with big things – if someone robs us, we can accept not robbing them in return. However, it is in little everyday ways that we fail to obey this command. When someone speaks harshly to us, we are tempted to speak harshly back. When someone blatantly takes our parking spot, we want to yell at them. When someone puts their own interests ahead of ours, we, in turn, want to put our own interests ahead of theirs, though the Bible tells us to put the needs of others first. Today, focus on responding only with selfless, gracious love when others act selfishly and mistreat you.

13. Psalm 137 – God wants you to share your resentment of others with Him and turn it over to Him. Remember, God knows what is happening to you and remains in complete control. Vengeance belongs to Him and not you. Be honest with God in your prayers, for your sake, not His. Praying to God is not like speaking to another person. You can’t hide what is really on your heart – He knows your heart far better than you do. When you are honest with God in prayer, it might be the only time you are truly honest with yourself. This confession is good for your soul. Remember, in prayer, you are in the presence of the Omniscient, Almighty, Holy God. Present to Him the full sacrifice of self in prayer. Only pride causes you to pray vanities and platitudes. It takes total humility to freely expose the whole ugly you to Him, and it takes confidence in His love, mercy and grace.

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14. Psalm 137:1-6 -- There are two pains: the small daily pains of disciplined obedience or the crushing pain of regret while reflecting upon what you have lost to sin. Choose the path of the disciple who is willing to live the disciplined life for the Glory of God and to experience the fullness of joy.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 Nov 18: Today, resolve to be a 'son (or daughter) of Zadok. (Ezekiel 48:11)

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 5, Friday, 23 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+45%2C+46%3B+pro+23%3B+John+18>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 23 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 45:1-8 – "...but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes." God is concerned about people's right to own and control their own piece of land.

2. Ezekiel 45:7-9 – "Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord God." God gave the ruler enough land that he did not need to tax the people or mistreat them in order to have the resources to run the country.

3. Ezekiel 45:10 -- "You shall have just balances." God is a just God who demands that all people and especially His people treat all others justly but also mercifully and graciously. People expect God to treat them with mercy and grace but to administer justice to those who offend them. God

4. Ezekiel 45:17 -- "It shall be the prince's duty to furnish the burnt offerings." God expected the government to support worship of God.

5. Ezekiel 46:8 -- "When the prince enters, he shall enter by the vestibule of the gate, and he shall go out by the same way." The Bible emphasizes the Holiness and Sovereignty of God and the subservience of all governments and rulers to God. We are commanded to obey earthly authorities which are all ordained by God (Romans 13), but the authorities are commanded to obey God, and we are commanded to obey God above all earthly authorities. "Jesus said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Romans 12:17) Our allegiance is first and foremost to the KING of Kings and to the Kingdom of God. People are just people, and God is God.

6. Ezekiel 46:18 -- "The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their property. He shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people shall be scattered from his property." Again, God is very concerned about property rights and specifically directs that the powerful not add to their family's property by taking from others.

7. Proverbs 23:4 -- "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist." Many people are wearing themselves out doing what God never wanted them to do because they are not satisfied with God's provision in their lives.

8. Proverbs 23:17, 18, 23 -- "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.... Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding." The Bible tells us to be zealous for the fear of the Lord, to put all of our effort, non-stop, into fearing the Lord; to invest everything we have into fearing the Lord. One definition for the word zealous is fanatical. Of course, the word fanatic is used in a negative sense today, but the devotion a Christian expresses for God will always appear excessive and

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extreme to the non-believer. To the non-believer, living in complete reverence, awe, and submission to the Lord is ignorant and foolish; however, the Bible reminds us that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). All creation is commanded by God to fear Him, both believer and non-believer. "Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble." (Proverbs 28:14). As Proverbs points out today, the fear of the Lord and the wisdom and understanding that comes from fearing the Lord requires discipline – hence the word disciple. It's not just a feeling; it is fervent, consistent action -- it is radical and fanatical; it is true love demonstrated by faithfulness.

9. Proverbs 23:22 -- "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." Character is taught in the home, and God's way is for a man and woman, united in marriage, to teach their children to fear the Lord.

10. John 18:1-11 -- Following God's way, Jesus knew what would happen to Him and remained in obedience regardless from a purely submission heart of love.

11. John 18:10, 11 -- "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?'" Many have used the story of Peter's sword wielding to preach pacifism, but bear in mind that Peter had a sword, and Jesus knew it. It wasn't that Peter sought to defend Jesus with his sword that was the issue, it was that Peter sought to defend Jesus at the wrong time, against the will of God at the moment. In fact, In Luke 22:35-38, Jesus tells His disciples that if they lack swords, they should buy them. Self-defense is a God-given right and responsibility which can't be abrogated.

12. John 18:14 – "It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people." God's way included Christ's death for the sins of the people.

13. John 18:15-18 – "Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself." Pride and fear are opposite sides of the same coin. Peter was willing to fight in garden when it wasn't appropriate but not willing to stand up for Jesus in the courtyard when it was appropriate.

14. John 18:17 – "The servant girl at the door said to Peter, 'You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?'" He said, 'I am not.'" Disciples of Christ must be ready to deny self, take up their crosses, and follow Jesus. (Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, Luke 14:27) Jesus had previously warned overconfident Peter that he wasn't there yet, but Peter did not believe Him. Here Peter faces the truth of himself which has been exposed, not by an attacking army but rather by a mere servant girl sitting at a campfire. It is in the little, seemingly insignificant moments that we reveal what we really believe about Jesus, in our conversations with others around 'campfires,' in our homes, in our workplaces, in the marketplace, in social settings, and on social media. While it may be true that actions often speak louder than words, don't believe the popular lie that words are secondary. The true test of your courage

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is in how, as an ambassador for Christ, you purely proclaim the Gospel to others right where you are. Those of us who have failed to proclaim the Name of Jesus to others when we should have can find hope in the story of Peter who failed miserably but later went to the cross literally for Jesus.

15. John 18:27 – “Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.” Remember what Jesus had said to Peter and Peter’s response: “Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!’” (Matthew 26:34, 35) Mark 14:72 tells of Peter’s reaction after he denied Jesus just as Jesus said he would: “And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.” Have you ever felt the guilt of failing Jesus? Remember, Jesus knows your weaknesses better than you do. Your failures are not a surprise to Him. When you are tested, it is not so that God can see the truth of your sinful hearts, it is so you can see it. God’s will in your failures is to bring you to humble repentance, to draw you closer to Him, to sanctify you, to conform you to the image of His Son, and to prepare you for greater faithful service in love. His goal is not to condemn you and destroy you. Judas denied Jesus, couldn’t bring Himself to repent and accept the forgiveness of God, and killed himself. Peter repented, accepted forgiveness, and was used mightily by God. Paul, formerly Saul who had made a career of persecuting Christians, repented and went to his death boldly proclaiming Christ and glorifying Him. Have confidence in grace, and glorify God boldly.

-- Acts 5:40-42 – “...when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”

16. John 18:33-37 – “Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’ Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’”

- Most people, including Christians, prefer the earthly kingdoms they can see over the Kingdom of God they cannot see. Someone once said, "In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is." In church, Christians often proclaim their ultimate allegiance to the KING of Kings and the Kingdom of God, but daily, in practical ways, the fear of man prevails in their lives. What has the greatest influence over you at the moment of decision? Every day, perhaps in seemingly small ways, we will take a side. And remember, silence is consent. When you choose to say or do nothing where sin is present, you have made a choice to capitulate.

- Jesus' kingdom does not depend upon politics.

17. John 18:37, 38 -- ""In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me'. 'What is truth?' Pilate asked."

- The truth is revealed through Jesus and Jesus alone. In fact, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) Those who listen to Christ

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understand truth. Those outside of Christ, like Pilate, have no way to determine truth or to truly know God. Regardless their intellect or religiosity, they navigate without map and compass on a journey to nowhere. Jesus said that He came to testify to the truth. Jesus stayed true to the mission God gave Him until the end. Now that mission has been given to you. How are you doing? Don't lose sight of the fact that your message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not a message of ethics, morality, or better living. If the "truth" or "salvation" message you are proclaiming to others is about fixing their earthly problems rather than saving their souls, and if your message doesn't start and end with Jesus, you are likely leading others astray. Ambassador, Priest, Saint, how many times will you say the Name, Jesus to others today?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 Nov 18: Testify to the truth of Jesus today, regardless the personal cost. Don't be like Peter and act as if you do not know Him when faced with the scrutiny of popular opinion or social acceptability. (John 18:37)

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 4, Thursday, 22 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+43%2C+44%3B+pro+22%3B+John+17>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 22 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 43:11 -- "And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple." Repentance comes before revelation.

2. Ezekiel 43:12 -- "This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple." God demands holiness in His temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16 tells us, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" God demands that you be holy -- "He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:15, 16) We are too complacent with the demand of holiness. Strive to be holy from this day forward.

3. Ezekiel 44:8 -- "You have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep my charge for you in my sanctuary." Once again, God expects His people to remain holy and to refuse to partner with the unholy.

4. Ezekiel 44:15-31 -- God honors ministers who are faithful in service by allowing them to be nearer to Him and to have greater intimacy with Him.

5. Ezekiel 44:23-24 -- "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. In a dispute, they shall act as judges, and they shall judge it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy." Ministers have no special rights in regard to obeying God; on the contrary, with maturity comes increased responsibility and a greater expectation of obedience, purity, and holiness. Leaders are expected to practice what they preach. With that maturity also comes a greater responsibility to offer grace to those who are less mature, to be longsuffering in response to the offenses of others, while persistently guiding others to reconciliation.

6. Ezekiel 44:27 -- "And on the day that he goes into the Holy Place, into the inner court, to minister in the Holy Place, he shall offer his sin offering, declares the Lord God." Ministers sin and have to follow God's way of dealing with sin.

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7. Ezekiel 44:28 "This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession." God's plan was for His priests to be solely dependent upon His daily provision. This requires them to live in faith and obedience. The Bible says that all Christians are priests.

8. Proverbs 22:4 – "The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life." Daniel, along with many others in the Bible, demonstrated this truth as you will read.

9. Proverbs 22:7 -- "The borrower is the slave of the lender." You cannot be a wholly faithful servant to God if you have made yourself a slave to men. Jesus was clear that no one can serve two masters. If you are in financial debt, a portion of your labors no longer resources God's work but rather another kingdom's agenda, and you have limited what you can do for the Lord.

10. Proverbs 22:11 – "He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend." See if this wasn't proved in the life of Daniel when we get there soon.

11. John 17 -- This chapter is Jesus' last recorded prayer before His crucifixion. Notice that His final prayer is all about glorifying the Father and about His disciples' relationship with the Father. What is your most earnest prayer? Are your prayers about you or about God's glory and the needs of others? How do you judge the effectiveness of your prayers? How do you judge whether your circumstances, regardless how painful they might be, are good or bad? If your prayers or circumstances draw you closer to Jesus, they have served their ultimate purpose, regardless the tangible outcomes.

12. John 17:1, 4, 10, 22, 23 -- "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you... I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.... All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.... The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me...." In our readings today, the concept of 'glory' is mentioned several times, eight times by Jesus. First, Ezekiel witnesses 'the Glory of God' at the Temple. Jesus in an impassioned prayer to the Father, describes the transfer of 'glory' from the Father, through Jesus, to the true believer, an allocation which occurs for two reasons – that the believer may be in unity with God (or truly 'know' Him) and that the world might see the power of that unity and 'know' that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus' prayer in John 17 deserves much deep, prayerful meditation on our part. The Father glorifies the Son so that the Son can glorify the Father before men; Jesus glorifies the believer so that the believer can glorify the Father and the Son (who are One) while living in unity with God, "accomplishing the work" given by God. So, what is 'glory'? The word is *Kabod* or *doxazō* in Hebrew or Greek respectively, meaning to honor, to magnify, or to properly weight in priority or significance. God 'magnified' the Son, proclaiming His pleasure with him, that the Son would 'magnify' the Father by revealing the character and will of the Father through his perfect life. To see Jesus was to see the Father in human form – "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9) The Father and Jesus are truly 'One,' which relates back to the first point John makes in this Gospel – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus is the Logos – the outward expression and revelation of the mind, wisdom, and voice of God. Jesus is the 'Wisdom' spoken of in Proverbs that existed before Creation and who was the source of Creation; He is the Truth of God personified. (Proverbs 8:22; John 14:6; John 17:5) The written word of God in the Bible is powerful

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because it communicates the will of God and reveals the Word (Jesus). God's word is true, it is through His word that we "come to know the Truth," Jesus. (John 17:8) When we 'abide' in God's word, we are aligned with His will and become one with Him, personifying (imperfectly) His will, bringing glory to Him, living out His Kingdom on earth (thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...). Walking in the word, empowered by the Spirit, we have the mind of Christ and unity with both God and fellow believers (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 1:27). Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 8:31, 15:7). Living God's word is how we walk with God as Noah did. The Bible says the Jesus is the "image of the invisible God" and that we were originally created "in the image of God." (Colossians 1:15; Genesis 1:27) How clearly does your life reflect God to others? Do you magnify God on earth by your obedience to Him?

13. John 17:3 -- "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

- Eternal life begins on earth not when we die and go to Heaven. Eternal life is not something that begins after you die, it is something that begins the moment you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. If you are a Christian that doesn't feel the joy, peace, and rest of eternal life, carefully consider the quality of your relationship with Jesus; go the Lord in prayer, and ask Him to strengthen your faith, hope, and love; and walk in obedience with eyes wide open to see a greater revelation of God in your life.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Knowing God through experience is radically different than knowing about God from a theology textbook. According to the Bible, you cannot say you know God unless you have experienced Him (Phil. 3:8, 10). Biblical knowledge always involves experience. You may become discouraged because the truths you read about in the Bible are much richer than the reality of your own experience. If you have not experienced God's power at work in and through your life, do not settle for a secondhand knowledge of God's power, rejoicing in what He has done in others. Jesus' prayer was that you would come to know God and His presence in your life and experience. Don't discount the power of God as described in Scripture simply because you have not experienced it. Bring your experience up to the standard of Scripture, never reduce Scripture to the level of your experience. Don't settle for a head knowledge of God's love. Jesus prayed that you would experience the depth and width and height of His love and that you would enjoy God's full and unending love in the day-to-day experiences of your life. If you sense there are biblical truths that you are not experiencing, keep that truth before you and ask God to bring it into your everyday experience. Ask God if there are any adjustments you need to make in order to receive His promise. Don't give up on the promises of God, stay with them until you are fully experiencing them.

14. John 17:4 -- "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." Jesus understood that the purpose of life on earth is to glorify God and to serve Him wholeheartedly. Life success is measured in obedience to God that results in ever-increasing love for Him and unity with Him, which draws others closer to Him -- increasingly knowing Him and making Him known. God is glorified when we do what He has commanded.

15. John 17:6 -- "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world." The word "manifested" is important for us to understand, meaning, "demonstrated, displayed, showed, exhibited, or revealed." Jesus brought the invisible, intangible attributes of God into physical reality on earth. He was the embodiment of God's word and will. We now are called to be "the hands and feet of

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Jesus." As ambassadors of Christ, we are called to be His representative in any situation, to "manifest" Jesus at the moment to those who otherwise would not see Him to know Him. This is a tremendous calling and responsibility.

16. John 17:8, 9 -- "For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them."

- Jesus modeled for us the pattern for evangelism and disciple-making: Give them the words of God (not our own words), walk with them, demonstrate obedience for them, help them know the truth, and pray for them.

17. John 17:9 -- "I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me...." Jesus does not see everyone the same.

18. John 17:10 -- "All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them." Jesus took ownership of the people God had placed in His life, committing to discipling them for the glory of God.

19. John 17:11, 21-23 -- "...that they may be one, even as we are one.... that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.... that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.... that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." Jesus' prayer for you is that you would come into perfect unity and love with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and other followers of Jesus; and that your perfect fellowship in love would be a testimony to the world that does not yet know that God is Love. If you have ever wondered what God wants you to do with your life, now you know. This is your measure of life success: How well you obey the commandments of love. The closer you get to Jesus, the closer you get to Love and the more the Light of Love will reflect off of you to others. Today, seek unity in love, first with God, the source of Love, and then with other Christians, while drawing others into that love. Know Love (God), and make Him known to others. It is very popular today to talk about unity, but unity around anything but Jesus is doomed and ultimately no unity at all. Draw closer to Jesus today, and let His love illuminate your life and brighten the lives of others around you, all to the glory of God.

20. John 17:12 -- "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." From Henry T. Blackaby -- Nothing that Satan can do to you should cause you to fear (2 Tim. 1:7). Jesus chose the twelve disciples the Father had given Him and then jealously guarded them from the evil one. Jesus sent His disciples into the world where they experienced difficult and dangerous circumstances, but He interceded on their behalf with His Father that they would have His strong protection from the evil one (John 17:15). In the same way, Jesus said that we, as His sheep, are held securely in the Father's strong hand (John 10:28). There is no better place to be than safely in the hand of almighty God. Do you believe this, or are you fearful of what Satan or people can do to you? The apostle John encourages us that we do not need to fear: He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). This is not merely a theological concept but a profound reality in which you can have absolute confidence. It is not just a truth for meditation in the security of your home; it is a promise you can cling to in the midst of a hostile and menacing world. What you do reveals what you

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believe. If you are living a fearful, anxiety-filled life, you are proving your lack of confidence in God's protection, regardless of what you may say. Live your life with confidence that Jesus is continually interceding with the Father on your behalf. If you trust Him completely, you will have nothing to fear.

21. John 17:13 – “But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- If there is anything that ought to characterize the life of a Christian, it is joy! Jesus spoke many times to His disciples about His joy being complete and full in them. His disciples were filled with joy as they realized who they were: children of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17). They had been dead in their sins but were now made alive in Christ (Rom. 6:4). They had once been helpless victims of death, but now death had no hold over them (1 Cor. 15:55-58). With such a marvelous salvation experience with Christ, how could the disciples be anything less than joyful? Don't deny yourself that which is your birthright as a child of God. Don't be satisfied with a joyless life. There ought to be in every Christian a deep, settled fullness of the joy of Christ that no circumstance of life can dispel. This comes as you allow the Holy Spirit to express Himself in your life. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy (Gal. 5:22). This joy is unlike any happiness that is produced by the world. It fills you and permeates everything you do. Jesus did not pray that you would merely be happy or even that you would escape grief. He prayed that you would have the same joy that the Father had given Him: a divine joy, a joy that comes from a deep and unwavering relationship with the Father. It is a joy that is grounded so firmly in a relationship with God that no change in circumstances could ever shake it. This is the kind of joy that Christ is praying will be in you.

22. John 17:15 -- "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." We are here on earth on purpose and for a purpose. We are not just waiting to die and go to Heaven. We are here to accomplish The Great Commission. Don't pray that God would take you out of this world and away from the important mission He has given you on this earth. Pray that in all things, you would grow in your love for Him and unity with Him, and that you would be increasingly conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus. (Romans 8:28, 29)

23. John 17:17-18 – “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- God will always sanctify you before He sends you. The Father set aside the twelve disciples and made them holy by the Truth, His Son. As they related to Jesus, the Truth (John 14:6), the disciples were refined by that Truth and were prepared to be sent out to preach the gospel. Jesus challenged their ambitions (Luke 9:46-48), chastised their lack of faith (Matt. 17:19-20), refuted Satan's influence (Matt. 16:23), and denounced their pride (Matt. 26:33-35). When Jesus had finished preparing them, the disciples were sent out in such power that their world was never the same again. Satan will try to convince you that your sin renders you useless to God. That is a lie from the author and father of lies. As soon as you sin, the Deceiver will whisper, “You failure! You are now of no use to God.” This can bring a deep sense of defeat and hopelessness to a Christian. Yet, there is no freedom that compares to a soul set free by God's grace. When God's people allow God's truth to realign them to God's will and God's standard, then the power of God will be released through them the same way it was through the first disciples. The Truth will set you free. The Truth is: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9), and we are restored to usefulness to God.

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- God gave His written word. Then Jesus embodied and fulfilled that word as The Word. Then, with all power and authority, Jesus commissioned us as ambassadors, priests, and saints to proclaim the word on His behalf, making disciples of all nations on earth, and we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to receive special revelation from God's word. So, how important is Bible study, memorization, and application?

- In his final hours, Jesus prays to the Father for the sanctification of the believers. He points out that the word of God is the primary instrument used by the Holy Spirit for sanctification. Jesus points out that, under his leadership, the disciples received God's word, accepted God's word, and obeyed God's word (John 17:6, 7, 14). The product of sanctification through the word of truth is unity in the Body which serves as a testimony to a watching world (John 17:20-23). Today the Bible is more accessible than ever before, but perhaps never before has God's word been handled so carelessly and complacently by so many. How much of the division and disunity we see in the Church today is the result of Biblical ignorance? God has commanded us (not suggested to us) to study His word diligently every day, to meditate upon it all day, to obey it, and to teach it to everyone, starting with our families. We are all to be like the Bereans who, with character more noble than others, eagerly examined the Scriptures each day to discern truth (Acts 17:11). "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)."

24. John 17:21 – "...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- God often speaks of human relationships as a part of His mission to redeem a lost world (John 13:20; Matt. 25:40). One reason He gives for a husband and wife to live in unity is so they can produce a "godly seed," that is, children who love and obey God, who can be used in God's mission to bring redemption to a lost world (Mal. 2:14-15). Similarly, the church is the body of Christ. A church cannot be on mission with the Father in our world if its members are waging war with one another (1 Cor. 12:12). There is a crucial connection between our relationships with others and the salvation of those around us. We might assume that during Jesus' prayer before His crucifixion, He would have prayed that His disciples would have courage, or would remain faithful, or would remember what they had been taught. Yet He asked that His followers would remain united in their love for one another. Jesus understood that it is spiritually impossible to love God but not love others. A test of your love for God is to examine your love for others. Our tendency is to say, "Heavenly Father, the problem is not between You and me. I love You with all my heart. I just don't love my brother." And God says, "That is an impossibility. You cannot love Me without loving the ones for whom My Son died" (John 13:34-35). Your life will not convince those around you of the reality of Jesus if you cannot live in unity with your fellow Christians.

25. John 17:22, 23 -- "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

- Jesus enables us to become "perfectly one" with Him and the Father – a reality that should be apparent to the world around us.

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- Unity can only come when we unify with God. Many people, even Christians see unity in itself as the goal so they attempt to unify around an activity, a church, a charity, a person, an organization, and many other things other than Jesus. If Jesus isn't the goal, the target, the center, Jesus will fail.

26. John 17:25-26 – “O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- You do not “organize” the kingdom of God, you “agonize” the kingdom of God. You cannot be close to God without being affected by His love. The heavenly Father loved His Son with an eternal love. Everything in the heart and life of the Father was released to His Son. As the Father expressed His love for a broken and sinful world, this passion was manifested through the life of His Son. The Father initiated His plan to save mankind, and out of a heart of devotion, the Son accepted the assignment that took Him to the cross. As Jesus walked among people, the Father’s love filled His Son. Jesus recognized that no ordinary love could motivate Him to go to the cross. No human love could keep Him perfectly obedient to His Father throughout His life. Only His Father’s love was powerful enough to compel Him to commit His life to the saving purpose of His Father. Jesus prayed that God would place this same love in His disciples. He knew that no other motivation would be sufficient for the assignments God had for them. God’s answer was to place His Son in them. It is impossible for a Christian to be filled with this measure of love and not to be on mission with God. You will be incapable of ministering to everyone God sends you unless you have His love. You cannot forgive others or go the extra mile with others or sacrifice for others unless you have first been filled with the boundless love of God. Seek to know the Father and His immeasurable love, then allow His Son to love others through you!

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 Nov 18: On this Thanksgiving Day, proclaim our thankfulness for your salvation through Jesus Christ, and glorify Him through your attitude of gratitude, and your unity with fellow believers.

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 3, Wednesday, 21 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+41%2C+42%3B+pro+21%3B+John+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 21 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 41-42 – God had a very precise plan for the place where He would live among His people and where the people would come to worship and give gifts to Him. The Bible says, that you are His Temple.
2. Ezekiel 41 -- The plans place the temple at the highest point and make the entrances to the parts of the temple increasingly narrow as one approaches the Most Holy Place where God lives. What does this suggest about the ways of God and about how He relates with us?
3. Ezekiel 41:3-5 -- "Then he went into the inner room.... And he said to me, 'This is the Most Holy Place.'" Ezekiel was taken to the outer sanctuary, but the angel did not take Him to the inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place, because Ezekiel couldn't enter the Holy Place as an unholy, unrighteous sinner. However, Hebrews 10 reveals that, through the blood of Jesus, we now have access to the Most Holy Place, having been covered over by the righteousness and holiness of Jesus -- "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled

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clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22) Now that you have access, live in that close relationship with God, and remain pure in His presence. The motto is "Semper Fidelis Coram Deo" which means "Always Faithful Before the Face of God".

4. Ezekiel 41:21-22 – “The doorposts of the nave were squared, and in front of the Holy Place was something resembling an altar of wood, three cubits high, two cubits long, and two cubits broad. Its corners, its base, and its walls were of wood. He said to me, “This is the table that is before the Lord.” Incredible detail is planned for the furnishing of the Holy of Holies, a place only the High Priest is allowed to see. God demands our very best where only He can see, our hearts. Only you and God can enter into your heart to see what is really there. It must be the most beautiful and holy place of the Temple.

5. Ezekiel 42:1-14 – Much detail is placed in God’s temple to accommodate the physical needs of the people and the logistics of worship. Often times Christians seek to “spiritualize” their faith so much they act like the physical aspects of life are somehow inconsequential or less spiritual. Some suggest that our physical lives don’t really matter, that we are just waiting to get to Heaven. However, God made us physical on purpose and told us to translate His will into physical reality on earth – “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God’s plan has Him returning to earth (a new earth) to reign. The physical is part of God’s spiritual reality.

6. Ezekiel 42:20 -- "He measured it on the four sides. It had a wall around it, 500 cubits long and 500 cubits broad, to make a separation between the holy and the common." In the physical world, proximity relates to time and space. Spiritually distance is measured in love, obedience, and holiness. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey....” The more you love and obey Jesus, the closer you get to Him and the more you distance yourself from the unspiritual. Obedience to Jesus makes you uncommon, holy, and holy means “set apart.” If you ever feel as if God is distant, make sure it is not because you have distanced yourself through disobedience.

7. Proverbs 21:1 – “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.” God is in control of the lives of all political leaders, using them for His purposes. This was revealed in the life of Nebuchadnezzar and many other worldly leaders in the Bible. If you want political leaders to act differently, you need to go to The Lord who controls their actions.

8. Proverbs 21:2 – “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.” God is not just interested in what you do but more importantly why you do it. Every ‘good deed’ can be done with selfish motivation or selfless motivation. A good deed done selfishly and one done selflessly may appear the same outwardly, but God knows the difference, the heart and true motive behind the deed, and He judges the acts differently.

9. Proverbs 21:3, 26, 27 -- “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.... the righteous gives and does not hold back. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent.” Throughout the Bible, we see that God does not accept the worship and ‘religion’ of the unrepentant sinner, regardless the person’s commitment to their futile religious practices. Of the Old Testament Israelites, God said, “Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they... did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.” (Isaiah 58) In their sin, God did not respond to their prayers and worship, leaving God’s disobedient people to question why their church had lost its power – “Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves,

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and you take no knowledge of it?" (Isaiah 58) Jesus answers this question still being asked in churches today – "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:7) The powerful life is the life truly surrendered to God, intent on fulfilling the will of God day by day, denying self, carrying the Cross, and truly following Jesus in obedience -- "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1) It is God's grace and mercy that give us the opportunity to present ourselves as 'living sacrifices' and to worship Him in spirit and in truth (in practical reality through tangible actions aligned with God's will). Living by grace involves bearing fruit which comes out of obedience. To love flowers is to hate weeds. Are there weeds of sin in your life that need to be pulled that are choking out your fruitfulness?

10. Proverbs 21:10 – "The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes." Mercy is a trait of the righteous.

11. Proverbs 21:11 – "When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge." Scoffers who have no spiritual discernment are like animals – like mules, they only respond to whips on the backside (pain) or to carrots (pleasure). The legal system is for scoffers and the simple. True Christians do what is right without need of laws, motivated by love.

12. Proverbs 21:17 – "Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." Pleasure seekers don't gain lasting wealth.

13. Proverbs 21:27 – "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." Compare this verse with Pro 21:2. Again, God judges intent, the heart behind the action.

14. John 16:1-4 -- "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you."

- Jesus was focused on the fact that His disciples were in great danger of going astray and that they needed to abide by His word as their only hope.

- Jesus warned His followers that they would be persecuted by people from within the church in the name of God because, though these persecutors were very religious, they "have not known the Father, nor me." Jesus warned His followers so that, under the pressure of the worldly church, His true followers would not 'fall away.' We must be very careful not to allow unfaithful but powerful elements of the contemporary church compromise our fidelity to Jesus. If you are truly obeying God's word, you might find that your greatest critics are members of the church.

- Many Christians have hurt other Christians believing they were serving God in the process. If your actions don't feel gracious, peaceful, and loving, they probably aren't, and you are therefore outside of God's will. When you are operating outside of the command of love, you are essentially making yourself an enemy of God.

15. John 16:6 – "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart." The reality God has in store for us might tend to fill us with grief, though we are reminded that this is part of God's

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perfect plan, and we can rely on the Holy Spirit for strength and joy in the midst of trials. God will judge the world, and we will suffer in the midst of that judgment; however, we will be rewarded for faithful service behind the enemy's front lines.

16. John 16:8 -- "When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." Only the Holy Spirit can convict the heart. As God's messenger, you are called to proclaim truth to others, but the Holy Spirit must do the convicting. Tell people the truth in love, and let the Holy Spirit take care of the rest.

17. John 16:12-13 -- "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." The Holy Spirit guides you through a process of spiritual growth -- spiritual growth is not obtained on your own ability and isn't obtained overnight. For those who are diligent disciples, the Holy Spirit reveals more and more truth everyday overtime. The Holy Spirit only speaks the words of the Father. Obedient disciples do likewise. No one should care about what you think, and your credibility does not improve with position, experience, or age. All that matters is the unfiltered word of God flowing out of your mouth as a messenger of Christ.

18. John 16:14 -- "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." We glorify God when we declare His truth to others.

19. John 16:20 -- "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy."

- The Christian's response to circumstances and world events is the opposite of those who are not followers of Christ. If you are rejoicing with the world, you might want to question your spiritual discernment. If you are fearing or fretting with the world, you might want to question your spiritual discernment.

- We naturally mourn over what the world rejoices over. Being a Christian doesn't mean you won't mourn, quite the opposite. Happiness and joy are not the same thing.

20. John 16:22 -- "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." Now is not our time of rejoicing. We will not fully rejoice until Christ returns, but our inner joy remains because we are always with Jesus. Today's feel-good church is severely disoriented to the realities of its environment and situation.

21. John 16:23, 24 -- "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." This is an important word for us from Jesus. The disciples had been with Jesus for a long time and had asked Him for many things, but Jesus said of them, "Until now you have asked nothing in my name." What is it to ask in Jesus' name? Essentially it is asking for Jesus' will rather than our own will, from unselfish motives that seek only to glorify Jesus. To that point in the Bible, the requests of the disciples always had a little selfish intent. To ask in Jesus' name is to essentially ask on His behalf, not ours. What will you pray for today and why? Are your prayers about you or about Jesus?

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22. John 16:31, 32 -- "Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.'" Part of your spiritual growth involves God revealing to you your lack of faith. This is your opportunity not to get discouraged but rather to turn to God for strength and to grow in faith.

23. John 16:32 -- "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Jesus knows better than anyone what it is to be abandoned and rejected and reminds us that the Christian is never alone, never abandoned, and never rejected. Your relationship with God is the only relationship you have which will never fail you in some way.

24. John 16:33 -- "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."

- The Christian should have and display peace through tribulation because of his relationship with God and total trust and confidence in Him. Jesus wants you to have inner peace on earth when there is no outer peace. Jesus speaks about peace over 100 times in the Bible. To those who have received salvation in Him, Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:50) Walk In the peace of Jesus. Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (John 14:27) Be troubled and worried no longer. Jesus also says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:21) Jesus also commands us to spread His peace to the world. We should be beacons of peace through our attitudes and communicators of peace through the preaching of the good word. Today, live in peace and preach peace to others, peace that only comes through Jesus.

- God modeled for us how to respond to abandonment and persecution while having peace in fellowship with God. If the world has not yet abandoned you, see if you haven't indeed abandoned God when it mattered most. When it was time to speak out against adultery, abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, injustice, etc, did you run to your home, shut the door and act like you didn't know Jesus, His teachings, or His call for repentance, which we are called as ambassadors to communicate on His behalf? Don't fool yourself – silence is consent. Are you scared to leave your comfortable, seemingly secure silence for Jesus? John the Baptist was beheaded because he dared speak out against adultery. Jesus said of John the Baptist that there was no man born of woman greater than John the Baptist. What does Jesus say about your fidelity and courage as His ambassador?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 Nov 18: Today, practice peace. Be an agent of peace, pointing others to the peace that only comes from right relationship with Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 2, Tuesday, 20 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+39%2C+40%3B+pro+20%3B+John+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 20 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 39:7 – "I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore." God's patience doesn't last forever.
2. Ezekiel 39:21-23 -- "And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face

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from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword.” God will glorify His Name in either positive ways or negative ways depending upon the obedience of those through whom He is working. God warns people that they will choose either blessings or curses. God will not be mocked.

3. Ezekiel 39:29 – “And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.” The Holy Spirit enables you to see God.

4. Proverbs 20:6 – “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” Nothing makes you more valuable and respected than fidelity to God. Nothing makes you more loving than fidelity to God.

5. Proverbs 20:22 – “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.” God commands you not to respond negatively to insults or maltreatment. Return good for evil.

6. Proverbs 20:27 – “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts.” Man was created with spirit, soul, mind, and body. The soul is our psychology and emotions, but the spirit is our connection with God, God’s spirit within us. Those without Christ have physical life, with a body, mind, and even soul, but they are spiritually dead. Those who are born again in Jesus obtain spiritual life, and the Holy Spirit is within them. They are no longer just smarter animals, they are spiritual beings.

7. John 15:1, 2, 5 – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.... I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

- Jesus expects continual spiritual growth and fruitfulness from His followers. The growth process is often painful as God "prunes" your character to make it more Christ-like and productive. Pruning is the painful process of removing what hinders further growth. What must be removed from your life so that you may continue to grow in Christ? The loving Father will continue to conform you to obedience and love “that your joy may be complete (15:11).” See Proverbs 20:27, 30. God has “appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (15:16). How are you doing at fulfilling the King’s calling? Everything you do apart from this is meaningless, meaningless, meaningless.”

-- “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:11).”

What sort of fruit does a Spirit-led Christian produce? See Galatians 5:22, 23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.” The attributes God removes are those opposite of the Beatitudes – He prunes away pride, pleasure seeking, arrogance, self-sufficiency, cruelty, impurity, resentfulness, bitterness, defensiveness, etc. Bearing fruit glorifies God and proves our discipleship. (John 15:8) The foundation of fruitfulness is obedience to God’s commands – this is also the secret to joy as well as a prerequisite for genuine love. (John 15:10, 11, 17) Those who obey God’s commands with love as their motive are friends with Christ and understand God’s will. (John 15:15) If we walk in obedience, we will walk in the power of God (meekness) and will have rest within our spirits despite the fact that we will be hated and persecuted by the world. In our persecution, we have true fellowship with Christ – adversity unites.

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8. John 15:3, 4 -- "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." You are saved by faith, not by works; you are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. However, having been saved by God's grace, you must remain in Him to be sanctified in grace. He has called you to obedience, holiness, and good works which God has prepared in advance for you. Now that you have been saved, serve the Lord as His disciple and bear fruit. Jesus said that to bear fruit you must remain in Him, remaining in Him means remaining in His love, and remaining in His love means obeying His commands. (15:4, 9, 10) The fruit that you bear demonstrates your discipleship to the watching world and serves your life's purpose of glorifying God. (15:8; Proverbs 20:11) Anything you do in life that is self-serving misses the mark. (15:4-6) Jesus describes two types of branches: those that don't bear fruit and those that do. The branches that don't bear fruit wither and die to no end, but the branches that do bear fruit add life, and when they fall to the ground (die of self), they produce seeds of new life (disciples).

9. John 15:5 -- "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- There are those who feel that they must be constantly laboring for the Lord in order to meet God's high standards. Jesus gave a clear picture of what our relationship to Him ought to be like. He is the vine, the source of our life. We are the branches, the place where fruit is produced. As we receive life from Christ, the natural, inevitable result is that fruit is produced in our lives. In our zeal to produce "results" for our Lord, we sometimes become so intent on fruit production that we neglect abiding in Christ. We may feel that "abiding" is not as productive or that it takes too much time away from our fruit production. Yet Jesus said that it is not our activity that produces fruit, it is our relationship with Him. Jesus gave an important warning to His disciples. He cautioned that if they ever attempted to live their Christian life apart from an intimate relationship with Him, they would discover that they ceased to produce any significant results. They might exert great effort for the kingdom of God, yet when they stopped to account for their lives, they would find only barrenness. One of the most dramatic acts Jesus ever performed was cursing a fig tree that had failed to produce fruit (Mark 11:14). Are you comfortable in abiding, or are you impatient to be engaged in activity? If you will remain steadfastly in fellowship with Jesus, a great harvest will be the natural by-product.

10. John 15:10, 11 -- "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." You abide in Jesus through obedience. You love Jesus through obedience. You find joy in life through obedience.

11. John 15:15 -- "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you."

From Henry T. Blackaby -- You do not choose to be a friend of God. That is by invitation only. Only two people in the Old Testament were specifically described as "friends of God." Abraham walked with the Lord so closely that God referred to him as His friend (Isa. 41:8). Moses spoke to God face to face as a man speaks with his friend (Exod. 33:11). By His very nature God is a friend to us. He loves us with a perfect love and reaches out to us with salvation when we can offer Him nothing in return. It is quite another thing when someone has a heart so devoted to Him that God initiates a special friendship. David's heart was totally devoted to God (1 Kings 11:4). Although David was not sinless, he loved God.

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David hated sin (Ps. 103:3); he loved to worship God (Ps. 122:1); he took genuine delight in God's presence (2 Sam. 6:14); he loved to speak about God (Ps. 34:1); he was keenly aware of his transgressions (Ps. 51:3-4); and he delighted in offering gifts of song, thanksgiving, and praise, asking for nothing in return (Ps. 100). So closely did David walk with God that his words were on Jesus' mind as He hung upon the cross (Matt. 27:46). Jesus called His disciples friends. He said He would disclose to them things that the Father had shared with Him, because they were His friends. There developed such an intimate friendship between them that He would share what was on His heart with His friends. If you cannot describe yourself as a friend of God, commit yourself to seek after God with all your heart.

12. John 15:20 – "Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours." If Jesus was willing to be persecuted by sinners for their sake, to reconcile them to the Father, what makes you more deserving of fair treatment than Him. What justification do you have demanding your 'rights' from others or seeking their punishment for treating you poorly? If you are going to rest on grace through Jesus, you have no choice but to give grace to all others. You have to be hurt by the sins of others to fully appreciate the grace you have received through Jesus.

13. John 15:25 – "They hated me without a cause." You will not convince others to believe through evidence our logic. It is not a head problem, it is a heart problem.

14. John 15:26, 27 -- "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning." You partner with the Holy Spirit to lead people to Jesus. You cannot lead anyone to Jesus apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, and God's plan is that you serve as Jesus' ambassador, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is your life mission.

15. John 15 – God expects followers of Christ to bear much fruit, not through their power or abilities but through the power of God flowing through them. Only the Creator can create; we can only steward what He has created. Apart from Christ working through us, we cannot do anything. If the life of the vine does not flow through you the branch no fruit can be produced. However, it is natural and expected for a healthy tree to bear fruit and to grow. The fruit proves the tree. Your fruit is evidence of your relationship with God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 Nov 18: Proclaim Jesus to as many as you can today, and allow the Holy Spirit to work where the Holy Spirit will. (John 15:26, 27)

DBRP - WEEK 47, Day 1, Monday, 19 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezek+37%2C+38%3B+pro+19%3B+John+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 19 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 37:1 – "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones."

- Don't just go out – be led out in the Spirit of the Lord. Even in a proverbial valley of dry bones, you can expect amazing things if the Spirit has led you there.

- God's servants are led by the Holy Spirit.

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2. Ezekiel 37:4 -- "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." God calls us to prophesize, not to question the receptivity of the audience. Ezekiel faithfully obeyed in a seemingly fruitless environment.

3. Ezekiel 37:6 -- "And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." God brings the spiritually dead to life for His glory.

4. Ezekiel 37:10 -- "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army." God allows His servants play a critical role in His work, though He is not dependent on them.

5. Ezekiel 37:14 -- "And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live."

- It is the Holy Spirit within us that gives us spiritual life.

- Dry bones cannot breathe life into themselves and bring themselves alive. Neither can a spiritually dead person bring themselves to life. God provides His Spirit to enable people to surrender to Him and follow Him. The Spirit, however, does not prevent a person from rejecting or disobeying Jesus if they want.

6. Ezekiel 37:23 -- "They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." When you turn to the Lord for cleansing, He will forgive you but also change your heart so you won't desire to sin as you once did; rather you will desire to closer to Him day by day, hating the sin that separates.

7. Ezekiel 37:24 -- "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes." The name 'David' here likely refers to the Messiah in the line of David, Jesus. When Jesus is truly your Shepherd, you are careful to obey Him.

8. Ezekiel 37:26, 27 -- "And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." God does not reside in a building. God's sanctuary is within His people. You are the Temple of God.

9. Ezekiel 38:23 -- "So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord." How many times does God's word remind us that His purpose for our lives is to bring glory to Him, not to us?

10. Proverbs 19:2 -- "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." Make rational decisions rather than emotional decisions; make spirit led decisions rather than decisions based merely upon your limited knowledge, but don't mistake feelings and emotion for the Spirit's counsel. The Bible says to test your perceptions of the spirit against the word of God. God will never ask you to go against His written word. If you sense selfishness in your decision, it is not from the spirit.

11. Proverbs 19:3 -- "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." Human nature incites us to blame God for our buffoonery and disloyalty.

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12. Proverbs 19:4 – “Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend.” The vast majority of relationships are motivated by selfishness – selfish friends like the way you make them feel or what you do for them. Often people approach God the same way, seeking His blessings rather than Him. What is the motivation behind your relationships with God and others – genuine love is selfless.

13. Proverbs 19:6 – “Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.” Many are in love with a concept of a god who always blesses them – a conditional, self-centered religion. This was Satan’s test of Job: “Take away the blessings, and Job will stop loving God, trusting, and obeying God.” Will you love, trust, and obey God no matter what happens to you?

14. Proverbs 19:22 – “What is desired in a man is steadfast love.” Any questions?

15. John 14:1, 21, 24, 30 -- “If you love me, you will obey what I command.... Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.... He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.... the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”

- Obedience to God reveals the truth of our love for God. We cannot disobey from a position of love. To claim love and godliness in disobedience is blasphemous.

16. John 14:6 – “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

- Do you believe Jesus enough to proclaim this eternal message to everyone you know?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- If you are walking daily with the Lord, you will not have to find God’s will—you will already be in it. If you are walking with Him in obedience day by day, you will always be in the will of God. The Holy Spirit’s role is to guide you step by step to do God’s will. Walking closely with God each day guarantees that you will be exactly where He wants you to be. You would have to reject all of the Holy Spirit’s activity in your life in order to get out of the will of God. The disciples never had to ask Jesus where they should go next. They simply looked to see where Jesus was going and stayed close to Him! Jesus was their “way.” They didn’t need a map as long as they had Jesus. Too often, we would prefer a road map of our future rather than a relationship with the Way. It often seems easier to follow a plan than to cultivate a relationship. We can become more concerned with our future than we are with walking intimately with God today. Jesus will never give you a substitute for Himself. He is the only way to the Father. That’s why it is critical that you clearly know when God is speaking to you (Isa. 30:21). If you are disoriented to how God speaks, you will not understand when He is giving you a new revelation about what He is doing. If you want to know God’s will, take time to cultivate your relationship with Jesus and learn to identify His voice. He is more than willing to show you the way.

17. John 14:6, 7 – “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.’” Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus is the Way God has provided for people to know Him – there is no other way, no other truth, no other life. We can’t approach God on our own terms.

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18. John 14:10 – “The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.” Jesus only spoke the words of God through the power of God and in the authority of God. We should do the same.

19. John 14:12-14 -- “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

- Jesus operated under the authority and power of the Father, and was solely obedient to His will. He modeled how we are to live our lives. If we truly believe, we will surrender entirely to His authority, will, and power.

- Do you believe that Jesus expects us to do greater things than He did because of the power, authority and support we have in Him? Do you understand that asking “in” His name is asking within His will for His will to be accomplished? When your prayers are for what God wants rather than merely what you want, your prayers will be answered with “Yes.” Our prayers must be God-centered, not self-centered, asking that God’s will be done, not our will.

20. John 14:15 -- “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Obedience is the proof of our love.

21. John 14:15, 16, 21, 23, 24 -- “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.... Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.... Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”

- Obedience opens the door for the Spirit’s work in the believer’s life.

- When something is repeated in the Bible it is for emphasis; the highest degree of emphasis is when something is repeated three times. Three times in John 14, Jesus reiterates that love and obedience go hand-in-hand. Many people believe in God, but James reminds us that even the demons believe in God. To love God, however, is to obey Him with contentment from the heart – “godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Timothy 6:6) Jesus points out that love inspired obedience will be VERY powerful in the life of a true Christian – “whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.... the Spirit of Truth... will be in you.... I will love him and manifest myself to him.... The Helper... will teach you all things... Peace I leave with you.” The powerless Christian has a love problem. The loving Christian will be evident to all by the power of the Spirit flowing through him or her. How is your spiritual love life?

22. John 14:21-24 – “...and I will love him and manifest myself to him....”

- Do you want to see Jesus? Do you want Him to be truly manifested in your life? Then, keep His commandments and His words. Love inspired, selfless obedience is the path to knowing Jesus more and more.

- From Henry T. Blackaby on John 14:21 -- Obedience to God’s commands comes from your heart. When you begin struggling to obey God, that is a clear indication that your heart has shifted away from Him. Some claim: “I love God, but I’m having difficulty obeying Him in certain areas of my life.” That is a

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spiritual impossibility. If I were to ask you, “Do you love God?” you might easily respond, “Yes!” However, if I were to ask you, “Are you obeying God?” would you answer yes as quickly? Yet I would be asking you the same question! Genuine love for God leads to wholehearted obedience. If you told your spouse that you loved her at certain times but that you struggled to love her at others, your relationship would be in jeopardy. Yet we assume that God is satisfied with occasional love or partial obedience. He is not. Obedience without love is legalism. Obedience for its own sake can be nothing more than perfectionism, which leads to pride. Many conscientious Christians seek to cultivate discipline in their lives to be more obedient to Christ. As helpful as spiritual disciplines can be, they never can replace your love for God. Love is the discipline. God looks beyond your godly habits, beyond your moral lifestyle, and beyond your church involvement and focuses His penetrating gaze upon your heart. Has your worship become empty and routine? Have you lost your motivation to read God’s Word? Are you experiencing spiritual lethargy? Is your prayer life reduced to a ritual? These are symptoms of a heart that has shifted away from God. Return to your first love. Love is the greatest motivation for a relationship with God and for serving Him.

23. John 14:26 -- “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” The Holy Spirit is your teacher, not any person. Listen to wise counsel from others, but test all teachings by God’s word and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. No person has more potential access to the Spirit than any other person, though many are more receptive to the Spirit than others due to the condition of their hearts and their level of obedience. Develop your own relationship with the Spirit, and be guided by Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Nov 18: Focus on obedience to Jesus today, but not an obedience motivated by fear, pride, or even duty, rather motivated by selfless love that is not seeking personal blessings but rather a more intimate relationship with Jesus. Seek that Jesus would be manifested in your life, not that you would have a more comfortable existence apart from Him. Seek not more knowledge ‘about’ Jesus, seek knowledge of Jesus, personal knowledge that comes from walking with Him in obedience. (John 14)

DBRP - WEEK 46, Day 7, Sunday, 18 November 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+35%2C+36%3B+pro+18%3B+psalm+135%2C+136>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 18 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 35:6, 11, 15; 36:19 -- “Because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you.... I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them.... As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate.... In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them.”

- God’s way is to judge people according to the way they judge others. This pattern is revealed throughout the Bible. Remember Jesus’s words -- “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:36-38) Remember how He taught people to pray to the Father -- “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12) Most are familiar with the ‘Golden Rule’ -- “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them,

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for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12) However, few truly consider the implications of not following the Golden Rule.

- We should not presume to think that we can treat others harshly while receiving nothing but mercy from God. God will reveal to you and to others His Justice, His mercy, and His Grace, by treating you the way you treat others. He will glorify Himself.

2. Ezekiel 35:13 – “And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it.” God takes offenses against His people personally, as an affront to Him, and He will deal with the offenders accordingly.

3. Ezekiel 36:13, 14 – “Thus says the Lord God: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,’ therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord God.” Ungodly nations are particularly hard on children. The nation of Israel during the time of Ezekiel had developed an international reputation as being a dangerous place to live because of the sinfulness of the people. Remember that one of the primary reasons God judged Israel was because they sacrificed their infants to Baal. This is what is being referred to in vs 18 – “I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it.” Today, the sacrifice of children to idolatry is performed in a more sophisticated way, and we call it abortion. About 60 million babies have been aborted in America since Roe vs Wade – that is the equivalent of 10 Holocausts. God will hold the nation accountable for that.

4. Ezekiel 36:20, 21 – “But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.’ But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.” God is ashamed of people who claim to represent Him when they are not holy and obedient.

5. Ezekiel 36:22-23 – “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”

- God’s intent is to spread the reputation of His name throughout the earth. When God works in our lives, it is ultimately not about us but rather about Him. We are on earth to accomplish His purposes, not ours. If His purposes require our demise, then praise God who has given us this incredibly honorable responsibility.

- God will glorify Himself through your life either in a positive way or a negative way, either through blessings or through discipline, depending on whether or not you choose to obey Him and display His character to the world rightly. God the Father cannot tolerate children that dishonor the family name.

6. Ezekiel 36:25-32 – “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my

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rules.... And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.... Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways....”

- We cannot purify ourselves; God must purify us. We cannot fix our hearts; God must give us a new heart. We cannot follow God’s command or obey Him unless His Holy Spirit is within us. You must be born again by salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

- Only God can cleanse you, fix your heart, and give you the strength to obey Him day by day. You cannot achieve holiness through willpower.

- Man cannot fix the condition of his heart. Modern-day gurus have nothing to offer you. Our only hope is salvation through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus we receive a new heart, and a new spirit, not band aids on our old broken, corrupted heart. Then we will see clearly the foolishness and sinfulness of our old self and our new heart will desire, out of love, honor, and reverence to obey God’s commands, placing no confidence in self or the ways of the world. Only through the power and grace of God is there any hope for genuine change.

-- 2 Corinthians 5:17 -- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- “Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.” The Holy Spirit drives you to humility, continual repentance, and the acknowledgment that is not for you but rather for the glory of God. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin, you will be truly repentant. When you are truly repentant, you will not want to sin any longer.

7. Ezekiel 36:26 – “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” Comments from Henry T. Blackaby – “From our hearts comes our response to God. Apart from the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, our hearts are extremely deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). David prayed that God would cleanse him from the ravages of his sin and purify his heart (Ps. 51:10). God’s greatest desire is that His people love Him with all their hearts (Deut. 6:5). Jesus said we are blessed if our hearts are pure (Matt. 5:8). Sin hardens the heart (Matt. 13:4, 19). The more sin we allow to pass over our hearts and through our lives, the more resistant we become to a word from God. The sin of unforgiveness stiffens our hearts. We cannot continue to resist the prompting of the Holy Spirit without becoming hardened against Him. Exposing ourselves to evil and ungodly influences desensitizes us to God and His word. Over time, our hearts become like stone, unreceptive to a fresh word from God. We become anesthetized to sin. Has your heart grown hard toward God? Do you feel as though nothing could soften it? God has a solution. He will separate you from the influences that are destroying you (Ezek. 36:24). He will cleanse you from all filthiness and remove everything that has taken His place in your affections (Ezek. 36:25). He will remove your heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh, tender toward Him and His word. If your love for God is not what it should be, ask Him to renew your heart and restore your devotion to Him.”

8. Proverbs 18:3, 5-6, 8, 19, 21, 23 --

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- God wants you to appreciate the power of your careless words to hurt other people.
- God has an ongoing concern for the needy and calls you to have the same.

9. Psalm 135:1, 5 – “Praise the Lord!... For I know that the Lord is great.” The more you really understand how great God is, the more you will want to genuinely praise Him. If your worship and praise is flat, it is because you have an appreciation problem.

10. Psalm 136:1 – “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” Psalm 136 is a list recounting all the ways God demonstrated His love and faithfulness to the people. This gave them encouragement for the future. Do you have a list of all the things God has done in your life to demonstrate His love and faithfulness? Take the time today to make that list, share with your family, and give thanks to God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Nov 18: See number 10 above.

DBRP - WEEK 46, Day 6, Saturday, 17 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+32-34%3B+pro+17%3B+psalm+134>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 17 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 32:3-9 – “Thus says the Lord God: I will throw my net over you with a host of many peoples, and they will haul you up in my dragnet. And I will cast you on the ground; on the open field I will fling you, and will cause all the birds of the heavens to settle on you, and I will gorge the beasts of the whole earth with you. I will strew your flesh upon the mountains and fill the valleys with your carcass. I will drench the land even to the mountains with your flowing blood, and the ravines will be full of you. When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God. “I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries that you have not known.”

- Throughout the Bible we are warned that everyone will face God’s judgment. Christians approach the Judgment Seat clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

- God uses both domestic and international politics to glorify Himself. God is currently setting the stage for what He will do in the future. To understand what might be coming about, you must first understand Him. However, deeper understanding can come only from the Holy Spirit revealing God’s will and the pattern of His ways through God’s word. Human intellect apart from revelation will always fall short. Only God knows what He is bringing about. Today, many are raging in the streets when they should be repenting.

- God knows a nation’s or person’s impact on people and generations far beyond the nation’s or person’s understanding of that impact. Sin has a ripple affect we cannot even imagine; God’s judgment on a nation or person is intended, in part, to send a message to an immeasurable number of other people who might hear and understand. When we spread the Gospel, we cannot imagine who might be impacted, people we will never meet.

2. Ezekiel 32:12 – “I will cause your multitude to fall by the swords of mighty ones, all of them most ruthless of nations. ‘They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt, and all its multitude shall perish.’”

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- Again, God will eliminate human pride. Be on constant vigilance against pride in your heart.
- God's will is to shatter human pride.

3. Ezekiel 32:17-19 – “In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, wail over the multitude of Egypt, and send them down, her and the daughters of majestic nations, to the world below, to those who have gone down to the pit: ‘Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down and be laid to rest with the uncircumcised.’”

- God has one destination for those who oppose Him.
- God will judge all those who do not “know” and acknowledge that He is God so that His name will be glorified. A nation's only hope is to acknowledge God.
- God has one destination for all those who oppose Him.

4. Ezekiel 33:1, 2 – “The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, speak to your people and say to them....’”

- The “word of the Lord,” includes a message of judgment against sin which is why Jesus' first message was “Repent.” As Ambassadors for Christ, we must speak out against sin and point to the Savior who saves us, not from the consequences of our sin, but from the wrath of God.

- It is always good to notice in the Bible, take to heart, and remember that God's worthy messengers did not speak their own words but only the words God gave them to speak. They were not offering others mere opinions, regurgitated interpretations of the Bible, or new ways of communicating old ideas. God's messengers speak His word at the right time at the right place in the right way to the right people for the right reasons. As ambassadors for Christ, we must be guided by the Holy Spirit, informed by the word of God, and we must only speak on His behalf using His words, not ours.

5. Ezekiel 33:5 – “He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.” You have to sound the trumpet; people have the responsibility to respond to your call for repentance. You are not responsible for how they respond.

6. Ezekiel 33:6 -- “But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.... And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?”

- Today's readings in Ezekiel directly mirror what God said to Jeremiah about the messenger being held accountable for the delivery of the message. The word Apostle (apóstolos) means basically ‘commissioned and sent messenger’ with authority as a ‘delegate.’ Jesus gave his followers the ‘Great Commission’ – “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20) The Bible says further, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” (2 Corinthians 5:20) Under the authority and power of God, we have been commissioned to serve as His messengers and representatives on

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earth, to proclaim a message of eternal consequence. This is a TREMENDOUS responsibility that cannot be abrogated. God will hold us accountable for how we perform our mission. We must warn the iniquitous, and we must be very careful not to 'muddy the waters' by adding or taking away from God's word. What we think about an issue matters little; what matters is what God's word says. For example, God's word forbids sex outside of a marriage between one man and one woman, period. God also demands that overseers, deacons, and elders be "men of one wife" with believing children. (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:12; Titus 1:6) However, regularly the church disregards these commands and many others, muddying the waters of God's word in the process in order to justify what they are doing. As a result, many churches have lost their holiness, power, saltiness, and luminance. While sin abounds, many Christians remain silent, contributing to the sin environment – "Qui tacet consentit": "Silence gives consent." What would Jesus say to the 'consenting' Christian? "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea." (Mark 9:42) "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!" (Matthew 18:7) Are you warning those around you? Are you vocal?

- You are responsible and held accountable for delivering the message to all; how people respond is their responsibility, not yours. However, their response to you is not an opportunity for you to quit proclaiming Christ. Your life mission is to proclaim Jesus and represent Him on earth. How are you doing?

7. Ezekiel 33:7-9 -- "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved." God holds His people accountable for testifying to the truth and warning the wicked, whether they choose to hear or not. Why does God give us this burden of responsibility? "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die?'" (Ezekiel 33:11) God has called us on a challenging mission of love. What could be more unloving than watching people head down the path of ruin and death while saying nothing? In an effort to appease sinful society, some Christians have accepted clever, sophisticated arguments which seek to nullify God's Laws, though the Bible makes them very clear and easy to understand. In this way, some Christians have sought to abrogate their eternal responsibility and life purpose as Christ's Ambassadors. However, God is against those who muddy the clear waters of His unchanging word to suit their own fears, desires or self-righteous egos.

8. Ezekiel 33:11 – "Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die...?" God loves all people and does not want any to die in sin. Is this hard to understand? God does not want to see anyone perish. So He tells his ambassadors (true Christians) to "Say to them" that they need to repent.

9. Ezekiel 33:12 – "And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when

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he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins.” Your good deeds don’t make up for you bad deeds. Righteous can only come from Jesus Christ. Trusting in human goodness is an illusion that leads to death (v13).

10. Ezekiel 33:14-16 – “Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.”

- Grace is given with the expectation of genuine repentance, restitution when possible, and continued obedience. Grace is not an opportunity to continue to freely dishonor God and hurt people without consequences to you. On the contrary, grace raises the standard for and expectation of love and faithfulness to God.

- Repentance results in a changed life.

11. Ezekiel 33:30-33 -- “As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, ‘Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. When this comes—and come it will! — then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

- God judges those who enjoy hearing His word but never practice it.

- The people did not want to obey God, they just wanted blessings from God – “their heart is set on their grain.” When people approach God and His word in a self-centered way, treating God as their genie in a bottle, they will be judged by God. We serve God; He doesn’t serve us.

- A love relationship with God is more than loving His word; it is obedience to His word.

12. Ezekiel 34:2-10 – God expects leaders of His people to sacrifice personal needs for the good of the people.

13. Ezekiel 34:4 – “The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.” God’s expectations for religious leaders are described here – it requires much, much more than an inspirational sermon.

14. Ezekiel 34:15, 16 – “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.” Jesus said, He is the Good Shepherd. Follow Jesus, and lead others to Jesus. He is the only Shepherd we should follow.

15. Ezekiel 34:17-19 -- “As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good

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pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?" Again, when we put our spin on God's word, adding to it, taking away from it, misinterpreting it, misapplying it, or distorting it in order to make it more appealing, we are muddying the waters, we ruin the terrain and muddy the waters. In a court of law, a witness takes an oath to tell the truth, the WHOLE truth, and NOTHING but the truth – anything else is a lie. I'm afraid we are all guilty of muddying the waters, justifying it as wisdom and tact in our relationships with others.

16. Ezekiel 34:30 – "And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God." God's presence with His people is the primary mark of His love relations with them.

17. Proverbs 17:3 – "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts." The Lord uses circumstances to test your heart. How has God tested your heart?

18. Proverbs 17:6 -- "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers." Christian parents should have a plan for generations of faithfulness.

19. Psalm 134:1 – "Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord!"

- God seeks worshippers whose worship never stops, who worship in spirit and in truth 34/7, 365.

- Make sure you go to church tomorrow.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Nov 18: Today, take some time to evaluate your success in your life's mission of serving as Jesus ambassador -- proclaiming Jesus, representing Him, and leading others to Him. Have you warned everyone who needs to be warned? Have you ministered to everyone God has placed in your life who need ministry? Recommit today to greater fidelity in service to God. Seek today to represent only Him and not yourself. (Ezekiel 33)

DBRP - WEEK 46, Day 5, Friday, 16 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+30%2C+31%3B+pro+16%3B+John+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 16 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 30:8, 19, 26 – "Then they will know that I am the Lord." God's ultimate aim is to glorify Himself. Everyone will eventually know Him as their Lord and Savior through Jesus or as their ultimate Judge.

2. Ezekiel 31 – God will destroy all pride which is an affront to His Sovereignty and Majesty.

3. Proverbs 16:2 – "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit." We tend to believe our own lies about our motives and intent. We often tell ourselves we are doing something for God or for others when we are really being self-serving. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" God knows your heart completely as well as the truth of your motives. Pray that God will reveal your heart to you and give you the strength through the Holy Spirit to turn your selfishness to selflessness.

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4. Proverbs 16:3 -- "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." The way to get what you want is to want what God wants. When you are working on God's plan, your plan cannot fail. It is only when you go your own way and start working for yourself that you have to start worrying. God has given you just enough time, energy, and capability to do what He wants you to do. If you find yourself harried, stressed out and worn out, you are probably doing things God never asked you to do.

5. Proverbs 16:6 -- "By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil." Our iniquity is atoned for by the blood of Jesus Christ who displayed perfect sacrificial love for us. We demonstrate our appreciation of the grace we have received by emulating the love and faithfulness of Jesus.

6. Proverbs 16:20 -- "Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." God gives great blessings to the person who not only will carefully study God's word but who will also trust God enough to obey His word.

7. Proverbs 16:26 -- "A worker's appetite works for him; his mouth urges him on." God knows that a little want is good for you. A life of ease and comfort will ruin a person. Stay hungry and drive on!

8. Proverbs 16:32 -- "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." The most difficult battle to fight is the inner battle, the struggle with self. If you have self-control, you are stronger than any warrior. If you can control your emotions in relationships and learn how to engage people in a positive and effective way, you will be a very influential person. Remember, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), not merely a product of human force of will. You can't overcome self with self alone.

- Proverbs 25:28 -- A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

- Acts 24:25 -- And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."

- 1 Corinthians 7:5 -- Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- 1 Corinthians 7:9 -- But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

- 1 Corinthians 9:25 -- Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

- Galatians 5:22-24 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

- 1 Timothy 2:9 -- likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,

- 1 Timothy 2:15 -- ...continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

- 2 Timothy 1:7 -- for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

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- 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

- 2 Peter 1:5-8 – “Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. John 13:14 – “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Jesus died on a cross for sinners, including you. He commanded that those who would follow Him must deny self and take up their cross for others, suffering the sins of others, humbly, as their servant, that they might know Jesus or know Him better.

10. John 13:16, 17 -- “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Jesus, though the Son of God, completely humbled himself and made himself a total servant to those undeserving around Him, even to the one who would betray him. Of Jesus, the Bible says, He “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:7, 8) The Bible calls us to “Have this mind among ourselves,” and Jesus said that we are blessed, not by knowing what Jesus did, but by DOING what Jesus did. Christ died for sinners; are we better than He, our Master? When we accept God’s mercy and grace for salvation and then demand justice from those who have sinned against us, we are seeking to make ourselves worthier of justice than the Son of God. This must never be considered. How could we possibly demand more rights than Jesus? If He was willing to die for sinners, we certainly must do the same. Have you ever said to someone, “I’m not your servant!”? Christians can never say something like that or think that way. “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14) Note from the life of Judas that being with God’s people, participating in the activities of God’s people, and fellowshiping with God’s people does not make you a Christian -- “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.... It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” Judas was among the twelve, participating in Jesus’ activities, yet the son of perdition. Yet, Jesus never kicked Judas out of the group or even fired him as the money handler (though Judas stole from the resources). Likewise Jesus does not filter the fake, self-serving, self-righteous ‘Christians’ from the churches. Be certain that you are worshipping Jesus in spirit and in truth. Christians follow Christ in obedience, from the heart, denying self, taking of the cross in relationships, and modelling Jesus sacrificial, selfless love to unloving people.

11. John 13:20 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” You are God’s presence on earth for other people.

12. John 13:33-38 – “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all

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people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’ Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.’ Peter said to him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.’”

- Love led Jesus to the cross and then to the Father. Love is willing to die for the beloved. A disciple's love imitates Christ's love.

- “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Does your radical love for others make it clear to all that you are a follower of Jesus rather than just another person who says that they are a Christian but who acts just like everyone else?

- When you were saved, you were saved into a family, a spiritual family of God's people, the church. Jesus said that the true church would be recognized by the love shown between its members. This family would be so full of genuine love flowing from the Head, Jesus that the world would have to take notice. Of course how could you expect anything else from the Bride of Christ but remarkable love? Is your community overwhelmed by the remarkable love flowing from your church? Do you have a genuine love for the people in your church, even the obnoxious, immature, annoying people? These are the people that really test your willingness to love which is one of the reasons God commands you to fellowship and worship with them. The quality of your relationships with the people within the family of God reveals much about the quality of your relationship with God – they go hand-in-hand.

- Hebrews 10:25 -- Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

13. John 13:37, 38 -- “‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.’” We cannot obey God within our own power; we must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. When we start trying to serve God solely from our own knowledge and strength, we will fail. God will use that failure to humble you and remind you to rely on Him. Remember, what God wants you to do is beyond human ability, because He wants to reveal Himself to the world, not reveal you. You can do ALL things, but only THROUGH CHRIST who strengthens you, and only the things God wants you to do through His power. All other ‘things’ are really no things at all, just meaningless efforts of futility, filthy rags no matter how much you declare them good deeds.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Nov 18: Display the same type of mercy, grace, and love to others that Jesus displayed on the cross for you. Deny yourself today, and take up your cross for others. Forgive today the way you want God to forgive you. Don't try to make yourself better than God by demanding better treatment from others than Jesus did for you. If He, the Son of God, was ready to forgive unconditionally and suffer for sinners, what right do you have to do otherwise? (John 13)

DBRP - WEEK 46, Day 4, Thursday, 15 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+28%2C+29%3B+pro+15%3B+John+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 15 November 18:

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1. Ezekiel 28:2 -- "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods....'" When pride causes us to trust in ourselves or anything else rather than God, we face judgment. When a nation thinks they don't need God anymore, it's end is near.

2. Ezekiel 28:16 -- "In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned." When you do business with the world for the sake of personal gain, you lose your holiness and step outside of the Lord's protection.

3. Ezekiel 28:17 -- "You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor." Foolishness is serving self rather than God. Foolishness chooses riches over righteousness. Foolishness seeks praise rather than seeking to be praiseworthy. Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"

4. Ezekiel 29:6 -- "Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD." God will prove His Sovereignty to all nations. God's will is to glorify Himself. People and nations are either with Him or against Him.

5. Proverbs 15:8, 9 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness."

- God is not interested in the religious activities of those who are merely seeking blessings for themselves with no real desire to serve and obey God wholeheartedly.

- Everything comes from God, belongs to God, and is controlled by God. Man's self-confidence and self-reliance are an illusion.

6. Proverbs 15:16, 17 -- "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it." You cannot get for yourself anything better than what God intended for you. When you are committed to walking with the Lord, He will give you what is best for you rather than what you want; but God often gives the unfaithful what they want, along with the consequences, as a form of discipline or judgment. It is hard when God tears down your idols in order to remove your distractions from Him, but it is devastating when God turns someone over to their idols. If you choose to pursue what you want instead of what God intends, you will only find sorrow and unfulfillment.

7. Proverbs 15:24 -- "The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath." Everyone is either on the right path or the wrong one. Only one path leads to God, and it is "narrow." Jesus Christ is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." No one gets to God but through Him. The Jesus path is the only path. If you don't really believe that, you not only have no witness, the Bible says to are an anti-Christ.

8. John 12:3-8 -- "Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, 'Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my

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burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.” God sees beyond words and deeds, judging the motives and the hearts of people. Judas claimed concern for the poor for selfish reasons. From his selfish, unloving position, he criticized Mary’s act of worship as impractical and wasteful. However, Jesus understood the intentions of her heart, to worship him. When Jesus says to Judas, “the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me,” I think he is saying much more than just “you can take care of the poor later.” I think he is saying that the poor remain, not because a lack of resources, but rather because a lack of love, love first for God and then for others. Mary understood that love starts with God and flows from God. We have no real love to give others unless we are abiding in Christ, and the love of Christ is flowing through us. Many people give to charities, not to love God and others, but rather to feel righteous or to get some sort of credit. How many charities have you seen named after a person rather than named to glorify God who provides everything? These self-centered philanthropic activities do provide some relief to people in need, but not only does the self-centered giver remain without “credit” from God, but these superficial efforts fail to address the root cause of the issues causing the need – sin. The heart of man’s problem is the problem with man’s heart.

- 1 Samuel 16:7 -- But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

- 2 Chronicles 6:30 -- then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways, for you, you only, know the hearts of the children of mankind,

- Proverbs 21:2 -- Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.

- Isaiah 29:12-14 -- And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot read. And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”

- Jeremiah 11:20 -- But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.

- Matthew 15:19 -- For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

- Mark 7:21 -- For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

- Romans 10:10 -- For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

- 1 Corinthians 4:5 -- Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

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- 2 Corinthians 5:12 -- We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.

- Ephesians 6:5-7 -- Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,

- Hebrews 4:12 -- For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- Hebrews 10:16 -- "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"

9. John 12:4-11, 13 -- "But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.... So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

- Many, many people are involved in "Christian" ministry for selfish reasons, even though they quite often have not admitted it to themselves. For this reason, C.S. Lewis advised friends to not make ministry a source of livelihood. Be certain that your acts of ministry are in no way motivated by selfishness such as a desire to feel good about yourself, to feel righteous, or to be noticed by others. Only God truly understands your motives because you even deceive yourself; but with humility, God can show you where you are not motivated by love alone.

- Selfish interests often blind us to God's interests.

10. John 12:26 -- "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."

- Jesus did not live life for himself, asking God to bless him along his personal journey. Rather, Jesus lived only for the Father's desires, plan, and will. Jesus did nothing unless the Father directly commanded him, and everything the Father commanded, He did. In Today's readings we see that every single word that came out of Jesus' mouth was commanded to him by the Father (John 12:49). This obedience was exemplified by Jesus at a very young age -- "'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'" If God is God (of course He is), and we are called to serve and glorify Him (as we are), and glorifying God is the purpose of our existence (which it is), how could we do anything but what the Father desires. Jesus was the perfect example, and commanded us to follow him as a faithful servant. So, what else in this world matters? However, today we read in both Ezekiel and John that pride gets in the way of our fidelity to the Lord. As described in Ezekiel, when we pursue our own paths for our own purposes and our own desires, we are putting ourselves before God and, in fact, calling ourselves god (Ezekiel 28:1-5). This self-worship is idolatry (Colossians 3:5) and putting a Christian spin on it does not change the truth of it. The Pharisees and those that followed them proclaimed their

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faith in God while they in fact refused to follow Jesus because they “loved praise from men more than praise from God (John 12:43).” Jesus warned that we cannot serve two masters. We are either about our Father’s business or pursuing the American dream. What is driving your actions today? What will you do today, what you think is best or what the Father has commanded? Whose words will you speak today, yours for the Father’s? In what will you place your trust, God or the economy and your job security? What will you fear today, God or man? What would happen if today we all boldly followed Christ in deed and no one or nothing else? See you on the battlefield.

- Many will talk about Jesus, but few will follow Him.

- Read this verse to know whether or not God will honor you.

11. John 12:37 – “Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him....” Miracles do not lead to faith.

12. John 12:41 – “Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.” Real prophets point to Jesus.

13. John 12:47-50 -- "If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

- Sinners are judged by the Father, not by the messenger who testifies to the truth of God's word and reveals sin through his testimony. Our job is to proclaim the truth, and we MUST point out sin and the need for salvation through Jesus Christ alone. The Father does the judging.

- Many struggle with how to reconcile these verses with the following: “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.” (John 5:22, 23) Also, consider John 9:39 – “Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.’” Christ came to bring salvation and restoration, to “proclaim the truth.” The Truth will stand as witness against all who reject His message when he returns to judge the living and the dead on the last day. This is better understood when we consider John 3:16 in context: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 Nov 18: Make your goal today to humbly serve Jesus and others today rather than yourself. Try to do nothing for personal gain. (John 12:6; Ezekiel 28)

DBRP - WEEK 46, Day 3, Wednesday, 14 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+26%2C+27%3B+pro+14%3B+John+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 14 November 18:

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1. Ezekiel 26:3, 5, 6 – “I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves.... For I have spoken, declares the Lord God. And she shall become plunder for the nations, and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”

- God will control nations, control nature, control circumstances, and control history to reveal Himself to the world.

- The nation that does not put God first and honor God as God will face the consequences of complete destruction.

2. Ezekiel 27:3 – “O Tyre, you have said, ‘I am perfect in beauty.’” Tyre had an extremely high opinion of itself in the midst of being condemned by God. The nation was completely out of touch with what God actually demands. Tyre truly had everything a nation could desire and was the product of the very best efforts people could put forward, but Tyre did not fear God. Because its foundation was ungodly, Tyre fell instantly like a house of cards. No doubt it had its mega-churches, luxurious cities, and mighty armies. Yet, in a blink of an eye, one of the greatest nations on the planet was left in ruins. This is a lesson for us. Our national motto remains, “In God We Trust.” Will America in its strength put its trust in God rather than economics, military strength, and ‘enlightenment’?

3. Proverbs 14:2 – “Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him.” What you do reveals how you really feel about God.

4. Proverbs 14:4 – “Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.” You have to get your hands dirty to get anything done. Someone has to be willing to do the dirty work.

5. Proverbs 14:8, 15 – “The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.... The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.” Wise people think carefully before they act.

6. Proverbs 14:14 – “The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.” God does not shield Christians from the consequences of their sin.

7. Proverbs 14:26 – “In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.” Only God can protect your family.

8. Proverbs 14:31 – “Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.” Generosity is an act of worship. The religious acts of the greedy person are unacceptable.

9. John 11:4 -- “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Since we cannot understand what God is doing, and since we view circumstances from a self-centered perspective, it is very easy for us to misinterpret what is happening to us and to begin to think that God is neglecting us or punishing us when bad things are happening. It is hard for us to imagine that “bad” things aren’t really “bad” but rather best.

10. John 11:5 -- “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.”

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- In perfect love, Jesus delayed, much to the dismay of those who loved Him. Because of His love, Jesus allowed Martha, Mary, and Lazarus to go through a terrible experience that God would be glorified through it all and also that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus could grow in a deeper, more enlightened, and more meaningful relationship with the Lord. To them, Jesus' delay may have appeared unloving, but yet they trusted in Him. Had it been up to Mary and Martha, they would have skipped this painful experience and would have missed out on what God had in store for them, but God responded to their pleas in a way that would give them what was best rather than what they desired. From our perspective, the pain of life does not make any sense, but how can we possibly understand what God has in mind: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD (Isaiah 55:8)." The question is, "How will we respond to painful circumstances, knowing that our perfect, loving Father is in control and has called us to serve as His instrument to Glorify Himself?" Can we be like Job who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him"? How will we respond to the circumstances the Lord puts before us today and the days to come? God will answer all of your prayers in a way that is better than you can imagine from your limited perspective. His goal is not to give you blessings. His goal is to bring you closer to Him. We don't live on blessings, we live on Jesus. Are we prepared to serve as God's instruments to glorify Himself regardless the personal cost?

11. John 11:14, 15 -- "Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'" Again, Jesus wants you to experience whatever you need to experience to know Him better. Trust Him and focus on Him rather than what He can give you. Your life is not about comfort, health, wealth, worldly success, or security; your life is about being one with Him. This is where He desires to take you, and if that is your goal, all things, whether seemingly good or bad, will be good.

12. John 11:21 -- "Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'" What emotions do you suppose were behind Martha's words? It takes great faith to trust God in His apparent silence or delay while going through life crisis. It takes great faith to believe in God's unconditional, perfect love and not to start blaming Him. No doubt Mary and Martha had their doubts, but they maintained hearts responsive to the Lord. They were probably like the man who said to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief (Matthew 9:24)!"

13. John 11:25, 26 -- "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" If you really believe this, it changes your whole outlook on life and all of your priorities.

14. John 11:27 -- "She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'" Jesus put Martha through life crisis to take her to the next level, to take her from head knowledge to heart knowledge, to make her faith real by giving her an opportunity to personally experience the Truth of God rather than to just rely upon teachings. Martha was going to see first-hand the power of God in her life; no longer would her faith rely on stories and the testimony of others. She was about to become a true witness. You won't grow in faith unless you step out in faith, unless you place yourself, or are placed, in situations when you can truly see God work. God will not let you stay where you are in your relationship with Him. You will either step out in faith to truly experience Him, or He will push you out through circumstances that He will orchestrate for your benefit and for His glory.

15. John 11:32, 33 -- "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

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- How differently do you think Mary, Martha, and Lazarus felt about Jesus after Lazarus was raised from the dead? But Jesus wasn't just using this situation to draw those three closer to Him, he was using their situation to bring glory to God before a watching world -- "Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him." (John 11:45) It takes great faith to believe that God's delay is always for a greater good, a greater purpose that I cannot understand. But in faith we bring glory to God while He draws us closer and closer to Him.

16. John 11:35 – "Jesus wept."

- One of the shortest verses in the Bible is one of the most powerful. Through it all, God Himself has great compassion for you because of His perfect love for you. Tied for shortest verse in the Bible is Thessalonians 5:16 "Rejoice always." These two short verses have much to tell us.

17. John 11:39, 40 – "Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?'" Jesus has control over science and nature and uses them to reveal Himself.

18. John 11:41, 42 – "And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.'"

- What God does in your life is ultimately not about you but about God and His purpose of reconciliation in the world. God's ultimate intent is not to give you a better life on earth but to glorify Himself and conform you to Christ-like character. Your goal should be His goal.

- Jesus saw His public prayers as an important testimony to others.

19. John 11:43 -- "Lazarus, come out." The blessings of God always require our instant, willing obedience to His commands.

20. John 11:45, 46 -- "Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done."

- Jesus Christ will always be divisive. Everyone will pick a side, but no one stands in the middle. It is either all about Jesus or not at all about Jesus. Anyone who says they are Christian but don't surrender all to Him are hypocrites.

- Jesus' incredible miracle divided the crowd, some believed and some didn't. Miracles cannot change the heart, though many claim their disbelief comes from a lack of evidence of God. Belief is not a knowledge issue, it is a heart issue. However, the chief priests and Pharisees only saw Jesus as a threat to their earthly position (John 11:48).

21. John 11:54 – "Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples."

- Those who reject Jesus will not see Him, experience Him, or have an appreciation for what they are missing. Jesus is with His disciples in obscure locations.

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- Had Jesus desired political power or power within the religious institutions, this would have been His opportunity to claim a position of leadership, yet He did the opposite of what most people would do, He withdrew. His goal was to glorify the Father and the Kingdom of God, not to build a kingdom on earth that would help people get the things they wanted that were mere substitutes for God.

22. John 11:57 – “Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.” The religious leaders wanted Jesus arrested. What does this say about the dangers of church politics?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Nov 18: Today, trust God with your adversity. Instead of viewing it as 'bad', consider how God is answering your prayers in a better way to bring you closer to Him. In your adversity, seek Jesus rather than just His blessings. You will receive the ultimate blessing -- Him. (John 11)

DBRP - WEEK 46, Day 2, Tuesday, 13 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezek+24%2C+25%3B+pro+13%3B+John+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 13 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 24:13, 14 – “On account of your unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you. I am the Lord. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord God.” God gives people the opportunity to be cleansed of their sins, with Him doing for them what they cannot do for themselves, but if they continue to reject His free gift of salvation, He will judge, and when He decides to judge, He will not relent.

2. Ezekiel 24:16 -- “Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke.” God may call us to go through terrible pain and suffering for His purposes.

3. Ezekiel 24:18 – “So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.” The purpose of your life is to glorify God. Eventually, we will be called to glorify God in death, but from this perspective, death is not bad but an opportunity. Of course, Christians understand that death is the beginning of an eternity with God.

4. Ezekiel 25:3 – “Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God: Thus says the Lord God, Because you said, ‘Aha!’ over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when they went into exile....” Just because a person does not choose to believe in God doesn’t mean that they aren’t still responsible to God. God will hold unbelievers accountable for their acts against God’s people.

5. Ezekiel 25:5, 7, 11, 14, 17 – A nation that does not know God in love will meet Him in anger.

6. Ezekiel 25:6 – “For thus says the Lord God: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel....” Joy over another’s misfortune is sin.

7. Ezekiel 25:11 – “...and I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they will know that I am the Lord.” A nation’s military strength makes no difference when God chooses to judge.

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8. Ezekiel 25:14 – “And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord God.” The fall of a nation is a result of God’s anger.

9. Ezekiel 25:15 -- “Thus says the Lord God: Because the Philistines acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity....” Harboring hatred is sin.

10. Ezekiel 25:16 – “...therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the rest of the seacoast.” God intends the defeat of a city to send a message to all the powerful nations of the world.

11. Proverbs 13:7 – “One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.” What you really are eventually reveals itself. It matters little what you say; what matters is what you really do, and from what motivation you do it.

12. Proverbs 13:13 – “Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.” God’s word is not hard to understand. What a person does with God’s word determines consequences. What you choose to do with God’s word is life defining.

13. Proverbs 13:21 – “Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.” Sinners don’t fall into disaster, they are chased by disaster, and they will be caught.

14. John 10:1 -- “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.” There are not many paths to God. Only through Jesus is there salvation. Anyone who proclaims any other message is a liar.

15. John 10:1-5, 14 – “He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.... I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”

- Preachers who point to anything or anyone but Jesus are liars, thieves, and robbers. True followers of Jesus follow Him only, they know His teachings and are not deceived by false teachings. Those who truly know Jesus respond to Him and follow His word in obedience. They are protected from false teachers because they know the “voice” of Jesus and can easily recognize an imposter or thief. How well do you know God’s word and the “voice” of Jesus?

- Do you follow Jesus because you know Him and his voice? Do you follow his commands alone, or are you enticed by robbers and thieves?

16. John 10:7 -- “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” Jesus is not only the Way, the Truth, and the Life, He is the door. Through Him you have access to the Father.

17. John 10:11, 12 – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.” Everyone else might abandon you,

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but Jesus never will. He has given His life for you when you didn't deserve it. If you desire to love Jesus, even very imperfectly, He will not forsake you.

18. John 10:14 – "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." Jesus' sheep follow Him.

19. John 10:19 – "There was again a division among the Jews because of these words." There are few things you can say today more divisive than "Jesus is the only way." Try it and see. Are you willing to proclaim this message?

20. John 10:25 – "The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep." Jesus did works in His Father's name, and He wasn't accepted by most. Today, most Christians do not generally attach Jesus's name to their works because they don't want to be rejected by people. Christians sanitize most of what they do from the name, Jesus. Even when giving to charity or committing acts of kindness, often they do not do it in the name of Jesus but rather say nothing, take credit themselves, or do it in the name of an organization. The two most popular charities are Doctors Without Borders and American Red Cross. These charities do not give in the Name of Jesus, but rather in the name of humanity.

21. John 10:25, 37, 38 -- "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." Do your actions reveal the power of the Holy Spirit within you so that it is undeniable?

22. John 10:27 – "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Obedience reveals God's true followers.

23. John 10:30 – "I and the Father are one." Our life ambition should be to be one with the Father and the Son. (see John 17)

24. John 10:38 – "...even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." Let your works be proof that you are a follower of Jesus and have the Holy Spirit within you.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 Nov 18: John 10:38 – Today, let your works be proof that you are a follower of Jesus and have the Holy Spirit within you.

DBRP - WEEK 45, Day 6, Saturday, 10 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze17-19%3B+pro+10%3B+psalm+139>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 10 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 17:18 – "He despised the oath in breaking the covenant, and behold, he gave his hand and did all these things; he shall not escape." God expects His people to keep the promises they make to both believers and unbelievers.

2. Ezekiel 18:4 – "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die." God holds everyone accountable for their own actions.

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3. Ezekiel 18:20 – “The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son.” Neither sin nor salvation are transferable from one generation to the next. Your relationship with God is between you and God.

4. Ezekiel 18:20-25 -- “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.”

- People are often judged by others because of their family backgrounds, and many social groups hate each other because of conflicts that occurred between past generations. God does not accept this and demands that we hold people accountable for their actions only.

- Chapter 18 is all about accountability. We are all responsible for our own actions; we all stand before Judgment alone, and there are no excuses. Stop blaming heredity, environment, chemicals, or circumstances for your sins. Repent, have a changed heart. Remember too that it is not how you start but how you finish that counts. Don't worry about your past sins, and be sure to NEVER return to them. Don't worry about what is not in your control (uncontrollable circumstances), but only what is in your control – your response to circumstances. Be faithful with today, one day at a time.

5. Ezekiel 18:23, 32 -- "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?... For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

- God wants all sinners to repent. He has commanded you to send that message.

- God does not desire that anyone should suffer or be lost. He does not reject men, men reject Him. People suffer the consequences of sin and then blame God for it or even deny His existence – “If there were a God, He wouldn't let these things happen.” We suffer in a world torn apart by sin, and we add to the pain by sinning ourselves. Some argue that God is not just while they themselves could not stand before His righteous judgment. In fact it is only by God's mercy that we don't face His total judgment. As the Bible says, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) In today's readings from Ezekiel God says, “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now..., Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just...? Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life.... Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.” Again, the Bible says, “For

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God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

-- Revelation 3:20 -- Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

6. Ezekiel 18:27, 28 – “Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.” Both in the Old Testament and New Testament, people had a hard time accepting the fact that God offers complete forgiveness to all people equally, regardless of how terribly they have sinned and regardless of how late in life they accept His forgiveness. It doesn’t seem fair to the person who has diligently sought to please the Lord his whole life that a person who has sinned greatly his whole life could, in the end, receive the same forgiveness. However, God wants all people to be saved. His desires should be our desires. We should rejoice when the wicked are saved.

7. Proverbs 10 – The Bible warns of the results of violence (6, 11), the consequences of ungodly gain (16, 24), the results of hard-headedness (8, 13-14, 17), the dangers of talking too much (19), and the importance of obedience (25).

8. Proverbs 10:4, 5 – God does not intend to use His power to make up for your lack of effort.

9. Proverbs 10:22 – “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.” If your riches have added sorrow, they were not acquired God’s way.

10. Proverbs 10:23 – “Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.” Wise people mourn sin; they don’t make light of it.

11. Proverbs 10:25 – “When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever.” One thing is certain in life: the tempest is coming, everyone will go through it, and how you go through it reveals the strength of your faith.

12. Psalm 139:1, 2 – “O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.” Again, the Bible reiterates that God judges your heart and your thoughts. You should take your thoughts as seriously as God does. Many misunderstand that fact that Jesus was without sin and yet the Bible says He was tempted by Satan in the desert. What they fail to understand is that Jesus was externally tempted by Satan, not internally tempted by His own wicked thought. Satan tried to get Jesus to change His desires, but Jesus only sought the will of the Father. What do you desire today?

13. Psalm 139:7 – “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?” Do you know the answer to this question?

14. Psalm 139:13, 16 – “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.... Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” How do you think God feels about the unborn child?

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15. Psalm 139:17 – “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!” Are God’s thoughts precious to you? Compare your thoughts to God’s thoughts.

16. Psalm 139:23 – “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!” Make this your prayer today.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 Nov 18: Today’s verses emphasize faithfulness in thought. Search your thoughts today to see where your heart is not aligned to God’s thoughts. Pray that God will search your heart and make His thoughts precious to you and His thoughts your thoughts. (see today’s readings)

DBRP - WEEK 45, Day 5, Friday, 9 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze15%2C+16%3B+pro+9%3B+john+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 9 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 15 -- Those who choose to build their own kingdoms on earth rather than to faithfully serve the Kingdom of God are good for nothing. The Bible repeats this over and over again. The whole Book of Ecclesiastes is a warning that all the people do for themselves rather than for God is meaningless, utterly meaningless. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Note that Jesus didn't say you can do some things -- He said you can do NOTHING. Many Christians wear themselves out trying to build their own kingdoms, missing what God has in store for them. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, fell victim to the deceit of earthly pursuits, and at the end of his ultimately unsuccessful life he said, "The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:11, 12) Our sole (or soul duty) is to serve God. Anything else is more than a waste of time, it is destructive.

2. Ezekiel 16:15, 16 -- “But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his. You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore.” God describes His relationship with His people as a marriage and describes sin as adultery. It starts when pride creeps in, and we become selfish, self-centered, and self-righteous; we start to believe that the talents, abilities, resources, and opportunities God gave us are from ourselves and for ourselves. We seek to please ourselves more than we seek to please God, and we are motivated by our own desires, passions, and emotions rather than by the Holy Spirit.

3. Ezekiel 16:15, 30-34 -- “How sick is your heart, declares the Lord God, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute.... Yet you were not like a prostitute, because you scorned payment. Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings. So you were different from other women in your whorings. No one solicited you to play the whore, and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.”

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- How differently does God describe sin than your church describes sin? While we tend to make light of sin, God describes it in the worst way, comparing it to unimaginable whoring and sin deserving of death. To fully appreciate the grace offered through Jesus, we must fully understand the severity of our sin and the nature of the One against whom we have sinned. True love for Jesus makes unthinkable sin unthinkable again. How well does the church communicate these words today? When was the last time you heard your pastor or preacher use the word sin or the word repent?

- "How sick is your heart, declares the Lord God?" A good question to continually meditate upon as you grow in your appreciation for Jesus and His grace and as you grow in your desire to have His heart.

4. Ezekiel 16:20 -- "And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured." When we stop truly loving God and draw away from Him, we lose our ability and desire to truly love others. People become instruments for our own pleasure, and when they do not fulfill our perceived needs, we view them as obstacles to happiness and resent them. One of the first places love is lost is within the family, those closest to us to affect us the most. This is why so many marriages fail today and why so many kids lose the benefit of sacrificial parenting.

5. Ezekiel 16:22 -- "And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood." All sin is the product of forgetting the reality of our relationship with God and forgetting the mercy and grace we depend on.

6. Ezekiel 16:28 -- "You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied." Sin is a lack of satisfaction with God and with His provision in your life. We want more than what God desires for us.

7. Ezekiel 16:48 -- "As I live, declares the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done." God expects more from those who claim to know Him and follow Him. When a Christian sins like an un-believer, his sins are actually much worse than those of the unbeliever.

8. Ezekiel 16:49 -- "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." Sodom is most remembered for "sodomy" and the terrible sin of homosexuality. However, God points out that the root of that sin was pride, gluttony, and self-centeredness. In their prosperity, they forgot God and became lawless to the basest degree. This is now a popular verse within the homosexual community who claim that it implies that homosexuality was not really the issue that brought about God's judgment in Sodom (where we get the word sodomy) and Gomorrah. However, many, many other verses in the Bible, such as those found in Romans 1, reveal otherwise.

9. Ezekiel 16:59, 60 -- "For thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant." God's ultimate aim is reconciliation, and He has given us, His ambassadors, the mission of reconciliation. Reconciliation does not include acceptance of sin. We must reconcile with God on His terms, starting with repentance.

10. Ezekiel 16:60-63 -- "Yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed.... I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be

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confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord God." Despite our whoredom, sin deserving of death, God establishes a new, undeserved, marriage covenant with us that should leave us totally humbled, speechless, grateful, submissive, and obedient. To sin (whore) again should be totally unthinkable. What is your response to grace?

11. Proverbs 9:8, 9 -- "Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." Both the wise man and the scoffer make decisions based upon what they think is right and best, but the wise man does so humbly, remains continually introspective, continually judges his behavior from the plumb line of God's word, and is always willing to listen to the advice of other wise, godly people and learn.

12. Proverbs 9:17, 18 -- "'Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' But he does not know that the dead are there that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.'" The fool is always looking for a short cut and is driven by self-centered desires and emotions, lacking self-control and discipline, but the wise person is self-disciplined, self-controlled, and willing to make daily sacrifices for a future greater good.

13. John 8:1 -- "...but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." Interestingly, this sentence begins in the last chapter -- "They went each to his own house...." You may recall that in the last chapter, Jesus had delivered some hard teachings that most could accept, so they left Jesus. What Biblical teachings are you struggling with that have caused separation between you and God?

14. John 8:10, 11 -- "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

- I have often heard people living in sin refer to this story to justify their sin -- "Let him who is without sin... be the first to throw a stone at her," implying that, because we are all sinners, God accepts our sin, and if anyone speaks out against sin, they are just being judgmental. However, they never seem to mention Jesus' final words to the woman -- "from now on sin no more." This was a kangaroo court designed to trick Jesus into an improper judgment (John 8:6). But Jesus had already stated that he did not come to do away with or change the Law. (Mat 5:17) Jesus held the accusers accountable to the letter of the law, an accountability that would have actually demanded their executions: Where were the witnesses? Where was the adulterous man? When Jesus commands that the innocent throw the first stone, he is referring back to Deuteronomy 17:6, 7 -- "On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst." Also, Leviticus 20:10 is very clear -- "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, BOTH the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." The accusers were not following due process and were standing on deadly ground: "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil

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from your midst.” (Deuteronomy 19:15-19) I would submit that the accusers departed because they recognized their own guilt. What Jesus did not do is excuse the woman's sin, though he did not condemn her for it. Jesus never excused sin but rather commanded, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2). However there is a lesson for us here in that while we should challenge sin, we are all guilty and not in a position to condemn (judge) anyone -- only God can Judge (determine the sentence). Saved by grace, we can only testify to the truth graciously and compassionately; ignoring sin is not loving or compassionate as sin itself is contrary to love. Jesus was very clear: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.... Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.” (John 8:31-34) Jesus desires to set captives free from sin. We are Christ's Ambassadors.

- Jesus always calls us to repentance and a new life of obedience motivated by love.

15. John 8:24, 26, 28, 29, 38, 42, 49-55 -- "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.... I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.... I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.... I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.... I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word."

- The Book of James reminds us that even the demons believe in Jesus, but saving faith surrenders all to Jesus and follows Him. Jesus modeled the faith He expects from His disciples – walking in His authority, speaking only His words, doing only what Jesus commands, empowered by the Holy Spirit, no longer walking in the flesh or for self.

- We are not the judge of others; we simply declare God's word to the world under the authority of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We also bear witness to the activity of God in our lives as we live in obedience to Him. We bear witness to the God we know, not to a religion, and we honor God in word and deed.

16. John 8:34 – “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.’” If you have been saved, you have been freed from the bondage of sin and will no longer practice sin because of your genuine love of Christ and because the Spirit gives you self-control in love. You will still sin, but it won't be your ultimate desire or practice. Through the sanctification process, you will sin less and less. Ultimately, the first sin and the sin that inspires all other sin is the breaking of the Greatest Commandment -- "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27). None of us are perfected in this love and, therefore, sin daily and depend solely on God's grace through Jesus. However, this is our pursuit.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 Nov 18: Today's readings really emphasize the requirement for obedience that is motivated by genuine love for God. Focus your day on obeying God, but not out of duty but rather out of love. Search your heart, and where you find a lack of love, pray, pray, pray, and continue your attempt to obey from a right heart. The Lord wants your heart, not just your service.

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DBRP - WEEK 45, Day 4, Thursday, 8 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezek13%2C+14%3B+pro+8%3B+john+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 8 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 13:2, 3 -- "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: 'Hear the word of the Lord!' Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"

- There are many competing messages out there, many proclaiming to be "truth." There is only One Truth, and One Word. Anyone who is proclaiming anything other than Christ is proclaiming self-righteous fantasy that is cursed. Ezekiel was called by God to counter the false messages of his day with the word of God – so are you. How are you doing?

- Nations facing judgment have religious leaders who speak on behalf of God though God never spoke to them. Such false teachers can even use God's word out of context to send a message God never intended. As Christians, we must be very careful not to misappropriate God's word to bolster our own personal opinions. The Holy Spirit is required to rightly apply God's word to a particular situation.

2. Ezekiel 13:6, 7 – "They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the Lord,' when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, 'Declares the Lord,' although I have not spoken?" False prophecy and religion may be very popular and may make people feel good for a time, but ultimately it is powerless.

3. Ezekiel 13:9 -- "My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations." Those who falsely speak on behalf of God become enemies of God.

4. Ezekiel 13:10, 11 – "They have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash, say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall!" Peace is a popular and socially acceptable message, but there cannot be peace with God while sin remains unaddressed. Today, many preachers bring the 'feel good' message when people need to first feel bad, when people need to mourn and repent, turning to God for forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Those who are saved, are not merely saved from the earthly consequences of sin, they are saved from the wrath of a Holy God who can have nothing to do with sin. Sin is the wall which separates us from God. The popular preacher doesn't seek to tear down that wall but rather seeks to whitewash it -- clean it up, make it a non-factor. The message is one of cheap grace, converting the Bible into a self-help book for better living. We need to deal with our sin and the problem with our hearts.

5. Ezekiel 14:3,6, 7, 9 -- "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them?... Thus says the Lord God: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.... Anyone... who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, I will set my face against that man;... and you shall know that I am the Lord.... And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the Lord... will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel."

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- Idols are anything that come between us and God or that we rely on instead of God. False teachers lift up idols instead of lifting up Jesus Christ. False teachers promote themselves, another person, organizations, institutions, philosophies, ideas, etc. rather than Jesus Christ. While everyone is talking about politics, talk about Jesus.

- Your work, your family, your hobbies, your possessions, your plans, etc. can all be idols if they become the motivation for your decision-making, if they become your goal and your focus. In themselves, these 'created things' are neither good or bad, but when placed above God, they become bad for you. The love of God must be your motivation for every decision you make, and oneness with God must be your life goal and daily objective and focus. You were created for this purpose.

6. Ezekiel 14:4, 5 -- "I the Lord will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols." When you turn to God and seek a relationship with Him, He is going to deal with your idols. The Holy Spirit will challenge you to search your heart, discover your idols, and put them aside that your heart would be fully committed to the One True God, your source of life.

7. Ezekiel 14:10, 11 -- "And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike— that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord God." God will deal with the false teacher AND the person who listens to the false teacher because His goal is to let nothing or no one lead other people away from Him. If you remain focused on Jesus and God's word, you will not be deceived by the false teacher.

8. Ezekiel 14:13, 14 -- "Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord God." God punishes disobedience, and people are not saved by the righteousness of other people. But as God punishes a nation, He will deal with each person according to their own behavior.

9. Ezekiel 14:21 -- "How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!" God uses elements of His creation to punish people. The world sees all natural acts as merely the random product of scientific principles, seeing the will of God as a non-factor. Therefore, they scoff at the idea of judgment. The Christian realizes that God is the God of science and direct the course of all things according to His perfect will.

10. Proverbs 8:2 – "At the crossroads she takes her stand." At the crossroads of life, you will choose to listen to wisdom or folly. Both are available to anyone and everyone.

11. Proverbs 8:13 – "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil."

- Anyone with a right understanding of the Holiness of God, must hate evil. You cannot love God without hating evil, the thing He hates most. All sin hurts, destroys, and separates from the Holy God. Out of love, God cannot tolerate sin. If you tolerate sin, you lack true love. Today, our twisted world says that tolerance (of sin) is somehow a loving thing to do, and Christians are accepting that lie more and more.

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- In pride, people twist God's words in order to accommodate sin. This is the same trick used by Satan in the Garden of Eden – "Did God really say...?" Today churches are doing what the Bible expressly condemns, arguing that modern times require a new interpretation of God's truth. God will not tolerate that.

12. Proverbs 8:35, 36 – "For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death." God expects you to put forth the effort to diligently study His word to understand His truths. The wisdom of God is not just magically revealed to you.

13. John 7:7 -- "The world... hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil."

- Why does the world hate Jesus? Are you hated as Christ's Ambassador?

- Today many in the church have shied away from testifying against sin, because they have been led to believe that it is judgmental or unloving, and they feel that it will only alienate them from the world. Jesus did not shy away from calling out sin, and he knew the world would hate him for it. John the Baptist was beheaded because he exposed Herod's adultery, and of him, Jesus said that there was not greater man born of woman. One of the reasons sin is increasing so rapidly in our society today is because the church is largely silent. This should not be. We must testify against sin, but of course, we must do it from a position of love and genuine concern. We must do it to bring glory to God, not to ourselves, and we should never do it from a position of self-righteousness. We must approach those who are sinning with gentleness and grace. (1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 4:2; James 3:17)

14. John 7:8 -- "You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." Again, wisdom is knowledge rightly applied, and wisdom can only come from God. From their perspective, the disciples wanted Jesus to go to Judea that He would be glorified there. The purpose for their request seemed very good and reasonable. They had a good objective -- to reveal Jesus to as many as possible. However, Jesus understood the Father's ultimate plan that they could not perceive -- in God's plan, the timing wasn't right to do the good thing they desired. Timing mattered. Only God can tell His followers when and how to apply his word. The Holy Spirit must direct your path.

15. John 17:12, 13 -- "And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, 'He is a good man,' others said, 'No, he is leading the people astray.' Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him."

- Everyone will make a decision of eternal consequence on who they think Jesus is. However, as Christians, Ambassadors for Christ, what we can't do is remain silent about the truth of Jesus due to fear.

- Don't be deceived. It is fear, not tact, that causes people to not speak openly about Jesus.

16. John 17:16-18 -- "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood."

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- We don't seek to be the teacher but rather the messenger of the teachings of Jesus. We don't need to add to His teachings or defend them. Those who are seeking God will accept the message. Those who are not seeking God won't.

- Jesus was the First Ambassador of the Father and our model for our ambassadorship to Jesus. We don't represent ourselves in any situation, we represent Jesus, and this is a 24/7 job. We stand in the place of Jesus in any particular situation and communicate His will and desires. As Jesus said clearly, "The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory," and therefore speaks falsely. Don't show people what you know or how smart and moral you are. Show them Jesus. God shares glory with no one. We are not ambassadors of good ideas or morality. We are ambassadors of Jesus. People don't need to learn from you, they need Jesus. If you are simply trying to lead people to a more successful or moral life, you are misleading them. They need Jesus. Don't let fear cause you to compromise the message and replace Jesus with a moral principle.

17. John 7:24 -- "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." Again, appearances are always deceiving because what can be seen by our five senses does not reveal the spiritual realities of the situation, and spiritual understanding is not ascertained by human intellect but only through spiritual revelation which comes from God. Right judgment can only come from God, and we are only as right as we are united with God and attuned to His will.

18. John 7:26 -- "And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him!" Jesus was not afraid to speak the truth openly though His life was seemingly threatened by authorities.

19. John 7:28 -- "But I have not come of my own accord." You are in the right place when you went there because God told you to go there and not simply because that is where you thought you should go or where you wanted to go.

20. John 7:37 -- "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." Jesus is the source of life. There is no satisfaction outside of Him.

21. John 7:43 -- "So there was a division among the people over him." Though there is not real unity apart from Christ, Jesus is the great divider because everyone will choose either to follow Him or not.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Nov 18: Endeavor today not to be influenced in your decision-making by any substitutes for God, your own desires, or even your own intellect. Seek the will of God first in every decision you make. Consider carefully why you are doing what you are doing. What is your primary motivation? Don't be driven by mere fear, pride, ambition, or even duty. Be guided by the Holy Spirit and love for Jesus. Also, don't lose sight of your God-given mission today -- to bring others closer to Jesus. (see today's readings).

DBRP - WEEK 45, Day 3, Wednesday, 7 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze11%2C+12%3B+pro+7%3B+john+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 7 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 11:5 -- "For I know the things that come into your mind." The Greatest Commandment in the Bible is to love God with all your mind. God knows your thoughts and what you care about most. God knows whether or not you really place Him first.

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2. Ezekiel 11:8 -- "You have feared the sword, and I will bring the sword upon you, declares the Lord God." Those who disobey God out of fear or turn to something other to God for security will be turned over to their fears and see those fears come to fruition.

3. Ezekiel 11:12 -- "For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you." Today, Christians are deciding whose rules they will follow, God's rules or the rules of secular society and secular government. Choose wisely.

4. Ezekiel 11:16 -- "...though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them...."

- It's not national security you need to worry about but rather obedience to, and unity with, the One True Protector.

- Even in discipline, God protects His children with the goal of seeing them through the discipline to ultimately bring them closer to Him in accordance with His will.

5. Ezekiel 11:19-21 -- "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord God."

- The Spirit of God brings God's people closer to Him and closer to each other. A godly people have unity in Christ. Many people are calling for unity today, but unity around the wrong thing means everyone is wrong together and collectively doomed. The only unity that benefits is unity around Jesus. Often, even Christians will mistakenly attempt to make "unity" the goal rather than Christ, and they will attempt to unify around and organization, a charity, a political party, a business, an ideology, etc. Also, many Christians will water down or disregard God's commands in order to maintain unity within a church or parachurch organization. This too is idolatry and ultimately doomed. Unity must be around the unchanging Truth, Jesus Christ. Until people seek Christ first, disunity is guaranteed. Where you see disunity, someone (or everyone) is putting self before Jesus.

- God's people walk together, with Jesus, in God's commands. The ungodly will suffer the consequences of going their own way.

6. Ezekiel 12:2 -- "Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house." It's not that we can't understand God's commands, we just choose not to obey them.

7. Ezekiel 12:3 -- "You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house." God delays in judgment and continues to send His messengers that some might still repent and surrender to Him. People, though they have sinned greatly, have a choice to repent, but the choice is theirs and the opportunity to choose has a deadline.

8. Ezekiel 12:25, 28 -- "I am the Lord; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed.... the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord God." Regardless of what visionaries might say, God will do what He has promised, and His will stands as a definite. Your vision matters not at all if

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it is not aligned with God's will. The prayers of God's people are answered when they are praying for what God intends.

9. Proverbs 7 – As stated earlier, God describes sin against Him as adultery. Read Proverbs 7 with this perspective.

10. John 6:5, 6 -- "Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do." Jesus will put you in impossible situations to test your faith. You may have heard it said, "God will not ask you to do anything you are not capable of doing." This is not true. God will always ask you to do what you can't do so that you can see what He can do through you, building your faith in Him and revealing Himself to the world around you as others see the power of God in your life. It doesn't take faith to do what you know you can do. It takes faith to obey God when you know you can't. This is where you experience God.

11. John 6:15 – "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself." The people thought they needed a political leader; Jesus knew they needed a Savior. The same is true today. Jesus was not seeking political power but to glorify the Father on earth. The people wanted a king who would give them what they wanted on earth. Jesus came as King to call people to seek God's will rather than their own will, not to build for themselves kingdoms on earth but to serve the Kingdom of God.

12. John 6:19-20 – "When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.'" Jesus' presence should bring peace, not fear.

13. John 6:27 -- "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you."

- For what are you working? Many people are defined by their careers, their personal goals, or their accomplishments. You should be defined by Jesus.

- Observe how much Christian conversation to unbelievers is about how to receive the blessings of God on earth (security, prosperity, comfort, success, happiness, etc) rather than how to become one with Jesus Christ.

14. John 6:35, 36 -- "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe."

- It is spiritual nourishment that people need which comes only through Jesus. Obesity is a problem in America, though there is a spiritual famine in the land. We feed the hungry by giving them Jesus, the only Bread that brings life. Are we telling the starving about Jesus Christ, or are we pointing to other ways to get fed – religion, philosophy, self-help, politics, ethics, morals, values, positive mental attitude, personal finances, counseling, etc? Do we think that just because we call ourselves Christians that our "self-help" advice to others is any less offensive to the Father who has offered His Son as the only answer?

- Contrary to what some might say, seeing is not believing. Many people say they simply don't have enough evidence to believe in Jesus, but their problem is not a knowledge problem, it is a heart problem.

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15. John 6:37, 44, 45, 63, 65 -- "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.... It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.... This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." God chose you before you chose God. God took the initiative in your relationship with Him. Had he not, you would not have a relationship with Him. Life comes from the Spirit not from human effort. The fact that you were Chosen by God for eternal life should drive you to true worship, surrender, obedience, and love.

16. John 6:38 -- "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Jesus proclaimed that His life purpose was to do the will of the Father. This is your life purpose too. How are you doing?

17. John 6:40 -- "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." The will of the Father is to reconcile people to Him through Jesus that they would have eternal life with Him. You have been given this mission of reconciliation on earth. How are you doing?

18. John 6:44 -- "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Jesus proclaimed truth to the Pharisees, but they did not believe. He did not argue with them. You cannot convince someone to believe in Jesus who is not being convicted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Your job is to proclaim truth. You cannot control other's response to truth, and you should not let the response of scoffers discourage you – since you have been faithful.

19. John 6:45 -- "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." Again, being informed is not the same as being transformed. Not everyone who hears and sees believes.

20. John 6:61-65 -- "But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, 'Do you take offense at this?... It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'"

- Jesus spoke of His followers consuming His body as a spiritual metaphor, but most completely missed what He was saying, took it literally, and walked away, offended by the thought of cannibalism. Jesus explained that He was speaking on spiritual things, not physical things. He then called out this misunderstanding as an example of how people who are not empowered by the spirit cannot understand spiritual things. Jesus knew that many would not accept His words, but He spoke to them anyway. Proclaim the truth and let God do the rest.

- Are you withholding the Name of Jesus Christ from your daily conversations in order to avoid some sort of professional or social rejection? Do you think that it is wise to be "subtle"? More often than not, Christians justify cowardice as tactfulness. Better to be on the side of boldness. God, not us, determines who will accept Jesus. Do not miss your opportunity to say the Name today.

21. John 6:66-69 -- "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall

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we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'"

- To many Jesus' words were more than just hard to understand, they were downright offensive. However, Jesus' true followers were willing to walk with him even when they didn't understand; in fact, because they truly believed that Jesus is the "Holy One of God," they understood that walking with Jesus was the only real choice. It doesn't take faith to follow when it makes perfect practical sense to us; it does take faith to do or believe what doesn't seem to make sense. It is hard for us to understand when Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) It is also overwhelming to contemplate the implications of Jesus' statement, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." (John 6:44) You don't have to understand the truth to believe in the truth if you know the Truth, Jesus. If you really believed that salvation only comes through Jesus, how differently would you live your life? How would that change your priorities? If this truth hasn't given you a sense of urgency for spreading the Gospel, what does that say about what or, more importantly, who you really believe?

-- John 6:29 -- Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

-- John 6:40 -- For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

-- John 6: 47 -- Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

- "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." The only hope for our nation and for every individual is to turn or return to Jesus Christ; do not deceive by communicating any other message, no matter how "good" that other message might sound.

22. John 6:70 -- "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.'" Few people saw more of Jesus than Judas, yet Judas still rejected Jesus. All the Bible study in the world and all the religious activity in the world can't substitute for genuine faith that surrenders in trust and obedience to Jesus. In the end, Judas' religion was selfishly motivated, seeking personal gain rather than to truly love and honor Jesus. Search your heart to understand what you really want from Jesus. Do you want blessings and reward or simply Him?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 Nov 18: Today, search your heart and consider why you practice your faith. Are you seeking the blessings of Jesus or Jesus Himself? Do you want comfort and security or unity with God, a truly loving relationship with Him? If you are honest, you will see that you have mixed motives. Pray earnestly for a pure heart and wholehearted desire for Jesus alone. (John 6:70)

DBRP - WEEK 45, Day 2, Tuesday, 6 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+9%2C+10%3B+pro+6%3B+john+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 6 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 9:4 -- "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." This is the mark of God's

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people, also described in Revelation 14:1 -- "Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." These are they who are in the family of God, united with Jesus and the Father. These are they who stand for Jesus in opposition of the world and often suffer for it. These followers of Christ are contrasted with those who have chosen to live as members of the godless earthly kingdoms and have a different mark -- "Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.... If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath.... And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: 'Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.' And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." (Revelation 13:16, 17; 14:9, 10; 17:5, 6) At some point, every person must choose to follow God as a citizen of God's Kingdom or man and his kingdom. Those who choose to follow Jesus ultimately can have no partnership with the corrupt systems of this world and will have to stand in opposition. The Book of Revelation describes their ultimate fate -- "Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.... They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads." (Revelation 20:4; 22:4) Many Christians wait for the day when they will have to make some obvious and dramatic choice to either reject God or be persecuted by the world, not realizing that they have already made this choice and make it every day. Will you compromise today and partner with corruption in order to get paid, to have security, to have 'friends,' and to live comfortably without conflict, or will you stand for what is right today regardless the cost? Will identify yourself as a follower of Christ today or as something else -- an American, an employee of a particular organization, a member of a particular political party, etc? Will you put your life on the line to confront sin and proclaim the need for confession, repentance and salvation through faith in Jesus, as John the Baptist did? If you are Christian, you are an Ambassador for Christ, either an honorable one or a dishonorable one. As an Ambassador, you cannot represent two different entities.

2. Ezekiel 10:22 -- "Each one of them went straight forward." Followers of God walk straight paths, turning neither to the left or to the right. They are wholehearted and fully committed, not distracted by any temptation or worthless thing. None of us live this out perfectly, but this is the goal.

3. Proverbs 6:20-25 -- "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck.... Do not desire her beauty in your heart." Mothers and fathers should teach their kids the importance of the sanctity of marriage, and they should teach them God's word that their desire for Jesus would be a more powerful influence in their lives than their passions, emotions, and urges.

4. John 5:5, 6 -- "One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?'" Jesus noticed and supported the people everyone else had long forgotten.

5. John 5:7, 8 -- "The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.' Jesus said to him, 'Get up, take up

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your bed, and walk.” For a long time, a man diligently looked to tradition, human wisdom, and superstition for healing when all he needed to do was trust and obey Jesus.

6. John 5:10 -- "So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, 'It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.'" People get angry when Jesus confounds their understanding and operates outside of their rules, beliefs, and values.

7. John 5:14 -- "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." Jesus didn't just address physical needs, but more importantly, spiritual needs. Jesus healed but also warned against sin. Unity with God through obedience inspired by genuine love is the goal, not a more comfortable life apart from God.

8. John 5:17 -- "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working.'" Jesus did what the Father was doing; He wasn't on His own program but rather was following the Father's lead. Jesus' agenda was The Father's agenda. He only did what The Father told Him to do, regardless of what others thought He should do. Jesus didn't act on His own initiative. He joined The Father in the work that the Father was already doing. Had Jesus done ministry like everyone else, the invalid would not have been healed but only ignored. How do you decide where to minister?

9. John 5:17, 19, 20 -- "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working.... Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.... I can do nothing on my own.'"

- Abiding in the Father, Jesus could see what the Father was doing when others could not. Jesus had spiritual vision and was led by the Spirit, not by the flesh or emotion. Christians often get this backwards; we come up with a plan to serve God based upon our human perceptions and then we get very busy with self-generated religious activity and ask God to bless it. Then, we measure success of that activity based upon outward appearances and our mortal standards. If the activity meets our standard of success, we tell ourselves God is with us, and if it doesn't measure up to our standards, we tell ourselves that it wasn't God's will after all. Of course, God doesn't follow our lead, nor does He measure success or failure on our terms. God's thoughts are as far removed from our thoughts as the Heavens are from the Earth. But we get so caught up in our own activities that we miss, right in front of us, what God is actually doing. Today, don't just get wrapped up in your own activities and initiatives; wait on God's lead. Walk with eyes wide open today to see what God is doing. Pay attention to the circumstances God intentionally orchestrates before you today and seek to be wholly obedient to His word in your response. Look to minister to the needs of those around you today as you feel convicted. Look for where the Holy Spirit is convicting hearts around you and follow God's lead as you serve as Christ's Ambassador in the lives of others on whom He is working. How different will your day be if you only do what God is already doing?

- People are busier today than ever before, but how much of that effort is doing things God never asked them to do or wanted them to do. Even in religious activities, we can find ourselves doing what God had never asked. What will drive your day? Will you be about your business, someone else's business or God's business. Find out what God is already doing around you and join Him in that.

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10. John 5:23, 24 -- "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." You cannot love God and not Jesus. You cannot come to The Father apart from Jesus, His Beloved, one and only, Son. This reality doesn't make sense and is downright offensive to those who want to approach God on their own terms. God is God. Jesus is Lord and Savior.

11. John 5:30 -- "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me." Again, Jesus was informed solely by the word of God and walked in the word. Jesus is the embodiment of the word; He is The Word. When you walk in the word, you are walking with The Word.

12. John 5:39-42 -- "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you."

- The world does not need Biblical principles, ethics, morals, and values; the world needs Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior, the only Name by which people can be saved. Today, Christians are preaching "goodness" rather than Jesus, convincing themselves that they are evangelizing. If your message or "advice" doesn't focus on the Person of Jesus, you are preaching another gospel which is not gospel at all but rather anti-Christ. Yes, Bible principles "work" in a practical sense, even for the unbeliever, but they don't "save." We are called to be Ambassadors for Jesus Christ, not Ambassadors for the law, or for morality.

- People approach the Bible in many different ways but mostly in a self-centered fashion, hoping to gain a better life on this earth. To many, the Bible is an encyclopedia of do's and don'ts, a self-help book, or a history of lessons-learned. However, the intent of the Bible is to lead you to Jesus -- the whole Bible is a testimony about Jesus, provided so you would go to Him in real, personal, and obedient relationship. Don't just read the Bible for how to live your life. Read the Bible to unite with Jesus.

- "I do not receive glory from people." God doesn't need us to defend Him. Just share the truth with others, regardless of whether or not they want to hear it, and let God take care of the rest. You are just a messenger -- be faithful to that.

13. John 5:43, 44 -- "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?"

- Christians often say that they don't want to "beat people over the head with the name 'Jesus'" and close the door to future influence. So, they try to communicate biblical ideas in some vague way, as if that would inspire the unbeliever to pursue Jesus. And then there are others who tell themselves that they don't have to say anything but just "act like Jesus," again somehow inspiring the unbeliever to seek Jesus. Today, we have Christians who actually boast that they don't say the Name "Jesus" because they don't want to "lose their witness." What? Christians avoid their ambassadorship to save their jobs and social positions, and they tell themselves that they are "salt and light" in their positions because they hint at faith and because they are good people. Often, they are seeking to draw attention to their own "righteousness" rather than to the person of Jesus Christ. What would Jesus do (WWJD)? He would not

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hesitate to proclaim the truth and be rejected. No one comes to the Son but the Father draws him. It is a copout to suggest that too bold a stand for Jesus is unproductive. It is God who produces, not us. The mealy-mouthed Christian is just a coward, usually with a great excuse. If more Christians boldly proclaimed Christ, we might have more unemployed Christians but also perhaps another Great Revival in America.

- What motivates you to do what you do? What or who has the biggest influence on your life? Whose approval do you seek most? To whom do you go to seek comfort? Who do you fear most, God or other people? Jesus said that the mark of a true believe is that they seek the will, praise, and glory of God above all else, and that their actions are determined by God's word. Jesus was criticized by the religious leaders of His day for doing God's will in the face of what men demanded of him. These religious leaders where the same type that Jesus called hypocrites (Greek word for stage actor) because that acted holy to gain the praise of men. Their good deeds were the product of pride rather than the product of genuine love for God. One scholar comments on these leaders -- "they never were afraid of the judgment of God but only the judgment of people." We can be led into sin and deceit when we honor and fear men more than we honor and fear God. Ask yourself today whose approval you are seeking. Endeavor to care not primarily what men think but to be first and foremost concerned with God's perspective.

-- Matthew 6:24 -- No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 Nov 18: Don't just get busy doing stuff today, getting wrapped up in the worries of the world. Only do what the Holy Spirit leads you to do; do it immediately and exactly how the Holy Spirit leads. Remember that God's thoughts are not your thoughts. The Holy Spirit will always lead you off of your intended path to do what He wants you to do rather than what your simple minds thinks best in any particular situation. Where you are uncertain as to what to do, remain within the direction of God's written word. (John 5)

DBRP - WEEK 45, Day 1, Monday, 5 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eze+7%2C+8%3B+pro+5%3B+john+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 5 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 7:4 – “Then you will know that I am the Lord.” God’s goal for both justice and grace is to reveal Himself and glorify Himself – it’s not primarily about us.
2. Ezekiel 7:9 – “And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who strikes.” To know God as a judge without pity is to know Him too late.
3. Ezekiel 7:12-13 – “The time has come; the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all their multitude. For the seller shall not return to what he has sold, while they live. For the vision concerns all their multitude; it shall not turn back; and because of his iniquity, none can maintain his life.” God has a day when all commercial transactions cease.
4. Ezekiel 7:19 – “They cast their silver into the streets, and their gold is like an unclean thing. Their silver and gold are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord. They cannot satisfy their

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hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity.” On the day of God’s judgment, money is worthless – you can’t eat money.

5. Ezekiel 7:20 – “His beautiful ornament they used for pride, and they made their abominable images and their detestable things of it. Therefore, I make it an unclean thing to them.” Substitutes for God appear only when people create them. Mankind brought sin, rebellion, and disorder into the world and created the corrupt systems that lead to wars and strife. Only when mankind sought to create kingdoms for themselves rather than serve the KING in His creation did mankind suffer.

6. Ezekiel 7:23 -- “Forge a chain! For the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence.” When God judges a nation, its government no longer maintains order and security to protect its people.

7. Ezekiel 7:24 – “I will bring the worst of the nations to take possession of their houses.” When God judges a nation, property rights go out the window.

8. Ezekiel 7:26 – “They seek a vision from the prophet, while the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders.”

- A lawless and ungodly nation cannot hear from God.

- A nation that faces judgment has religious leaders that cannot truly understand God’s word or will though they make a living claiming that they do.

9. Ezekiel 7:27 – “The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.” God’s ultimate goal in judgment is that people would know that He is God, and that He is KING.

10. Ezekiel 8:6 – “And he said to me, ‘Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations.’” Sin separates people from God though they may continue to perform religious activities and do “good works.” They have the form of religion, but it is powerless.

11. Ezekiel 8 – In a godless nation, there is still religion and religious leaders who claim to be worshipping God. The godless nation still claims godliness, and the vast majority practice the accepted false religion of the day.

12. Ezekiel 8:12 – “Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of pictures? For they say, ‘The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.’” God’s people cherished things more than God and blamed God for being distant and unresponsive. God is not here to give you what you want. We cannot barter with God by performing deeds just so He will bless us. We must worship and serve God because that is what we were created to do. We are here for Him, not the other way around. When we are in a loving, obedient relationship with God, blessings come naturally, but blessings can never be the motivation for our worship – this is self-centered worship and is not love, not really worship.

13. Ezekiel 8:18 – “Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” God is deaf to the cries for help of the people who have departed from Him. These cries are all self-serving. God cannot reward the unfaithful.

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14. Proverbs 5:21 – “For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths.” Sin starts in the heart, and God knows your heart fully. Consider carefully your thought life. Before you committed any outward sin, whether seen or unseen, you first desired to do it, and that desire was already a sin, breaking the Greatest Commandment of loving God completely. As Jesus pointed out, sin starts in the heart. You may not have murdered anyone, but if, in your heart, you desired to, you are guilty of an even greater sin than murder, and that sin is failing to love the Almighty and other people as you should and as He commands. Putting your desires, even for a moment, above Him is cosmic treason against the One and Only Sovereign Lord. Don’t just repent of the sins you commit in secret, repent of your thoughts that dishonor God. Pray for a pure heart, and give thanks for God’s grace.

15. Proverbs 5:22, 23 – “The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.” Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” Obedience is a discipline – hence, the word disciple. Sinners lack self-control and self-discipline. They are not willing to make the small daily sacrifices each day required to invest in their spiritual growth and in their relationship with Jesus. They are defeated each day by their desires, emotions, and passions. Rather than being controlled by the Spirit, they are controlled by idols, created things that have become more influential in their lives than the Creator. What will control you today? What will be the source of your motivation? For what will you endeavor and why?

16. John 4:6 – “Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.” Jesus knew what it was to be tired, hungry, and thirsty. Although when he felt these strong human desires, He did not sin by becoming self-centered, irritable, or blind to the needs of others. He stayed on mission and continued to serve God and draw others towards God.

17. John 4:7 – “A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’” Jesus asked for service not to take care of Himself but to create a relationship that would be used to serve others. Samaritans were despised by Jews, but Jesus knew no prejudice.

18. John 4:10 – “Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’” Jesus identified Himself as “the Gift of God” who when served blesses far more than one could imagine.

19. John 4:13, 14 – “Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” Jesus satisfies the root of all needs by bringing people to the source of Life. Jesus said, “I am the... Life.” If you have Jesus, you are satisfied beyond measure. If you feel dissatisfaction, it is a relationship and perspective problem.

20. John 4:18 – “For you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.” To reunite people with God, Jesus had to reveal to people the sins that separated them from God. He had to call them to repentance. God forgives sin, but He must be honored in obedience and faithfulness.

21. John 4:23, 24 -- “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

- True worship is empowered by the Spirit and revealed in tangible examples of obedience and selfless love. God made us human to worship Him in the physical realm. We translate spiritual truth into

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physical, tangible reality on earth. We don't just love the Lord with all our "heart and with all our soul;" we also love Him with all our physical "might" or strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5) We are not called to simply "fear the Lord" conceptually, but also to "walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13) A true worshipper of God does His will, and God listens to Him. (John 9:31) True worshippers present themselves to God as living sacrifices, "holy and acceptable to God." (Romans 12:1) What you do reveals what you truly believe and care about. God is seeking those whose worship is true.

- Most people worship "what [they] do not know." True worshippers "know" God, not just about God, and worship in truth by doing what He commands.

22. John 4:26 – "Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'" Some false teachers claim that Jesus never said He was the Messiah. Let this verse and the one preceding it settle the matter.

23. John 4:34 – "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.'"

- Jesus was not controlled by human desires and passions but rather by His love for the Father. His motivation behind all of His words and deeds was to selflessly serve the Father. When He got uncomfortable, His words and deeds didn't change. He was just as loving under any condition. How about you? What motivates you to do what you do? What does it take to change your attitude?

- "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." This should also be our "daily bread."

24. John 4:39 – "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony." The woman's natural response to her life changing experience with Jesus was to tell others. If you have a hard time telling others about Jesus, you might want to question what sort of relationship you really have with Him. She didn't just know 'about' Jesus; she knew and experienced Jesus personally. Do you have knowledge about Jesus or knowledge of Jesus? Have you been practicing religion rather than walking in relationship? Bible knowledge informs, but Jesus transforms. A genuine encounter with Jesus changes everything.

25. John 4:42 – "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.'" A testimony must come from first-hand knowledge, not second-hand knowledge. Witnesses can only testify to what they have seen and heard personally, anything else is hearsay. If your testimony is weak, it can only be because your experience with Jesus is limited. Pray that God will reveal Himself to you more and more each day, but don't pray pridefully. You must approach God humbly.

26. John 4:42 -- "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." Someone else may have led you to Christ and may have discipled you from God's word, but maturity demands that you hear from God yourself through His word empowered by the Holy Spirit.

27. John 4:48 -- "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

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- God's judgement will come as a thief in the night because it will not be preceded by signs and wonders so that those who do not seek God and have faith will not be aware. God's word has been provided already and is very clearly understood. What people do with God's words without signs and wonders reveals the condition of their hearts.

- Sin causes people to ask God to prove Himself to them.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 Nov 18: Today, share your personal testimony with those you know. If this is hard for you, search your heart to understand why. Are you more concerned about how others might view you than you are excited about sharing Jesus with anyone who might listen because you cannot contain your love for Him? (John 4:39-42)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 7, Sunday, 4 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezek+5%2C+6%3B+pro+4%3B+psalm+129%2C+130>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 4 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 5:6, 7 – “And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes.” In one sense, the person who knows God's commands and then rejects them is far worse than the person who had never heard God's commands. You would expect an ungodly person to sin; but how shocked should you be when someone who has received salvation through the blood of Jesus, who has the Spirit within them, willfully tramples on the blood of Jesus through sin?

2. Ezekiel 5:11 – “Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw. My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.” God's mercy has a limit beyond which only judgment lies.

3. Ezekiel 5:13 – “And they shall know that I am the Lord—that I have spoken in my jealousy—when I spend my fury upon them.” God executes judgment on sinners to reveal Himself and His character before a watching world.

4. Ezekiel 6:7 – “And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the Lord.” Nearly eighty times in the Book of Ezekiel, God says that His intent is to reveal Himself, to confirm His sovereignty, to glorify Himself, and to bring people repentance. How has God revealed Himself in your life, and what has been your response?

5. Ezekiel 6:9 – “...I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations.” God views sin as spiritual adultery (or prostitution) – because we desire, direct, and give our passions to something other than Him, other than the One we have made an oath to love only. God cannot approve of our adulterous actions. Of course, we tend to make light of our sins, but God is a jealous God. Would God approve of the Bride, His church, even flirting with the world? You cannot be “married” to God or be one with God and mess around with the world.

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6. Ezekiel 6:10 – “And they shall know that I am the Lord. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them.” Again, God punishes to reveal Himself as God. We must be very careful not to take a self-centered view of the Bible and of circumstances – ultimately, it’s not about us; it is all about Him.

7. Proverbs 4:4 -- “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.”

- God wants you to have the fullness of life, which comes from a heart that earnestly desires to love, trust, and obey Him.

- It is amazing how the modern church has perverted this simple truth in order to accommodate sin, all in the name of “grace.”

8. Proverbs 4:13 -- "Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life." Daily Bible study and practice is an essential discipline of the disciple.

9. Proverbs 4:18, 19 -- “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” Everyone is walking down one of two paths, either getting closer to God or further away. Some have described Hell as an eternity of getting farther and farther away from God.

10. Proverbs 4:26 – “Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.” One of the most important traits a person can have is humble self-awareness, the ability and willingness to see and correct personal character flaws. Most people have “fatal flaws” they either can’t/won’t admit or aren’t willing to change. Growth requires both incredible humility to admit and persistent discipline (as a disciple) to change. Change doesn’t happen overnight, but denial, self-righteousness, and self-justification, can seriously delay required change.

11. Psalm 129:2, 4 -- “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me.... The Lord is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.” Things are not what they appear to be from the very limited human perspective. It may appear that sin prevails, but God has already cut the chords of the wicked, the victory has already been won, and we stand victorious in Jesus. You may be enduring suffering now, but it is very much temporary and a very small thing compared to your eternal reward.

12. Psalm 130:3, 4 – “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.”

- Truly understanding the grace you have received through Jesus drives you to obedience, not to casual, comfortable compromise. Grace gives you a second chance to honor God as God.

- Grace should bring us to Fear God, not take Him for granted or treat Him disrespectfully.

13. Psalm 130:5, 6 – “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.” Faith is trusting God in the moment, and hope is trusting God with the future – faith projected forward. The Bible says that the big three for Christians is “faith, hope, and love” – “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” You must know God to trust Him, and you must trust Him to obey Him, to wait on Him. Faith trusts God enough to do what God commands at the moment of decision, though the consequences may seem perilous in the current situation; hope trusts God enough to

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continue in obedience over time, though you don't seem to be getting results or though things seem to be going from bad to worse. It takes both faith and hope to truly love God and others. Love is obedience now and consistent, unwavering obedience over time. Hopeful love is never giving up on someone, even if it takes a lifetime to achieve reconciliation. Remember, your life mission is reconciliation -- drawing people closer to Jesus and closer to each other in Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 Nov 18: Wait on the Lord today by trusting and obeying Him now, committing to trusting and obeying Him in the future, and by demonstrating unconditional love for others that is willing to suffer unfairness for the sake of reconciliation. Have the faith to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. (Psalm 130:5, 6)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 6, Saturday, 3 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezek+3%2C+4%3B+pro+3%3B+psalm+128>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 3 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 3:1 -- "Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." As Ambassadors, we are to consume God's word and communicate it to the world.

2. Ezekiel 3:7-11 -- "'But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.' Moreover, he said to me, 'Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear or refuse to hear.'"

- God often sends His messengers to people He knows won't listen. God strengthens His servants to endure opposition. Are you ready to preach the Gospel regardless of how it might be received?

- God calls his 'Ambassadors' to faithfully proclaim God's word while walking in obedience; the messenger's success is measured in faithfulness, not by how the rebellious respond to the message. In fact, God warns Ezekiel that, "[they] will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because [they] have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart.... Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." The fact that God knows that the rebellious will not receive His word does not relieve the 'Ambassador' of the responsibility to proclaim the message. Today, Christians are very careful not to say anything to the rebellious that they would not receive well or that might be considered offensive to them. Christians have also become very casual with sin and carelessly disobedient. Rather than becoming peacemakers (reconciling man with God), the church has become more concerned with becoming more peaceable and peace loving (avoiding conflict at all costs), to the expense of holiness and evangelism. Too often the mega-seeker-sensitive churches' answer to rebellion and rejection is better marketing, packaging, and presentation rather than greater movement of the Holy Spirit emanating from holy congregations. Pray for revival within the church. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

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- “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears....”

You must know the word of God in order to share the word of God. We must diligently study God’s word and only speak God’s word. Don’t substitute ‘good ideas’ or popular opinion for God’s word. We represent Jesus, not the current version of morality.

3. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself. Again, when a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before them, they will die. Since you did not warn them, they will die for their sin. The righteous things that person did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the righteous person not to sin and they do not sin, they will surely live because they took warning, and you will have saved yourself.” (Ezekiel 3:17-21)

- As Christians we have been given a great responsibility. We have been appointed as “Christ’s Ambassadors” charged to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19) This charge is often referred to as the “Great Commission,” but the “teaching them to obey” part has often been called the “Great Omission” because people don’t want to hear that our HOLY GOD demands obedience and hates sin. All believers are to live and serve as Priests within the world, proclaiming the Gospel to all of mankind. This IS our purpose on earth, and we were created to glorify and serve God. Jesus began his earthly ministry by commanding, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” (Matthew 3:2) Likewise, as Christ’s Ambassadors, we are called to warn the of the consequences of sin and of their need for repentance. This is not a popular message (John the Baptist lost his head for calling out the sexual sins of Herod), but God holds us accountable for delivering the message, not for how others respond to the message. God also holds us accountable for the way we proclaim the truth – “yet do it with gentleness and respect.... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.... peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” (1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 4:2; James 3:17) Proclaim the truth so that when you meet the Lord you will hear Him say, “Well done, my good servant!” (Luke 19:17)

-- 1 Peter 2:9 -- But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

-- Revelation 1:6 – [Jesus] has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

-- Revelation 5:10 -- You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.

-- Revelation 20:6 -- Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

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-- 2 Timothy 4:2 -- Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

- You cannot escape or abrogate your responsibility to communicate God's truth. God will hold you accountable.

4. Ezekiel 3:22-27 – “And the hand of the Lord was upon me there. And he said to me, ‘Arise, go.... the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, “Go, shut yourself within your house. And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people. And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.” God's true servant is led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, not by human wisdom or ability.

5. Proverbs 3:33-35 -- “The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous. Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor. The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.”

- Some receive judgment while others, also guilty, receive forgiveness, mercy, and grace. The notable difference between those who receive forgiveness and those who receive punishment is that the forgiven are humble, contrite, repentant and fear the Lord. Humility involves seeing ourselves from God's perspective, seeing the truth of ourselves, and lowering ourselves in relation to others (the greatest shall be the least), having the heart of a servant to God and mankind. St. Bernard (not the dog) defines humility as, "A virtue by which a man knowing himself as he truly is, abases himself." Proverbs says that "humility is the fear of the Lord." Humility is closely related to meekness and selflessness. It is impossible to have wisdom or honor without humility. A humble person cannot look down on others while he seeks to help them draw closer to God -- a beggar showing another beggar where to find bread. Part of being humble is being continually self-aware, always considering the motives behind our behavior. Most importantly it is being receptive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit (impossible prior to salvation). Humility is the key to judging sin without being judgmental.

6. Psalm 128:1, 2 -- "Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you."

- Believing in God is not the same as fearing God, trusting Him and obeying Him. Blessings come from obedience.

- Biblical living involves fearing The Lord and working with your hands to provide for yourself and others.

7. Psalm 128:6 – “May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!” A full and peaceful family is one of God’s primary blessings for those who follow Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Nov 18: Recommit to diligently studying and obeying God’s word so you can effectively share God’s word and glorify God. Let the peace of God be apparent in your life. (See today’s readings)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 5, Friday, 2 November 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezek+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+2%3B+john+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 2 November 18:

1. Ezekiel 1:12 -- "And each went straight forward. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went." Four different creatures had complete unity in purpose and action because they followed the Holy Spirit without turning to the left or to the right. Unity is only found in the Spirit. The words universe and university combine the words unity and diversity -- many different things working together as one. God created the universe, and God created the church. The Church should be united in their diversity through their collective union with Jesus. Where there is disunity, there is a relational problem with Jesus somewhere.

2. Ezekiel 2:3 -- "And he said to me, 'Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.'" When God calls a servant, God reveals where He is at work and where He wants the servant to work.

3. Ezekiel 2:5 -- "And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them." Your duty to God is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Whether they hear or refuse to hear is up to them, but their choice is not the measure of your success, your obedience is.

4. Ezekiel 2:6 -- "And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." Rebellious people have always treated God's ambassadors poorly, and God knows it. You should expect it, but God commands you not to be afraid of it.

5. Ezekiel 2:6 -- "And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions." God knows His messengers will get persecuted, and God warns His messengers, reminding them that many will reject the Gospel violently.

6. Ezekiel 2:8 -- "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

- To be ready to preach God's word, you must digest God's word. It must be your daily sustenance, and like food, it should slowly build you into a new person.

- God holds His servants accountable for calling the sinful to repentance; God does not hold the messenger accountable for how the message is received.

7. Proverbs 2:1 -- "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you...." God's people avoid being led astray by Christian-like false teachings by storing God's commands from the written word within their hearts. All acceptable teaching is merely an application of God's word. The only acceptable teacher is the one who points to Christ, given Him all the attention and credit.

8. John 3:1-15 -- "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" Only the Holy Spirit, received by those saved through Jesus, can bring enlightenment. You MUST be born again. Spiritual birth comes through faith in Jesus, not through anyone or anything else. Schools can inform, but only Jesus can transform. You cannot understand what the Bible says intellectually, but you can never really understand the wisdom of the word apart from the

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Spirit. You either have it or you don't. Debating about the Bible with the unspiritual is like trying to teach a fish to play piano.

9. John 3:8 – “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

- We cannot know who the Spirit is convicting and drawing to Jesus. We are called to serve as Christ's Ambassadors to all people. The Holy Spirit will convict as the Spirit wills.

- If you have boldly proclaimed the Gospel to others, you have undoubtedly been made fun of for being a “born again Christian.” Perhaps, as was the case with Jesus, you were mocked by someone who claimed to worship God. Jesus explained that this was inevitable. However, as is clear in both our Old Testament and New Testament readings today, we are called to proclaim the Gospel to all, whether or not they choose to hear it and despite the abuse we will inevitably receive by the rebellious. God's charge to us is much like what God commanded of Ezekiel: “Son of man, I send you... to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house. But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you [the word of God is our bread].”

-- Matthew 28:19 -- Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

10. John 3:13 – “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.” Compare John 3:13 to Proverbs 30:4 – “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!”

11. John 3:14 – “...who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil....” The cross was always God's plan.

12. John 3:17-18 -- "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

- God wants everyone to be saved and offers salvation freely, but people must take the free gift in order to possess it. Those who go to hell choose to.

- Those who reject Jesus are condemned because they condemn themselves.

13. John 3:19 -- "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." It isn't that people don't have enough evidence to believe in Jesus, they just don't want to believe. It isn't a knowledge problem, it is a heart problem.

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14. John 3:21 -- "But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." You come to the light through obedience, and obedience demonstrates unity with God, being one in purpose with God, or being "in God."

15. John 3:27 -- "John answered, 'A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.'"

- You cannot save yourself, and no one else can save you. Your salvation can only come through Jesus.

- God is the Creator and Source of everything. We cannot produce wisdom, love, or anything else; it must come from God. We will either use what God has created in a good way through obedience or pervert God's good creation through sinfulness.

16. John 3:30 -- "He must increase, but I must decrease." The saved Christian desires to become nothing that Jesus would become their whole life and that all that they are would be a testimony of Jesus to the world. Don't let anyone look to you. Always point to Jesus.

17. John 3:31 -- "He who comes from above is above all." Never forget that!

18. John 3:36 -- "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." Again, eternal life comes only through Jesus. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.... You must be born again.... whoever believes in him may have eternal life.... For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." (John 3:3, 5, 7, 15, 16, 18, 19)

-- Matthew 18:14 -- So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

-- 2 Peter 3:9 -- The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 2 Nov 18: Walk with God today, in oneness with Him by obeying Him completely. Perhaps the hardest place to learn obedience is in relationships with others. To follow Jesus, you must deny self in relationships and take up your cross in relationships. The first command is love, and love must be willing to suffer injustice for the sake of reconciliation. (John 3:21)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 4, Thursday, 1 November 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=lam+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+1%3B+john+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 1 November 18:

1. Lamentations 3:21, 22 -- "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end." In your darkest hour, when there seems to be no hope, you can hold to the truth that God's love and mercy never ceases, and He is still in complete control. He knows what is best for you though sometimes it is painful. Trust in Him.

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2. Lamentations 3:25, 26 -- "The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD." Waiting quietly and patiently for The Lord is one of the hardest things to do.

3. Lamentations 3:27-42 -- "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; let him put his mouth in the dust— there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. For the Lord will not cast off forever, but though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.... Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven: 'We have transgressed and rebelled'" There is a lot of meat in these verses. Sometimes, trials are clearly self-induced -- "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:11-12) Sometimes, we don't understand why we are suffering. In trials, don't turn away from God but draw closer to Him and learn from the situation. God ultimately works all things together for good for those who are following Jesus. Trust your loving Father in your suffering; recognize that nothing is happening to you the He did not allow to happen for a greater good that you cannot understand – wait on Him. He is more than faithful and only deals with you in perfect love. Pain is God's chisel as He crafts you into the likeness of Christ. If you are being disciplined accept it, learn, and grow in love.

-- 1 Peter 4:19 -- Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

-- Hebrews 5:8 -- Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

-- 2 Corinthians 12:10 -- For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

-- Psalm 141:5 -- Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it. Yet my prayer is continually against their evil deeds.

-- Romans 5:3-5 -- ...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

-- Philippians 4:4 -- Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

4. Lamentations 3:40 -- "Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord!" You should know if you are obeying God.

5. Lamentations 3:42 -- "We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven." Repentance is required for forgiveness.

6. Lamentations 4:1 -- "How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed! The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands!"

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- We are called to be the holy stones of the temple and the shining gold of God. Sin tarnishes and scatters God's people. This should never be.

- Judgment can enable you to see yourself in a new light and change your materialistic priorities.

7. Lamentations 4:11, 12 -- "The Lord gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger, and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem." Sin causes God to destroy what He established.

8. Lamentations 4:13, 14 -- "This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests.... They wandered, blind, through the streets; they were so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments." A precursor of God's judgment is blind guides and teachers.

9. Lamentations 4:15, 16 -- "'Away! Unclean!' people cried at them. 'Away! Away! Do not touch!' So they became fugitives and wanderers; people said among the nations, 'They shall stay with us no longer.' The Lord himself has scattered them; he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders." Judgment exposes and humiliates false teachers and separates them from the true church.

10. Lamentations 4:22 -- "He will uncover your sins." All sinners face God's judgement. The purpose of God's discipline is to uncover your sins and bring you to repentance and reconciliation.

11. Proverbs 1:7 -- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Our public school systems start with the presumption that God is not a factor in knowledge. They teach a 'knowledge' that is independent or void of God. What does this say about the ultimate fate of the nation?

12. Proverbs 1:22 -- "How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?" Scoffers are those who simply refuse to hear the truth of Jesus. Have you noticed how they delight in their ungodly beliefs?

13. Proverbs 1:24 -- "Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded...." It is not that God isn't calling out to save, it is that many refuse to take His hand.

14. Proverbs 1:32 -- "For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them." The cherubim in Ezekiel 10:22 walked straight paths under God's commands, but notice that the evil turn away from God and are destroyed.

15. John 2:3-5 -- "When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'" Jesus was obedient to his mother, despite the inappropriateness of her request, her lack of understanding, His adulthood, and His position as the Son of God. What does this tell us about how God views obedience to His commands? Jesus modelled obedience for us all. Do you obey God's commands even when it doesn't seem to make any sense? Are there some 'small' or 'outdated' commands that you have decided God doesn't really care that much about? Do you have habitual sins that you commit casually in the name of 'grace'? "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1, 2)

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-- Philippians 2:8 -- And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

16. John 2:15 -- "And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables." This is not the "gentle Jesus" often described in traditional storytelling. Jesus knew when and how to be forceful to defend the powerless for God's glory.

17. John 2:23-25 -- "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man." There is a big difference between believing in Jesus and surrendering and following Jesus. Saving faith is a fully committed faith. If Jesus is truly your Lord and Savior, everything in your life has changed, and He is your goal. Saving faith seeks Jesus, not just His blessings.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 Nov 18: Practice total obedience today to God and to all authorities. (John 2:1-10)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 3, Wednesday, 31 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=lam+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+31%3B+john+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 31 October 18:

Note: Here is a link to a short video overview of Lamentations: <https://youtu.be/p8GDFPdaQZQ>

1. Lamentations 1:2, 19, 21 – “Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her” – Many put their hope for comfort, peace, joy, security, etc, in something or someone other than God, though they may not even admit to themselves that they are doing it. However, all substitutes for God will let you down.

2. Lamentations 1:4-10 – When God judges, He puts an end to unacceptable, comprised, half-hearted, self-centered, and misguided worship.

3. Lamentations 1:5 -- "Her foes have become the head; her enemies prosper." Defeat was God's method for discipline.

4. Lamentations 1:5 -- "The Lord has afflicted her." Sometimes the Lord has to afflict those He loves in order to bring about the good He wants in them and for them.

5. Lamentations 1:8, 9 – “Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away. Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; therefore, her fall is terrible; she has no comforter. ‘O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!’” Throughout the Bible, God uses vivid word pictures of a woman caught in adultery or prostitution to describe the sin people commit with substitute “idols” against Him. The Bible picture of sin stands in stark contrast with the world’s approach to sin, even the church’s approach to sin which makes light of sin in the name of “grace.”

6. Lamentations 1:11-16 – When the illusion of idols is stripped away, some people remember God and cry out for His help. Contrary to secular humanist teachings, it is not because people need an imaginary,

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superstitious hope that they turn to God; they turn to God in need because their imaginary hopes have been revealed and removed and, perhaps for the first time, they see the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

7. Lamentations 1:12, 13 – “Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger. From on high he sent fire; into my bones he made it descend; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has left me stunned, faint all the day long.”

- God's worse punishment was reserved for His people who knew Him yet continued in sin.

- God's discipline may isolate you and make you feel sorry for yourself until you cry to Him for help.

8. Lamentations 1:19 – “I called to my lovers, but they deceived me; my priests and elders perished in the city, while they sought food to revive their strength.” Religious leaders sometimes forsake people for the sake of their personal needs.

9. Lamentations 1:22 – “Let all their evildoing come before you, and deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my transgressions; for my groans are many, and my heart is faint.” Judgment against you does not mean that you are the only sinner. God will administer appropriate justice, mercy, and grace to all. You need only be concerned about your relationship with God and can trust Him to deal appropriately with everyone else.

10. Lamentations 2:2 – “The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.” When God's people take His grace for granted and accept sin, He must punish them to humble them and bring them back to a right appreciation of His holiness, mercy, grace, and love.

11. Lamentations 2:5 – “The Lord has become like an enemy.” In our sin, we can make God like an enemy.

12. Lamentations 2:6 – “He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place; the Lord has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.” God has the power to replace earthly leaders whenever and however He wants. God has established all political leaders for His purposes. Often God uses bad leaders as an instrument of discipline.

13. Lamentations 2:7 – “The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary.” The Lord rejects religion practiced by the ungodly and disobedient.

14. Lamentations 2:9 – “Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; the law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the Lord.” An ungodly nation is filled with misguided politicians and powerless spiritual leaders who no longer truly hear from God, although they continue to claim that they do, likely convincing themselves that their fantasies are visions.

15. Lamentations 2:11-13 – “My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out to the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and babies faint

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in the streets of the city. They cry to their mothers, 'Where is bread and wine?' as they faint like a wounded man in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers' bosom. What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea; who can heal you?" Reflective people weep and are troubled by God's judgement.

16. Lamentations 2:14 -- "Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading."

- One of the factors that led to the destruction of Israel was that the religious leaders did not expose sin but rather told the people what they wanted to hear. 2 Timothy 4:3 has this to say: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear." Today's introductory chapter of John reveals that John the Baptist, who eventually lost his head for exposing sin, had a far different approach than the prophets condemned in Lamentations. John the Baptist, was "a voice crying in the wilderness," telling everyone to "Make straight the way for the Lord." Recognizing that most would reject the Lord, he still cried out to his community in hopes that "all men might believe." As 1 Corinthians 13 says, "Love... always hopes." John's baptism was a baptism of repentance (Matt 3:11) – exposing sin, pointing to our need for a Savior, calling the sinner to seek God's mercy and grace through the Messiah. Matthew 3:8-11 records that the first words of Jesus' ministry were: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near," and then "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." Less and less are churches and individual Christians "expos[ing]... sin to ward off... captivity." The word sin is hardly ever used anymore, much less repentance and surrender. Christians are often caught flat footed when you ask them, "From what have you been saved?" Answer: The wrath of God due to our sin.

17. Lamentations 2:18-22 -- Intercessory prayer is part of God's plan for His people when they endure judgment.

18. Lamentations 2:20 – "Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?" How bad does it have to get before people lament and repent?

19. Lamentations 2:22 – "You summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side, and on the day of the anger of the Lord no one escaped or survived; those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed." God's plan affects all people.

20. Proverbs 31:1-5 – Leaders are characterized as self-disciplined and self-controlled. They are not motivated by passions.

21. Proverbs 31:6-9 – Leaders are strong people who take care of weaker people.

22. Proverbs 31:31 – "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates." Honor is something that is earned through honorable behavior.

Note: Here is a link to a short video overview of John chapters 1-12: <https://youtu.be/G-2e9mMf7E8>

23. John 1:1-5 -- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything

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made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

- John begins his story of Jesus by telling you that He is the source of all wisdom and all life. Jesus said of Himself that He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Everything that matters to you starts and ends with your relationship with Him.

- Jesus Christ is the center and source of everything, all wisdom, all creation, all peace, all love. If we are pointing to anything else or proclaiming anything else, we are antichrist. There is no hope in governments, people, or programs that don't acknowledge that Christ is our only hope. The dark message from Satan that goes back to the beginning of His rebellion is that mankind can find salvation through someone or something else.

24. John 1:1, 14 -- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." How we view, approach, receive, and respond to God's written word reveals our relationship with the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

25. John 1:7 -- "He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him." John was the first Ambassador for Christ who modelled our life mission -- bearing witness to Jesus that others might believe in Him, not in "goodness" or vague concepts of "god," but Jesus Christ.

26. John 1:8 -- "He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light." Your life mission is to bear witness to Jesus. Never point to yourself or to anything else. Always point to Jesus.

27. John 1:9-13 -- "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

- What have we done with our right to become "children of God?"

- "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." The religious reject Jesus when they proclaim Him theoretically, but follow idols practically.

- You must be born of the Spirit through Jesus to be truly alive. Those without the Spirit are the real walking dead.

28. John 1:14 -- "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." When you read the Bible honestly, you cannot help but fellowship with the Living Word of Jesus. The Bible is the thoughts of the One you need to know. Read the Bible to draw closer to Jesus.

29. John 1:19-30 -- To accomplish your life purpose and mission, you must know who you are and who Jesus is. Truly understanding this changes everything. Even most Christians don't understand these basics.

30. John 1:29, 32, 33 -- "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!...' And John bore witness: 'I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize

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with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" Your mission involves getting rid of sin and guilt and being Spirit-led.

31. John 1:38-44 – Your mission involves following Jesus and leading others to Him.

32. John 1:39, 46, 50 -- "Come and you will see.... You will see greater things than these." If you are truly willing to follow Jesus, He will show you things you could not possibly imagine.

33. John 1:41 – "He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ)." Mission begins with your own family.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 31 Nov 18: Follow Jesus today and see what happens. (John 1:39, 46, 50)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 2, Tuesday, 30 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+51%2C+52%3B+proverbs+30%3B+jude>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 30 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 51:1 -- "Behold, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon," God moves the hearts of people for His purposes. He is the only one who can change the mind of the people around you that you deal with.

2. Jeremiah 51:5 – "For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the Lord of hosts, but the land of the Chaldeans is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel." The Holy God cannot stand sin but is willing to forgive it.

3. Jeremiah 51:7— "Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine; therefore the nations went mad." God used Babylon to discipline Israel, then God disciplined Babylon. Failure in life is often being successful in the wrong things. Babylon experienced apparent success on a path to destruction.

4. Jeremiah 51:8, 9 – "Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed. Forsake her, and let us go each to his own country, for her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies." God felt compassion for the people He judged.

5. Jeremiah 51:11 – "Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields!" The Lord stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon was to destroy it as the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance for his temple. God controls foreign policy.

6. Jeremiah 51:16 – "When he utters his voice there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses." The Creator never stops controlling His creation. It is insanity for the created creature to believe (s)he can manipulate the Creator, define Him, completely understand Him, or ignore Him.

7. Jeremiah 51:17-19 – "Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of delusion; at the time of their punishment they shall perish. Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for he

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is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the Lord of hosts is his name.” Substitutes for God will come and go and have no real power. They are an illusion. God is the only real Power, and He never changes. The Creator will destroy all substitutes for Him.

8. Jeremiah 51:20-23 – “You are my hammer and weapon of war: with you I break nations in pieces; with you I destroy kingdoms; with you I break in pieces the horse and his rider; with you I break in pieces the chariot and the charioteer; with you I break in pieces man and woman; with you I break in pieces the old man and the youth; with you I break in pieces the young man and the young woman; with you I break in pieces the shepherd and his flock; with you I break in pieces the farmer and his team; with you I break in pieces governors and commanders.” God chooses small people and His remnant to achieve His purposes in history, revealing the foolishness of man's pride. God does not honor the pride of men.

9. Jeremiah 51:26 – “No stone shall be taken from you for a corner and no stone for a foundation, but you shall be a perpetual waste, declares the Lord.” God’s judgement has eternal consequences.

10. Jeremiah 51:31-34 – “One runner runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to tell the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every side; the fords have been seized, the marshes are burned with fire, and the soldiers are in panic. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me; he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel; he has swallowed me like a monster; he has filled his stomach with my delicacies; he has rinsed me out.” Even while they were in captivity, God took care of His people by influencing the hearts of the captors.

11. Jeremiah 51:47 – “Therefore, behold, the days are coming when I will punish the images of Babylon; her whole land shall be put to shame, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.” God’s invitation competes with the invitation of substitutes for God for the loyalty of God’s people. Today, it’s the Gospel or the American Dream.

12. Jeremiah 51:50 – “You who have escaped from the sword, go, do not stand still! Remember the Lord from far away, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.” God’s invitation demands an immediate response.

13. Proverbs 30:2 -- “Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man.” The first step to understanding is to understand that you don’t understand. Human intellect is so very limited; it can’t take you very far. However, God reveals things to you that you could never understand on your own or through all the teaching the world has to offer. A prerequisite to acquiring wisdom is acknowledging your ignorance, your sinfulness, and your total dependence on God.

14. Proverbs 30:3 – “I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.” Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. You cannot apply knowledge rightly without the direction of the Holy Spirit who puts things in context with the big picture that you can never see.

15. Proverbs 30:5, 6 – “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Walking in God’s word keeps you within the will of God even though you don’t fully understand what is happening or the “why” behind what is happening. We tend to add to God’s word or to complicate it because we really don’t want it to say what is clearly says. We tend to put conditions on it: “Who really is my neighbor? Under what

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conditions do I really have to forgive? Times have changed, and this doesn't mean the same thing anymore." The Bible warns that God's word is unchanging, and you must obey it to remain in God's will and to have wisdom. And Jesus told you in last week's readings that you cannot really understand God's word or obey it without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit which comes through salvation.

16. Proverbs 30:8, 9 – "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." Sin, all sin, is to reject the Lord and profane His name. We take it so very lightly, but God does not. Sin always starts with desires that become bigger in our life, more important, and more influential than God. Even desires that are, in the right application, good, such as the desire to eat, can become sin when they start to control us and lead us to depart from God's will. When the God-given desire to eat becomes gluttony, we are caught in sin and need to recognize the remove the idol we have created.

17. Proverbs 30:10-23 – After the writer of Proverbs 30 proclaims in verses eight and nine the requirement to maintain God as your highest desire, honoring Him as KING, obeying Him, and rejecting competing desires, he describes the attributes of those who lack proper humility and are self-serving rather than disciples. They are slanderers (v 10), disrespectful (v11), self-righteous (v12), arrogant (v13), sharp-tongued (v14), greedy (v14), never satisfied (v15-16), disobedient (v17), unpredictably driven by human passions (18-19), callously deceptive (v20), and unfit for service (v21-23).

18. Proverbs 30:24-31 – The writer transitions from the traits of the sinful fool in verses 10-23 to traits of wisdom which are grounded in discipline and unity.

19. Proverbs 30:32 – "If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth." Sin is selfishness. Sin is placing yourself, your desires, ahead of God which is unthinkable cosmic treason. The writing is calling you to repentance. Even those sins you know you commit that you consider "small" are not small if you consider what they mean – "God says, 'no', but I say 'yes.'" Consider today where you still knowingly dishonor God, repent, and receive His forgiveness.

20. Jude 1, 2 – "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you."

- Jude introduces himself first as "a servant of Jesus Christ." How do you introduce yourself?

- Mercy, peace, and love come only from God.

- The mark of a person truly walking with Jesus is ever-increasing mercy, peace, and love -- it is not additive, it is exponential.

21. Jude 4 -- "For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

- A teaching can creep into the church that allows grace to be used an excuse to do what you want to do. Grace is not a license for disobedience or immorality, nor does it mean that God will overlook such behavior. Grace is not freedom to sin; it is freedom from sin. Jude was compelled to warn the church against those within the church who make light of sin in the name of 'grace'.

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- It would appear that, as is the case today, Jude had observed many in the church using grace as an excuse to live sinful lives, surrendering to their wicked desires rather than to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jude describes them as no better than animals and warns that they will not escape God's judgment. Though they claimed to be Christians, their actions revealed that in fact they were "devoid of the Spirit." Jude exhorts the church to persevere: "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh." Essentially he is saying, "Love the sinner, and hate the sin; influence without being influenced." Again, it is interesting that, during this time before the fall of Rome, Jude specifically refers to the sin of homosexuality as Paul does in Romans 1. When was the last time you heard someone preach against homosexuality, adultery, promiscuity, etc?

- Jude reminds us that, while under grace, we cannot reject authority (8) and simply act as unreasoning animals (10) "who follow mere natural instincts" rather than the Spirit (19). Instead, Jude commands "Build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life (20, 21)." While we wait for the mercy of Jesus, we are to continue to pursue holiness and obedience. In our pursuit, we are to hate sin while showing Christ-like mercy to sinners (22, 23) – Love involves revealing the truth of sin:

-- "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Romans 12:9-12)."

22. Jude 8, 19 -- "Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.... It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit." Those who call themselves Christians yet continue in sin, proclaiming 'grace' all the while, are in actuality denying the Lordship of the Savior, rejecting His authority, blaspheming His Holy Name, and perverting the Grace that comes through the Blood of Jesus – they are, in fact, devoid of the Spirit. Such Christians are divisive, countering the ministry of reconciliation.

23. Jude 8 -- "Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones." Sin is always a rejection of God's authority over your life and a discrediting of His holiness. The "Christian" who continues in sin is really rejecting the authority of Christ, living out blasphemy.

24. Jude 10, 11 – "But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion." Jude describes the "carnal Christian" as spiritless animals who act on animal instincts rather than being controlled by the Spirit. They are like Cain who lacked self-control which comes from the Spirit. When you sin, you blaspheme God -- how serious is that?

25. Jude 12, 13 -- "These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever."

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- Selfish Christians are hidden destroyers, claiming to be leaders but only lifting themselves up and drawing attention to themselves rather than God; they may claim to be alive, but in their selfishness and self-centeredness, they are really dead.

- The disobedient Christian is worthless and destructive.

26. Jude 16 -- "These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage."

- Constant complainers who take sides are revealing their self-centeredness and ungodliness. Jesus gave us a mission of reconciliation, uniting other to God and to each other, not dividing. Do you know a church-goer who always seems to have a complaint, who always seems to be dissatisfied? Hopefully, that someone is not you. Hopefully, in your selflessness, you can influence that constant critic to reconcile to Jesus and to others. Again, read John 17.

27. Jude 18 -- "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.' It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit." Scoffers who cause divisions do not have the Spirit or are at least quenching the Spirit. Scoffers scoff because they want to pursue their own passions.

28. Jude 19 -- "It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit." Worldly people cause divisions, the Spirit unites people in Christ. Apart from Jesus Christ, there can be no real unity. Many will seek unity around some idol, like a political party or an organization, but this is doomed and antichrist.

29. Jude 20-23 -- "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh."

- We must be uniters in a world full of dividers; we must be peacemakers in a world full of unpeaceable people. We must bring order in a world of disorder; we must bring light in a world of darkness. We must love in a hateful world. However this requires much prayer and requires the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than merely intellect. It is dangerous business to snatch others out of the fire. Don't be complacent in your efforts to do so or attempt to do it in your own power.

- You don't snatch people from a fire by standing in it with them.

30. Jude 24 -- "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling...." Only Jesus can keep you from stumbling. You cannot stand on your own.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 30 Oct 18: Be a positive uniter today, remembering that ultimately there is no unity unless people are uniting first with Jesus. Don't try to create a false unity, uniting around and idol such as the nation, a business, a teacher, a pastor, a church, morals, ethical standards, bright ideas, etc. Reconcile people to Jesus, and they will naturally unite with each other too. Your mission is to reconcile others to Jesus. (2 Cor 5:18, 19). Also re-read John 17. (Jude)

DBRP - WEEK 44, Day 1, Monday, 29 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+49%2C+50%3B+pro+29%3B+3+John+1>

2018 Defenders Bible Reading Plan Study Notes

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 29 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 49:1 -- "Concerning the Ammonites. Thus says the LORD: 'Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? Why then has Milcom dispossessed Gad, and his people settled in its cities?'" There is no reason why God's people, empowered by the Holy Spirit, should be controlled by the world.
2. Jeremiah 49:4 -- "Why do you boast of your valleys, O faithless daughter, who trusted in her treasures, saying, 'Who will come against me?'" God will take away what you place in the way of your relationship with Him.
3. Jeremiah 49:11 -- "Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me." God still cares about your enemies' children. Do you?
4. Jeremiah 49:12 -- "For thus says the Lord: 'If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink.'" God will not leave a nation's sins unpunished.
5. Jeremiah 49:15, 17 -- "For behold, I will make you small among the nations, despised among mankind. 'Edom shall become a horror. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters.'" Part of God's judgment is ruining one's reputation.
6. Jeremiah 49:16 -- "The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart." Pride deceives you in thinking you are of any significance apart from God.
7. Jeremiah 49:19 -- "Behold, like a lion coming up from the jungle of the Jordan against a perennial pasture, I will suddenly make him run away from her. And I will appoint over her whomever I choose. For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me?" God's judgment can be compared to a surprise attack.
8. Jeremiah 49:20 -- "Therefore hear the plan that the Lord has made against Edom and the purposes that he has formed against the inhabitants of Teman: Even the little ones of the flock shall be dragged away. Surely their fold shall be appalled at their fate." God wants people to know His purposes.
9. Jeremiah 49:22 -- "Behold, one shall mount up and fly swiftly like an eagle and spread his wings against Bozrah, and the heart of the warriors of Edom shall be in that day like the heart of a woman in her birth pains." God's judgment melts all human courage.
10. Jeremiah 49:31 -- "Rise up, advance against a nation at ease, that dwells securely, declares the Lord, that has no gates or bars, that dwells alone." God condemns a people who are overconfident.
11. Jeremiah 50:4 -- "In those days and in that time, declares the Lord, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come, and they shall seek the Lord their God." Repentance is the beginning of revival.
12. Jeremiah 50:5 -- "They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, 'Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.'" Commitment to an eternal love relationship with God brings revival.
13. Jeremiah 50:6, 7 -- "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold. All

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who found them have devoured them, and their enemies have said, 'We are not guilty, for they have sinned against the LORD, their habitation of righteousness, the LORD, the hope of their fathers.'"

- God calls unfaithful believers lost sheep with bad shepherds who need revival and the Good Shepherd, Jesus.

- When God's people are led astray by false teachers, the entire nation falls. The only shepherd worth following is The Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Any leader that does not point to Jesus as the one to obey is an anti-Christ, though we don't see them that way.

14. Jeremiah 50:11, 12 -- "Though you rejoice, though you exult, O plunderers of my heritage, though you frolic like a heifer in the pasture, and neigh like stallions, your mother shall be utterly shamed, and she who bore you shall be disgraced." Many messages in churches today are "Be happy" while the Nations go from bad to worse. God doesn't expect people to rejoice and boast when they should be mourning and turning to Him.

15. Jeremiah 50:15 – Raise a shout against her all around; she has surrendered; her bulwarks have fallen; her walls are thrown down. For this is the vengeance of the Lord: take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done." You will reap what you sow.

16. Jeremiah 50:20, 33-34 – In those days and in that time, declares the Lord, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.... Thus says the Lord of hosts: The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah with them. All who took them captive have held them fast; they refuse to let them go. Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon." A remnant will experience revival, not the majority.

17. Jeremiah 50:29, 31-32 – "Summon archers against Babylon, all those who bend the bow. Encamp around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; do to her according to all that she has done. For she has proudly defied the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.... Behold, I am against you, O proud one, declares the Lord GOD of hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you. The proud one shall stumble and fall, with none to raise him up, and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it will devour all that is around him." Another chapter in the Bible warns you that God opposes human pride. God will humble the proud for His name's sake.

18. Jeremiah 50:42 – They lay hold of bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy. The sound of them is like the roaring of the sea; they ride on horses, arrayed as a man for battle against you, O daughter of Babylon!" God uses cruel, merciless people as agents of His judgment.

19. Proverbs 29:1 – "He who is often reproofed, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing." There can come a place in a person's life when it is too late to receive forgiveness. God's patience has a limit.

20. Proverbs 29:5 – "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet." When you tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear, you are contributing to their pain and destruction, you are being unloving, and you are sinning.

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21. Proverbs 29:12 – “If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.” Christ's Ambassadors have an obligation to speak the truth to leaders whether they want to hear it or not.

22. Proverbs 29:18 -- “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” Gods people can serve as a preservative and an influential agent of peace and stability if they have the courage to defy popular opinion and to speak the truth.

23. Proverbs 29:26 – “Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.” Most don't even treat God with as much respect as they do influential people.

24. 3 John 1:1 – “The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.” Love is an easy word to say, but true love is sacrifice.

25. 3 John 1, 3, 8, 12 -- “I love in truth.... indeed you are walking in the truth.... that we may be fellow workers for the truth.... Demetrius has received a good testimony... from the truth itself.... and you know that our testimony is true.” The true church is united in truth, truth that makes man-made divisions such as race, class, culture, nationality, and denominations meaningless. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14 6) Those who ‘walk in the truth’ walk as Jesus walked. John reminds us that, toward that life ambition, we should live our lives “for the sake of the name” and treat others “in a manner worthy of God.” (3 John 6, 7) Is that your ambition? Are you united as one with the true church rather than the world?

26. 3 John 1:3, 4 – “For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

- Real Christians don't just talk about the truth, they walk in the truth. They surrender themselves to Jesus daily and walk with Him, denying themselves, proclaiming the truth daily in love, demonstrating forgiveness, generosity, grace, mercy, peace, patience, kindness, justice, humility, etc.... Your life goal should be that as you follow Jesus closely, you will be an example to help others follow Him too, not follow you but follow Him.

- Love hopes more than anything else that others would follow Jesus.

27. 3 John 7, 8 -- "For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth." God expects us to work through the church to advance the Kingdom.

28. 3 John 11 – “Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.”

- The Bible could not be clearer on this point: faith is revealed in attitudes, words, and actions. Jesus said, you judge the tree by the fruit the comes from it. Those who truly know and love Jesus are transformed by His love. They don't continue in unrepentant sin, and when they do sin, they mournfully and humbly turn to God in repentance. Christians are continually claiming the promise of 1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

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- In the very short letter of 3 John, John contrasts the behavior of Gaius and Demetrius with that of Diotrephes. Gaius had displayed his love and “faithfulness to the truth” along with his commitment to “walk in the truth” by showing hospitality and generosity to “the brothers” who he did not know personally. Contrarily, Diotrephes who “likes to put himself first” is characterized by John as a malicious gossip who refuses to “welcome the brothers.” John then reminds us of what was taught by Jesus, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.... The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.” (Matthew 12:33, 35) Of our own power, we have no ability to be “good” only through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit can we hope to do good – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4, 5) So, how do we abide in Christ? Jesus said, “Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:9-11). The verse above tells us to “imitate good” rather than evil. So, how do we imitate good? Ephesians 5 expands on this concept and would be worthy of review today. Unlike Diotrephes who lived selfishly while claiming to be Christian, we are to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” and to submit “to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5) The Holy Spirit gives us the power to abide in Christ, but we must make the decision daily to submit to God and others in true love. The completely sacrificial love lived out by Jesus is our example.

- John encourages the Church to walk in obedience to the Lord. John, The Apostle of Love, sees obedience as required to truly love God and to express genuine love towards others. Paul backs this truth up in Romans 12:9 when he says, “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.” Someone once said, “If you love flowers, you have to hate weeds.” Sin is contrary to God’s Will – it offends, hurts, and destroys. We cannot take a casual, careless position on either love or sin like the culture around us does.

- Christians who are really Christian do the work of Christ.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 Oct 18: If Jesus walked in your circles today, what would he be like? How would He act? What would He do? What would He say to your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers? Make every effort to imitate Jesus today. Truly seek to be His Ambassador. Keep a journal of your experience. Make a note every hour on how the last hour went. You have somewhere around sixteen waking hours today, sixteen hours to reveal the Way, the Truth, and the Life to others. Journal sixteen hourly self-assessments today, each time praying for a closer walk with Jesus and a greater imitation of Him to others. (3 John 11)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 7, Sunday, 28 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+47-48%3B+pro+28%3B+psalm+126%2C+127>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 28 October 18:

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1. Jeremiah 47:3 – “At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions, at the rushing of his chariots, at the rumbling of their wheels, the fathers look not back to their children, so feeble are their hands....” God’s judgment humbles the prideful and terrifies the fearless.
2. Jeremiah 48:3-6 -- “A voice! A cry from Horonaim, ‘Desolation and great destruction!’ Moab is destroyed; her little ones have made a cry. For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping; for at the descent of Horonaim they have heard the distressed cry of destruction. Flee! Save yourselves! You will be like a juniper in the desert!” A nation that puts its trust in anything other than God will inevitably face destruction, and when the institutions fall, it is every person for themselves.
3. Jeremiah 48:7 – “For, because you trusted in your works and your treasures, you also shall be taken; and Chemosh shall go into exile with his priests and his officials.” God brings judgment when you trust in your own resources.
4. Jeremiah 48:8 – “The destroyer shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape; the valley shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord has spoken.” God’s judgment is swift and complete.
5. Jeremiah 48:10 – “Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness.” God will not be dishonored with half-hearted obedience or lackluster service. God is God and must be treated with due honor. How can anyone dishonor the Almighty with mediocrity, particularly after He sacrificed His Son for the unworthy?
6. Jeremiah 48:11 -- “Then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.” The Great Commission is to bring all peoples back into loving, obedient relationship with Him, not to “make the world a better place.” The entire Bible describes a struggle between two kingdoms, between the Kingdom of God, and the counterfeit kingdom of man (inspired by Satan). God will tear down the kingdoms of men that attempt to compete with His Kingdom. God destroyed the Tower of Babel, and man has been trying to rebuild it ever since rather than placing their trust in Him.
7. Jeremiah 48:14 -- “How do you say, ‘We are heroes and mighty men of war’?” God destroys all human pride which is an affront to Him.
8. Jeremiah 48:20 – “Moab is put to shame, for it is broken; wail and cry! Tell it beside the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste. Moab is put to shame, for it is broken; wail and cry! Tell it beside the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste.” When God punishes a nation, it often surprises and confounds them.
9. Jeremiah 48:26 -- “Make him drunk, because he magnified himself against the Lord, so that Moab shall wallow in his vomit, and he too shall be held in derision.” To take credit for success without reference to God is to oppose God.
10. Jeremiah 48:29, 30 – “We have heard of the pride of Moab— he is very proud— of his loftiness, his pride, and his arrogance, and the haughtiness of his heart. I know his insolence, declares the Lord; his boasts are false, his deeds are false.” Again, God destroys all human pride which is an affront to Him.
11. Jeremiah 48:30, 33 – “I know his insolence, declares the Lord; his boasts are false, his deeds are false.... Gladness and joy have been taken away from the fruitful land of Moab; I have made the wine

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cease from the winepresses; no one treads them with shouts of joy; the shouting is not the shout of joy." God will silence the self-reliant boasting of any person or nation and take away their joy.

12. Jeremiah 48:36 – "Therefore my heart moans for Moab like a flute, and my heart moans like a flute for the men of Kir-hareseth. Therefore the riches they gained have perished." Judgment makes your material resources useless.

13. Jeremiah 48:38 – "On all the housetops of Moab and in the squares there is nothing but lamentation, for I have broken Moab like a vessel for which no one cares, declares the Lord." God's judgment destroys nations in a rapid, complete, and irreversible way, like a piece of pottery which is shattered and cannot be repaired.

14. Proverbs 28:1 – "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." God's truth is uniting, not divisive. When leaders point everyone to Christ, the closer they all get to Christ, the closer they get to each other, and the closer they get to Peace, Love, Joy, and Hope.

15. Proverbs 28:5 – "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely." There is no complete justice apart from God; no one approaches God but through Jesus Christ. No leader who fails to proclaim Christ first can bring true justice to a people. Christians see very clearly the injustice of the justice systems of this earth, and Christians are called to be the conscience of society, always trying to steer people back to Jesus.

16. Proverbs 28:7 -- "The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father." Why is the law contrasted with gluttony? Because both relate, from opposite positions, with self-control and self-discipline. There are many undisciplined, self-centered, destructive behaviors that are not illegal but are still wrong, signs of disrespect for God. The last fruit of the spirit described in Galatians 5 is self-control. Self-control is not an intellectual ability, it is a spiritual ability. Do you have it?

17. Proverbs 28:9 -- "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." God does not reward bad behavior. God is not here to serve you. You are here to serve Him. This is a consistent message throughout the Bible.

18. Proverbs 28:14 – "Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity." This is true for both people and nations. A hard lesson revealed in the Old Testament.

19. Proverbs 28:19 – "Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty." Worthless pursuits are those that have no virtuous reproduction capacity to support the needs of others (not the just the wants of others).

20. Proverbs 28:26 – "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered." Do you know any fools?

21. Psalm 127:1, 2 -- "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep."

- We were created to serve God and to fulfill His will on earth. Whatever we are doing for self is a waste of time and will not prevail.

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- So many churches and Christians are wearing themselves out pursuing goals God never intended for them to pursue. Too often we decide how we are going to serve God rather than waiting on Him and merely being faithful with the little things He places before us day by day. It is usually pride, fear, and feelings of inadequacy that drive us towards emotional decision-making and pursuit of works of the flesh rather than works of the Spirit which come from the Spirit's lead. God has given you just enough time and resources in a day to do exactly what He wants you to do without losing your peace and joy. He does not equip each day to pursue your own goals and ambitions, things He never asked you to do. "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it (Proverbs 10:22)." Why wear yourself out and ruin your joy and peace trying to get what God never intended you to have and what God will never allow you to keep? Serve God, rest in Him, receive His blessings which will exceed your expectations, and have peace in life.

22. Psalm 127:3-5 -- "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate." Children are a blessing from God, a reward from God. Treat them as such.

23. Psalm 127 -- If you aren't working for the LORD, your work is futile, regardless of how hard you work. Are you advancing the Kingdom of God or trying to build your own kingdom on earth?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 Oct 18: Rest in the Lord today. (Psalm 127:2)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 6, Saturday, 27 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+44-46%3B+pro+27%3B+psalm+125>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 27 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 44:5 – "But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods." God doesn't accept idols in your life, things that you allow to detract from your wholehearted devotion to God. These things aren't little statues for most people. The Bible says, "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord..." (1 Samuel 15:23) "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5) "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:14)

2. Jeremiah 44:7, 11-12 – "And now thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah, leaving you no remnant?' Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt.' To depart from God after discipline is to face judgment.

3. Jeremiah 44:10 -- "They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers...."

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- Humility and fear of the Lord lead to obedience. Disobedience is a lack of both humility and fear of the Lord and is a rejection of the Sovereignty of God – this is the highest of all possible treasons. God is patient, but God will humble the proud, particularly those who claim the name of Christ yet play loose with sin. Humility, reverence, and obedience -- only the humble will follow Jesus Christ.

- Sin is a pride problem. It is always placing yourself higher than God, at least at that moment. For example, holding back forgiveness from someone is saying that you deserve more justice than Jesus, who gave His life for sinners. You may not have considered that even the sin of fear is the product of pride. Pride demands control, and fear is a response to a sense of a loss of control. Fear is the opposite of faith, and some will have faith in self (pride), which proves inadequate, while others will place their faith in God (real faith, surrender, confidence in Him). When the idol of self proves false, fear enters into the picture. Humble faith in God, however, never proves false. Those with faith in Jesus also have hope – faith projected forward to the future. Those without faith and hope have a void in their soul that they try to fill with more self, attempting to strengthen their faith in self. So, they try to build upon the lie of self-sufficiency. They get more money, more education, more “friends,” more awards, etc. However, the fear that can never replace hope only grows because inside people know that the bigger the house built on a foundation of sand, the more catastrophic the collapse. The Bible says, that humility comes before honor, that pride comes before the fall, that without faith it is impossible to please God, that we must build our house on the rock of Jesus, that we must seek the Kingdom of God rather than our own kingdoms. Learn from the Bible and truly place all your faith in God and not in your own abilities or anything else.

4. Jeremiah 44:15 – “Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah....” Both men and women lead a nation to sin; both men and women can be mighty witnesses for Jesus.

5. Jeremiah 44:18 – “But since we left off making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.” Israel gave substitutes for God credit for what God had done.

6. Jeremiah 44:21 -- “As for the offerings that you offered in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them? Did it not come into his mind?” Just because God has yet to judge our nation for the sins we have committed, doesn’t mean He isn’t going to. His delay reflects His patience as He waits for repentance. But God doesn’t wait endlessly.

7. Jeremiah 44:22 – “Therefore your land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day.” Many scoff at the idea that a nation’s sins are the cause of the crisis it experiences. However, throughout the Bible, God punishes nations through wars, famine, disease, natural disasters, economic collapse, bad leadership, etc. God is in complete control.

8. Jeremiah 44:26 – “Therefore hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by my great name, says the Lord, that my name shall no more be invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, ‘As the Lord God lives.’” God swears an oath to Himself because He is Everything, with nothing higher. God’s promises are sure.

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9. Jeremiah 44:29 – “This shall be the sign to you, declares the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for harm,” God carries out the judgment about which He warns.

10. Jeremiah 45:5 – “And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not, for behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the Lord. But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go.” God does not want you to seek personal success or power in order to build for yourself a personal kingdom as a replacement for The Kingdom. God will not allow you to put yourself on a throne rather than honoring God on His Throne.

11. Jeremiah 46 -- God controls the fortunes of all nations.

12. Jeremiah 46:8-10 -- Egypt rises like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge. He said, ‘I will rise, I will cover the earth, I will destroy cities and their inhabitants.’ Advance, O horses, and rage, O chariots! Let the warriors go out: men of Cush and Put who handle the shield, men of Lud, skilled in handling the bow. That day is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes. The sword shall devour and be sated and drink its fill of their blood. For the Lord God of hosts holds a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.” God destroys the proud expectations of the world’s most powerful leaders.

13. Jeremiah 46:12 – “The nations have heard of your shame.” For those who lack humility, God will bring shame, to prove their pride a lie and potentially drive them to humility.

14. Jeremiah 46:28 – “Fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the Lord, for I am with you.” God continually calls us to put an end to a life of fear by trusting in Him rather than self or anything else. If your faith is in God, you cannot fear because you trust that the God who loves you is in complete control and will only respond to you out of perfect love, giving you only the very best. Faith inspires you to see past the appearance of things to the reality of things. Things may appear to be bad, but to the Christian, all things are good.

15. Jeremiah 46:28 – “Fear not... declares the Lord, for I am with you.... I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.” Don’t be scared of God’s discipline. It doesn’t mean God is abandoning you, on the contrary, He is giving you what is best for you. Like a loving parent does with a child, He must punish you to perfect you. Have faith through discipline, and draw closer to Jesus, not farther away. Remain obedient through discipline and return to humble submission. Don’t despise God’s discipline but be thankful and grow in your love and appreciation for your Father who seeks to bring you to the place where you can have the fullness of joy.

16. Proverbs 27:6 -- "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." Honest words from true friends are for your benefit, provided to you unselfishly; words from fake friends are for their benefit, provided to you selfishly.

17. Proverbs 27:17 -- "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." True friends challenge you and support you to make you better, to help you get closer to Jesus. A true friend doesn't want anything to stand between you and Jesus. If your friends aren't in a partnership with you to get closer and closer to Jesus, you need better friends.

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18. Proverbs 27:23-27 – “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations? When the grass is gone and the new growth appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field. There will be enough goats’ milk for your food, for the food of your household and maintenance for your girls.” While others are focused on obtaining wealth, comfort, and pleasure in the here and now, focus on building wealth generating capacity for the long haul. Don’t be satisfied with produce, seek what produces the produce, seek production capacity.

19. Psalm 125:1 – “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.” There is a clear theme in today’s readings – humility, faith, hope, trust, obedience, love.

20. Psalm 125:3 -- “For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong.” When the wicked lead a nation, the righteous are tempted to sin. The ungodly should not be allowed to lead.

21. Psalm 125:5 – “Peace be upon Israel!” You will never have peace in life until you have faith, hope, and love. Summary: Humility comes before honor, and pride before the fall. Fear is the product of pride. Faith comes from humility. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith surrenders all to God and trusts God rather than self or any other idol. Faith walks in obedience and the greatest command to obey is love. It takes faith to love because it takes faith to be vulnerable in love and to suffer in love. Faith trusts God through the suffering for a greater blessing than can be imagined today. Faith, hope, and love bring peace as we become one with the Father and the Son. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. The goal is not goodness or blessings, the goal is Jesus. Your goal today is to humbly follow Jesus, trusting and obeying Him. Don’t let anything distract you today.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 Oct 18: Today, seek to understand your fears from the perspective of your pride, your trust in self rather than Jesus, your focus on self rather than Jesus and others. Discover your hidden pride and pray for greater humility. Put your trust in Jesus and grow in faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love. Consider how well you are loving God and others today. Realize that your unloving words and deeds have their root in fear, pride, and selfishness. Pray that God will help you truly search your heart and remove your selfish pride. Recognize your pride, but don’t stare at it. Rather, keep your eyes on Jesus. Follow Him today, only Him. (see today’s readings)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 5, Friday, 26 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+42%2C+43%3B+pro+26%3B+2+John+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 26 Oct 18:

1. Jeremiah 42:6 – “...we will obey the voice of the Lord our God....” A right perspective on God leaves no debate about obedience. No sane person would consider disobeying the KING of Kings.

2. Jeremiah 42:6 – “Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.” God's view of what is "good" or "bad" is far different than our view. As Romans 8:28 explains, "For those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Romans goes on to say, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” (Romans 8:29) According to God’s word,

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when we are in fellowship with God, He uses all circumstances for good purposes beyond our understanding and to conform us to the image of His Son. If we allow circumstances or our actions hinder our fellowship with Him, failing to trust Him, to obey Him, and to remain joyful (though not necessarily happy), we only hinder God's blessings in our lives. We might think when we get what we want it is good, and when we don't it is bad, but if what we want is not what He wants, we misinterpret the circumstances, misinterpret God's ways, and set ourselves for unnecessary pain. No one wants to go through hard times, but often hard times are what are needed to glorify God and conform us to the image of Christ. This is why the Bible tells us to rejoice in trials, tribulations, and suffering (Matt 5:12; Luke 6:23; 1 Pet 4:13; James 1:2; Rom 5:3; 1 Thes 1:6).

3. Jeremiah 42:11 -- "Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid."

- One major theme in the Bible is that fear of man more than fear of God will lead to terrible sin. This fear of man comes in many forms and is an incredible temptation. For most people, it is peer pressure or social pressure that creates the most temptation, wanting to keep peace with the crowd rather than peace with God, or wanting to be approved by others rather than approved by God. For others the primary temptation might be fear of authority figures, believing their fate to be in the hands of the authorities rather than in the hands of God. Key is trusting and obeying God above all else -- "No king but King Jesus!"

- We have put too much stock in government. We talk more about politicians than we do about Jesus Christ.

4. Jeremiah 42:13-17 -- "But if you say, '...we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,' then hear the word of the Lord, ...the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die." There is always a risk of syncretism, the blending of false worldly beliefs with God's truth in order to "get along" or have "unity" with those around us; this is compromise that threatens our holiness. Purity is more important than unity. In the US, Christianity has been compromised for sake of the American Dream. We are very careful not to offend with the truth, and we adopt what seems to work in this world rather than what God commands in order to enjoy the comfort and riches of our pleasure-seeking society. This security is an illusion. Security only comes from fidelity to God.

5. Jeremiah 42:13-22 -- "But if... then." It is very popular in churches to preach on "The promises of God," but rarely do the preachers point out that most of God's promises are conditional. God will respond to you in a certain way "if" you respond to Him in a certain way. The way is love and obedience. God is not simply your genie in a bottle, here to give you gifts and empower you to get all you want out of life. We are here to love Him, serve Him, and glorify Him -- this is what we were created to do. When we fulfill our purpose, we are blessed as promised.

6. Jeremiah 42:19-22 -- "The Lord has said to you..., 'Do not go to Egypt.' ...you have gone astray at the cost of your lives. For you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God, and whatever the Lord our God says declare to us and we will do it.' ...but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God.... Now therefore know for a certainty that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to live." The people said they wanted to follow the Lord, but they went to the world for their provision, comfort, and security. They prayed but didn't obey.

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They trusted in government over God. This mistake had short-term payoff but ultimately cost them everything.

7. Jeremiah 43:2 -- "Azariah... and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, 'You are telling a lie. The Lord our God did not send you....'"

- Azariah's fatal decision was that he did not believe God's prophet. Why? One, because the prophet said what Azariah didn't want to hear. Two, he did not trust Jeremiah because he did not have a right relationship with either God or Jeremiah. Knowing who to trust and from whom to receive biblical counsel is critical. Who can you trust to advise you solely from God's word? And when this godly, trusted advisor does counsel you, are you willing to listen and do what the Bible tells you to do?

- When people don't like what God had to say they invent their own version of the truth to justify their disobedience. They will then violently defend their flawed, sinful positions. God's word stands no matter what popular public opinion says.

8. Proverbs 26:4, 8 -- "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.... Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool." There is a danger of becoming like who you challenge. How we respond to sinners often reveals the sin within our own hearts.

9. Proverbs 26:7 -- "Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Fools often know the word but won't do the word. They may claim to be Christian but are guided by their own fears/desires and the teachings of the world rather than Him.

10. Proverbs 26:12 -- "Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Fools think they know better than God's word.

11. Proverbs 26:18-20 -- "Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, 'I am only joking!' For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases." The Bible holds you accountable for careless words and careless dealings which impact others' lives in a negative way. How we influence other people's lives is nothing to be taken lightly.

12. 2 John 1:1 -- "The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth..." There is no love apart from the Truth.

13. 2 John 1:3 -- "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love." Grace, mercy, and peace can only come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, and only in both truth and love. Again, there is no love apart from the truth. This is wholly contrary from what the world says.

14. 2 John 1:3 -- "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love." Your level of grace, mercy, and peace reveals how close you are to Jesus.

15. 2 John 1:4-11 -- "I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.... And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.... Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in

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the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works."

- "I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father." Knowing the truth isn't enough. We must "walk" in the truth with peace and joy out of love. If you are obeying but it is difficult for you, you still have a love problem.

- "And now I ask you... that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it." Once again, love requires obedience to God's commands.

- "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves.... Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works." Which of our leaders in America proclaim the Gospel above all else? Christians often get excited about leaders who never mention Jesus or His Gospel but proclaim a message of salvation through human effort and achievement. The seemingly good message that doesn't point to Christ is ultimately deception. Remember, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching [the Gospel], do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works." Don't fall into the trap of moralism. How many times will you proclaim Jesus Christ today?

- John was known as the 'Apostle of Love.' Notice how adamant John is about the requirement for obedience in love. This is in stark contrast to the world today which sees calls to obedience as somehow 'unloving.' Notice also how the 'Apostle of Love' has no tolerance for those who teach anything other than Christ and obedience to him. Why? Because to 'tolerate' false teachings and sinful practices is to make one culpable for the eternal demise of others and to dishonor God. No, true Christians are not always tolerant – they can't be while remaining in love.

- Love and obedience are inseparable. Where you are not obeying, you are unloving.

- "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." As discussed previously, this isn't just a verbal confession, it is a life confession proclaimed by actions. If you don't live for Jesus, you are anti-Christ, regardless of what you say. If you are not physically gathering with Jesus, you are scattering.

- "Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." Abiding in the teaching is obeying the teaching. Don't hang out with fake Christians who Jesus calls hypocrites, the Greek word for actors.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 Oct 18: Demonstrate your love today through obedience, joy, grace, mercy and peace. (2 John 1)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 4, Thursday, 25 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+40%2C+41%3B+pro+25%3B+1+john+5>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 25 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 40:3 – “The Lord has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you.” God often punishes sin by orchestrating circumstances against the sinner. The unbeliever will not accept this idea.

2. Jeremiah 40:4 – “Now, behold, I release you today from the chains on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you well, but if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See, the whole land is before you; go wherever you think it good and right to go.” Ironically, Jeremiah gained freedom of choice under Babylon after Judah had put him in prison.

3. Jeremiah 40:5-7 – “‘If you remain, then return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever you think it right to go.’ When all the captains of the forces in the open country and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land and had committed to him men, women, and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile to Babylon.’ So the captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present, and let him go. Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land.” Under the worst circumstances, God can still deliver his faithful from total destruction and can orchestrate circumstances to provide for them and comfort them.

4. Jeremiah 40:10-12 – “‘As for me, I will dwell at Mizpah, to represent you before the Chaldeans who will come to us. But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken.’ Likewise, when all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as governor over them, then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been driven and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance.” God’s people, for thousands of years, have had to learn to live under foreign, ungodly rule.

5. Jeremiah 40:10-41:7 -- People often think that their schemes and plots can control history without realizing God remains in control and no plan prevails over His. Succeeding generations often refuse to learn the right lessons from God’s work in history, which is “His-story.”

6. Jeremiah 41:8-9, 18 – “But there were ten men among them who said to Ishmael, ‘Do not put us to death, for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey hidden in the fields.’ So he refrained and did not put them to death with their companions. Now the cistern into which Ishmael had thrown all the bodies of the men whom he had struck down along with Gedaliah was the large cistern that King Asa had made for defense against Baasha king of Israel; Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain.... because of the Chaldeans. For they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.” Fear of people rather than fear of God is often, unfortunately, the primary motivator for most people’s actions despite God’s stern warning against fearing man.

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7. Proverbs 25:11-12, 15, 18 – “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.... With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.... A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.” Your words have a powerful impact on your environment and on people within your environment. Your words shape the outcome of events and influence the hearts of others. Your words will either make things better or worse, reconcile or further divide, build up or tear down, energize others or deenergize others. Knowledge is not enough; you must transmit knowledge in a way that can be well received by the listener; you must understand your audience and have a sense of timing and effectiveness. You must be salt and light, but too much light can be blinding, and too much salt can ruin the flavor. Impersonal communication is often unloving, regardless the content. God is very concerned about how you speak and how you listen.

8. Proverbs 25:19-20 – “Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips. Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.” God wants you to learn who to trust and who not to trust.

9. 1 John 5:1-5 – “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

- True believers believe in Jesus, the kind of belief that trusts and follows.

- The product and evidence of our love is obedience. Truly loving others requires genuine love for God and obedience to his commands. We know that sin (all wrongdoing) is not only an offense to God but also hurts others. Though “the Son of God has come and has given us understanding,” and though, through Jesus, we have “overcome the world,” no one loves perfectly, and, therefore we still sin. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).” As we grow in faith and love, our obedience increases. Jesus loved perfectly and was wholly (holy) obedient to the Father. In fact, he said that he did nothing unless the Father commanded him. My sin reveals to me the true condition of my heart and reveals where I have not completely surrendered. Holiness is a journey following the path of God’s Word: “How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:9-11).” Our spiritual growth process as we walk in the Light is described in Proverbs 4:18: “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.”

- Many people are quick to say that they believe Jesus is the Son of God, but their actions don’t reveal it. The reality of Jesus changes everything in a person’s life, driving them to radical love and obedience. The true believer overcomes the temptations, worries, fears, and trappings of the world. They aren’t perfect, but they are being perfected every day in evident ways. God’s people love other Christians. God’s people believe that Jesus is the Son of God, The KING of Kings, and they follow their King, not just from a sense of duty, but from wholehearted love. The mark of genuine love is willing obedience to God’s commands.

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All acts of love conform to God's commands. Sinful relationships are by definition unloving regardless of how the world defines them.

- The prerequisite for love and godliness is faith in Jesus Christ and rebirth through him (see John 3 for the requirement to be born again). The way we love others is to “love God and obey his commands.” I hope that the modern church will relearn this vital relationship between love and obedience. God’s commands reflect God’s perfect character, perfect will, and perfect love; they reveal the way to apply or live out love which Jesus Christ perfectly demonstrated for us, ultimately on the cross. The God who IS love has given us the commands of love that we may learn the ways of true love, learning as children to walk as Jesus walked in perfect love. John points out that as we grow in love, God’s commands become less burdensome for us because we become more aligned with them in love – we desire to obey God because we no longer have to resist our unloving hearts. By definition, ANYTHING we say or do that is contrary to God’s commands is unloving, hateful, murderous, even blasphemous (against God). How can you examine yourself to assess how loving you are? Joyful obedience to Jesus Christ is the test of love – “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” What is the greatest way to love others? Love and obey God, pointing the way to Jesus Christ.

10. 1 John 5:12 -- “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” Again, many, many Christians are substituting the Gospel message with moralism, ethics, and charity. The Bible is clear that we are to minister to the needs of others, but in the name of Jesus with the Gospel as our message. How urgently are you sharing the Gospel of Jesus with those who do not have the Son? How many times will you proclaim Jesus Christ today?

11. 1 John 5:14 -- “If we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” The Bible doesn’t say ‘if we ask anything, He hears us,’ rather it says, “If we ask anything according to His will.” God does not support or resource what isn’t within His will. If you want what God wants, you will get what you want.

12. 1 John 5:18 -- “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning.” Salvation changes your whole life. When you truly put your faith in Jesus, you are never the same again. What does your behavior say to others about your God?

13. 1 John 5:21 -- “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Don’t prioritize anything over Jesus and His commands. Your success today is measured in how faithfully you follow and serve Him out of your love for Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Oct 18: Today, pray, but seek to pray within God’s will and not your own will. Pray first for the heart and mind of Jesus. (1 John 5:14)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 3, Wednesday, 24 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+38%2C+39%3B+proverbs+24%3B+1+John+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 24 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 38:4 -- “Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm.” The truth often hurts, but “wounds from a friend can be trusted.” In this case, the truth was hurting morale, which directly effects the strength of the

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fighting force. The officials had good reason to be concerned, but they were wrong in assuming that Jeremiah intended to harm them – quite the opposite was true. If you love someone, you must tell them the truth. Jeremiah was willing to tell the truth to those who did not want to hear it at great peril to his life.

2. Jeremiah 38:6 -- "So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern, but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud." Jeremiah was faithful to God's word, and God allowed him to be persecuted in a life-threatening way. What doubts would you have had in Jeremiah's position? Do you need people or circumstances to validate your fidelity to God?

3. Jeremiah 38:19 -- "King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, 'I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest I be handed over to them and they deal cruelly with me.'" King Zedekiah's character was 180-out from Jeremiah's. King Zedekiah was motivated by fear and self-preservation, ready to disobey God and destroy a city in hopes of saving his own skin. Where does fear and selfishness rule in your life?

4. Jeremiah 39:7, 8 -- "He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon. The Chaldeans burned the king's house and the house of the people, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem." There is no limit to the cruelty of the ungodly who do not know true love, love which can only come from God. Expect no mercy or compassion from the ungodly.

5. Proverbs 24:11, 12 -- "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" These Proverbs cannot be repeated enough to Christians. Those without Jesus face terrible consequences on earth but, more importantly, eternal damnation. Christians can't act like they are not responsible for those around them who are on the path of destruction. It is selfish to avoid uncomfortable conversations, keeping people from hearing the eternal truth they desperately need. Your enemy's salvation should be of utmost importance to you.

6. Proverbs 24:32 -- "Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction." The truth of God's word is revealed all around you as circumstances play out in the lives of others. One person observed that wisdom understands without experiencing. In other words, it is wise to avoid the mistakes of others by learning from the experiences of others without experiencing the same circumstances yourself. The Bible warns you on what you should do and shouldn't do. Don't put God's word to the test. When others do, observe and learn even further.

7. 1 John 4:1 -- "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." Go to the source for your understanding. Keep the Holy Spirit as your Counsellor and Teacher. The best another person can do to instruct you is to refer you to Him and repeat what He said. No one can add to God's word. Go to God.

8. 1 John 4:2, 3 -- "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."

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- To be clear, other religions are 'antichrist' and DO NOT lead to God. "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." (1 John 4:13-15) Only through the Spirit can a person truly confess Jesus – the Spirit within us causes us to uncontrollably "confess that Jesus is the Son of God." It is amazing to me how many who call themselves Christians are more concerned about offending others than saving them from eternal separation from God.

- Many Christians, even pastors, have largely eliminated the name Jesus from their social discourse, choosing rather to preach a form of moralism rather than the Gospel. They justify this by claiming to be 'seeker sensitive,' not wanting to offend, not wanting to 'lose their witness,' etc. Whatever the reason, these teachers have not put Jesus Christ first, rendering them false teachers. The solution to man's problems is not principles but rather a Person, Jesus Christ. We are Christ's Ambassadors, not self-help gurus who put our spin on what Jesus said. Charity is not enough, education is not enough. What people need is Jesus – that is the only message of a true teacher.

- In your conversations, the name Jesus Christ will be the filter separating those being convicted by the Holy Spirit and those who are not. Many Christians get sucked into that comfortable, acceptable conversation and convince themselves that they are somehow fulfilling the Great Commission of making "disciples" who "obey" Jesus Christ. Start your advice with a call for repentance and surrender to Jesus and see who is still willing to listen. Those are the ones to invest in. Of course, you are likely to pay a hefty price for your faithful, uncompromised approach. John 14:6 -- "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Is Jesus' message your message?

9. 1 John 4:7, 8 -- "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

- God's main command for us is love. "God is love." There is no love apart from God. God, The Creator, is the Creator of love and the source of love. People cannot produce or create love, only radiate the love they have received from God. The closer you are to God, the more you can truly love. Strive for unity with God, and you will grow more loving as a natural result. Anything that comes from another source and is presented as love is a lie, a false love. The closer you are to Jesus, the more you really know Him, the more you will love others with a real love, not the false, fake worldly version of love.

- Throughout the Bible we are commanded by God to love, demonstrating that love is a choice we have to make. However, it is impossible for us to make that choice if love is not "manifested" in us through Jesus Christ. We must be "born" spiritually through Jesus to have the Spirit of God (who IS love) within us. We can only "choose" to love God because God first chose us – "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10) So, it seems to me that God has given us the ability to love (an ability that only truly comes from God) so that we have the power to choose to love – "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:11) As we choose to love one another, "God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12) But again, John makes it very clear that anyone who claims to have love apart from Jesus Christ has been deceived – "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." (1 John 4:15) Only through Christ can we be "perfected" in love. Jesus said that to abide with him we must also obey him, and John points out that this obedience should be based on love rather

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than fear. Since God has commanded us, above all else, to love, it is probably wise to search the Scriptures to understand what He means by love:

-- John 15:13 -- Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

-- 1 Timothy 1:5 -- The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

-- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 -- Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

-- Ephesians 4:2 -- walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

-- Romans 12:9-21 -- Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it[c] to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

10. 1 John 4:10-11 -- "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." God has called us to emulate His boundless, unconditional love that is not dependent on the response of the recipient of our love. In fact, it is inevitable that this sort of love will involve bearing the burden and forgiving the offenses of those incapable of returning such love: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) Out of obedience, which is a product of love, Jeremiah delivered God's Word to the king and was subsequently abused to the point of near death. In response, he showed no bitterness or anger but continued to speak truth to them. Love cannot remain silent while people perish. As it says in today's Proverbs: "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" (Proverbs 24:11, 12) Finally, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18). Fear stands in the way of love. The antidote to fear is unconditional forgiveness. Through Christ we have complete forgiveness so we can experience the joy of God's love without fear of punishment. We now must provide the same type of forgiveness to others so that there is no fear of retribution that would stand in the way of reconciliation.

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11. 1 John 4:12 -- "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." The love you show others reveals how much you really know and love God and are used by God. Love is the proof of your salvation in Jesus.

12. 1 John 4:13 -- "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." Again, love is impossible without the empowering of the Holy Spirit and irresistible while abiding in the Holy Spirit. If you are unloving, you either are not saved and lack the Spirit, or you are quenching the Spirit or are out of step with the Spirit due to sin in your life.

13. 1 John 4:15, 16 -- "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So, we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

- The confession mentioned here is not simply a verbal statement, it is a life-altering conviction. It is a total surrender to Jesus and to His love. It is a confession that makes Jesus our life's ambition. If you want Jesus above all else, He will never deny you.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- The greatest truth in all of Scripture is this: God is love. Understanding this in its full dimensions will set you free to enjoy all that is yours as a Christian. But you must accept that God loves you. If you grew up experiencing unconditional love in your family, this may not be difficult for you. However, if your early years were void of love, this truth may be hard to accept. God loves you, not because you deserve His love, but because His nature is love. The only way He will ever relate to you is in love. His love for you gives you an inherent worth that nothing can diminish. If you cannot accept the truth that God loves you, you will be limited in how you can relate to Him. When He disciplines you, you will not take it as an expression of His love. Rather, you may resent Him. When God says no to a request that is less than His best for you, you will conclude that He doesn't care about you. Without a clear understanding and acceptance of God's love for you, you will be disoriented to Him and to what He wants to do in your life. If you will accept God's love, however, you will be able to return love to God as well as to others (1 John 4:19). Are you experiencing the profound sense of joy and security that comes from knowing you are dearly loved by God? Being assured of God's love for you sets you free to enjoy the numerous expressions of love He showers upon you each day.

14. 1 John 4:18 -- "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." Those who love Jesus obey Him not because they are scared not to, but rather because they love Him and want to honor Him and glorify Him above all else. Love is a much greater motivator than fear. Only through faith and love can you please God. Everything you do that is selfishly motivated is unacceptable to God.

15. 1 John 4:19-21 -- "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

- It doesn't get much clearer than this. How you love others reveals how much you really love God.

- The best measure of your relationship with God is how you love others. This is why Jesus tied together the love of God and the love of others in His response to the question, "What is the greatest commandment." Religious activities, religious knowledge, and charitable contributions are not measures

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of your godliness – genuine love is the measure of your godliness. If you don't feel loving, check your relationship with Jesus Christ. What might be hindering that relationship?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 Oct 18: Today, consider how you love those around you, particularly those who are hard to love. What does your attitude towards others reveal about the truth of your relationship with Jesus? What might be standing in the way of your relationship with Jesus and with others? Pray that God will draw you closer to Jesus that you can genuinely love more and more. (1 John 4) Also today, don't preach moralism, values, ethics, and principles -- preach Jesus Christ! Don't replace the Gospel with good ideas. Be an Ambassador for Christ, not self-help guru. Don't talk about what you have done or what you think. Talk about what He did/does and what He commands. Go and "make disciples" who "obey" Jesus, not more motivated humanists who want to believe that self-control can be obtained apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. As His ambassador, how many times will you say the name Jesus Christ today? (1 John 4:1-6)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 2, Tuesday, 23 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+36%2C+37%3B+proverbs+23%3B+1+John+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 23 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 36:3 – “It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that everyone may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.” God wanted Jeremiah to preach the truth about Israel's sin in order to give them a chance to repent. The truth was to be proclaimed for the sake of love. God sovereignly gives us the freedom to choose. Our choices do not alter His perfect plan, but we still bear the burden of choice.

2. Jeremiah 36:5 – “And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, ‘I am banned from going to the house of the Lord, for you are to go.’” There came a time when God's word was not allowed to be proclaimed in the ‘church,’ only what suited the government. Religious and political leaders may prevent true followers of Christ from speaking the truth because the leaders reject the truth and are threatened by the truth. Nevertheless, we should look for opportunities to speak the truth anyway.

3. Jeremiah 36:23, 24 – “As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot. Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments.”

- Ignoring God's word or refusing to accept it doesn't change God's word, it only changes the one who rejects it, further hardening the heart and sealing the hearer/reader's fate.

- Powerful leaders can show complete contempt for God and think nothing of it, demonstrating incredible arrogance and bringing great judgment upon themselves and those who would follow them.

4. Jeremiah 36:26 – “but the Lord hid them.” The officials warned Baruch and Jeremiah to hide, which they did, but the Bible says also that “the Lord hid them.” Success comes from the Lord, not from our actions, but we must first be willing to do our part, and we must be responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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5. Jeremiah 37:3 – “King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘Please pray for us to the Lord our God.’” Ironically, king Zedekiah defied God’s word yet hoped that God would still show mercy to him and bless him. One cannot expect God to bless sin.

6. Jeremiah 37:15 – “And the officials were enraged at Jeremiah, and they beat him and imprisoned him in the house of Jonathan the secretary, for it had been made a prison.” Jeremiah’s faithfulness to God and his refusal to keep God’s word to himself earned him a beating from the king. He was a successful prophet. How do you measure success?

7. Jeremiah 37:7-20 – The people had to decide between trusting God or the powerful armies of Egypt. It takes faith to believe the promises of God that cannot be seen in the face of tangible evidence that would seem to contradict God’s word.

8. Proverbs 23:17 – “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.”

- Don’t be influenced by the teachings of the world which seem to bring success to the ungodly. Their apparent success is a hollow deception. Trust and obey God.

- Envy is another form of fear of man, and it is disloyalty to God. We see what other are getting through ungodliness, and we want what they have more than what God has given us. We start to question (subconsciously) whether or not God is going to take care of us or is treating us fairly, and in our perceived relative deprivation, we “God to Egypt”. Abandoning (spiritually) our King.

9. Proverbs 23:20, 21 -- “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty.”

- Drunkards and gluttons lack self-control. Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit to have self-control, to live disciplined, holy lives.

- Some research suggests that the Christian population in America is more obese than the rest of the population. What does the Bible say about that?

10. 1 John 3:3 – “And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” Those who really love Jesus pursue purity as an act of love and worship. How you endeavor to purify yourself reveals what sort of faith, hope, and love you really have.

11. 1 John 3:4 – “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” From Henry T. Blackaby – “It is a dangerous thing to live your life without a spiritual “plumb line,” or standard, by which you determine right from wrong. God’s Word is that plumb line. Spiritual laws, like physical laws, are meant to protect you, not restrict you. You may exercise your freedom to challenge the laws of electricity, but to do so can bring you death. Likewise, you will not break God’s laws, they will break you. God established absolute moral and spiritual laws that we are free to ignore, but we do so at our own peril. These laws are timeless. Culture does not supersede them. Circumstances do not abrogate them. God’s laws are eternal, and they will save you from death if you follow them. You may feel that God’s laws restrict and bind you. On the contrary, God’s Word protects you from death (Rom. 6:23). For example, when God said that you are not to commit adultery, He wanted to free you to experience the fullest pleasure of a marriage relationship. Furthermore, He knew the devastating heartache that would come to you, your spouse, your children, your relatives, your

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friends, and your church family if you broke this law. How important the laws of God are for your life! Without them, you would be robbed of the delights God has in store for you. Sin is choosing a standard other than God's law on which to base your life. If you are measuring your life by that of your neighbors, or society at large, then you are basing your life on lawlessness, and lawlessness is sin."

12. 1 John 3:5-10 -- "You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." 1 John 3 closely mirrors 1 John 2. It is almost as if he is saying the same thing twice, this time in a different way. First, he drives home to essentiality of obedience, holiness, and righteousness in the life of a Christian, and then he immediately turns to 'love' as the ultimate test of obedience -- he digs in deep into the heart as if he has anticipated the listener who would start counting off their 'good deeds' and 'works of service' in their heads while denying the truth of their self-centeredness, anger, bitterness, envy, greed, lust, and pride. He has to say it twice because he knows too well our nature. In both chapters, John challenges the 'desires' that drive the outward activities, and dares us to be honest with what is in our hearts. (1 John 2:16; 1 John 3:21) In both chapters, John reminds us that we cannot walk both in selfishness and with Christ -- we must die of ourselves and be selfless. From the perspective of love (rather than pride or fear) he returns to the importance of making your faith tangible in this world -- "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18) Genuine love comes from "a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (1 Timothy 1:5) Those who desire a "pure heart" must "flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness" -- two action verbs that involve running at max effort, not lightly or half-heartedly. (2 Timothy 2:22) Those who desire a good conscience must live in humility, repentance, and confession before the Lord, constantly living out 1 John 1:9 -- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." John makes a VERY important point here: "you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--just as it has taught you, abide in him." (1 John 2:26) In Christ, you have become the 'priest' and the Holy Spirit within you reveals truth to you, convicts you, and teaches you. (1 Peter 2:9, Rev 5:10) While others might be used by God to convict you, the issues of your heart are between you and God and must be dealt with solely between the two of you. No one else knows your heart but God. "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." (Ephesians 4:30) What has the Holy Spirit revealed about the condition of your heart that must be confessed (as in 1 John 1:9) today?

13. 1 John 3:6 - "No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him." More thoughts from Henry T. Blackaby -- "The Bible makes two things clear about sin. First, living a lifestyle of sin indicates that you are not walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, regardless of what you say about your spiritual condition. You cannot regularly spend time studying and meditating on God's word, praying and walking in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and persist in sin. Second, if you do not hate sin the way God does, then you do not truly know Him. There are those who continue in their sin yet insist that they love God and belong to Him. John makes it clear: If you have a

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lifestyle of sin, you have not seen Him and do not know Him. You may have prayed a “sinner’s prayer,” or made a commitment in your church, or been baptized, but the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence in your life is that you are defeating sin. This does not mean that you will never sin, but it does mean that you refuse to make sin a lifestyle and you immediately seek forgiveness when you sin (1 John 1:10). It means that you are opposed to sin, as God is, and you allow the Holy Spirit to eradicate every trace of sin in your life. It means that when you sin, you immediately confess it and repent of it and do whatever is necessary to avoid repeating your sin. If you find yourself falling into sinful habits or not grieving over your sin as you once did, this indicates that you are not abiding in Christ. Return to Him in repentance; restore your fellowship with Him, and you will once again experience victory over your sin.”

14. 1 John 3:7-10 -- “Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” Children act like their parents. Your actions reveal whose child you really are. Proverbs 20 says it like this: “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” (Proverbs 20:11) These words cannot be clearer, but people still seem to find creative ways to explain them away. When was the last time you heard a sermon preached on these verses? Again, the expectation of the early church was that Christians would live righteous, holy, and pure lives, rarely sinning.

15. 1 John 3:16 – “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” Christian love is selfless. Jesus said that the first step to “coming after” Him was to deny self. Compare 1 John 3:16 with the well know verse, John 3:16.

16. 1 John 3:17 -- “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” Are you ready to give everything up to love God and others unconditionally?

17. 1 John 3:18 – “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” Talk is cheap. Jesus said that His true followers worship the Father “in spirit and in truth.” What you do reveals what you really believe and who you really love.

18. 1 John 3:22 – “Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.” When you want what God wants, you will get what you want. The secret to answered prayers is the pray in the will of the Father. Prayer doesn’t change God, it changes us. Keep praying and watch God shape your desires more and more to His desires.

19. 1 John 3:23, 24 -- “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

- God’s command of love does not negate all of His other commands but rather covers them as they are a perfect reflection of His love and His will. This is why John begins this chapter by reminding us that “sin is lawlessness.” Love does not condone lawlessness which only dishonors and destroys.

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- Again, the Bible is not complicated or hard to understand – to abide in God is to obey His commands. Today John is only repeating what he learned from Jesus: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:4-11)

- “...whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother (1 John 3:4-10).” John points out that sin is the product of selfishness (self-worship, idolatry) which is the opposite of love, stands in the way of love, and is actually hateful and murderous. Contrarily, love is selfless and obedient unto death as exemplified by Jesus’ sacrificial love for us. John tells us, as children, don’t wallow in guilt over the sins you know you have committed because you have been forgiven, just stop being deceived, stop making excuses, and grow up to be like Jesus – “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 Oct 18: Practice purity and selflessness today. (1 John 3:3-16)

DBRP - WEEK 43, Day 1, Monday, 22 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+34%2C+35%3B+proverbs+22%3B+1+John+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 22 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 34:15-17 – “You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty... and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, but then you turned around and profaned my name.... Therefore, thus says the Lord: You have not obeyed me... behold, I proclaim to you... the sword... pestilence, and... famine, declares the Lord. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.” Don’t mock God by repenting and returning to your sin in complacency. God will not be mocked by His people. Grace does not free you from the Lord’s discipline.

2. Jeremiah 35:18, 19 – “Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father and kept all his precepts and done all that he commanded you, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me.”

- God honors obedience. The Recabites could trace their obedience back 250 years (2 Kings 10:15), never giving in to temptations to do what everyone else was doing. God lifted the Recabites up as an example to all had promised them a permanent relationship with Him. What has your family done faithfully from generation to generation to honor God? Today is a good day to commit or recommit to create generations of fidelity.

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- To Jonadab's family God said, "You shall always stand before me." In contrast, concerning the disobedient God said, "Behold, I am bringing... all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered." The Church today takes sin very lightly, as if grace means that God no longer cares that much about our sins. However, today is another day where our readings should correct us. In the first sentence of 1 John 2, John (the Apostle of Love) writes, "I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But IF anyone does sin.... He then goes on: "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." This is not at all hard to understand, but somehow, we manage to create theology which suggests that there is not a real expectation for us to "walk in the same way [Jesus] walked." Yes, John reminds us that IF we sin, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." However, we forget Hebrews 10:29: "How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of Grace?" While we know that, in mercy and grace, we don't get the punishment we deserve but rather the forgiveness we don't deserve, the fear of trampling Jesus under foot should be a far, far greater motivation than fear of punishment to spur us on to holiness. Love causes us to see our sin from God's perspective and to respond accordingly. Lord, please help me see my sin the way you do and to have Jonadabian fidelity to you – Semper Fidelis Coram Deo.

-- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 – It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lusts like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God who gives you the Holy Spirit.

3. Proverbs 22:4 – "The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life." God will honor humility.

4. Proverbs 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." God will train you up in the way you should go, and you won't always like it.

5. Proverbs 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." During your formative years, did your parents train you in godliness (discipleship)? If not, your battle against ingrained habits of sinfulness is more difficult, but fortunately, the Holy Spirit empowers you to have the fruit of self-control. Don't convince yourself that you can't help what you do. On another note, what habits are you instilling in your children which will form the way they think and act? Is God's word the beginning and end of your conversations?

6. Proverbs 22:11 – "He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend." Your mouth reflects what is in your heart and affects all of your relationships.

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7. Proverbs 22:19 – “That your trust may be in the Lord....” This is humility and faith. You will not trust who you do not know and love. Proverbs says that the Bible was given to you that you would grow to know Jesus, to love Him, and to trust Him. Pour into your Bible daily and grow in humility, faith, hope, and love. Remember, the goal of the Bible is not to make you more moral and successful, it is to bring you into oneness with Jesus and conformity to His image, that you would truly “know” Him and make Him known.

8. 1 John 2:1 -- “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin....” It is striking how much the expectation has changed within the church. John’s expectation was that sin would be a very rare thing – “if anyone does sin.” It seems the church today expects sin within the body to be a normal thing, and the worldly church is quick to proclaim “grace” as an excuse for sin, rather than freedom from the bondage of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. The early church certainly didn’t cheapen grace like that. We are saved by grace alone, resting upon God’s merit rather than our own unworthy merit. However, the expected response to grace is obedience motivated by love. Obedience isn’t the path to salvation, it is the evidence of salvation.

9. 1 John 2:1-6 -- “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.... And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

- Obedience is the true mark of salvation and love for Christ. John’s expectation for Christians was that they would not sin habitually but would walk as Jesus walked. Christians do not achieve holy perfection in this life, but Christians display holy direction in life. How far the church has drifted from what Jesus expects of his followers....

- These are very powerful verses worth memorizing and meditating on every day. The truth of your relationship with God is revealed in your obedience. Again, the truth of your love for God and others is also revealed by your obedience. All disobedience is selfish and unloving, no matter how you justify it. Don’t deceive yourself by going to church while continuing in sin and believe that you are good with God.

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.” (1John 2:3)

- The ‘casual Christian (if there can be such a person) says, “Well, everyone sins.” True, and yes, we live in a state of grace. Yet the Bible commands that, in our love for Christ, we must resist sin with all of our might as our genuine act of worship (Hebrews 12, James 4:7, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 10:13; John 4:23). Today is a new day. Get your armor on, and step out.

10. 1 John 2:4 – “Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. There is no such thing as a “carnal Christian.” Those who continue in sin unrepentantly don’t know Him though they may believe in Him like the demons do – “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19)

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11. 1 John 2:18 – “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.” Many speculate about the end times antichrist, but there have been and will be many antichrists, powerful people who are against God. Anyone who preaches a truth that is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ is an antichrist, no matter how kind that may seem.

12. 1 John 2:19 – “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” Those who reject their faith never really had faith to begin with.

13. 1 John 2:22, 23 – “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.” Again, those who deny that Jesus is the one and only Son of God and the one and only way to God are antichrists.

14. 1 John 2:27 – “But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.” If the Holy Spirit is within you, then the Holy Spirit is your Teacher. Study God’s word daily, walk with Jesus in obedience, remain in prayer, and listen to the Holy Spirit.

15. 1 John 2:29 – “If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.” Children act like their parents. God’s children act godly. What you do reveals what you really believe in and who you really love the most. Those who really love Jesus want to please Him in love and obey Him as a desire of the heart rather than just an act of obedience.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 Oct 18: The theme from Jeremiah 35 and 1 John 2 today is obedience. Reread 1 John 2:3-6 and consider your actions today from the context of those verses, meditating upon what your behavior says about your love for God. From the context of these verses, consider what you allow yourself to think about, what you choose to view or listen to, what you gaze up, what you say, what you do, and what you feel. What do your actions in context with these verses reveal to you?

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 7, Sunday, 21 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+32%2C+33%3B+proverbs+21%3B+psa+123%2C+124>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 21 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 32:2 – “At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah.” The scene-setter for what is about to happen next is Jeremiah being imprisoned at the palace while his prophecies are being fulfilled through Babylon besieging the city. Try to imagine being in his position.

2. Jeremiah 32:8 – “Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.” Jeremiah is in prison, the city is about to be captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and now Jeremiah’s cousin comes and asks him to buy his field. It took a lot of nerve for Jeremiah’s cousin to ask him to buy a field that was about to be captured. It took far more faith for Jeremiah to buy the field.

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How shocked Hanamel must have been when Jeremiah bought it, and while in captivity! What Jeremiah was displaying was complete trust, faith, and hope in God. Jeremiah was willing to invest in the future God had promised. Are you ready to put this kind of faith into your investment in the Gospel and the Kingdom of God?

3. Jeremiah 32:25 “Yet you, O Lord God, have said to me, ‘Buy the field for money and get witnesses—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.’” God directed Jeremiah to invest in God’s future promise when that investment defied all human reasoning and understanding. This is called faith. Jeremiah did it before he understood it, and then he went to the LORD in prayer to seek understanding. God answered Jeremiah’s prayers. Faith obeys first and asks question later. Most people ask a lot of questions first to put off or avoid obedience. Remember Satan in the Garden – “Did God really say....?”

4. Jeremiah 32:27 -- “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?” Do you want to be used by God in your day as powerfully as Jeremiah was in his day? Then, you must walk in absolute faith and obedience as he did. Today, Jeremiah does not hesitate to tell the king that he will soon lose his throne and become a prisoner of war; nor does he hesitate to obey Leviticus:25 and buy his cousin’s field, even though he knew the Chaldeans would take over. Jeremiah obeyed God’s word, period, despite the fact that it seemed to counter human wisdom and good sense. Jeremiah walked by faith, not by sight; he did not lean on his own understanding but rather trusted in God with all his heart. He put his money where his mouth was. He knew that nothing was too hard for God. “And without faith it is impossible to please him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Do you have the faith to please God as Jeremiah did? Are you ‘all in’ for the Lord?

5. Jeremiah 33:3 – “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” God still does this. Are you hearing from God?

6. Jeremiah 33:3 – “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.”

- The Spirit reveals what is impossible for the mind to know. God who knows all will reveal to you so much more than you could ever learn or discover on your own. How important is it to receive God’s revelation in life?

- Too often we settle for much less than what God wants to do through us. We read in Jeremiah 32:27: “I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for Me?” and we answer, “No Lord.” Yet, when we face difficult situations, we begin to qualify our belief in God and lower our expectations of what God will do. It is one thing to believe God could perform a miracle in the Bible, or a thousand years ago, or even in the life of a friend; it is quite another matter to wholeheartedly believe God can do anything He chooses to do in our lives! When almighty God speaks to us, what we do next proves what we believe about Him, regardless of what we say. God revealed to Moses His plan to orchestrate the greatest exodus in human history, and He wanted to use Moses to accomplish it. Moses responded by arguing with God! Moses was overwhelmed by what he heard and began to make excuses for why he could not participate in God’s activity. Moses would have readily acknowledged his belief in God’s power, he simply did not believe God could do His miraculous work through his life. Moses’ argument with God limited his ministry for the rest of his life (Exod. 4:13-16). Do you sense there may be far more that God wants to do through your life than what you have been experiencing? Ask God to show you what it is, then be prepared to respond in faith and obedience to what He tells you.

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7. Jeremiah 33:7, 8 – “I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.” God can fix what sin has broken. Turn your past over to God and serve Him today with all of your heart, and let Him give you a new future.

8. Jeremiah 33:5, 8, 9 – “I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil.... I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me.... They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.” In love, God can’t tolerate evil. He will glorify Himself in either a negative way or positive way, revealing His sovereignty, holiness, justice, mercy, and grace. He will punish and cleanse so that He can bless. Does the reality of God’s sovereignty, holiness, justice, mercy, and grace cause you to tremble and drive you towards personal holiness, purity, and obedience?

9. Jeremiah 33:14-16 – “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”

- “The Righteous Branch” refers to Jesus. Interesting to compare with Matthew 2:23:23 -- “He went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: ‘He will be called a Nazarene.’” The root of the word 'Nazareth' (in Greek the word is 'Nazara') relates to the Hebrew word for branch: "nazar." The use of 'nazar' to mean BRANCH is found in at least a few important messianic passages such as Isaiah 11:1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch [nazar] shall grow out of his roots." There are many passages earlier and later than Isaiah 11:1 which define the condition 'nazirite'- the holy, set apart life, set apart and sanctified to God.

10. Proverbs 21:3 -- "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Another major theme throughout the Bible is that proclaiming Jesus is no substitute for obeying Jesus. Obeying is far better than saying, "I'm sorry." You should worship in church as the Bible commands, but you will worship today in your behavior. True worship is being obedient to God, doing what is right. Will you deny yourself today, take up your cross, and follow Jesus?

11. Proverbs 21:9 -- "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife." This verse isn't just about marriage or directed at women. It is about relationships in general, particularly close relationships. Do you lift people or bring them down? Are you positive or negative? Are you thankful or always complaining? Do you bring peace or discourse? When you walk in a room, do people light up or turn away? Maybe your answer is different for different relationships. Maybe you are positive at work or negative at home or vice versa. Seek to always be a harbinger of peace and joy. Seek to change your outward behavior towards others immediately, but simultaneously, get to the root of your behavior. If you lack grace, peace, joy, gentleness, etc, it can only be that you are not close enough to Jesus; you are not amazed enough by grace. Don't just heal the wound superficially. Draw nearer to Christ that you would be so filled by His love that it would naturally overflow out of your life onto others.

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12. Proverbs 21:10 – “The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.” If what you desire most is not God but something else, you will eventually treat people unfairly and justify your actions to defend what you really care about the most.

13. Proverbs 21:11 -- "When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge." There are many possible responses to the truth. One is acceptance, one is doubt, but the scoffer wholly rejects truth, refusing to listen at all. There is no hope for a scoffer.

14. Proverbs 21:30, 31 – “No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.” Don’t learn this the hard way. Better to understand this upfront and follow the teachings of God rather than the counsel of people. The world is full of many very talented and intelligent false teachers. If you aren’t grounded in God’s word, being counselled daily by the Holy Spirit, you will be deceived by another teacher and go the wrong way. Judge everything you hear and see from the standard of God’s word.

15. Proverbs 21:31 -- "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord." What are you placing your confidence in today? If you lost all physical possessions on this earth, would your trust be shaken? If so, your trust is not really in God as it should be. God tested Abraham's trust by asking him to sacrifice the one thing he cared most about in life. Is there something that motivates you more than Jesus?

16. Psalm 123 – Look to the LORD if you need mercy. You won’t find complete mercy anywhere else.

17. Psalm 123:2 – “Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.” Keep your eyes on Jesus today; follow Him closely.

18. Psalm 124:1-5 – “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side... when people rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters.” Life is too big for any of us. God tells us to take responsibility for our lives, to plan, to save for the future, to work hard, etc, but we are deceived if we think that our security and our future rests in our abilities. God remains in complete control. Trust in Him, and rest in His security.

19. Psalm 124:8 – “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Your fate is solely in God’s hands. Turn to Him. Part of turning to Him is obeying what He has told you to do for His glory and for your benefit. Too often we expect God to remove from our lives the consequences resulting from our disobedience. Sometimes, our merciful God does remove the consequences of our sin, but often, in perfect love, He leaves the consequences in our lives as his chisel to shape us more and more into the image of Christ.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 Oct 18: Practice Psalm 123:2 today. Keep your eyes affixed on Jesus today, and truly walk with Him today, not just conceptually but tangibly. Jesus said, “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kinds of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” Today, be led by the Spirit rather than your own perceptions, intellect, and emotions, and translate Spiritual truths into tangible reality through your words and deeds. Transmit the will of God into the world through your

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words and deeds. Be a light today, and ambassador of Jesus. Worship Jesus today through your love for others.

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 6, Saturday, 20 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+29-31%3B+proverbs+20%3B+psa+122>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 20 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 29:1-7 – “These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem. The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

- Faith, hope, and love involves investing in God’s word and promise, even if no one else is, even when everything seems hopeless to everyone else. It involves putting your everything into a plan, God’s plan, even when others think it will fail. It involves being willing to have children in a sinful world because God said “be fruitful and multiply.” It involves preaching the Gospel when it seems no one wants to hear it. It involves continuing to obey God when obedience seems to be working against you.

- Interestingly, when I looked up the word “kingdom” in the Bible this morning, I found two definitions: 1) “A political or territorial unit ruled by a sovereign”; 2) “The eternal spiritual sovereignty of God or Christ.” God’s people are defined by the second definition, and God warned His people not to put their trust and hope in earthly kings or earthly kingdoms. In fact, in 1 Samuel 8, when God’s people asked for an earthly king, God declared they had rejected God as KING, and that their choice would only lead to ruin. Now in Jeremiah, because of their own sin, God’s people were in exile being ruled by the ungodly – they had lost their political/territorial kingdom because they had rebelled against the Sovereign KING in their hearts. They had gone from being a powerful nation on earth to becoming slaves. Some “prophets,” completely out of touch with what the KING was doing, remained in denial, preaching that God would miraculously destroy their conquerors within a couple of years – a popular message with the people (Jeremiah 28). However, God wanted his people to understand that the KING remains the KING and rules over His people wherever He desires; their problem was not political it was spiritual – in their rebellious hearts, they had denied the Sovereignty of God in their lives. God took away their earthly kingdom that they would “seek first the kingdom of God (the second definition of kingdom) and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33) -- “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).” God told His people to pursue prosperity in society while being very careful to remain holy and obedient to the KING and His unchanging word. As some say today, “Be in the world, but not of the world.” Engage the world, but do not compromise your holiness in the process. God was also very clear to His people not to let “prophets” lead them astray from the word of God. Most importantly, God

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told His people to live boldly in faith and hope -- "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." Our KING is the KING of Kings who reigns Supreme. God's people are a "kingdom of priests" living among the earthly kingdoms as "Ambassadors for Christ." We must influence without being influenced, remaining holy and true to the word of God. Stay in the word. These passages apply to us today as we live as a Kingdom dispersed among the kingdoms of the world.

-- Jeremiah 31: 33, 34 -- I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

-- John 18:36 -- Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

- "Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease." It takes faith, hope, and love to raise children, particularly when times are hard. God told the exiles not to stop having children though they were in captivity. When everyone else is worried about loss, God wants His people to think about growth -- "Be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth."

2. Jeremiah 29:8, 9 -- "Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord." If God has not sent the messenger, the messenger is a deceiver. Fidelity to God and daily study of His word will enable you to detect the false prophet or false teaching and protect you against those who claim to speak on behalf of God and who have popular acclaim but who are only liars and destroyers.

3. Jeremiah 29:11 -- "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." Your faith in this statement changes how much you are willing to invest in God's word and commands. Faith, hope, and love generate action, enthusiasm, and passion. God has a great plan for your life if you will turn your heart to Him and obey Him.

4. Jeremiah 29:13 -- "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." There can never be a casual relationship with the Almighty. If you want to know God, you must be wholehearted, serious, fully committed. A half-hearted search for God comes up wanting. Jesus said He will spit the lukewarm out of His mouth.

5. Jeremiah 29:15-23 -- "Because you have said, 'The Lord has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,' thus says the Lord concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your kinsmen who did not go out with you into exile: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, behold, I am sending on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like vile figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten. I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the Lord, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares the

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Lord.' Hear the word of the Lord, all you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall strike them down before your eyes. Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: The Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire, because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the Lord.'"

- If God didn't build it or bless it, it is doomed. Though God, through the prophets, told the Israelites to accept their exile into a foreign land, many refused to listen and tried to sustain the nation under their own power, contrary to God's plan. They went through the motions of both government and church, but all of it was meaningless. We don't tell God what we are going to do for Him, He tells us.

- "...because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the Lord, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares the Lord." When God judges the nation, the nation will not have the excuse of ignorance of God's word.

- "They have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the Lord.'" God knows the sins of those who have not made restitution or have not sought reconciliation, and He will hold them accountable, even those who proclaim Jesus while hiding the offenses they have committed against others.

6. Jeremiah 30:24 – "In the latter days you will understand this." Faith (trusting God at the moment), hope (trusting God with the future), and love (relying on God's love enough to love others unconditionally) may require you to commit your whole life to parts of God's word you don't understand or are completely unaccepted by others. Everyone will understand at the time of judgment.

7. Jeremiah 31 – Faith, hope, and love rely on God's grace through self-induced hard times (v2), trusting in God's everlasting love rather than personal merit or strength (v3). Faith, hope, and love start with humility and repentance (v9), acceptance of God's discipline with a response of obedience (v18, 19), and a return to the path of righteousness without wavering (v 21, 22).

8. Jeremiah 31:19 -- "For after I had turned away, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth." The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to convict you of your sin and to bring to repentance. The truly repentant turn 180-out from their old ways and walk in both grace and holiness.

9. Jeremiah 31:31-34 – "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Christianity is not about following a bunch of written laws or moral code through personal goodness and self-discipline. It is about having a true heart for God, obeying God out of genuine love, empowered by the Holy Spirit to do what the flesh could never do. It is about truly knowing God rather than simply knowing

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'about' Him. It is about following Him wholeheartedly because love for the Perfect Father demands nothing less. It is a spiritual covenant rather than simply a written one. However, it doesn't contradict God's written word because God's written word reflects His perfect character and will.

10. Jeremiah 31:33-34 -- "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Our readings in Jeremiah today tell a remarkable story of sin, punishment, conviction, repentance, mercy, grace, revival, reconciliation, love, and joy – a story of salvation that reflects how God works in the lives of individuals too. Every generation has their teachers and 'prophets' who attempt to downplay sin and offer shortcuts to salvation that don't involve punishment, genuine repentance, the need for forgiveness that only God can provide, and total surrender to God. Claiming to speak on behalf of God, Shemaiah preached a blasphemous yet popular message of 'short-cut salvation' that minimized the wrath of God. Not Jeremiah. Jeremiah proclaims God's wrath and punishment, "Because they did not pay attention to my words, declares the Lord, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets.... they have committed adultery... they have spoken in my name lying words." Jeremiah describes the "incurable hurt... because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant." However, Jeremiah also describes healing and reconciliation that can only come from God -- "For thus says the Lord: I will visit you.... For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore.... With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back." God always takes the initiative, visits, and invites; those who seek Him and genuinely call upon Him with weeping and wholeheartedness will be received by Him, and He will "lead them back." Jeremiah prophesied of a day when God's people would truly 'know the Lord' and would have the "law within them, and... on their hearts." This 'New Covenant' is provided through Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone. Without Jesus Christ, there is no forgiveness of sins and no Holy Spirit power to overcome the power of sin. This fundamental truth is regularly denied today, even by people who would call themselves 'Christian.' And our seeker-sensitive churches that make every effort to avoid labelling anything sin, have countered Jesus' message of "Repent!" Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) To know him is to love him; to love him is to obey him -- "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

11. Jeremiah 31:33, 34 -- "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord." Those who know God have a heart to obey Him. They obey Him because they love Him.

12. Proverbs 20:1 -- "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." How does the Bible describe alcohol?

13. Proverbs 20:6 -- "Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?"

- God seeks a rare commodity: a faithful individual.

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- There is an important lesson for us in Jeremiah 32: Obey the Lord, and ask questions later. Jeremiah is in prison while the army of the king of Babylon is besieging Jerusalem. With shocking audacity, Jeremiah's uncle comes to him in prison and asks him to buy his field, presumably in a rush to get silver before the economy collapses, all real property is captured, and the people are exiled. According to Biblical scholars, at the time Hanamel's offer, the town of Anathoth was already destroyed by the Babylonians, and the property rights were essentially worthless. Yet, God told Jeremiah to buy the property anyway. So, Jeremiah did exactly what the Lord said to do even though it appeared to make absolutely no sense. Only AFTER Jeremiah obeyed the Lord did he ask the Lord for answers – "Yet you, O Lord God, have said to me, 'Buy the field for money and get witnesses'—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.'" (Jeremiah 32:25) Jeremiah's obedience was the product of his faith in God. The situation seemed hopeless, but Jeremiah rested in the promises of God and, literally, "put his money where his mouth was by redeeming his cousin's field." As stated in today's Proverbs, many claim to have steadfast love, but few will be faithful regardless the cost. Jeremiah taught us a lesson in fidelity. Jeremiah trusted God's word that, "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (Jeremiah 32:15), but he also trusted in a greater promise -- "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 33:14-16). Through Jesus we have eternal life and are filled with the Holy Spirit. He has made Christians a "Kingdom of Priests" to serve as "Ambassadors for Christ" until Christ returns in full majesty. I pray that we have the faith to live with integrity as we look forward to that Great Day.

-- Hebrews 11:1 -- Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

-- Hebrews 11:6 -- And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

-- Hebrews 10:19-31 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

-- Proverbs 20:11 -- Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.

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-- Proverbs 20:7 -- The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!

14. Proverbs 20:12 – “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.” Do you have to believe it to see it? Your eyes and ears can be deceiving and can how our heart interprets the inputs it does receive. Which is wiser, to trust your ears and eyes or the One who created them?

15. Proverbs 20:29 – “The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.” Building physical strength is a daily effort that is hard but has value. However, that daily investment eventually dwindles with age. However, character and wisdom development are also a daily effort of great value, but the investment isn’t lost with age. Unfortunately, many spend their early years neglecting their spiritual strength only to end up weak in their older years when they need that strength the most.

16. Psalm 122:1 -- "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!' How excited are you to go to church tomorrow? Do you have a heart to worship God in fellowship with God's people? The Bible says that how much you really love God is revealed by how much you really love others, how much unity you have with fellow believers. Do you have a passion for your church? If not, your relationship problem starts with your relationship with God. Pray about your heart for God and others -- the two are inseparable: "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20)

17. Psalm 122:8, 9 – “For my brothers and companions’ sake I will say, ‘Peace be within you!’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.” The way of a child of God is to seek peace for others and not to just give them comforting words of peace but also to personally work to bring them peace, meeting their needs in a tangible way, while seeking to draw them closer to the Prince of Peace, Jesus. Don’t just say, “Have a nice day”, but do something real to make it nice.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 Oct 18: Consider the strength of your faith (how much you trust God at the moment of decision), hope (how much you trust God with the future), and love (how willing you are to selflessly and unconditionally love others, particularly those who hurt you, because God loves you perfectly and gave His Son for you). Your faith, hope, and love reveal the quality of your relationship with God. If you find yourself lacking, don’t try harder but rather draw closer to Jesus. Read John 17 and seek the “oneness” with God for which Jesus prayed for you.

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 5, Friday, 19 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+27%2C+28%3B+proverbs+19%3B+1+John+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 19 Oct 18:

1. Jeremiah 27:9, 10 -- "So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune-tellers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’ For it is a lie that they are prophesying to you...." God was using world politics to punish Israel which, as a nation, had turned from Him. However, none of the nation's advisors or religious leaders understood what God was doing except Jeremiah who had remained faithful to God amidst a wholly corrupt society. Only Jeremiah understood what was really going on, and Jeremiah was willing to proclaim the truth regardless the personal cost. Can you see the signs of the times from the perspective of God's word, and are you willing to speak the truth to a society that doesn't want to hear it?

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2. Jeremiah 28:11 -- "And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years.' But Jeremiah the prophet went his way." Self-confidence, the power of positive thinking, and empty faith are no substitute for God's word and His truth. Many people today preach a faith that has nothing to do with faith in God but rather faith in the power of belief alone, an empty faith that says with enough confidence and determination a person can overcome or achieve anything. It is a faith in the power of human will, and it is a deception. A more 'spiritual' version of empty faith is "name it and claim it" -- just say what you want, and trust that God will provide it. However, faith is only as good as the object of that faith, and you can't claim what God hasn't named. It is God's will that shall be done, not yours, no matter how committed you are to your ideas or how confident you are in your abilities. Faith in God partners goes hand-in-hand with the fear of God. God is God and you are not. If God is not the author of your plan, it is doomed. Find out what God is doing, and be a part of that plan.

3. Jeremiah 28:15-17 -- "Listen, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. Therefore, thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord.' In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died." Those who proclaim their own version of the truth make themselves enemies of God, and there is no more horrific place to stand than against the Almighty. Those who, through their own spiritual immaturity and ignorance follow false teachers, follow them down the path of death. Jesus said that wide is the path taken by the majority who will follow false teachers, but narrow is that path of those who will follow Him. Who are you listening to for direction every day, and who are you really following?

4. Proverbs 19:3 -- "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." Don't blame God when you face the consequences of your own foolish actions.

5. Proverbs 19:21 -- "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." Again, it's God's plans that matter, not yours. Seek God's plan rather than trying to create your own.

6. Proverbs 19:22 -- "What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar." Character is invaluable and very rare. Love and faithfulness go hand-in-hand. What God seeks is the person who will be faithfully obedient in love.

7. Proverbs 19:27 -- "Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." Don't stop reading the Bible every day. You need to be coached daily in the word of God by the Holy Spirit.

8. 1 John 1:1 -- "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life." Jesus is the physical manifestation, the human form of God's word. When you read, study, meditate upon, memorize, and obey God's written word, you will naturally draw closer to Jesus.

9. 1 John 1:3, 4 -- "...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

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- When you proclaim God's word, you help others grow closer in fellowship to the Father and the Son, which was Jesus' final prayer in John 17. In John 15, Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." Jesus wants you to have the fullness of Joy by being united in Him, and God gives us His word that we might learn how to be united with Jesus. How important is daily Bible study and practice for your life?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- John the apostle never ceased to marvel at the life-changing relationship he enjoyed with his Lord. It overwhelmed him to know that, at a particular time in history, the God of the universe chose to have fellowship with him, a simple fisherman. John was so overjoyed that he earnestly wanted to share his joy with others so they, too, might experience the same joy. A special fellowship or "bonding" developed between those who had personally encountered Christ as they rejoiced together at God's goodness to them. Those around you desperately need to be encouraged by your latest encounter with Christ. Some have lost hope that they can experience the reality of God's presence in their lives. They don't need your philosophies or theological speculations. They don't need to hear your opinions on what they should do. They need to hear from someone who has just come from a personal, life-changing encounter with the living Christ. When you have had such an experience you will be like the apostle John, hardly able to contain yourself as you rush out to tell others of your amazing encounter with God. Your responsibility will not be to convince others of the reality of God, but simply to bear witness to what your Lord has said and done for you. The change in your life will be your greatest testimony of your relationship to Christ. There is nothing more appealing or convincing to a watching world than to hear the testimony of someone who has just been with Jesus.

- Our joy is made complete when we follow Jesus in truth, together. Jesus said this: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:9-11)

10. 1 John 1: 5-10 -- "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

- We must walk in the light, not in darkness, and "practice the truth" (not just acknowledge the truth) to have true fellowship with Jesus and with one another. To walk with Jesus, we MUST deny self, that ultimate idol. We won't get it right, we will wander off, and we will continue to sin along the way, but through the process of (genuine) confession and repentance we will grow to be more and more like Christ, we will be strengthened in our fellowship, our light will shine brighter, and our joy will become more complete.

-- Genesis 6:9 -- Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

-- Mark 8:34 -- And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

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-- Matthew 5:16 -- In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

-- Proverbs 4:18 -- But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

-- John 15:10, 11 -- If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- You can't have close fellowship with Jesus and subsequent fullness of joy if you continue in sin. One of the indicators of true fellowship with Jesus is purity and holiness. Another mark of fellowship with Jesus is fellowship with other true believers. Also, the one in fellowship with Jesus walks very humbly and with a repentant heart.

- Two marks of a Christian: 1) They walk not with the sinful world but with Jesus, practicing the truth (not just reading it or talking about it); 2) They walk with each other, in fellowship with one another, preferring one another, supporting one another, loving one another that they would bear witness to that love (along with the collective obedience to Christ as one united body) and know that the church is Christ's. Are your best friends from your church, those with whom you fellowship with, those with whom you leisure with, those with whom you confide in, and those on whom you count? If not, why not? What does that say about the condition of your fellowship and that of your church? We are called to serve specific purposes within a body of believers, not alone. Are you an amputated limb? Are you a lame limb, only useful part of the time and at times undependable? Or are you united with your local church body (both the collective body and the individual members)? God gave us the 'one anothers' to practice first within our home, then within the church, then within our communities. Are you practicing the 'one anothers'? Below are 52 'one another' verses. A good idea would be to put one on your mirror each week to consider, memorize, and put into practice.

-- Mark 9:50 -- Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

-- John 13:14 -- If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

-- John 13:34 -- A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

-- John 13:35 -- By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

-- Romans 12:10 -- Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

-- Romans 12:16 -- Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

-- Romans 14:13 -- Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

-- Romans 15:5 -- May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,

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- Romans 15:7 -- Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
- Romans 15:14 -- I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.
- Romans 16:16 -- Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
- 1 Corinthians 6:7 -- To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?
- 1 Corinthians 11:33 -- So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—
- 1 Corinthians 12:25 -- that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
- 2 Corinthians 13:11 -- Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
- Galatians 5:13 -- For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- Galatians 5:15 -- But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.
- Galatians 5:26 -- Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
- Galatians 6:2 -- Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- Ephesians 4:2 -- with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- Ephesians 4:25 -- Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.
- Ephesians 4:32 -- Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- Ephesians 5:19 -- addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,
- Ephesians 5:21 -- submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Colossians 3:9 -- Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices
- Colossians 3:13 -- bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
- Colossians 3:16 -- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12 -- and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,

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-- 1 Thessalonians 4:9 -- Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,

-- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 -- Therefore encourage one another with these words.

-- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 -- Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

-- 1 Thessalonians 5:15 -- See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

-- 2 Thessalonians 1:3 -- We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

-- Hebrews 3:13 -- But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

-- Hebrews 10:24 -- And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

-- Hebrews 10:25 -- not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

-- James 4:11 -- Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

-- James 5:9 -- Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

-- James 5:16 -- Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

-- 1 Peter 1:22 -- Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

-- 1 Peter 4:8 -- Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

-- 1 Peter 4:9 -- Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

-- 1 Peter 4:10 -- As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

-- 1 Peter 5:5 -- Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

-- 1 Peter 5:14 -- Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) Confession is a daily, continual habit. You have been forgiven of your sins and still need to come to terms with the sin that remains within your character. When you sin today, and you will, immediately ask for forgiveness of that sin, regardless of the fact that you live in grace. This is fellowship and part of your growth process. When you do ask for forgiveness for your sin, having

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asked from your heart, fully accept that forgiveness and walk with Jesus in peace and confidence, remembering the words Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, "Go and sin no more."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Oct 18: Memorize 1 John 1:9, practice it today, and make it your daily habit.

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 4, Thursday, 18 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+18%3B+2+pet+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 18 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 25:3 -- "The word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened."

- For about 40 years, Jeremiah, 'The Weeping Prophet' faithfully and persistently prophesied against his nation, contrary to the other prophets of his time, and at the expense of his own comfort and security. In today's readings, Jeremiah was on year 23. He countered his government, the church, and the culture. Who are we not listening to today? Who is the Jeremiah of our generation? How long would you faithfully proclaim God's word in a hostile environment without any apparent results? Do you need results or confirmation to be faithful? Jeremiah did His job as an Ambassador. How others responded to Him was not Jeremiah's responsibility. Have you persistently proclaimed God's word?

- Today, God's word is more available than any other time in human history, but less and less do people seem to care about it. Even within the Christian church, research polls reveal that a very small percentage of Christians have actually read the whole Bible; far fewer study it and apply it intentionally. You cannot know what you have not heard, and you certainly can't obey what you haven't heard. However, ultimately the issue is a heart issue rather than a knowledge issue. If there is no desire to know God's word, a desire which comes from the heart, there is no hope for wisdom.

2. Jeremiah 25:34 -- "Wail, you shepherds, and cry out, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like a choice vessel." There are two types of sorrow: the sorrow of repentance, being truly sorry for having done wrong with a heart to never do wrong again; and the sorrow of punishment, being sorry for receiving the pain of discipline and judgment. The people who do not experience the sorrow of repentance will only cry out and mourn when judgment falls upon them. Today is the day for repentance and surrender to God, but this is not the message of most 'shepherds' within our communities. Sometimes, the positive message is not the right message, but no one wants to hear the hard message.

3. Jeremiah 26:2, 3 -- "Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the Lord all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds."

- Jeremiah was sent to 'worshippers' who were about to face the judgment of God because they did not really honor Him as God in their deeds. God had to encourage Jeremiah not to "hold back a word" because this was a message no one wanted to hear, a message that would not be received well; but God intended to give them a chance to repent anyway. Perhaps, Jeremiah was the only one in his day proclaiming this message -- the pastors, priests, and gurus of the day certainly weren't. Even if you go to

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a Bible-based church, it is possible to preach a message from the Bible that is out of place for the current situation, preaching a message of peace and joy when it should really be a message of woe and repentance.

- "It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds." People have a choice and a chance to obey or not obey.

4. Jeremiah 26:14 -- "But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you." Again, Jeremiah was willing to proclaim God's word regardless the consequences, and he never stopped preaching.

5. Jeremiah 26:11 -- "Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, 'This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.'" Much like Jesus was persecuted by the Pharisees, Jeremiah was persecuted by the religious leaders of his day. Jeremiah was essentially accused of being unpatriotic or politically incorrect because he preached the word of God. Today, God's word is becoming more and more politically incorrect, placing the Christian in a moral dilemma. Many respond to this division of ideas by remaining silent in order to preserve the 'peace', abrogating their life mission of being Christ's ambassador. What will you do?

6. Jeremiah 26:16 -- "Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, 'This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.'" A nation needs leaders, not just theologians, who are willing to listen to God and to call for a national fear of the Lord.

7. Proverbs 18:1 – "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." Christians are not loners. Isolation and individualism are selfishness and unloving. Our mission is all about relationships. God brings people together in unity.

8. Proverbs 18:9 – "Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys." We are to do our work for God, not for men or money. How you work reveals who/what you are working for as well as what you think about God and the honor due him. What does your work reveal?

9. Proverbs 18:13 – "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."

- Christians don't interrupt.

- This is one of the most basic rules of listening, communication, and relationship building. If you are thinking about what you are going to say while the other person is talking, you are also breaking this rule.

10. 2 Peter 3:3, 4 -- "Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming?'" Do you know any scoffers today?

11. 2 Peter 3:9, 10 -- "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." God's patience will not last forever, and there will be no warning when it comes. God's timing is perfect. Only the Father knows the time of the End as he patiently provides

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mercy and salvation to sinners who would perish eternally without. Meanwhile, God has commanded us to preach the Gospel and make disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all of His commands.

12. 2 Peter 3:11 – “A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- When God told Abraham He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham’s life was immediately and radically affected. Noah could not carry on business as usual once he knew what God was planning for his generation. Knowing that God is preparing judgment brings a sobering reality to Christians, helping us recognize what is eternally significant and what is not. Peter cautions us that a catastrophic time of judgment is coming. On the day of the Lord there will be a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat. On that day, he warns, the earth will be consumed. Peter assures us that this is not mere speculation; it is certain and imminent. He then asks the crucial question that applies to each generation: “What kind of persons ought you to be?” With judgment pending for us and countless millions of people facing destruction, how should we live our lives? Many Christians attach great value to temporal things. Hobbies and possessions consume us, leaving little time or energy to invest in what is eternal. More than anyone else, Christians should be sensitive to the times in which we live. We should walk so closely with God that if He were preparing to bring judgment upon people, we could warn those in imminent peril. Since Christ has been long-suffering in His return so that no one might perish (2 Pet. 3:9), should we not invest our effort in building God’s eternal kingdom? Should there not be an urgency about us to complete the tasks that God gives us?

13. 2 Peter 3:14 -- "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace." Are you diligently pursuing purity, holiness, and peace with God as you eagerly await His return?

14. 2 Peter 3:17, 18 -- "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

- Grace is not freedom to live lawlessly. Grace affords you the opportunity to pursue and even higher degree of obedience which is motivated by genuine love rather than fear or duty. Many view salvation as freedom to sin without fear of punishment. However, this is a misguided, selfish, and false view of Grace. The one who has been saved from God's wrath through the blood of His son desires above all else not to continue in the very sins for which Jesus suffered -- this is unthinkable. How could anyone be so flippant with such sacrifice of love from God Himself? Peter warns not to get trapped by this false teaching or by the practices of lawless 'Christians.'

- A popular teaching today suggests that grace renders the Law obsolete. God warns us against lawlessness. Grace frees us and empowers us to grow in obedience which is the natural response of love for Jesus. The more we know Jesus, the more obedient we are, and the more we grow spiritually.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Oct 18: Today, make this your focus: "Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace." (2 Peter 3:14)

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 3, Wednesday, 17 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+17%3B+2+pet+2>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 17 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 23:1 -- "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" Many 'spiritual' and political leaders who claim to know the way only lead people astray and to destruction. These leaders who are not unified with God only lead followers to disunity and further separation from God. Any leader who doesn't overtly point to Christ (no matter the justification) is a false leader. Jesus is not only "The Way, The Truth, and The Life" for spiritual matters, He is the only way for all the practical issues of life, including politics – all issues are foundationally spiritual issues. If you are not using your influence to guide people to Jesus, you are using your influence to guide people away from Jesus.
2. Jeremiah 23:4 – "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord." Leaders are responsible for the accountability of every member of the flock. Who is now missing from your church congregation? Why? Who among your family is not saved? Who has God placed in your life, giving you the responsibility to minister to them? How are they doing tonight? Find the missing sheep, and relieve those who are afraid or dismayed.
3. Jeremiah 23:5, 6 -- "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the only truly good shepherd. A leader that is not constantly pointing at Him (rather than self, party, church, denomination, or organization) is misleading, pointing to another means of 'salvation' or peace. Yes, God gives certain authorities and responsibilities to people and institutions, but He gives special authority to His ambassadors, priests, and saints – Christians. Follow Jesus and proclaim Jesus. You haven't been called by God to be an ambassador to anything or anyone other than Jesus.
4. Jeremiah 23:9, 10 – "Concerning the prophets: the land is full of adulterers.... Their course is evil, and their might is not right.... they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil.... Don't listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'" The adulterous teachers blend the teachings of God with worldly wisdom (syncretism), and they attach 'spirituality' to popular belief systems. They dilute the word of God to make it "acceptable" to the populace under the guise of "seeker sensitive evangelism." They are very careful not to use words like "repent" and "sin," and they use the name "Jesus" very sparingly as not to overwhelm or offend. They allow God's people to become dependent on worldly institutions and point towards "good people" for hope rather than Jesus Christ alone. They talk about "morals, values, and ethics" rather than the Commands of God, and they seek to generate unity in ideas, programs, charities, for sake of societal stability, rather than seeking unity in the One True God. They proclaim "wisdom from the ages" rather than God's word and offer peace to those who reject God's word. These hopes are vain according to the Bible. Again, we are Ambassadors for Christ and Christ alone, not organizations or ideals. It is time for Christians to stand for Christ and nothing else. Don't muddy the waters.

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5. Jeremiah 23:11 -- "'Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil,' declares the Lord." An ungodly nation has ungodly pastors with an outer shell of godliness (whitewashed tombs) who preach the word for prophet and morph it to appeal to an ungodly people.

6. Jeremiah 23:16-19 -- "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.' For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened? Behold, the storm of the Lord!'"

- It is striking that as the Nation seems to unravel into moral chaos at an unbelievably rapid rate, the sermons delivered from pulpits across the country remain mostly unchanged and unaffected. Again, the pastors of an ungodly nation preach what people want to hear. In our nation, things seem to go from bad to worse. Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned both in the Old Testament and New Testament today as a warning and as "an example of what is going to happen." (2 Peter 2:6) Who is paying attention?

7. Jeremiah 23:20 -- "The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly." When we stand in judgment before God, our organizations, parties, denominations, programs, policies, projects, charities, events, and activities that did not directly, overtly, and boldly point to Christ and His commands will all seem so incredibly foolish. God has given us His word that we might understand what really matters before being surprised by judgment. We have been given the task of going throughout the world making disciples, teaching them to OBEY all the God has commanded, nothing less than that. Sometimes obedience to God's clear and simple word doesn't seem to make sense from our perspective. Sometimes pure obedience to God alone will be judged by the world as fanatical, judgmental, and simple-minded. However, "in the latter days, you will understand it clearly."

8. Jeremiah 23:22 -- "But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds." A theme repeated for emphasis -- godly leaders only proclaim His words, not what seems right in their own eyes or what seems right to the majority (see Judges -- they did what seem right in their own eyes).

9. Jeremiah 23:28, 29 -- "Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" God allows deceitful leaders compete in the marketplace of ideas with His true ambassadors, and He allows people to choose who they will trust and follow.

10. Jeremiah 23:28 -- "Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully." So many people are seeking a greater revelation, a special revelation, or a fresh approach to God's word, but so few know, proclaim, and obey God's clearly written word. When was the last time you heard a preacher preach these words from the Bible: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a

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debased mind to do what ought not to be done.... Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them"? (Romans 1:26-32)

11. Jeremiah 24 – God will separate His people from the rest when it is time, blessing them and punishing those who rejected Him.

12. Jeremiah 24:5-7 -- "I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart." God can use adversity to bring you back to Him. God is looking for a wholehearted follower, and He will remove your idols that cause you to have a divided heart. The 'good' things you cherish in life more than God, that influence your behavior more than your commitment to God are really 'bad' because they distract you from Jesus. God may have to tear down your idols.

13. Proverbs 17:1, 4, 9, 11, 14, 19-20, 23: God wants you to be an agent of peace, not anger and fighting. It is hard to share Jesus with someone you are fighting with over a fleeting issue.

14. Proverbs 17:1 – "Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife." God wants you to live in quiet and peace rather than self-induced chaos and stress. Better to have less in peace and quiet than to wear yourself out trying to do everything.

15. Proverbs 17:10 – "A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool." Wise people are self-examining and self-correcting.

16. Proverbs 17:14 – "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out." If you get in a fight with someone, you have usually failed somewhere long before the fight. Learn to identify and correct "the beginning of strife."

17. Proverbs 17:16 – "Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?" Wisdom cannot be bought. Unlike knowledge, wisdom cannot simply be taught in a classroom. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied from an understanding of God's will. Wisdom requires a heart that is aligned with God's heart. This is cultivated over a lifetime. There is not shortcut to wisdom and no secular version of true wisdom.

18. Proverbs 17:24 – "The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth." Wisdom must be your life's pursuit ahead of knowledge, riches, and happiness. It must be for daily focus.

19. 2 Pet 2:1, 3, 14 -- But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.... In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories.... With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood!

- Wow! Both Jeremiah and 2 Peter have much to say today about false prophets and teachers – "shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" They lead the people into adultery (disobedience and the acceptance of disobedience) and they tell them that it is ok. They say the

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God approves of what God hates. They make light of sin as if God doesn't really care. They claim to speak for God while rejecting His Word. They claim to have dreams and visions that did not come from God but rather from their own sinful desires. They tell the sinners what they want to hear and justify sin so that sinners won't feel guilty for sinning. 2 Peter 2:18-22 says, "For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for 'people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.' If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.'" This is the message I hear preached often that says that "grace" is a license to sin – "God knows that I am a sinner and accepts me for who I am." We are to "escape the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

20. 2 Peter 2:3 -- "And in their greed they will exploit you with false words." People who tell others what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear about Jesus are acting selfishly, seeking personal comfort, security, or gain. An unselfish person is willing to leave their comfort zone for the sake of others. False teachers pervert the truth in order to build a following and gain something for themselves, even if that something is only personal satisfaction, feeling good about their own apparent righteousness. God shares the glory with no man.

21. 2 Peter 2:5 -- "He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness." Noah was a herald of righteousness because He only preached God's message, a message accepted by no one. To the world, Noah was an utter fool. Few leaders seek to be a fool for Christ.

22. 2 Peter 2:5-10 -- "He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority." Lot was a righteous man, tormented in his heart by the perversion of his nation, which included rampant homosexuality, but Lot apparently did nothing to influence the culture around him and had become so connected with that culture that the angels had to actually force him out of the city before destroying it. Having assimilated into that ungodly land, he lost his wife and his in-laws, and his daughters were also trapped in perversion. How assimilated are you in our culture that is moving farther and farther away from God? How might the culture be causing you to compromise your purity and squelch your proclamation of the Gospel? What impact are you allowing to ungodly culture have on your children? What impact are you having on the ungodly culture?

23. 2 Peter 2:6 – "...if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly." See the comments above on Jeremiah 23:16-19.

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24. 2 Peter 2:9, 10 -- "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority." We have adapted our laws to accommodate defiling passions, despising the authority of God. God will deal with that.

25. 2 Peter 2:10 -- "Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones." Isn't this the norm in society today?

26. 2 Peter 2:12 -- "But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction." Those who quench the Spirit and allow the flesh to rule are no different than animals, denying their spiritual image of God.

27. 2 Peter 2:18 -- "For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error." Have you noticed how loud and boastful the ungodly are?

28. 2 Peter 2:19 -- "They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved." Our current sexual, humanist revolution which is overtaking our nation is proclaimed in the name of freedom while placing more and more people into bondage. Many are celebrating freedom from laws which once maintained a higher moral order in our society, not realizing that this freedom from law and order only serves to enslave more and more people to destructively sinful lifestyles. Popular opinion and social morality don't nullify God's commands.

29. 2 Peter 2:20 -- "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first." Many justify their worldly compromise by proclaiming 'freedom through grace,' but if they have asked for forgiveness for their sins through the blood of Jesus Christ and then continue in that sin, they not only trample on the blood of Christ, they also having nothing left to hold them back from the destructiveness of sin. They have denied the love of Christ through their willful disobedience, and without the motivator of love, nothing will stop their downward spiral. 2 Peter 2 goes on to say, "For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: 'The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.'" What hope is left for the person who proclaims Jesus and yet continues in willful sin? There is no such thing as 'cheap grace.' Grace came at the price of the blood of Jesus and, for that, we should tremble at the thought of disobey Him.

30. 2 Peter 2:21 -- "For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." Pray that God shows mercy on the nation that once proudly proclaimed, "No king but King Jesus," and "In God We Trust."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Oct 18: Today, ask yourself how you might have compromised your purity due to the influence of the culture in which you live. Consider what you will watch or listen to for entertainment today. Does it make light of the sin God abhors and for which Christ

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paid the penalty? Consider how clear your message of the Gospel is as an Ambassador for Christ in this corrupt society. Are you holding back? Why? (see 2 Peter 2)

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 2, Tuesday, 16 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+16%3B+2+pet+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 16 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 21:2 -- "Inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is making war against us. Perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds and will make him withdraw from us." The people who had chosen not to honor God by disobeying Him and living as they pleased actually thought that God would miraculously save them. The response they got from God through Jeremiah was the opposite of what they expected. They were completely oblivious to their enmity with God. Today many claim a special relationship with God while they remain in defiance of His commands. God will not be mocked.

2. Jeremiah 21:14 -- "I will punish you according to the fruit of your deeds, declares the Lord." God holds everyone accountable for their actions.

3. Jeremiah 22:3-6 -- "Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation. For thus says the Lord concerning the house of the king of Judah: 'You are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon, yet surely I will make you a desert, an uninhabited city.'" Through faith in Jesus, we are credited with the righteousness of Christ, though we did not deserve it. While we were still sinners Christ died for us; we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, through faith, not by our works. The goal of salvation (justification) is sanctification (being conformed to the image of Jesus -- Romans 8:29) while we await final glorification through Christ. Through salvation, we are no longer compelled by the law to obey God but rather compelled by the love of God to obey Him, freed from the bondage of sin, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Love produces fruit naturally. Grace does not change the standards and expectations of the Holy and Just God but rather changes our ability and motivation to obey Him. Grace doesn't remove the consequences of sin, but should change our response to sin through conviction of the Holy Spirit, genuine repentance, and a changed life. Having been justified, God expects us to live justly through love. And as the above verses demonstrate, the truth of our love for God is revealed in how we treat others. Children of God who don't obey God should anticipate the discipline of their Heavenly Father, not in condemnation but rather in sanctification. "But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world." (1 Corinthians 11:31-32) Judge yourself truly that you would not require the Father's discipline -- "But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation."

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4. Jeremiah 22:8, 9 – “‘Why has the Lord dealt thus with this great city?’ And they will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God....’” Again, God will judge those who reject His commands.

5. Jeremiah 22:15 – “Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar?”

- Your great accomplishments don't give you any more control or security than you had before. Your fate is completely in God's hands. God honors those who honor Him.

- What makes a king a king? Is it his personal power? No, a king's power comes from his legitimate authority. When a single police officer in uniform breaks up a mob of angry men who are physically more powerful than he, he does so by the power of his authority. It by that authority that he remains confident to command, “Stop in the name of the law!” The Bible says, that all authority is established by God. (Romans 13) The Father gave all power and authority to the Son (Mat 28:18) though the Pharisees questioned His authority. (Mat 21:23) Jesus commended the centurion above all others because he understood the power of Jesus' authority. (Luke 7:8) Calling upon his authority, Jesus commanded us to go throughout the world and make disciples who would obey all of his commands as King of kings (Matt 28:18-20). We are called to live lives of power under the authority of the King as His Kingdom of Priests (Rev 1:6), reigning in life through Jesus. (Romans 5:17) Eternal life and our holy priesthood does not begin when we die, it began the moment we were born again (John 17:3), and the power of God flows through is as nourishment flows through a vine to the branches. (John 15) Jesus said that, under His position of authority, His every word and deed was subject to the authority of the Father. (John 14:10) Likewise, our authority as Christians is subject to the authority of the Father and Son. Let us live lives worthy of our calling. (Ephesians 4:1)

- Romans 5:17 -- For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

- 2 Timothy 2:12 -- If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;

- Revelation 5:10 -- You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

6. Jeremiah 22:21, 22 – “I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, ‘I will not listen.’ This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice. The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds” Have you stopped to consider that perhaps the customs, traditions, and morality that you grew up with and learned might be very, very far from God's standards and will? Many spiritual leaders in the world are only following the wind. Only those who are truly following Jesus can really preach what God wants preached.

7. Proverbs 16:2 – “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.”

- God shows the truly humble what they cannot see in themselves. God will show you the truth of your heart if you will listen, and God will draw you closer to Him if you will obey.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- How quick we are to question the motives of others, yet we are so slow to question our own! When others harm us, we may assume the worst of intentions. When we are guilty, we often excuse our offenses, concluding that others are far too sensitive! Regardless of how we

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monitor our motives, God weighs them in His scales of righteousness. It is futile to try to deceive God with our pious justifications, for He sees our hearts. Is it possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason? Of course! You can attend worship services with a heart that is far from worshipful (Isa. 1:10-17). Could you show concern for the poor and yet have a heart that is opposed to God? Judas did (John 12:4-8). Could you make bold statements of love for Christ and actually be aiding the work of Satan? Peter did (Matt. 16:21-23). Could you offer sacrifices to God and be in total disobedience to Him? King Saul did (1 Sam. 13:8-9). Could you pray with the wrong motives? James said you can (James 4:3). Many things cause us to do what we do. We can be motivated by good things, such as love for God, compassion, generosity, and faith. Or our actions can come from unhealthy motives such as pride, insecurity, ambition, lust, greed, guilt, anger, fear, and hurt. It is even possible to do the best things based on the worst motives. When the Lord measures our motives, He looks for one thing: love. All that we do should proceed from our love for God and for others (1 Cor. 13). Take time to look past your actions to what lies behind them. Ask God to show you what He sees when He examines your motives.

8. Proverbs 16:25 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

- Again, the Bible reminds us that only God can show us the way we should go; we cannot trust in our own understanding. If you are not following Jesus day by day, you are off course and going down a path that leads to death.

From Henry T. Blackaby -- Things are not always what they seem. Proverbs warns that we can be deceived into believing we are going down the right path and yet be heading toward death, the opposite direction from God's will. People do not naturally seek God or pursue righteousness (Rom. 3:10-18). Only as the Spirit awakens our hearts to the Person of Christ are we able to desire God's will. If we make decisions apart from the guidance of the Spirit of God, we will be like a ship trying to sail without a compass. We will do what makes the most sense, based on our own wisdom. But what looks attractive may actually lead to sin, ultimately destroying what is precious to us, for our most profound human thinking is mere foolishness to God (1 Cor. 1:18-20). Only God knows the way that leads to life, and He wants to lead us to walk in it (Matt. 7:13-14). Don't assume every opportunity that arises is from God. Satan will disguise himself as an “angel of light,” and his invitations will seem to be in your best interest (2 Cor. 11:14). Yet his way leads only to death (John 8:44). The word of God will be like a light to your path, guiding you in the ways of righteousness (Ps. 119:105). It can be perilous to follow a path that seems right without first consulting the Holy Spirit for guidance (John 16:13). Take time to seek the Holy Spirit's direction when you face decisions. He knows the full ramifications of your choices. The Holy Spirit will assist you to understand truth and to experience abundant life. Trust Him as He leads you.

9. 2 Peter 1:1 – “Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ....” All who are saved through Christ have equal righteousness and equal access to the power of the Holy Spirit.

10. 2 Peter 1:2 – “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” The more we truly know Jesus, the more we grow in grace and peace.

11. 2 Peter 1:3-9 – “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.... so that... you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness,

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and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.”

- As a Christian, you have everything you need to live a holy and abundant life (2 Pet. 1:3-11). Your intelligence, your education, or your family background do not determine the holiness of your life. Everything you need to live a victorious, joyful, and abundant life is found in the Holy Spirit who resides within you. (Gal. 5:22-23) According to Peter, each Christian, by faith, has access to these qualities: goodness, knowledge of God, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. It would be of no use to inherit a fortune if you did not know it was yours. Likewise, it is of no benefit to inherit everything necessary to become like Christ if you do not claim it. If we continue to lack self-control when God has made it available, we rob ourselves and those around us. If God is willing to instill brotherly kindness into our behavior, but we never display it, people will suffer needlessly as a result. The key to all that God has made available to us is our faith. We must believe that God wants to build these qualities into our lives. In the Gospels, Jesus related to people according to their faith. (Matt. 8:13; 9:29; 15:28) He rewarded genuine faith by granting salvation and healing. If He met unbelief, He did not reward it. (Mark 6:5-6) Review the qualities that Peter said God wants to instill in you. If you lack any of these qualities, ask God to work them into your character, so that you will be more like Christ.

- We don't obey to be saved. We obey because we have been saved and are being saved.

12. 2 Peter 1:12-15 – “Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.” God calls us to remind each other to remain obedient.

13. 2 Peter 1:14 – “...since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.” God can show you your future if He wants to. However, God doesn’t show you the future to accommodate your lack of trust in Him.

14. 2 Peter 1:16 – “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” Witnesses testify to what they have personally seen or experienced, not what they have heard from others. Your witness to others is a testimony to what Jesus has done in your life and what you have personally grown to know about Him. If you have a hard time sharing your testimony, it may be that your real experience with Jesus is very limited. Don’t just read about Jesus and then try to convince people of what you have read – your heart won’t be in that. Instead, walk with Jesus in faith, watch Him work miraculously in your life, and grow closer and closer to Him in genuine relationship. If you truly experience the power of Jesus and the truth of His word in your life, you won’t have any trouble bearing witness to it.

15. 2 Peter 1:19-21 – “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” All Scripture is the word of God.

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16. 2 Peter 1:21 – “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Everybody has an opinion, and many seek to use Biblical proof texts to validate their opinion. The Bible has been used to justify all sorts of thoughts and deeds; it has been used as a self-help book; a business book, and for all sorts of ambitious ends. However, true prophecy comes from the Holy Spirit and draws from God’s word to communicate what God would say on a current situation or matter, always pointing to Jesus; God’s prophet will not add, take away, or conflict with God’s written word but will place it in current context in ways that could not have discerned through mere intellect. God’s message will always be different than what we would have expected because His thoughts are farther from ours than the Heavens are from the earth.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Oct 18: Journal today on how well you personally know the person of Jesus and what you have personally experienced from Him vice what you have merely read about or heard from others. Use this experience as the foundation of your personal testimony, and pray above all other prayers for a deeper, more meaningful personal relationship with Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 42, Day 1, Monday, 15 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+15%3B+1+pet+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 15 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 19:5 – “...and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind....” God expects you to do only what He has planned and commanded, not what seems to succeed for other people.
2. Jeremiah 19:11 – “So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so that it can never be mended.” There can come a time when God knows a person or nation will never turn to Him, when the opportunity for repentance is gone. He then destroys the worthless vessel.
3. Jeremiah 20:2 – “Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of the Lord.” God does not always choose to protect His faithful servant from suffering and persecution at the hands of humans who have departed from God. However, God does promise to remain faithful to His suffering servant through persecution.
4. Jeremiah 20:3 – “The next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, ‘The Lord does not call your name Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side.’” Jeremiah was God’s messenger. He didn’t hold back God’s message from those who needed to hear it, regardless of whether or not he thought they would listen and regardless of the potential consequences he might endure for delivering an undesirable message. Often, we are far too concerned about our words being accepted than being communicated in truth and love as God desires us to do. Today, most pastors in America won’t even use words like “sin,” “Hell,” or “repent,” because these words are too unpopular and considered judgmental. God calls us to proclaim the truth, regardless of how others might choose to receive it.
5. Jeremiah 20:7-10 -- “I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, ‘Violence and destruction!’ For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there

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is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! 'Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' say all my close friends, watching for my fall. 'Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him.'"

Jeremiah had a message no one wanted to hear. Not only did his message seem fanatical and foolish to others, it also seemed treasonous, a very serious matter. When they said to themselves, 'Perhaps he will be deceived,' these former close friends were actually looking for a way to kill him legally (Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 18:23). The fact that Jeremiah had already declared (in our readings) several times that all other prophets were 'false prophets' certainly didn't add to his personal security (Jeremiah 5:31, 6:13, 8:10). Jeremiah didn't have a death wish and wasn't looking to be a martyr; in fact, at times he resented being put in that position (Jeremiah 20:7). Jeremiah simply couldn't contain the Holy Spirit's compulsion to testify to the truth, regardless the consequences. As much as he tried, he simply could not quench the Holy Spirit, and it cost him his family, his friends, and all his worldly comforts. Remember, Jeremiah didn't choose to be a prophet; he was chosen. When called by God, what else matters? The Great Treason would be to disobey the LORD. You too have been called by God to proclaim the truth to a land that has rejected God as KING and LORD. Now what? Jesus said, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). What did he say? 'All' will be persecuted. All who? All 'who desire to live a godly life' will be persecuted. Just wanting to follow Jesus will set you up for persecution. If you are not being persecuted for the truth in this day and age, it may be because you are not living a godly life, simply because you really don't want to. And being "persecuted" isn't the same as being "prosecuted," which is a punishment you deserve for your wrongdoing. Everyone suffers on this earth due to the consequences of sin, particularly their own sins. However, suffering for the truth is a much different thing. "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name." (1 Peter 4:12-16)

-- 1 Peter 5:9 -- Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

-- Revelation 2:10 -- Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

- "I shout, 'Violence and destruction!' For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long." Are you willing to be ostracized because of your message from God?

- "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." Jeremiah didn't always want to speak the truth, but He couldn't control Himself. He had to speak the truth. Does that describe you?

- "'Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' say all my close friends, watching for my fall." The truth will separate close friends and family. Though others may abandon you, God will never leave you or forsake you. Remain faithful to Him, and show others what love and faithfulness looks like.

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6. Jeremiah 20:11 -- "But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble." In your persecution, God is still in control and will take care of you. Vengeance is in His hands, not yours. Trust God to handle it.

7. Jeremiah 20:13 -- "Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers." You can rejoice in persecution. You should rejoice in persecution.

8. Jeremiah 20:14-18 -- "Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, 'A son is born to you,' making him very glad. Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?" Some days you may wish you had never been born. Life is hard, even for God's most faithful servants. Sometimes you have to praise God even when you don't feel like it. Stay strong.

9. Proverbs 15:8 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." Not everyone who goes to church and sacrifices to God is acceptable to God; not everyone who prays to God is accepted by God. God knows the heart. You must approach God with a contrite heart and with the goal of serving Him not to be served by Him.

10. Proverbs 15:9 -- "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness." The true Christian has been saved through Jesus and made righteous (or right with God) through Jesus, but the true Christian still "pursues" righteousness and holiness with all might, seeking to grow more and more into the image of Jesus. We will never fully achieve the fulfillment of righteousness, holiness, and love on this earth, but this is not an excuse to pursue that aim half-heartedly. Have a holy direction while awaiting holy perfection!

11. Proverbs 15:26 -- "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure." The Bible has much to say about the words that come out of your mouth, in part, because your words reveal what is in your heart. Words are very powerful -- usually the first way your thoughts enter the tangible world and have an influential impact. Your words transmit your thoughts into the thoughts of others, transferring positive thoughts into their minds or negative thoughts into their minds. Your words will either lift others up or knock them down. They will either instruct or deceive. They will either unite or divide. They will make people feel better or feel worse. Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak." (Matthew 12:36) Today, let no careless or ungracious word come out of your mouth. Speak for Jesus (as His ambassador), not for yourself. Ensure every word that comes out of your mouth is a healing word, and encouraging word, a loving word. Don't transmit negativity into the world, only positivity. Remember, the most powerful word you can use today is "Jesus."

12. 1 Peter 5:1, 2 -- "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly." Leaders lead by being a good example, emulating Jesus, and coaching

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others to Christ-like character; and they do it not because they have to or for personal gain but because they have a heart for God and for others.

13. 1 Peter 5:2-4 – “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” Sheep are smelly and senseless, doing the same senseless things over and over again. Turn your back for a minute, and the sheep are wandering again. Shepherds (which can be a metaphor for pastors, parents, employees, and community leaders) are called to eagerly, patiently, and graciously care for their ‘sheep’ without a desire for personal gain. This takes great spiritual maturity, and shepherds should not expect that sheep will have the same understanding and discipline that they do; they should expect to have to continually correct the same sheep for the same things. If sheep were as wise as shepherds, they wouldn’t need the shepherd. With leadership comes lifelong responsibility to lead the weak. If you can’t stand the smell of sheep, you can’t be a shepherd. Shepherds are not to be harsh and overly domineering but rather are to be gentle and to lead the way in example. Shepherds can lead their sheep to where they need to go only if they are following the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, Jesus. Shepherds can deal with their sheep well when they are always mindful that they themselves are ultimately just dumb smelly sheep who require the daily patience and grace of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus.

14. 1 Peter 5:5, 6 – “Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

- Humility is one of the key attributes of a Christian. Is “humble” one of the first words people would use to describe you?

- From A. W. Tozer -- “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Peter 5:5) Some time ago we heard a short address by a young preacher during which he quoted the following, “If you are too big for a little place, you are too little for a big place.” It is an odd rule of the kingdom of God that when we try to get big, we always get smaller by the moment. God is jealous of His glory and will not allow anyone to share it with Him. The effort to appear great will bring the displeasure of God upon us and effectively prevent us from achieving the greatness after which we pant. Humility pleases God wherever it is found, and the humble person will have God for his or her friend and helper always. Only the humble are completely sane, for they are the only ones who see clearly their own size and limitations. Egotists see things out of focus. To themselves they are large and God is correspondingly small, and that is a kind of moral insanity.

- 1 Peter 5:6, 7 – “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” Few people recognize that anxiety is a pride problem. How can the Bible say that anxiety comes from pride? Pride leads a person to believe that they are in control of their circumstances, that their fate depends on their abilities. Anxiety is the realization that they really are not in control, that their abilities are not enough, and their hope in self is futile. The anxious person is a prideful sheep that has wandered away from the Chief Shepherd and is starting to realize that they have no idea where they are and that they are defenseless against the wolves of life. The answer to anxiety is to humbly return to the Chief Shepherd

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and rest in His guidance and protection. The job of the humble sheep is to trust, obey, and follow closely as the Shepherd leads to green pastures.

- "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." From Henry T. Blackaby -- As you've no doubt discovered, becoming a Christian does not make your problems go away. But it does give you an Advocate to whom you can take every concern. The Christians Peter addressed were facing persecution. They did not know whom they could trust; a friend, a neighbor, or even a family member could betray them, resulting in suffering and even death. But Peter had walked with the risen Christ, and he had personally experienced the love that Jesus had for His followers. He knew that Christ was in control, capable of handling every trial and that He wanted to do so as an expression of His love. Casting our cares is a choice. It means consciously handing over our anxiety to Christ and allowing Him to carry the weight of our problems. At times this is the most difficult part of trusting God! We don't like turning over the responsibility for our problems. We have been taught that self-reliance is good and praiseworthy. We may even enjoy worrying. Yet if we are to be freed from the burden of our concerns, we must choose to cast them into the strong hands of our Father. Peter does not distinguish between little cares and big cares. God does not differentiate between problems we should handle on our own and God-sized needs. He asks us to turn them all over to Him. One of our greatest errors is to assume we can deal with something ourselves, only to discover that we really can't. God sees you as His frail child, burdened with a load that surpasses your strength. He stands prepared to take your load and to carry it for you. Will you let Him?

15. 1 Peter 5:14 – "Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ." Humility is easier when you can "cast all your anxieties on Him." Prideful people are really fearful people, people who feel as if they have to validate themselves, defend themselves, justify themselves, prove themselves, etc. Humility is proof of faith in Him rather than self.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 Oct 18: Today, whether it be in your home, your office, your church, or your community, be a good shepherd by following the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd closely and modelling His example of living and leadership. Don't be the prideful leader who considers himself or herself the example, but be the humble leader who always points to the Example and demonstrates a life surrendered to Jesus. Never think the focus is you, live a life that points only to Jesus Christ. (see 1 Peter 5)

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 7, Sunday, 14 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+14%3B+psalm+120%2C+121>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 14 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 17:5 -- "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord."

- Everyone places their trust in someone or something. In whom do you really place your trust? In whom does the nation place its trust?

- The Israelites of Jeremiah's day believed they could trust in their army, the diplomacy of their king, and their foreign alliances to protect them from the powerful Babylonian empire. They gave lip service to their trust in God, but their actions showed where their faith really was: in their military and financial

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might. God spoke through Jeremiah to warn them that He would not bless those who trusted in anyone or anything instead of Him. Placing your ultimate trust in anything other than God is idolatry. How can you know if your faith is not truly in God? Ask yourself these questions: Where do I turn when I experience a crisis? When I am hurting or afraid, to whom do I go? When I have a financial problem, whom do I want to tell first? Where do I seek comfort when I am under stress or discouraged? Could it be that you are saying you trust in God but your actions indicate otherwise? God often uses other people as His method of providing for you. Be careful lest you inadvertently misdirect your faith toward His provision instead of toward the Provider. God may meet your need through your friends, but ultimately your trust must be in God. The Israelites were so stubbornly committed to trusting in human strength instead of God that, even as the Babylonian army approached Jerusalem, they continued to desperately seek a person, nation, or army that could rescue them. They realized too late that they had neglected to trust in the only One who could deliver them. Don't make the same mistake as the Israelites. Go straight to the Lord when you have a need. He is the only One who can provide for you.

2. Jeremiah 17:9, 10 – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? ‘I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.’”

- What you care about most determines what you think which, in turn determines how you act. Your actions are the fruit of your heart, but often people pretend to be something they really aren't, fooling others and sometimes even themselves. God is never fooled though and knows your true motives. For example, people may be very impressed by the 'good deeds' of someone, but God knows if those deeds are merely the product of prideful self-righteousness, an attempt to gain favor from others or merely feel good about themselves.

- A person can judge another person's actions, whether they are good or bad, but God judges the heart, and the motives behind those actions. Only God knows the 'why' beneath the motives – why a people think the way they do – we don't; therefore, we can't judge the inner person, only God can. (Luke 11:17; Mark 12:15; Acts 15:8) We can't even honestly judge our own inner person because we deceive ourselves – only God can. I believe the Bible calls Christians to 'judge' behaviors within the context of God's word without judging the heart or worth of the person, something only God can do – “Do not slander a servant to his master.” (Proverbs 30:10) When we try to play god, either in self-judgment or judgment of others, we only cause pain and destruction. C.S. Lewis makes this observation: “Human beings judge one another by their external actions. God judges them by their moral choices.... When a man who has been perverted from his youth and taught that cruelty is the right thing, does some tiny little kindness, or refrains from some cruelty he might have committed, and thereby, perhaps, risks being sneered at by his companions, he may, in God's eyes, be doing more than you and I would do if we gave up life itself for a friend.... It is as well to put this the other way round. Some of us who seem quite nice people may, in fact, have made so little use of a good heredity and a good upbringing that we are really worse than those whom we regard as fiends. Can we be quite certain how we should have behaved if we had been saddled with the psychological outfit, and then with the bad upbringing, and then with the power, say, of Himmler? That is why Christians are told not to judge. We see only the results which a man's choices make out of his raw material. But God does not judge him on the raw material at all, but on what he has done with it.” (C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 86-87) From our very limited position, we can only walk very humbly in forgiveness and seek to 'abide in Christ,' obeying his commands which are ever on our hearts, and testifying to the truth in word in deed. We must be in

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continual prayer to the Lord – “Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!” (Psalm 119:36) And, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) Be careful not to be deceived by your own ‘good deeds’ which at their root may be nourished by pride, self-righteousness, feelings of unworthiness, or fear. Pray to God, “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” (Psalm 109:23)

-- Romans 12:1-3 -- I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

-- Galatians 6:1 -- Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

3. Jeremiah 18:6 -- "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!" God knows how to bring salvation to your family, your friends, your community, and your world. Accordingly, He invites us to join Him in His divine work. Clay has no plans of its own -- It is just clay to be molded by the hands of the Creator. As clay, we are to be moldable, pliable, totally submissive to the will of its master. At times we excitedly announce to God: "I've discovered my strengths and gifts, and now I know how I can best serve You!" At other times we inform Him, "I am aware of what my weaknesses are, so I know which tasks I'm not capable of doing for You." Yet this isn't characteristic of clay. God isn't limited to working with our strengths. (2 Cor. 12:9-10) He can mold us into whatever kind of instrument He requires. When God's assignment demands humility, he finds a servant willing to be humbled. When His work requires zeal, He looks for someone ready to be filled with His Spirit. God uses holy vessels, so He finds those who will are ready for Him to remove their impurities. If your tendency is to tell the Father what you can and can't do for Him, repent, submit to His agenda, and allow Him to shape you into the person He wants you to be. Like clay.

4. Jeremiah 18:12 -- "But they say, 'That is in vain! We will follow our own plans....'" Only the ungodly fool believes he is in control of his own life. God determines the fate of every person. Those who choose to depart from God will suffer grave consequences.

5. Jeremiah 18:15 -- "But my people have forgotten me; they make offerings to false gods; they made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk into side roads, not the highway." If something has become a higher priority in your life than Jesus, you will turn and walk down the wrong path in life, away from Jesus. What is the primary motivation in your life? What is your life focus? Why do you really do what you do? Are you really following Jesus or chasing after something else?

6. Proverbs 14:5 -- "A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies." The truth of your words and advice is determined by in whom you have placed your faith. If you are guided by the Spirit and are following Jesus, proclaiming only His word and not your own, you speak the truth and are a faithful witness. If, however, you are merely offering your own opinion based on 'common sense' or the teachings and traditions of this world, you are misleading others away from the truth, despite your

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good intentions. The only word that is inspired, the only word that you are allowed to proclaim as Christ's ambassador is God's word, not your opinion. Speak God's word.

7. Proverbs 14:6-9 -- "A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding. Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge. The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving. Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance."

- Today there are many who scoff at simple Christian faith, thinking themselves so very wise. Their false wisdom can be quite deceiving. Have nothing to do with teachings void of Jesus. The foolish scoffer mocks the need for repentance and the need for reliance on the sacrifice of Jesus (the guilt offering). However, a true teacher starts and ends with Jesus. If your counsellor isn't continually pointing you to Jesus but rather some form of moralism, psychology, or any other idea that rests on a hope other than Jesus, walk away.

- "Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright." Christians make amends for sin when it is within their power to do so. Exodus 22, Leviticus 24, and Numbers also speak to the principle of restitution.

8. Proverbs 14:12 -- "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." People don't usually pursue what they think is wrong but rather pursue what they think is right. The problem is that their thoughts are immeasurably far removed from God's thoughts. Many are very committed to convictions that are very moral in the eyes of society and very sinful in the eyes of God, the Author of Justice. When people do what is right in their own eyes, they perish.

9. Proverbs 14:15, 16 -- "The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless." Don't believe what you hear from others; believe God and His word. Very, very few read and obey God's word. If you choose to do that, you will turn away from evil and the majority.

10. Proverbs 14:21 -- "Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor." Own this verse. If you look down on others around you, you are a sinner -- it doesn't say you are sinning; it says you ARE a sinner -- it is in your character not just in your behavior. Examine yourself from this perspective. Your generosity to the needy (both physically needy and spiritually needy) reveals what is really in your heart. The problem with being generous to the needy is that they are needy for a reason. They are usually dealing with the consequences of their own sinful behavior. They don't deserve to be treated well -- this is called grace, the same type of grace you have received through Jesus and in which your hope rests.

11. Proverbs 14:25 -- "A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful." Jeremiah was a truthful witness. He spoke the truth no one wanted to hear in hopes of saving lives. Are you willing to proclaim Jesus to those who do not really want to hear it?

12. Psalm 120:1 -- "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me." God will not refuse those who genuinely cry out to Him.

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13. Psalm 121:2 – “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Faith comes from a true understanding and appreciation of who God is and what He has promised. If you have placed your trust in the Creator of all things who has promised to love you, what do you have to worry about?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Oct 18: Recommit to trusting in the Lord and no one or nothing else; recommit to following Jesus and no one or nothing else. Walk with Him by obeying Him and watch His fidelity revealed in your life.

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 6, Saturday, 13 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+14-16%3B+proverbs+13%3B+psalm+119>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 13 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 14:7 -- “Though our iniquities testify against us, act, O Lord, for your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against you.” We must approach the Lord in true humility as a repentant sinner amazed by grace, and our desire must be Him rather than merely something from Him for ourselves. Often God uses our desperation to draw us to Him, but He wants you to recognize your relationship problem with Him rather than just your physical problem. The reality is, no matter how much we are blessed on this earth, our physical life will end in death, but our relationship with Him (whether positive or negative) will endure for eternity.

2. Jeremiah 14:8-10 – “Why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?... Yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; do not leave us.’...” Thus says the Lord concerning this people: ‘They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the Lord does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.’” The sinful people suffering from the consequences of their sin maintained the perspective that God had abandoned them and had left them to be victimized unfairly by cruel, blind fate; however, God tells them that He did not abandon them, rather they abandoned Him. They were not suffering from mere random circumstances but by His hand of discipline. Have you ever heard someone say they didn’t believe in God or worship God because they did not believe a god of love would allow ‘innocent’ people to suffer needlessly? That is not a new complaint, and it is just as shallow, self-centered, and misinformed today as it always has been.

3. Jeremiah 14:12 – “Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them.” God knows the difference between those who are truly repentant and truly seeking Him and those who, on the contrary, merely want God to give them what they are looking for in self-centeredness. Phony religion is contractual – “God if you do this for me, I will do something for you.” True religion is covenantal – “I will love and obey you, regardless of what happens to me.” True religion places God above self through all circumstances.

4. Jeremiah 14:13, 14 – “Then I said: ‘Ah, Lord God, behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’” And the Lord said to me: ‘The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.’” A sinful nation promotes and lifts up preachers who will say what they want to hear and who will not warn against judgment for sin. How many preachers today talk about the looming judgment of God?

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5. Jeremiah 15:6 – “I am weary of relenting.” God’s patience doesn’t last forever.

6. Jeremiah 15:16 – “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.” Henry T. Blackaby -- If you were to receive a note from the leader of your country or someone famous, you would probably save it as a keepsake. How much more precious is a message from almighty God! Sometimes we find ourselves in circumstances that are beyond our control. This was the case for Mary and Martha as they were grieving the death of their brother Lazarus. At these times a word from Jesus can bring much rejoicing (John 11:41-45). Other times when Jesus speaks, His words bring correction. “Get behind Me, Satan!” (Matt. 16:23) and “O you of little faith” (Matt. 14:31) do not seem to bring joy. Yet Jeremiah said that God’s word brought him joy. It is overwhelming to consider that holy, almighty God would speak directly to us! What a privilege that He would care enough to challenge our destructive thoughts or practices. No matter whether His words are praising us or chastising us, we ought to consider it joy to receive life-changing words from our Master! Every time we prepare to worship the Lord, we ought to do so with anticipation that almighty God may have something to say to us. Whenever we open our Bibles, we should expect that God has something to tell us in our time with Him. We ought to be far more concerned with what God will say to us during our prayer times than with what we intend to tell Him. When you receive a word from your Lord, whether it be of praise or of correction, consider it joy that almighty God would speak to you.

7. Jeremiah 15:17 – “I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.” Holiness can be lonely like leadership. When you are leading the race, you are often running harder than everyone else and running alone. It takes great physical and moral courage to be a faithful Christian. Few are willing to persevere on the hard road.

8. Jeremiah 15:19 – “If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.” We are called to be Ambassadors for Jesus, to speak on His behalf. We are not called to represent ourselves on this earth but to help reconcile the divide between God and men. Who will influence who? Will you influence the world around you, or will the world be more of an influence on you? Is the spirit in you really greater than the spirit in the world? Will you be bright and salty today or dim and tasteless?

9. Jeremiah 16:16 -- “Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them.” Compare this prophetic verse with the call from Jesus to his disciples: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19) Are you a good fisherman?

10. Proverbs 13:5 – “The righteous hates falsehood, but the wicked brings shame and disgrace.” The righteous will desire obedience.

11. Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible and uses each letter of the Hebrew alphabet to teach a spiritual lesson. Psalm 119 is a great Psalm to review regularly. Read the whole thing and see if it does not inspire you to diligently study and live by God’s Word.

12. Psalm 119:5 – “Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!” Is this your earnest desire?

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13. Psalm 119:9-16 – “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.” A wholehearted seeking of the Lord requires fully committed Bible study, memorization, and application. It also requires evangelism. Are you a wholehearted follower of Jesus?

- Psalm 119 is my favorite Psalm – it is also the longest.

14. Psalm 119:18 – “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” Anyone, through intellectual knowledge, can know what is in the Bible, but it requires the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to truly understand what it means, and it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to live it. Godliness is much more than an intellectual pursuit; it is a spiritual endeavor. Some of the most influential atheists in the world can quote the Bible better than many Christians; in fact, Satan tempted Jesus with Bible quotes. Spiritual discernment however is available only to those saved through Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

15. Psalm 119:20 – “My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.” Is this your consuming longing today? You might say, “I don’t want rules; I want Jesus.” Good, but understand that the rules of God are the application of His desires and intent, a reflection of what is on His heart; they are His perfect will. Shouldn’t you care most about what Jesus cares most about if you are desiring to be His real friend and to walk with Him? Or, do you want a relationship with Him only on your terms?

16. Psalm 119:30 – “I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.” Love and faithfulness go hand-in-hand. Have you chosen the way of love and faithfulness?

17. Psalm 119:36 – “Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!” Selfishness is what separates you from God. This is why Jesus said the first step to coming after Him is to deny self.

18. Psalm 119:46, 47 – “I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.” Testifying about Jesus is not hard at all for someone who truly loves Him and knows His word.

19. Psalm 119:51 – “The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.” Throughout all of history, God’s people have had to endure ridicule from the ungodly. This is inevitable. Rejoice if you find yourself in the company of the many faithful who have suffered before you as you carry on the torch of the Good News.

20. Psalm 119:72 – “The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.” Something will have priority in your life, God or something else. Most people who claim to be Christian are actually influenced day-to-day by a higher priority than Jesus, usually something connected to self-preservation or self-fulfillment. Following Jesus will always be a leap of faith and love, requiring you to give up your life that you may have real life in Him.

21. Psalm 119:90 – “Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.” Opinions about God change from generation to generation, but God doesn’t change. Your

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personal opinion matters little unless your opinion is God's unchanging truth revealed through His word and the Holy Spirit.

22. Psalm 119:99, 100 – "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts." The learned scholars are but blind guides as are the theologians with seminary degrees who do not live out the words of Jesus and glorify Him alone in absolute humility. The greatest spiritual leader in your community may be the man on the street corner who no one notices. Man-made positions and recognitions are not God's measure of success. Find and surround yourself with the true followers of Jesus.

23. Psalm 119:129 – "Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them." Ultimately, obedience only comes from love. If you are trying to obey from a position of fear, self-righteousness or duty, you will still fall short because anything other than love is self-centered.

24. Psalm 119:136 – "My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law." When was the last time you were consumed in sorrow by the sins of others?

25. Psalm 119:147, 148 – "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words. My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise." Do you begin and end each day with dedicated time with the Lord?

26. Psalm 119:160 – "The sum of your word is truth, every one of your righteous rules endures forever." To know God's whole truth, you must know His whole word; you must study the Bible in total, not just bits and pieces of it.

27. Psalm 119:175, 176 – "Let my soul live and praise you, and let your rules help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments." We were created to love, obey, worship, and praise God. However, we were also created to be totally dependent upon Him, powerless, and defenseless in our own strength like sheep. We must follow the voice of the Shepherd and remain in His protection. We must follow the Shepherd not trusting in our sheepish knowledge. Sheep like to wander off to their own peril. We must understand that we are just like sheep. Stay as close as you can to the Shepherd.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 Oct 18: Read Psalm 119 carefully, meditate upon it, and apply it beginning today to your daily walk with Jesus. (see notes above)

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 5, Friday, 12 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+12%2C+13%3B+proverbs+12%3B+1+pet+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 12 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 12:1-3 – "Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart. But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter." God may allow the wicked to prosper for a time, which may cause you to question Him, even complain. He understands you don't understand. Go to Him in prayer, and He will guide you into greater understanding and into closer relationship with Him.

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2. Jeremiah 12:5 -- "And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?" If you won't trust and obey God when things are relatively easy, you certainly won't trust and obey God when things are really hard. God uses hard times to prepare His minister for harder times.

3. Jeremiah 12:6 -- "For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you." God can show you who to trust and who not to trust.

5. Jeremiah 12:10 -- "Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portion." Ungodly leaders, whether they claim to be religious or not, can lead a whole nation astray.

6. Jeremiah 12:11 -- "The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart." God's unchanging word testifies against ungodly leaders and against ungodly society, but people choose to ignore the truth of God.

7. Jeremiah 12:16, 17 -- "And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, 'As the Lord lives,' even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. But if any nation will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the Lord."

- God expects obedience from all people.

- We are engaged in a global competition of ideas and beliefs. In this battle, who is most influencing who? God intends for His people, as His ambassadors to foreign lands, to teach His enemies His ways and to turn their hearts towards Him. He intends for us to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded." (Matthew 28:18, 19) This is our primary purpose on earth – as servants of Christ, we do not pursue our own desires but only the will of our Master, "no longer for human passions but for the will of God." (1 Peter 4:2). As a very visible example to the world, we are to have NOTHING to do with sin, displaying grace, and speaking only godly words. All of our words and deeds should glorify God (not ourselves) and draw people to Him (1 Peter 4:7-11) From a position of holiness, as "priests," we proclaim the Gospel that sinners might turn to Jesus and be saved – "For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does." (1 Peter 4:6) However, if God's people become influenced by the world, they become "spoiled [and] good for nothing." (Jeremiah 13:7) If God's people, who bear the name, 'Christian,' make light of the sin from which Christ suffered the cross to save us, then they must be punished. (Jeremiah 13:15-27) For the sake of His glory, God will very visibly punish His adulterous people (who partner with the world) "with tears because the Lord's flock has been taken captive." (Jeremiah 13:17) "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet." (Matthew 5:13)

-- Hebrews 10:26-36 -- For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which

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he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

-- 1 Peter 4:17-19 -- For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

8. Jeremiah 13:10 -- "This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing." God's word will often go against what is in your heart, because you are not perfected in love, and God's thoughts are far from your thoughts. You must choose to follow God's word instead of what you would prefer. If you will not submit your will to God's will, you are essentially "good for nothing." What good is a disobedience servant, and untruthful witness, or a disloyal ambassador?

9. Jeremiah 13:11 -- "For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen." God wants people to depend on Him and on nothing else.

10. Jeremiah 13:17 -- "But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock has been taken captive." God's true servants are heartbroken when God's people refuse to repent. God wants that no one should perish in their pride but that all would turn to Jesus.

11. Jeremiah 13:18 -- "Say to the king and the queen mother: 'Take a lowly seat, for your beautiful crown has come down from your head.'" No one is exempt from God's judgement.

12. Jeremiah 13:22 -- "And if you say in your heart, 'Why have these things come upon me?' it is for the greatness of your iniquity that your skirts are lifted up and you suffer violence." The one who receives the consequences of his decision to ignore God should not be surprised or blame God for his decision.

13. Jeremiah 13:23 -- "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil." Sin can become a habit which eventually shapes your character and the truth of who you are. You must develop habits of goodness rather than habits of badness. You become more and more what you repeatedly choose to do. Your character is formed from your habits over time. It is very hard to change character quickly, perhaps impossible.

14. Jeremiah 13:26 -- "I myself will lift up your skirts over your face, and your shame will be seen." There are 'natural' consequences for your choices and actions, but God is not just a bystander. God Himself is the author of your circumstances and determines your fate.

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15. Proverbs 12:8 -- "A man is commended according to his good sense, but one of twisted mind is despised." Many will hate you because you obey God, but those same people resent you when you act as the world does. The world does not really know how to love because it doesn't really know the God who is love. Focus on your relationship with Jesus who loves you faithfully.

16. Proverbs 12:26 -- "One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." Compare this verse to Jeremiah 23:1 above. Do you guide your neighbors towards Jesus or away from Jesus? Do you give them 'good ideas' or the Gospel? Do you encourage them to rely on their own abilities or Jesus? Do you tell them to have a positive mental attitude or to humbly repent and surrender to Jesus? Do you quote popular gurus of the day or Jesus?

17. Proverbs 12:2 -- "A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of evil devices he condemns." You cannot partner with God and expect blessings from Him while you are in disobedience to His word.

18. Proverbs 12:9 -- "Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread." Don't boast of your gifts and talents but rather let them reveal themselves.

19. Proverbs 12:11 -- "Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread,
but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense." Don't waste your time on things that don't matter.

20. Proverbs 12:15 -- "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice." The ability to be humbly self-aware and self-correcting is critical to life success.

21. Proverbs 12:25 -- "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." Most people are struggling with anxiety. Do your words make them glad?

22. Proverbs 12:26 -- "One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." A good leader leads people to where they need to go. Christians are leaders who lead people to righteousness because that is where everyone needs to go. But Christians can only lead if they are followers, followers of Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate leader.

23. Proverbs 12:27 -- "Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth." The lazy person has everything they need but refuse to do anything with it.

24. 1 Peter 4:1, 2 -- "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God." These are powerful verses calling us to do away with self-centered emotions that would impassion us to respond to others from a position of pride, self-righteousness, fear, anger, or judgment. When we have learned how to suffer persecution in love, to "take up our cross," we have learned to deny self, truly love Jesus, and trust in Him.

25. 1 Peter 4:1-6 -- Worldliness and godliness head in two opposite directions. It is impossible to partner with and walk with ungodly people and with Jesus at the same time.

26. 1 Peter 4:7 -- "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit that is founded on the perspective of your world view, your faith, and your hope. Self-control is not hard when you really believe Jesus is Lord, when you really love Him, and truly desire to please Him. It is about perspective and focus, about what really matters most at the moment of decision, about what is most "real" in your mind, the instant,

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momentary pleasure of the temptation at hand, or the inevitable consequences. The unseen must be more real to you than what is visible. For example, the person who struggles with a diet craves certain foods. These foods are very appealing, accessible, and pleasurable, and the consequences associated with eating them are inapparent, distant, and questionable – the visible is more powerful than the invisible, and for most people, the visible usually wins. However, some have the ability to focus on the consequences of their actions, perceiving that "the end of all things is at hand." They are able to focus on what really matters to them rather than instant gratification. What is your focus? Have you ever noticed that when you are extremely busy doing something that really matters to you, you sometimes forget to eat? Likewise, when you are fully committed to serving God with a sense of urgency, many temptations in life become irrelevant.

27. 1 Peter 4:7-11 -- End times call for prayer to God and love within the church.

28. 1 Peter 4:8 -- "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." If the Bible says, "above all," then it should be clear that love is your life priority, but not just a casual 'love' but "earnest" love which implies significant, sincere intensity. If it is hard for you to sincerely and intensely love others, particularly those who are hard to love, you must "above all" other priorities in your life, search your heart and understand what it is about your relationship with Jesus that is making it hard for you to obey His top command.

29. 1 Peter 4:9-11 -- "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

- The Bible tells us to be hospitable without grumbling because the expectation is we will show hospitality to inhospitable people and in such a way that is difficult for us. How should we act while we are being taken advantage of? We should be good stewards of grace (giving people what they don't deserve); every word that comes out of our mouth should mirror the word of God, and we should serve with all of our might through the special empowerment of God -- all this to glorify God.

- We should speak God's words in love. What you do is essential but not enough. You must proclaim Jesus, clearly, with your actions demonstrating the truth within you.

30. 1 Peter 4:12-15 -- "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler."

- Suffering is a reason to rejoice.

- Life is hard in this sinful, broken world. And the Bible says to Christians, "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you (1 Peter 4:12)." Just as Jesus was persecuted by the world, his true followers will also be persecuted from the dark world that hates the light. In this we are to rejoice that we have been afforded the opportunity to "share Christ's sufferings." When God called you to proclaim Jesus to the sinful, hateful world, he

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knew you would get hurt; but in that suffering, He is drawing you closer to Him. However, the Bible also warns that living foolishly only causes pointless, needless suffering. As the saying goes, "Life is hard, but it is harder when you're stupid." How much pain in your life is really self-induced? How many times have you heard Christians complain about "attacks from Satan" or "spiritual warfare" when what they are really dealing with are the natural consequences of their own careless behavior? Obedience to the word of God will not take suffering out of your life, but it will remove the self-inflicted pain which is usually our biggest problem. Walk in the light of God's word that you may live in as much peace as possible.

31. 1 Peter 4:18 – "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" No one deserves salvation. Thank God for grace, and don't take grace lightly.

32. 1 Peter 4:19 -- "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

- It takes faith to suffer and to return good for evil. Do you trust God enough not to vindicate yourself or demand justice for yourself? "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

- It is sometimes hard to do what is right when everyone around you is doing wrong, but obedience is an act of faith and love. Obedience is a commitment to pursue faithfulness out of gratitude and reverence to our "faithful Creator" who hates sin of all kinds. The key to overcoming temptation is not developing greater will power but growing in greater love and appreciation for Jesus. Keep your eye on the prize, and you won't see anything else.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 Oct 18: Today, show hospitality to others, particularly to the inhospitable by focusing intently on the reality of Jesus and the grace He shows you. When you notice that you don't feel hospitable, take time to reflect upon that and truly consider what your feelings say about the condition of your heart. Pray for the love of Christ to compel you to greater love. (1 Peter 4:9-11)

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 4, Thursday, 11 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+10%2C+11%3B+proverbs+11%3B+1+pet+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 11 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 10:13-14 -- "Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of delusion." The secular humanist's knowledge of the world and men's efforts to create their own kingdoms and security systems on earth are a delusion, based on false perception that they are in control and God isn't. If God isn't the author of what you are doing, it is more than a waste of time, it is a major setback, regardless any apparent near-term success.

2. Jeremiah 10:21 -- "For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the Lord; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered." Nations are destroyed when the political and religious leaders stop really listening to and following God. If a person isn't following Jesus, they are leading everyone behind them astray.

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3. Jeremiah 10:23 -- "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." The Christian understands that God is in complete control of His life and determines His steps.

4. Jeremiah 11:3, 4 -- "Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant that I commanded.... Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God." God's people cherish and follow His word. How you approach Bible study says a great deal about your actual relationship with God. If you can't seem to find time for God's word, what does that say about your actual life priorities and about in what you are actually placing your trust?

5. Jeremiah 11:14 -- "I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble." If you don't listen to and obey God, don't expect Him to listen to your prayers.

6. Jeremiah 11:18 -- "The Lord made it known to me and I knew; then you showed me their deeds." God gives you His word and then reveals His truth in your life. You have to choose to what you pay attention.

7. Proverbs 11:3 -- "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them." A set of rules won't help the person who doesn't have the character to follow them.

8. Proverbs 18:9 -- "One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys." Likely we all spend too much of our time trying to fix what someone else messed up or broke due to pure negligence, complacency, or laziness. Small, seemingly insignificant, decisions to cut corners or disregard fundamentals have a huge ripple effect that affects many and can become catastrophic. Truth be told, too much of our time is also wasted fixing what we messed up or broke because of our bad habits: we don't put something away where it goes, then later spend hours looking for it -- hours which could have been used doing something productive, hours we will never get back. When we are not disciplined and diligent in our basic habits and practices, we suffer a huge opportunity cost and destroy our productivity; this is a sin that we must work on daily. God is very interested in our attention to detail in all that we do. Our professionalism ultimately glorifies Him. Lack of discipline, diligence, attention to detail, and professionalism dishonors Him.

9. Proverbs 11:18b -- "...but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward." From Henry T. Blackaby -- There are many ways to invest our lives, but none offers greater reward than devoting ourselves to the pursuit of righteousness. Every area of our lives should reflect the holiness of God that is ours by salvation: our thoughts, so that nothing we think about would be inappropriate for a child of God; our actions, so that our lives demonstrate that we serve a holy God; our integrity, so that we are above reproach in all our relationships. Are you taking God's righteousness in your life for granted? Righteousness is something you must allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Instead of sowing holy thoughts, are you allowing evil and sinful thoughts to grow in your mind? Are you allowing lust to grow unchecked within you? Does enmity, bitterness, jealousy, or unforgiveness remain in your life? Jesus said if we seek first God and His righteousness, everything else will follow (Matt. 6:33). There is great reward in sowing righteousness. What are you presently doing to plant holiness in your life? (1 Pet. 1:15). How are you putting righteousness in your mind so that your thoughts are holy? How are you cultivating righteousness in your relationships so that you maintain your integrity? Are you instilling righteousness in your activities so that your life is above reproach? If you want to harvest righteousness in your life tomorrow, you must plant seeds of righteousness today.

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10. 1 Peter 3:2-4 -- "...they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external... but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." Character is far more important than personality, popularity, and image. God judges character and the heart, not presentation.

11. 1 Peter 3:4 -- "...a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

A gentle and quiet spirit is "very precious" in God's sight, but is not the way of culture today. At one time not long, men of respect were called "gentlemen," and women of noble character were referred to as "ladies." Now these words are virtually meaningless. Who today prides themselves on a "quiet spirit?" Note in 1 Peter that even when we are defending the faith, we are called to do it "with gentleness and respect." You might recall that in Proverbs, Folly is described as "loud." Proverbs also says, "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit (Proverbs 15:4)." Of Himself, Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:29)." Do you want to be like Jesus? You must be gentle with a quiet spirit.

-- Galatians 5:22-24 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

-- 1 Timothy 4:11 -- Aspire to live quietly....

12. 1 Peter 3:8 -- "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." The Christian promotes unity, not disunity. However, unity must be unity in Jesus. Read John 17 again.

13. 1 Peter 3:9 -- "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." You are called and commanded to bless those who curse you, to return grace for abuse. This is a test of your faith.

14. 1 Peter 3:10-12 -- "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." The Bible is so very clear, but we tend to create complex philosophy to explain away God's clear commands and to justify or excuse our disobedience. Do you desire to see good days?

15. 1 Pet 3:13-17 -- "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."

- No one likes a zealot, except God. Always stand for the truth, but do it respectfully, not to be liked but to reflect the character of Jesus.

- We are saved by faith, not by works. Obedience is the product of our faith, is how we show reverence for God, and is a testimony before the world. Our obedience is an act of love toward God and toward

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man; obedience is an instrument through which to build our character. Someone once said, "Pain is God's chisel." When I consider the pain I have had in my life, I realize that most of it was self-induced. My own sin has caused most (not all) of my pain. Even when I was the victim of others' sin, my inappropriate response to their actions caused most of my suffering. Why suffer needlessly by walking outside of God's Word? "Better... to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

16. 1 Peter 3:20 -- "...when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water." God's patience endured until only eight godly people remained. God displayed similar patience in Sodom and Gomorrah. We now live in a time of God's patience. Will you be one of the few who remain faithful when everyone around you turns away from God? Remember, during the time of Noah, plenty of people were going to church, but their religiosity was empty.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 Oct 18: Today, focus on how you treat those who frustrate you. Make it your aim to show them mercy, grace, peace, and love. Seek to be a reconciler. (1 Peter 3:9)

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 3, Wednesday, 10 October 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=Jeremiah+8%2C+9%3B+proverbs+10%3B+1+peter+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 10 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 8:5 -- "Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?" Continually repeating sin signals a lack of genuine repentance and true fellowship with God.

2. Jeremiah 8:6 -- "I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man relents of his evil, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turns to his own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle." A person who is not guided by the Spirit is much like a senseless animal, goaded by an evil master, oblivious to the demise that awaits them.

3. Jeremiah 8:6 -- "I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man relents of his evil." The prayers of an unrepentant sinner are not effective, not because God can't hear them but because He doesn't honor them.

4. Jeremiah 8:7 -- "Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the LORD." All of God's earthly Creatures obey God and serve their created purpose except people. People were created to love and serve God, but mankind has rebelled and subjected all of creation to the consequences of disorder and sin. God has given us His written word, further revealed by the embodiment of His perfect word in Jesus, along with the Counsel of the Holy Spirit, yet, we can't seem to even find the time to read His word that we would even understand how to fulfill our earthly purpose. If we don't even know what God's word requires, how can we possibly serve Him? If God's commands revealed in His word are not priority in our lives, we will not serve Him, and we have reckoned Him something less than God -- this is cosmic treason.

5. Jeremiah 8:8 -- "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie..." You don't really know God and don't really have wisdom if you don't obey God. To know God's word and then disobey God's word is far worse than having never

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known God's word, and far worse still is teaching others to disobey God through your example of sin. Jesus said, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin." (Luke 17:1, 2)

6. Jeremiah 8:9 -- "The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, so what wisdom is in them?"

- Proper respect for God and His word is the foundation of wisdom. Those who obey God's word in love are wise. Many people are searching for some higher truth, endeavoring for more education, or seeking some special revelation beyond God's written word, but they have rejected the most basic truths of God revealed in the Bible. For many Christians, the issue is not in the knowing, it is in the doing. If they would faithfully obey what they already know, they would be ready to receive more, and they would be on the path of wisdom and godliness. God's word is easy to understand but hard to follow because the issue is not with the head, it is with the heart. The Biblical scholar, the academic, the mystic, the inspirational orator, they are no match for the simple, humble, obedient follower of Jesus who likely goes unnoticed by most.

- Any "wisdom" that deviates from the word of God is, in fact, a lie and sin. Contrary, to what Jeremiah prophesied against, 1 Peter calls us to live up to our calling as Priests. That's right, you are a priest:

-- 1 Peter 2: 4, 5 -- As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

-- 1 Peter 2: 9-12 -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

- If you have ever asked "What does God want me to do with my life?" you need not ask anymore – as a Priest, "proclaim the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

7. Jeremiah 8:12 -- "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown." We don't even realize how calloused our hearts have become and how desensitized we have become to sin. What is shocking is what is no longer shocking to us.

8. Jeremiah 8:14, 15 -- "Let us go into the fortified cities and perish there, for the Lord our God has doomed us to perish and has given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord. We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror." The sinner will perish in his false security.

9. Jeremiah 9:1 -- "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

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- A true prophet speaks from a heart of overwhelming compassion and concern for the sinner.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Jeremiah was invited by God to be a weeping prophet. His call came during turbulent, agonizing times as his society suffered from pervasive moral and spiritual decay. The nation of Judah had turned so far from God that it was soon to face His fierce judgment. This was not a time for merrymaking but for weeping. God looked for someone He could mold into the kind of prophet needed for such a bleak time. He found Jeremiah. The cost to Jeremiah was intense; he sacrificed much of the freedom of his youth in order to be God's messenger. He forfeited family and reputation. He endured misunderstanding, ridicule, and persecution. He was imprisoned and mocked by those to whom he had come to warn of God's impending judgment. Satan will try to convince you that obedience carries much too high a price, but he will never tell you the cost of not obeying God. If you are to be used in God's service you must expect to make adjustments in your life. Can you measure the distance between the throne room of heaven and a cattle shed in Bethlehem? How far is it from the Lordship of the universe to the cross? Don't be deceived into thinking there is no cost involved in obedience. What adjustments is God asking you to make? Will you face the hardships and opposition that will come when you align your life with God's will? Jeremiah had the deep satisfaction of knowing he was a faithful and beloved servant of God. Your reward will be the same when you choose to fully obey Christ, regardless of the cost.

10. Jeremiah 9:4-6 -- "Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD." Without God all relationships are doomed. Without God, society is doomed. God is love. God is the only source of love. Love is the foundation of trust. All relationships are based on trust. Where God is absent, love is absent, trust is unwarranted, and relationships are unstable at their foundations. A divided nation is full of people with divided hearts.

11. Jeremiah 9:13, 14 -- "They have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, but have stubbornly followed their own hearts... as their fathers taught them." Your heart is inclined to selfishness; it is in your nature and has been taught to you since your childhood. God's word reveals to you the difference between your natural inclinations and the will of God, and God's word reveals our total dependence on the grace of God through Jesus as well as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, which is Jesus. As you walk in God's word, you slowly develop a Christ-like character.

12. Jeremiah 9:23, 24 -- "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.'" What is the measure of your success? It is truly knowing God and conformity to Christ in love and righteousness. All of your earthly accomplishments that aren't inspired by love for God and that are truly intended to glorify God will be used by God for His purposes, but don't bring credit to your life.

13. Proverbs 10:5 -- "He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame." You build wealth when you don't need it for the days ahead when you will need it.

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Likewise, you should build your spiritual strength for the days you will really need it. If you don't build in advance, you won't be prepared for the rainy days.

14. Proverbs 10:8 – “The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.” Some people want to say what they think; but wise people want to hear what God has to say about a matter. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Trust in God, not in your own understanding.

15. 1 Peter 2:2, 3 -- "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." A real encounter with God leaves you craving more, never fully satisfied.

16. 1 Peter 2:5 -- "You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood."

- You are a stone that can't fulfill its purpose unless it is connected and oriented to the Cornerstone (Jesus) and unless it is also connected tightly to the other stones (fellow Christians). The isolated Christian who is not united with the church is also not joined with the Cornerstone of Jesus, regardless of what they might tell themselves. We learn to love Jesus more and more primarily through family and the church. No temple stone is independently special but rather gains value with the others. Every stone in the temple has its unique place, and they are all required for the integrity of the building. A stone that is missing or out of place is a sore sight to the architect.

17. 1 Peter 2:6 -- “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious.” Unity is only possible when all of the stones are aligned with and connected to the Cornerstone, Jesus. Today, many people seek unity -- unity in principles, ideas, culture, creed, nationality, etc., in order to achieve peace, but true unity can only be achieved around the Person of Jesus Christ (see John 17), and apart from Jesus, there can be no peace.

18. 1 Peter 2:8 -- "They stumble because they disobey the word." Don't let anyone tell you that obedience to the word has been nullified by grace. Grace doesn't cancel God's word but rather empowers you, for the first time, to truly obey it in love rather than seeking to justify yourself through prideful obedience or self-justified disobedience. In fact, if you pursue obedience pridefully, you have already disobeyed the Great Commandment and the First Commandment.

19. 1 Peter 2:9 -- “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

- You are a priest on earth. Are you a good priest, or do you still think that is someone else's job? Priests may benefit from more education, but seminary is not a prerequisite to fulfill your calling from God.

- The Bible redefines race. Do you see yourself as part of the Christian race? Do you see yourself as a priest? Do you, first and foremost, identify yourself as part of the 'holy nation'? Do you see your primary calling on earth as proclaiming “the excellencies of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light”? Are you united with the people of God? Do you see Christians as ‘your people’, regardless of man-made social stratifications? If not, why not? God has called you to “seek first the Kingdom.” God's Kingdom is now. Today, in Jeremiah, God says, “Let not the wise man boast in his

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wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:23) Likewise, Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) Do you not understand that eternal life does not start when you die but rather started the moment you first knew Jesus? Do you not understand that the Kingdom of God is, in part, His people on earth waiting for the triumphant return of Jesus from the Kingdom of Heaven to reign on a new earth with his servants?

-- 2 Peter 3:13 -- But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

-- Revelation 21:1-4 -- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

-- 2 Timothy 2:12 -- if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

-- Revelation 20:6 -- Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- If you are a Christian, you are a priest, chosen by God. As a member of the royal priesthood you have constant access to the King. If there is ever a need in your life, you don't have to find an intermediary or enlist another priest in order to gain a hearing from the King. Your position as a royal priest allows you direct access. This privilege describes your position as a priest. However, priests also have a function. It is the responsibility of a priest to work within a priesthood. Scripture does not promote the practice of individual priests, each with a separate ministry. Rather, priests function together (Lev. 9:1). An unbiblical sense of individualism can isolate you from functioning within God's royal priesthood as He intended. The priest represents God to the people, but he also takes the people's concerns to God. Is there someone around you who desperately needs the intercession of one of God's priests? Perhaps someone will only come to know God by seeing Him in your life. Our world hungers for an expression of Christ as He really is, living out His life through His people. It is dangerous to put our job above our calling by God. We are called to be priests first, and to hold a job second. When we get these out of order, everyone around us is denied access to the Father through us. God may have called you into a secular job as a vocation, but more importantly He has appointed you to be one of His royal priests.

20. 1 Pet 2:10-12 -- "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.... Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep

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your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

- Again, our nationality is Christian; our race is Christian. Our national mission is the proclaim Christ. We are strangers and ambassadors to earthy kingdoms.

- How you act either brings credit to God or discredits God. How terrible is it to misrepresent the God you were made to serve and to reveal to others?

21. 1 Peter 2:17 -- "Honor everyone." Honor who? Everyone. This is not hard to understand.

22. 1 Peter 2:19 -- "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly." When we suffer maltreatment from the unjust, we demonstrate the grace of God which is the foundation of our salvation. Don't resent persecution but consider it an act of worship and an opportunity to fellowship with Jesus.

23. 1 Peter 2:22-24 -- "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." Jesus said that if we truly wanted to know Him, to "come after" Him, we must deny self, take up our cross daily, and follow Him. This means we remain pure and obedient through life's trials, and that we trust God with our fate through persecution, retuning only love, mercy, and grace to those who mistreat us, always pointing the offender to Jesus. Your goal for an offensive person is to show them Jesus with true love in your heart. Jesus is our example, and we must always remember as we are being persecuted that Jesus died on a cross for us though we did not deserve and though we had not even repented yet but rather remained in our sin. It is one thing for someone to dishonor you; it is quite another thing for you to dishonor the Creator of the Universe, the LORD Almighty, something you have done time and time again and continue to do. Jesus died on a cross for you. Are you more deserving of justice than Jesus? How can you demand justice for yourself while relying on mercy and grace from God? Think deeply on this today, and "live" by grace by showing grace.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 Oct 18: See number 23 above.

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 2, Tuesday, 9 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+6%2C+7%3B+proverbs+9%3B+1+pet+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 9 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 6:10, 11 -- "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. Therefore, I am full of the wrath of the Lord; I am weary of holding it in."

- The rebellious see God's word as offensive. However, God's messenger can't contain the Spirit inside that must proclaim the requirement for repentance and salvation from God's wrath. The messenger doesn't seek to tone down God's message or make it more accommodating to those engaged in sin. On the contrary, the prophet is tasked with testifying to the truth in stark contrast to the message of the world -- "from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people

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lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall." (Jeremiah 6:13-15) God's messenger can't remain silent before sin or make like of what God considers detestable. Additionally, in response to God's word, God's people "conduct [them]selves with fear... holy in all [their] conduct, remembering that they "were ransomed from the futile ways.., not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:13-19) It is an unthinkable thing to treat to blood of Christ carelessly. The repentant will respond to God's word without the aid of marketing schemes, sales pitches, big bands, or light shows. The rest won't. It is the role of the messenger to be faithful to God's word, regardless the response.

2. Jeremiah 6:13-20 -- "For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not pay attention.' Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it. What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me."

- God's people had become wholly corrupt while the religious leaders preached a "feel good" message. Abominations had become acceptable to God's people, while God's word was deemed outdated and irrelevant. God's written Law had been rejected and replaced with religiosity. Social tolerance became more important than obedience to God's word. This Old Testament prophecy is a warning to the church today as is 1 Peter that calls us to, based on the grace we have received, remain holy, fearful, pure, and obedient to God's word which remains unchanged forever. This is not hard to understand. We are called to obedience without excuses. Many sins are now celebrated in our culture but must be rejected by God's people.

-- 1 Peter 1:13-25 -- Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

- "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them,

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they shall be overthrown.” The more people practice sin, the more insensitive they are to their sin. What once would have shocked them no longer shocks them, and they lose all shame. Just look at what people accept today as entertainment.

3. Jeremiah 7:4 – “Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.’” Claiming to be religious and going to church doesn’t make up for a person’s behavior which is a better revelation of what is truly in a person’s heart. God is not at all moved by unrepentant worship.

4. Jeremiah 7: 8-10 -- “Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations?” If someone thinks that grace through Jesus frees him or her to continue in sin without concern, that person may never have really received salvation through Jesus. Love is more powerful than the law and compels the Christian not to sin. (2 Cor 5:14) The only response to grace and saving faith is obedience, holiness, and joy. Any response to the sacrifice of Christ other than humble obedience and holiness leaves doubt as to what was actually received.

5. Jeremiah 7:16 -- "As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you." God doesn't honor the prayers of the unrepentant.

6. Jeremiah 7:23 -- "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you." Jesus said it like this: "If you love me, you will obey me." Obedience isn't the path of salvation – we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus – obedience is the evidence of salvation, the fruit of salvation.

7. Jeremiah 7:24 -- "But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward." To be your Savior, Jesus must be your Lord and Savior. It is impossible to both humbly surrender to Jesus and also to take Him for granted or to treat the blood of His sacrifice carelessly by continuing in sin.

8. Jeremiah 7:27 -- “So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you.” Often, such as was the case with Moses, God sends His messengers to speak to a people He already knows will not listen. His word becomes a testimony against those who refuse to accept it. God's word never returns void; it always accomplishes its purpose, whether to bless or to curse. You are Christ's ambassador in this generation, called to proclaim the word of God, whether people will listen or not. Success for you is not measured in conversions but rather in commitment, in fidelity to your calling. Only the Holy Spirit can convict a person's heart to receive salvation.

9. Jeremiah 7:27 -- "This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips." There is no political hope for our nation apart from repentance and revival.

10. Proverbs 9:1 – “Wisdom has built her house.” Wisdom is orderly and industrious.

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11. Proverbs 9:13 -- "The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing." Fools are loud, driven by emotion and passion, and lacking in self-control and gentleness.

12. Proverbs 9:17 -- "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Fools want something for nothing, take pleasure at the expense of others, seek self-gratification, have a weak sense of responsibility, and tell themselves that their selfishness can be kept to themselves without consequences. There is no such thing as secret sin, and everything done in the darkness will be exposed by the light.

Note: Here is a link to a short video overview of 1 Peter:

<https://youtu.be/WhP7AZQIzCg>

13. 1 Peter 1:1 -- "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Peter's identity was in Jesus, not in what he did to make money or what he did as a hobby. He introduced himself as an apostle of Jesus. How do you introduce yourself to others?

14. 1 Peter 1:2 -- "May grace and peace be multiplied to you." Peter's ambition was to multiply the Grace of Jesus on earth. What is your ambition?

15. 1 Peter 1:8 -- "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory." Your daily endeavor must be to grow in love for Jesus. You can't obey who you do not trust, and you cannot trust who you do not know. The more you know Jesus, the more you will love Him, and love will impassion you to do far more than what you would do from mere duty based on rules. Only love can truly change your heart and life. A person close to Jesus is not only marked by obedience but also by great joy.

16. 1 Peter 1:14-16 -- "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

- God calls you to a much higher standard than mere moralism -- He calls you to holiness, Christ-likeness. This endeavor must be inspired by love.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Your mind is a wonderful thing! You can memorize life-changing passages of Scripture that can undergird you in your daily life; you can meditate upon God's Word, discovering His magnificent truths; you can discern between truth and falsehood; you can recall God's past blessings. Some of God's most effective servants were those who disciplined their minds for His service. Moses, educated in the best schools of Egypt, assembled the books of the Law for the Israelites. Isaiah used his scholarly mind to write an exalted prophetic book in Scripture. Paul learned under Gamaliel, the outstanding teacher of his day, and it was through Paul that God presented much of the theology found in the New Testament. Sadly, many Christians today do not exercise their minds to be of service to God. They allow others to do their spiritual thinking for them. If they can find their theology from a book, they will not bother to study God's Word themselves. If a speaker makes an authoritative statement, they readily accept it without verifying whether it is biblical. Paul urged Christians to strive for maturity in their thinking (1 Cor. 14:20). He said there was a time when his spiritual thinking was immature, but he had prepared his mind to know and understand the great truths of God (1 Cor. 13:11). He had not allowed others to do his thinking for him. When you became a Christian, God renewed your mind (Rom. 12:2). Be certain to use your mind in a way that brings glory to God.

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17. 1 Peter 1:22 -- "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart." Love comes from a pure heart. We are not perfected in purity or love, but this is the goal. Remember, God IS Love. We grow in love only by growing closer to Jesus, and we love others only as much as we emanate the love of Christ by our proximity. Read Jesus' prayer for us in John 17. He desires us to become one with Him and the Father that we can love and become one with fellow believers. Your 'oneness' is the measure of your success on earth. Judge the fruit of the love in your life and meditate upon what it tells you about your oneness. Consider the level of your purity and holiness and meditate upon what that tells you about your oneness. Rather than simply trying to change your behavior today, focus on growing in oneness with Jesus, loving Jesus today with more of your heart.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 Oct 18: Endeavor to see yourself, first and foremost, as an ambassador for Christ, entrusted with the message and ministry of reconciliation, a multiplier of God's grace and peace. Don't allow yourself to lose spiritual perspective during your physical walk today. Be guided by the Spirit. "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:14; see 1 Peter 1:1, 2)

DBRP - WEEK 41, Day 1, Monday, 8 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jer+4%2C+5%3B+proverbs+8%3B+james+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 8 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 4:1 – "If you return, O Israel, declares the Lord, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, and if you swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory." For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: 'Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.'"

- "If you return, O Israel, declares the Lord, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver...." You are either going to follow Jesus or not. If you have decided to be a follower of Jesus, then do it; remove the things in your life that are compromising and do not waiver.

- We make light of sin. We make excuses for sin. We act like God doesn't really care about sin. We think the grace of God makes sin a non-issue. We view sin as uncontrollable. But God's word in Jeremiah and James holds us accountable for sin and challenges us to take a hard look at what is really in our hearts. James calls us to choose between friendship with the world or friendship with God. If you are a Christian and choose to "love" the world, the Bible calls that adultery! James says that in grace, we are to submit ourselves to God, resist the devil, and make the choice to draw near to God – this is an action. We must make the choice to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. To call yourself a Christian and live in casual sin is to be double-minded. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds."

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-- "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:1-8)."

2. Jeremiah 4:9, 10 – "'In that day, declares the Lord, courage shall fail both king and officials. The priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded.' Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God, surely you have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'It shall be well with you,' whereas the sword has reached their very life.'"

- God holds BOTH religious leaders and political leaders accountable for the sins of the nation. We have much to say today about the state of our political leaders, but what about our religious leaders?

- The nation who has turned from God has filled itself with religious leaders who tell them what they want to hear instead of the truth and therefore are surprised when judgment comes.

3. Jeremiah 4:19 – "My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh the walls of my heart!" God is pained by your sin, and punishes in anguish.

4. Jeremiah 4:22; 5:2, 5, 6, 12, 21, 22-24, 30, 31 -- "'For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise'—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.... Though they say, 'As the Lord lives,' yet they swear falsely.... They know the way of the Lord, the justice of their God. But they all alike had broken the yoke; they had burst the bonds.... their transgressions are many, their apostasies are great.... When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery.... They have spoken falsely of the Lord and have said, 'He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine....' Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. Do you not fear me? declares the Lord. Do you not tremble before me.... But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away. They do not say in their hearts, 'Let us fear the Lord our God....' An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their own direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?"

- The ways of the world appear wise to the ungodly. They are out of touch with the wisdom of God. Many 'religious' people see themselves as good when God sees them as evil. Statistically, when looking at unbiblical social trends, those who sit in pews on Sunday, don't look much different than those who don't.

- God says that only fools don't have a love relationship with Him.

- Jeremiah was not prophesying about non-believers, people who didn't believe in God, didn't have God's word, or didn't have the ability (spiritual eyes and ears) to understand God's word. He was prophesying judgment upon God's "people" and "children" who claimed to be godly but were living as they pleased rather than in love and obedience to God. They were committing spiritual adultery and telling themselves that God was good with it. There was no genuine reverence for God, and the church leaders were all preaching what made the people feel good about themselves rather than preaching

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repentance. What should we do in times like these? Today's readings from James say, "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19, 20)." Again, James' comments are not directed at people outside of the faith but rather those who have the truth and have wandered from it. We desperately need Christians who are willing to bring lost sheep back into the flock where the Shepherd leads.

5. Jeremiah 5:2 -- "Though they say, 'As the Lord lives,' yet they swear falsely." Jesus said it like this: "Why do you call me Lord, and do not do what I say?" Talk is cheap. Obedience is the demonstration of faith, hope, and love.

6. Jeremiah 5:3 -- "You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent." God's discipline is an opportunity to repent. Don't continue to resist God's discipline.

7. Jeremiah 5:19 -- "And when your people say, 'Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us?' you shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.'" God fits the punishment to the sin.

8. Jeremiah 5:27 -- "Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich." Wealth does not prove you are in good standing with God.

9. Jeremiah 5:31 -- "...the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?" God wants His messengers to deliver what He says, not what people want to hear.

10. Proverbs 8:12, 13 -- "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." Wisdom is greater than knowledge -- wisdom is knowledge rightly applied, which requires the Holy Spirit's counsel. Wisdom involves not only knowing what is right but doing what is right; it involves self-control, self-discipline, and willing obedience. Many know what is right, but don't have the heart to do what is right. You will only be willing to do what is right when God Himself is your goal, your prize, your crown, your greatest love, your life aim. Pride and arrogance are the product of a heart that places self over God, and your mouth reveals whether you love God and others most or yourself the most. God hates perverted speech, yes, hates.

11. Proverbs 8:17 -- "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." If love for Jesus is not your motivation today, you won't see what God wants you to see today. Your goal, whatever it is, influences how you see and judge everything else. For example, a parent who has lost a small child in a large crowd, will frantically search for the child, paying little attention anyone or anything else, with the exception of those they think might be able to help them find the child. When you are seeking a closer relationship with Jesus, worldly distractions become irrelevant.

12. Proverbs 8:34-36 -- "Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death." You must learn to see life from God's perspective, to be guided by His word, and to be of one mind with Him. We must learn to do what God would have us do rather than what we would desire to do. Often, we must dutifully obey God's word until our desires

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more and more become His desires, until our heart truly desires to do what He desires us to do. This is a daily growth process. If we refuse to do what we know God has told us to do, our hearts will harden, and we will lose the desire to obey more and more.

13. James 5:5 – “You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence.” Self-indulgence is ungodly and worthy of God’s judgment.

14. James 5:7, 8 – “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” The Christian life is a lifetime of cultivating a godly heart, one day at a time, patiently waiting for the Day of the Lord.

15. James 5:7-11 -- Patience is a godly virtue. When the Bible speaks of patience, it is talking about patience that waits beyond natural life if necessary.

16. James 5:9 – “Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.” Do you grumble? This is a sign of distance from Jesus.

17. James 5:11 – “Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.” A mature Christian is consistently Christ-like over time, steadfast, regardless the circumstances and with no need of praise.

18. James 5:14 – “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” Do your elders pray for you when you need it?

19. James 5:16b – “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” – From Henry T. Blackaby -- God promises all believers that if we live righteously and pray fervently, our prayers will be effective and produce significant results. How do we treat a promise like this? We might argue, “But I do pray, and nothing happens!” Our problem is that we do not hold ourselves accountable to the Scripture. God’s Word says that prayer ought to accomplish much. If our prayer life is not accomplishing much, what should we do? If we are praying but seeing no results, should we conclude that this promise is untrue? Should we excuse this Scripture as impractical and unrealistic? Or should we examine ourselves to see if we meet its conditions? James says that fervent prayer avails much. Could it be that we are not as fervent in our praying as we should be? Fervent prayer means we do not quit easily. Fervent prayer means we purposefully spend sufficient time in intercession. Fervent prayer means we cry out to the Father, sometimes in tears, with our heart and soul. Fervent prayer comes as the Holy Spirit assists us in praying with groanings too deep for words (Rom. 8:26). According to James, our righteousness will ensure effective prayer. God’s standard of righteousness is different from ours, for He looks beyond our actions, even beyond our thoughts, directly to our hearts. How then should we hold ourselves accountable if our prayers are accomplishing little? If nothing happens when we pray, the problem is not with God. The problem is with us, for God’s word is absolutely reliable. If we adhere to what God requires, He will lead us to pray for things that align with His purposes, and God will answer our prayers in a mighty way.

20. James 5:16a – “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” – From Henry T. Blackaby -- Confession is God’s provision to clear obstacles that hinder our relationships with God and with others. Confession is not just for those who don’t mind admitting their faults. Confession is a command, given to every Christian. James advised that when we sin, it is important for us to confess not only to God, but also to our fellow Christians. There is a tremendous

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freedom that comes as we openly acknowledge the sinfulness of our actions to others. If confession does not come out of repentance, it is merely admission, and not true confession. It is important to confess your sins specifically and not hide behind generalities. It is one thing to pray, "O Lord, forgive my sin." It's quite another to identify specifically in painful honesty. Whenever possible, confession ought to be made directly to those whom your sin has hurt. You are not to confess the sins of others but only your offenses. Confession is not a sign of weakness; it is evidence of your refusal to allow sin to remain in your life. Significantly, James linked confession with prayer. Your prayers will be hindered if you hold on to unconfessed sin. When James promised that the "effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," he did so in the context of confession. If you wish to have a powerful prayer life, you must regularly confess your sin. Only when there are no obstacles separating you from God and others will your prayers be effective. Pride will discourage you from admitting to others the sinfulness of your heart. A desire to please God will compel you to confess your sin and rid yourself of its oppressive burden.

21. James 5:19-20 – "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

- Saving a sinner from sin is one of life's greatest accomplishments. You can be a hero today by bringing back a wanderer. "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh." (Jude 1:20-23)

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- One of the Christian's greatest deterrents from sin is the life of another Christian. Some Christians maintain that it is none of their business if another chooses to sin. They are convinced that they are being judgmental if they respond to someone in sin. The world persuades them not to get involved, but this inaction prevents them from being an effective intercessor. As Christians we are aware that sin brings death (Rom. 6:23). Sin kills relationships, dismantles marriages, stifles joy, and destroys peace. When we see someone wander from the truth into error, how should we respond? When Jesus saw sin, it broke His heart. He wept over entire cities as He saw them rejecting the truth (Matt. 23:37-39). He prayed fervently for His disciples to be strong when they were tempted (John 17). He warned those who were heading toward spiritual failure (Matt. 26:20-25, 34). Jesus was even willing to die to save people from their sins because He knew the devastation that sin causes. Jesus never stood idle as those around Him were led astray by their sin. He always took an active role in turning them back to God. "Minding your own business" will save you some discomfort, but it will not help a brother or sister who needs to return to the Lord. If you are truly aware of the grave consequences for those who continue in sin, you will be moved to weep even as Jesus wept. Pray fervently for your friend. That will safeguard your motives and prepare you to minister to him. Be alert, in the event that God asks you to confront your friend. If you do so, be loving and gentle lest you, too, be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Oct 18: Focus on not grumbling today. (James 5:9)

DBRP - WEEK 40, Day 7, Sunday, 7 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=jeremiah+1-3%3B+pro+7%3B+psalm+117%2C+118>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 7 October 18:

1. Jeremiah 1:5 -- "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." God had a plan for you before you were even born. When, where, and how you were born was providential. As with so many we read about in the Bible, you might have been born into unfortunate conditions, but consider Romans 8:28. John 9 tells the story of a man who was born blind and had spent his life as a beggar. The disciples question Jesus on whose sin was responsible for this man's terrible fate. Jesus explains, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." Jesus miraculously heals this man who ends up proclaiming truth to the Pharisees, glorifying God, and becoming an important part of God's eternal word. You are special to God. Likewise, God cares about every unborn child and views them as equally valuable as anyone else, as evidenced in Exodus 21:22-25, where God's law establishes the penalty for causing the death of an unborn child -- "life for life." Christians have a responsibility to protect the defenseless unborn.

- Psalm 139:13-16 -- 13 -- For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

- Jeremiah 29:11 -- For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

- Psalm 82:3-4 -- Give justice to the weak and the fatherless.... Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

- Proverbs 31:8-9 -- Open your mouth for the mute....

- Proverbs 24:11-12 -- Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?

2. Jeremiah 1:7, 8 -- "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you." God will take you out of your comfort zone and empower you to do what you couldn't normally do because He wants to show both you and the world what He can do, not what you can do. He wants to bring glory to Himself, not to you.

3. Jeremiah 1:7, 8 -- "...and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," You have nothing to worry about if God has sent you; you have everything to worry about if He hasn't.

4. Jeremiah 1:9 -- "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth." God gave you His word to share with others. Proclaim Jesus, not morality; and use His words, not your own words.

5. Jeremiah 2:1 -- "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride." The Bible continually describes our relationship with God like a marriage and our sin like adultery. We tend to downplay our

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sin, but God doesn't. When we downplay our sin, we downplay our grace, and we harden our hearts to the love of God. Are you still 'Amazed by Grace'?

6. Jeremiah 2:2 – From Henry T. Blackaby -- Even when our hearts grow cold toward God and our devotion to Him weakens, His love remains steadfast. We may forget God, but He remembers us. God was concerned because the people of Judah had allowed their hearts to drift far from Him. In a powerful moment, God shared His heart with His people, recalling what it was like when they first began loving Him. He remembered how they had loved Him, as a new bride loves her husband, with excitement and enthusiasm for the future. He recalled the kindness they had expressed as they willingly followed Him wherever He led them. God reminded them of the love they had once had for Him, so that the memory might rekindle feelings of devotion and their hearts might return to Him. If you do not guard our heart, you will grow cold in your love for Christ. A time may come when He approaches you and reminds you what your relationship was once like. Do you recollect the joy that permeated your life when you first became a Christian? Do you recall the youthful commitments you made to Him, pledging to do anything He told you to do? Do you remember the thrill you experienced each time you came to understand a new dimension of His nature? Spiritual memory is important. You may not realize how far you have drifted from God until you contrast the love you are expressing to Him now with that of earlier days. God has not changed. He is the same Person you gave your heart to when you became a Christian (Mal. 3:6-7). If your love for God is not as intense as it once was, return to Him. He will restore the intimate fellowship you once shared with Him.

7. Jeremiah 2:3 – "Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the Lord." How do loving, protective parents act when strangers mistreat their children? How will God treat those who mistreat you? God watches over His children. Leave it to God to deal with those who mistreat you.

Jeremiah 2:6 – "They did not say, 'Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, no man dwells?'" From Henry T. Blackaby -- Christianity is an intimate, growing relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. It is not a set of doctrines to believe, habits to practice, or sins to avoid. Every activity God commands is intended to enhance His love relationship with His people. God designed worship for us to see Him in His glory and to respond appropriately; for many it has degenerated into "religion," one more meeting to attend out of habit. God established the sacrificial system so that we, His people, could express our love to Him; but we often diminish our gifts to our Lord into futile attempts to appease Him and to pacify our guilty conscience. God gave us prayer so we could have conversation with Him, but we often distort this by "saying prayers" and hurrying off without ever listening to what is on our Father's heart. God instituted His commandments as a protection for those He loves, but the commandments can become a pathway to legalism rather than an avenue for a relationship with our Father in which He protects us from harm. Religious activity apart from fellowship with God is empty ritual. The people of Jeremiah's day were satisfied to have the ritual without the manifest presence of God. They became so comfortable with their "religion" that they didn't even notice God's absence. Is it possible to pray, to attend a worship service, or to give an offering yet not to experience the presence of God? It certainly is possible! And that has been the sad commentary on many a Christian experience. Don't settle for a religious life that lacks a vital relationship to Jesus Christ. When God is present, the difference will be obvious.

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8. Jeremiah 2:8 -- "The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me." Nations fall when the political leaders and the religious leaders stop fearing, honoring, and glorifying God. We tend to point the finger at politicians for our national decline. What about the pastors and priests? By the way, the Bible says that all Christians have the responsibilities of a priest. When the priests (Christians) transgress against God in disobedience, the salt loses its saltiness, and the light grows dim; the world decays and grows dark.

9. Jeremiah 2:13 -- "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Much of America has replaced God with secular humanism, a "cistern" philosophy that replaces hope in God with hope in an "enlightened" man. Too often, Christians, rather than proclaiming Jesus, proclaim a "Christian lifestyle" of morality and good deeds. Rarely will a Christian use the Name of Jesus in normal conversation, even more rarely the word repent. Our approach cannot hold water.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- There should never be "dry spells" in the Christian life. God said that He would be like an artesian well in the life of a believer. Artesian wells bubbled forth with a cold, fresh, never-ending supply of water from the depths of the earth, quenching any thirst and always satisfying. This is the picture of the spiritual refreshment that belongs to the person in whom the Holy Spirit resides. Have you ever heard people say they are experiencing a dry spell in their Christian life? What are they saying? Are they saying that the Lord ran out of water? It should never cross your mind that the fountain of living waters residing within you should ever be reduced to a trickle. You don't need to run all over the country trying to find sources of spiritual refreshment. Conferences, retreats, and books can all bring encouragement, but if you are a Christian, the source of living water already resides within you. Have you exchanged the living fountain for man-made cisterns that cannot hold water? Why would you exchange an artesian well for a broken water tank? Artesian wells do not dry up. Broken cisterns do. If you are experiencing spiritual dryness right now, is it because you have been attempting to find your source of spiritual refreshment from man-made sources, which will fail you every time? Jesus extended an invitation to you when He said: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37). Have you been refreshed by the living water only Jesus can provide?

10. Jeremiah 2:20 -- "For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds; but you said, 'I will not serve.' Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore." In one sense, the sinful Christian is worse than the pagan because He has been forgiven, freed, and empowered and yet chooses spiritual adultery against the perfectly loving, faithful God – all this before a watching world.

11. Jeremiah 3:6-11 – Unrepentant people influence others to rebel and to remain unrepentant.

12. Jeremiah 3:12 – "Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, 'Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the Lord; I will not be angry forever.'" God's mercy and love give you reason and opportunity to repent. People are without excuse.

13. Jeremiah 3:15 -- "'And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.'" If a nation returns to the LORD, God will give them good political and religious leaders. Leaders are appointed by God, and He gives to glorify Himself.

14. Proverbs 7:2 -- "Keep my commandments and live." God pleads with people to obey Him, in part, for their benefit. Why choose to suffer needlessly?

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15. Proverbs 7:6, 7 -- "For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple." God's truth is revealed every day in the lives of people around you if you are paying attention and viewing life from the perspective of God's word. Likewise, your life should reveal to others the truth of God's mercy, grace, love, and holiness.

16. Psalm 117:1, 2 -- "Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!" Psalm 117 is the shortest Psalm in the Bible and is also the middle chapter of the Bible -- short, succinct, powerful! Are you excited to praise the Lord this morning? It is all about perspective, your perspective on God and His love.

17. Psalm 118:5, 6, 14, 15, 17-24 -- "Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me...? The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous... I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." How wonderful that we have received the salvation of which the Psalmist could only prophesy! Now, how should we live? "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by... the builders, which has become the cornerstone (Acts 4:11)."

18. Psalm 118:9 -- "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes."

- During a period of political rivalry, it is important to explain to people that the hope of the nation is God, not politicians. No matter who is elected, how strong the economy is, or how strong the military is, nothing can protect the nation that isn't protected by God. National defense is best achieved through repentance and revival.

- Jeremiah answered God's call to prophesy against his own government. His faithfulness to God appeared to be treason to his earthly king, and he was imprisoned, persecuted, and exiled; yet Jeremiah pleaded with his country to follow God's ways, not the politicians. Jeremiah was just a young man who initially lacked confidence, but God said to him, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.... Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." Jeremiah was not called to act under his own wisdom, strength, talent and skill; he was called to act under the power and authority of God. Under the authority of God, Jeremiah was "set... over nations and over kingdoms... to overthrow." Likewise, Jesus gave us the Great Commission to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you;" and Jesus placed these two bookends on that commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Like Jeremiah, we, as a 'priestly kingdom', have been set over the nations by the authority of the KING of kings and through his power, not ours. The Ancient Prophets had a glimpse of us long before we existed -- "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the

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midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off." (Micah 5:7-9) Like Jeremiah, using weapons that are not of this world (not of flesh), we are called to "destroy strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4) It is a global insurgency as we transform hearts across the planet, destroying "arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and [taking] every thought captive to obey Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) Our message as Christ's ambassadors is the same as it has always been -- "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17) Are you ready to join in the Great Victory? Or will you be like the tens of thousands who walked away from Gideon's Army in the face of seemingly impossible odds only to miss out on the incredible experience of the power of God at work? God is inviting us to be a part of what only He can do, to step in faith, knowing that our power is wholly insufficient (the definition of faith). This is what Jesus did with the disciples when he sent them out to heal -- "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction." However, when they proved unable to heal (despite the power and authority given to them), Jesus explained the problem -- "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?... Because of your little faith [you could not heal]. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." (see Matthew 17) If we fail to rise up like lions, it is not because we lack the authority and Holy Spirit power; it is because we lack the faith. Faith grows every time to take another step in faith. Through baby steps, we eventually learn to stride.

19. Psalm 118:18 -- "The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death." God disciplines but never gives you what you really deserve, which is death, eternal death. Don't despise the Lord's discipline, which is the loving Father's way of maturing you and conforming you to the image of His Son, Jesus.

20. Psalm 118:19 -- "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord." Only God can open the gates of righteousness to you; give thanks for the grace you have received in Jesus.

21. Psalm 118:22 -- "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Again, this is Jesus.

22. Psalm 118:29 -- "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" Salvation should make you rejoice every day.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 7 Oct 18: Dedicate today to giving thanks for all that God has done for you, and proclaim His love and faithfulness to as many as you can today.

DBRP - WEEK 40, Day 5, Friday, 5 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+63%2C+64%3B+proverbs+5%3B+james+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 5 October 18:

1. Isaiah 63:8, 9 -- "And he became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity, he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them

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all the days of old." Jesus was afflicted for the afflicted, offering salvation, redemption, love, and the hope of restoration and eternal life for those who would turn to Him. Let Jesus carry you.

2. Isaiah 63:10 – "But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them." They had access to the Holy Spirit, but grieved the Holy Spirit, becoming enemies of God. Horrifying!

3. Isaiah 63:14 -- "So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name." Never forget that, ultimately, it is not about you. Your purpose is to glorify God, and you do this by displaying a relationship with Jesus to others. If you focus on your relationship with Jesus, you won't have to worry about proving it -- it will be self-evident.

4. Isaiah 64:3 -- "When you did awesome things that we did not look for...." God will bless you far beyond your imagination. God will answer your prayers far beyond your requests. He knows what is best for you; you don't. Trust God to surprise you with more than you imagined.

5. Isaiah 64:5-7 -- "You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities." Even what we believe is pure is filthy in God's eyes. We are totally dependent on God's grace. We are not capable of righteousness apart from salvation through faith in Jesus and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

6. Isaiah 64:6 -- "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." Key to our relationship with God is understanding how wholly unworthy we are of His love, mercy, and grace; how insignificant we are before His Majesty; and how Magnificent He is. The greater you understand your own humility compared to His Majesty, the greater you will appreciate and glorify His love.

7. Proverbs 5:23 -- "He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray." The first level of leadership, the foundation for all other leadership is leading self (which is actually demonstrating fidelity in following Jesus). Another word for self-leadership is discipline or self-control (a spiritual fruit). Self-leadership must be continuous, and if it fails, the person fails in all leadership at the foundational level. A person without self-control is completely untrustworthy and cannot lead others. Good leaders know the way and show the way. God leaders know Jesus, follow Him, and show others how to know Him and follow Him. If your leader is not following Jesus, he is leading you astray. If you are not faithfully following Jesus, you are leading others astray. As a leader, you are either with Jesus or against Him.

8. James 4:1-8 -- "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He

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yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

- Again, James reinforces the theme of self-control that comes through the Spirit. Jesus calls us to deny self, but quarrels always include a degree of selfishness and a lack of self-control which is evidence of your submission to the Spirit within you (see Galatians 5). James challenges you to consider the selfishness you display in quarrels. Your responsibility is not to control the other person or their actions. Your responsibility is to control yourself by being one with Jesus. Warning, self-examination is important and Biblical -- "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Corinthians 13:5) Test yourself, but do not judge, or condemn yourself -- "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself" (1 Corinthians 4:3). You can't fix what you aren't willing to be honest about, and you must strive to be conformed to the image of Christ, but in the process, don't focus on the reality of who you are, focus on the reality of Jesus, the grace you have received through Him, and the unimaginable love God has for you, just as you are. Fix your eyes on Jesus more and more – only by seeing Him clearly can you even hope to rightly see self, and only by seeing Him clearly can you rest in His love – inspection not introspection.

- "You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." Do you ask God for what you want? If so, what is the motivation behind your requests? Are you still selfishly motivated though Jesus tells you that the first step towards following Jesus is to deny self? Again, James is challenging you to consider your heart and relationship with God, rather than blaming circumstances or others on your lack of peace. Make Jesus your true passion, and replace your worries with joy in Him.

- We often fight with others because we are actually fighting against God and the calling He has given us. As a priest on this earth, do you take responsibility for maintaining peace and interceding for those who sin? Do you understand that you walk as Christ's ambassadors and that ambassadors never represent themselves? You can't proclaim the gospel of grace while you aren't displaying the gospel of grace when offended. God knows He is sending you out to hurting people who hurt people, and He knows that they are going to hurt you. His charge for you is to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him in the moment. God is giving you an opportunity to fellowship with Christ in His suffering for the sinful. Don't get in arguments because of your pride; your pride is always counter to God's will for your life of surrender and humility. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has empowered you to overcome your natural passions that war within you, but you must "submit yourselves to God [and] resist the devil." Part of the reason why God intentionally places difficult people in your life is to reveal the truth of what is in your heart, to give you a greater appreciation of the grace you have received, and to teach you how to love others. No one can cause us to be angry, bitter, or jealous; we do that to ourselves. We may be tempted outwardly, but we don't have to be tempted inwardly. Quarrelling is foolish and makes you or the issue at hand the focus rather than Jesus. God has called you rise above it to win souls.

-- Proverbs 20:3 -- It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.

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-- Proverbs 16:32 -- Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

-- Ecclesiastes 7:9 -- Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

-- 2 Timothy 2:23-24 -- Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil.

-- Matthew 5:22 -- But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

-- Philippians 2:14-16 -- Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

-- 1 Corinthians 6:7 -- To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

9. James 4:4 -- "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." God compares the worldly Christian to an adulterer. Love and fidelity are inseparable. Will you be faithful to Jesus for faithful to the world? Who will you REALLY follow today? Will you chase after what everyone else is chasing? Will you get consumed in the worries of the world, or will you walk with Jesus? If you walk with Jesus you will have to walk away from the crowd.

10. James 4:7-8 -- "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." Submit, resist, draw near! Purify your heart! Be double-minded no longer. This is a life choice. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Being close to God is a choice that takes effort on our part.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- There may be times when God seems far away. You may feel as if your prayers go unheard. James said there is a simple reason for this and a solution. If you are far from God, it is because your sin has separated you from Him. God is unchanging. His character stays absolutely holy. His faithfulness remains constant; it is we who change. We allow sin into our lives. We choose our own direction. We spend less and less time with Him in Bible study and prayer. Then one day we realize that we have gradually grown distant from God. The solution, according to James, is straightforward. We are to draw near to God. As we realize our need to be closer to the Father and we begin to return to Him, He meets us even as the father hurried to greet his prodigal son (Luke 15:20). Drawing near to God requires you to take two actions. First, you must cleanse your hands (Isa. 1:15). You must cleanse your way of living. If you have been actively engaged in sin, you must renounce it. If you have done anything to offend or hurt someone, you must make it right. Second, you are to purify your heart (Ps. 51:10). You must make certain your attitudes, thoughts, and motives are right in God's eyes and are in harmony with God's word. Jesus warned that you cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). It is impossible to love

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anything else as much as you love God and still please Him. If God seems distant, do what is necessary to cleanse your hands, purify your heart, and draw near to Him.

11. James 4:11, 12 -- "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?" Your mission is to bring others closer to Jesus, not to drive them away. God has a heart for every sinner. Show no partiality to anyone. Share the Good News to everyone in love. Speak the truth about sin, but speak the truth in love -- this is true love. Your job is not to promote condemnation but rather reconciliation.

12. James 4:13, 14 -- "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit' — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." Today is the day to submit, resist, draw near, purify, and glorify Jesus to others. Today is the day to love others as an act of love for Jesus. Don't count on tomorrow or put off loving others today in hopes of doing it tomorrow.

13. James 4:16, 17 -- "As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." All sin involves thinking more highly of yourself than you ought, placing your own wants and desires ahead of the commands of Jesus. Using the word of God, the Holy Spirit convicts you of what you ought to do. If you choose instead to do what is most comfortable, convenient, or desirable to you, you sin, and you risk hardening your heart to sin.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- It is never a minor thing to know God's will and not do it. God calls this sin. We can make excuses for our lack of obedience: "I'm just not ready yet" or "I'll do it later!" or "I don't think it will make a difference" or "I can't afford to!" We rationalize, we procrastinate; yet, in God's eyes, rationalization and procrastination are nothing more than disobedience. At times we deceive ourselves into thinking that good intentions equal obedient actions. They do not. A good intention without corresponding activity is disobedience. When we encounter God and He gives us a direction, it is not enough to write down the date in our spiritual journal, or even to tell our friends and church of our "decision." God's call is not to "make a decision" but to obey! Deciding to obey is not equal to obeying! (Matt. 21:28-31). Loudly affirming the necessity of obedience is not the same as obeying (Luke 6:46). Making commitments, even publicly, is not the same as obeying our Lord. Substituting our own good works is not the same as obeying. God told King Saul to wait until the prophet Samuel arrived. Instead of waiting, Saul took matters into his own hands and offered a sacrifice. Saul discovered, to his deep dismay, that other acts of supposed piety do not take the place of obeying a clear command from God (1 Sam. 15:22). As with Saul, God expects you to obey everything exactly as He tells you. Only obedience satisfies God's desire for obedience!

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 Oct 18: Meditate upon today's readings and endeavor to surrender the day to Jesus, doing only what He would have you do, for Him and not for yourself.

DBRP - WEEK 40, Day 4, Thursday, 4 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+61%2C+62%3B+proverbs+4%3B+james+3>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 4 October 18:

1. Isaiah 61:1 -- "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

- See Luke 4:18 where Jesus proclaims that He is the fulfillment of the prophetic verses of Isaiah. Jesus later tells His disciples (including today's disciples) that they have been given the Spirit and have been anointed to continue bringing the Good News, to bind the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty through Jesus, and to set the captives free. With all power and authority, Jesus called us to the Great Commission of making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey. You have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power.

-- 2 Corinthians 1:21 -- And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,

-- 1 John 2:20 -- But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

-- 1 John 2:27 -- But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

-- Revelation 3:18 -- I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- God's timing is perfect! When He speaks, the time to respond in obedience is now. We often act as if we have all the time in the world to obey Him, but history doesn't wait on our commitments. There is no such thing as postponing a decision with God. Either we obey, or we disobey. It is either faith or unbelief, obedience or disobedience. When God announces that now is the acceptable time, what you do next is critical. How often people have been unprepared when a word came to them from the LORD. God said, "Now is the time for you to respond to Me" and their response was, "But I'm not ready. I have some things I need to do first. I'm too busy!" (Matt. 8:21). God's timing is always perfect. He knows you, and He is fully aware of your circumstances. He knows all that He has built into your life until now, and He extends His invitation knowing that His resources are more than adequate for any assignment He gives you. That is why Scripture tells us God is concerned with our heart. If we do not keep our heart in love with Jesus, our disobedience when God speaks could affect the lives of others. When God speaks it is always out of the context of eternity. We don't have to know all the implications of what He is asking. We just have to know that it is a word from almighty God. "Now" is always the acceptable time to respond to the Lord!

2. Isaiah 61:3 -- "They may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD." Be a mighty oak of righteousness in the LORD.

3. Isaiah 61:8 -- "For I the LORD love justice;" We forget this sometimes. Through grace, we have received freedom as described in Isaiah 61:1,2, but this isn't a freedom to sin but rather a freedom to live justly, to live obedient, holy, and pure lives that serve others and glorify God. We have been given the freedom and authority to defend justice.

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- Romans 8:21 -- that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

- 2 Corinthians 3:17 -- Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

- Galatians 5:1 -- For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

- Galatians 5:13 -- For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- 1 Peter 2:16 -- Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

- 2 Peter 2:19 -- They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

- Titus 2:15 -- Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

- Colossians 2:10, 15 -- and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.... He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

5. Isaiah 61:8 -- "I hate robbery and wrong." You cannot love Jesus without hating sin.

6. Isaiah 61:10 -- "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness." Jesus covers over your sin, and clothes you with His righteousness so that you can stand before the judgment of the Father, acceptable and approved.

7. Proverbs 4:2 -- "Do not forsake my teaching." Many pray, seeking a word and direction from God, special revelation, but they have not taken seriously and to heart the word God has already provided in the Bible, general revelation. Be faithful to what God has already said, and watch God work in your life.

8. Proverbs 4:7 -- "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom." If you want to be wise, you have to work at it through the disciplines of discipleship. Your daily disciplines reveal what you really want. God does not just drop wisdom into the lap of the half-hearted.

9. Proverbs 4:14-15 -- "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on." Dedication to God is a complete life change that is as much about what you choose not to do as it is what you choose to do. You will have to walk away from the things everyone else accepts as normal and acceptable -- God's standard for you is much, much higher. God's word says that all Christians are clergy, priests, and saints, but we don't act like it.

10. Proverbs 4:18, 19 -- "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble." Each day, people are going further down that path they have chosen, whether on a journey closer to Jesus or a journey further away, a journey closer to light or a journey closer to darkness, closer to life or closer to death. Those being sanctified shine brighter and brighter until death or Christ's return. Your last day on earth should be your best day -- strive for that.

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11. James 3:8 -- "No human being can tame the tongue." The tongue reveals the heart. Only God can change the heart; only God can tame the tongue. Your will power will never be enough. Self-control is the last listed fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5. It is not the fruit of intellect or personal will power. If you have trouble taming your tongue, it is a problem with your relationship with Jesus, not a problem with your education, your upbringing, or your force of will. You can try to wrestle yourself; theoretically, that would be an even match, but the sinful you has had far more training, practice, and development than the virtuous you. Turn that fight over to the Holy Spirit – no contest.

12. James 3:9-12 -- "With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water." How you treat others reveals how you really feel about God. You can't honor God while you are dishonoring others. God is the God of truth, not merely words. What you say and what you do both must be true, flowing from a heart of genuine love. If your fruit is wrong or your 'water' bad, you need to go to the source -- examine your relationship with Jesus. Many people consider themselves to be 'spiritual,' and ponder and pontificate on spiritual things, but Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24) The truth of your heart is revealed in what you say and what you do.

13. James 3:13 -- "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom." Understanding is not measured in book knowledge, oratory skills, dissertations, or titles, but rather in the nine fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness [gentleness] and temperance [self-control], along with the absence of the works of the flesh which are manifested in the three areas of sex, religion, and relationships with others -- "sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these." (Galatians 5:19-21) Today, James points out that teachers should be model fruit bearers rather than mere scholars. Unless you have proven your understanding by your fruit, your gentleness, and your self-control, you should not be teaching, regardless of how much Bible you think you know and how smart you think you are. Jesus called the fruitless herald of Bible knowledge a "false prophet" whose fruit would eventually reveal the truth of the person. James says that what comes out of our unguarded mouths is usually the first indicator of what is really in our hearts, then our deeds will follow suit. Today, James, when discussing true understanding, first calls out the fruit of 'meekness' in contrast to 'jealousy', 'selfish ambition', and 'boastfulness'. Meekness is not weakness; it is inner strength which flows from God. The word 'meek' comes from the Greek word *prautēs* (prah-oo'-tace). *Prautēs* is used in the New Testament to describe three attitudes: submissiveness to the will of God (Colossians 3:12), teachable-ness (James 1:21) and consideration of others (Ephesians 4:2). It is an inwrought grace of soul, a temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. It is that humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense while being free of any desire of revenge or retribution. It is that inner, 'gentle strength' that cannot be taught that enables us to deny self, carry our cross, and follow. It is applied humility. Of the nine fruits of the Spirit, this is one that does not apply to God the Father. The Old Testament never refers to the Father as being meek, and in the New Testament only the Son is spoken of as meek, and that only in His incarnation. Jesus was "gentle [*prautēs*] and humble in heart." (Matthew 11:29; 21:5; 2 Corinthians 10:1) Like their

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Lord, believers are to be meek and gentle (1 Timothy 6:11) and to wear these attributes like a garment (Colossians 3:12). By definition, *prautēs* has nothing to do with 'jealousy', 'selfish ambition', and 'boastfulness'. The meek teacher never draws attention to himself but always points to Jesus. It is never 'I' or 'me'; It is always 'He'.

14. James 3:14-18 -- "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." Again, notice that bitterness, jealousy, and selfishness are heart issues that corrupt behavior. Heart issues are spiritual issues resulting from a relationship problem with Jesus. Also, note that wisdom comes from above. Earthly 'wisdom' is actually demonic, a false, deceptive substitute for the wisdom that can come only from God through Jesus. How do you know if you have real wisdom or demonic wisdom? Real wisdom honors God, not self, and produces purity, peacefulness, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, impartiality, and sincerity in your life. Use these attributes to test your own wisdom and the wisdom of others. The world is full of smart, talented, funny, attractive, and powerful people, but the world is desperately lacking truly wise people. You can help fill that void by committing to be a true follower of Jesus. What is the first step to following Jesus? Jesus answers that question: "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself....'" (Mark 8:34)

15. James 3 -- "Not many of you should become teachers." Everyone wants to be a teacher. Best to point to God's word, and let the Holy Spirit be the teacher. We tend to interpret God's word distorted by our own motives, often without even realizing it; and we like to glorify ourselves when we teach rather than focusing all attention on Jesus -- we want credit and honor. Even Moses, the humblest of men attempted to share glory with God when He struck the rock twice. His pride made him an unworthy teacher at that moment. Just communicate God's word directly, pointing solely to Jesus, and trust the Holy Spirit to convict hearts.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 Oct 18: Today, test your 'wisdom' by evaluating your selflessness, purity, peacefulness, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, impartiality, and sincerity. (James 3:14-18)

DBRP - WEEK 40, Day 3, Wednesday, 3 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+59%2C+60%3B+proverbs+3%3B+james+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 3 October 18:

1. Isaiah 59:1, 2 -- "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation, between you and your God." Sin separates, gets in the way of a right relationship with The Holy God. If you are a Christian, you have been saved by faith in Jesus, your sins have been forgiven, "and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." (Acts 13:39) However, in salvation, you were called to sanctification -- "because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13) "For it is for

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this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers." (1 Timothy 4:10) Obedience to God isn't the condition for salvation it is the fruit or evidence of salvation, not the path to salvation but the path of sanctification, being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) and knowing Him more and more each day (John 17:2), that we would have the fullness of joy in Him (John 15:11). In our fellowship with God, the Bible says our sin can grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesian 4:30), quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and cause us to get out of step with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25). Do not let sin separate or get in the way of your fellowship with God.

- John 3:36 -- "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

- Galatians 5:16-26 (Keep in Step with the Spirit) -- But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

2. Isaiah 59:8-13 -- "The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace. Therefore, justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor we are like dead men. We all growl like bears; we moan and moan like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: transgressing, and denying the Lord, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words."

- It is our own sin that denies us peace, blinds us, and separates us from God.

- "We hope for justice, but there is none." A person or nation cannot expect blessings from God while remaining in disobedience.

- "For our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: transgressing, and denying the Lord." When we sin, we are in essence denying the LORD at that moment.

3. Isaiah 59:15, 20 -- "The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. and turning back from following our God.... 'And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,' declares the Lord." No one

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could save the world trapped in the guilt of sin but God Himself, Jesus, the One without sin. Jesus is the only Redeemer, the Redeemer to those "who turn from transgression" as the evidence of redemption. Those who habitually and willfully continue in sin do not know Jesus as revealed by their behavior. Christians still sin but continually bear the fruit of sanctification, not holy perfection but holy direction.

- Luke 6:43 -- For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit,

- Proverbs 20:11 -- Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.

4. Isaiah 60:2 -- "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you." Jesus is a bright light in a very dark world.

5. Isaiah 60:15 -- "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, joy from age to age." The age of persecution is temporary, followed by majesty in Jesus. Will you be worthy of majesty after persecution for the name of Jesus?

6. Proverbs 3:3-7 -- "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil." Simple and powerful words from today's Proverbs. Ecclesiastes 7:29 states: "This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes." Our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, but we chase after folly so easily and cause so much unnecessary pain for ourselves and others. Today, recommit to being faithful with every moment, driven by love for the Lord rather than anything else. When you inevitably fall short, give thanks that you remain in a state of grace, get back up, try again, and grow in spiritual maturity (sanctification). Babies fall a lot before they learn to walk, and walking is simply controlling a continual fall forward. Learn more and more to walk with God.

7. James 2:1 -- "My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." Partiality is a sin because it involves viewing others from your selfish perspective rather than from God's perspective. It is the first form of judging others wrongly.

8. James 2:10 -- "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." Only by seeing lawlessness from God's perspective can we get a true sense of how terrible sin is before a Holy God. Only by understanding how guilty we are and how hopeless our condition as sinners do we truly appreciate the Cross of Christ and the mercy that we have received. Only then are we inspired by grateful love to truly obey from the heart and to show grace and mercy to other hopeless sinners.

9. James 2:12, 13 -- "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

- Many 'Christians' act like grace is freedom from the consequences of sin rather than acting like grace is the freedom not to sin. It is a much graver thing to be judged under the law of liberty rather than to be judged under the written law. What is left to be said of the person who accepts the sacrifice of the Son of God for their sins and then turns around and sins unremorsefully? The unsaved cannot help but sin

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and haven't the power of the Spirit and of love, but the saved who live by faith also live by love which by default hates the sin that God hates. No one should be more horrified by sin than the Christian.

- "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." God will treat you the way you treat others. Do you rely on mercy from God for your transgressions while demanding justice be imposed on those who have offended you?

10. James 2:19, 20 -- "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"

- Many who claim to be Christian don't even have a demon-level of faith -- they don't even shudder. Believing in Jesus isn't the same as having a saving faith in Jesus, trusting, following, and loving Jesus. The Great Commission does not call us to go into the world and make "believers"; it calls us to make "disciples", disciplined, followers of Christ who obey Him out of love. Obedience is not the path to salvation but rather the evidence of salvation. "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright." (Proverbs 20:11)

11. James 2:26 – "Faith apart from works is dead." True faith is revealed by its fruit. We are saved by faith, not by works; but a faith without works is no faith at all. We are saved by faith alone, but not a faith that is alone.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Oct 18: Today, focus on showing no partiality to anyone for any reason, whether it be status, personality, attractiveness, likeability, influence, etc. See everyone through the eyes of Jesus. Everyone needs Jesus equally, and you are His Ambassador. Don't short change anyone the message of the Gospel for any reason. (James 2:1)

DBRP - WEEK 40, Day 2, Tuesday, 2 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+57%2C+58%3B+proverbs+2%3B+james+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 2 October 18:

1. Isaiah 57:1 – "The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity." A corrupt nation turns it's back on religious persecution.

2. Isaiah 57:5 -- "You who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?" The unrighteous nation that uses abortion as birth control will be judged by God in a terrible way.

3. Isaiah 57:15 -- "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." Relationship with God starts with a contrite heart.

4. Isaiah 57:21 – "'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'" God said it; that settles it. Peace only comes from God, period.

5. Isaiah 58:2-4 – "Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves,

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and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high."

- God does not bless or draw near to willful disobedience. Why is the church so powerless today? Disobedience. Why does revival tarry? Disobedience. God will not be mocked by those who claim to seek Him but don't obey Him.

- "Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure." God knows what self-centered religion looks like – He is not fooled.

- "Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high." How you treat others reveals the truth about how much you love and honor God. Following Jesus requires denying self and taking up your "cross" in relationships.

- "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." (John 4:23) "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." (James 1:27) "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) There is an appearance of godliness that has no power – among those who claim to seek the Lord daily but, in reality, are only pursuing blessings from God for their own prideful purposes. These are they who pain themselves in pursuit of religious activities with the wrong heart and wrong motives, believing that their self-glorifying piety will earn them favor from God (not to mention the respect and praise of men). Self-righteous acts of self-denial (like fasting with the wrong heart) are presented as holiness. However, God sees beyond the deeds into the heart. And eventually a person's deeds will expose the truth of their hearts even to men. "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Galatians 6:7, 8) Those who proudly proclaim the name of Christ, actively participate in their church activities and yet fail to keep themselves "unstained from the world" are "double-minded... unstable in all [their] ways... [and] must not suppose that [they] will receive anything from the Lord." (James 1:7) Jesus gave us the steps to discipleship: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) This is an all or nothing proposition.

-- Matthew 6:24 -- No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

-- Luke 11:23 -- Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

-- Revelation 3:16 -- So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

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-- Mark 10:21 -- "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

-- Luke 9:62 -- Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

6. Isaiah 58:5, 7 -- "Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself?... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house...?" Once again, the first step to following Jesus is denying self. The next step is sacrificing for others daily, sometimes tangibly and sometimes emotionally. We demonstrate our love for God by how we love others, particularly those who can't or won't reciprocate. We received unmerited grace from God as the supreme act of His love. When we give unmerited grace to others out of love, we are living out the Gospel.

- Matthew 25:40 -- And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

- Matthew 25:45 -- Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

- 1 John 2:10 -- Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

- 1 John 3:10 -- By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

- 1 John 3:16 -- By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

- 1 John 3:17 -- But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

- 1 John 4:20 -- If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

- 1 John 4:21 -- And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

7. Isaiah 58:9 -- "Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer." When you truly call to God from a humble, repentant heart, He will answer.

8. Isaiah 58:6-14 -- God demands obedience before sacrifice and religion.

9. Proverbs 2:1-6 -- "... then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God...." Read Proverbs 2:1-5 and find out how to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Note: Here is a link to a video overview of James -- <https://youtu.be/qn-hLHWwRYY>

10. James 1:1 -- "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..." James identified himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. How do you identify and introduce yourself?

11. James 1:5 -- "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." Wisdom comes only from God.

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12. James 1:8 -- "He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." The sinful Christian is double-minded.

13. James 1:12 -- "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." Trials are a test intended for blessing as they bring you closer to Jesus. See Romans 8:28, 29.

14. James 1:14, 15 -- "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." Among the world, the flesh, and the devil, the one you need to worry about the most is the flesh. It is their own desires that destroy the sinner. There are many temptations out there, but they are only an issue for you when you allow them to enter your heart.

15. James 1:20 -- "... the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." This is not hard to understand. Christians who live by grace and who are called to proclaim the forgiveness and grace that comes through Jesus, cannot be disposed to anger. Only God's anger is righteous. Yours isn't.

16. James 1:22-24 -- "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like." The true Christian obeys, not perfectly but intently. The hypocritical Christian is disobedient, but claims to be Christian. If you accept the Bible as the word of God; if you read it, believe God has called you to obedience, and pursue obedience as an act of love. If you believe Jesus paid the penalty of your sin on the cross and then you disobey the word of God, you don't really believe what you say you believe.

17. James 1:26 -- "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless." How you speak to others reveals what is really in your heart. Perhaps there is no more powerful verse about careless words than this one.

18. James 1:27 -- "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

- Charity and purity are essential Christian attributes.

- A true Christian relentlessly guards His purity and holiness.

- Compare James 1:27 with Isaiah 58. What is the Bible telling you? Is it hard to understand?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 2 Oct 18: Identify yourself and introduce yourself today as a servant of Jesus Christ, then prove it by your shocking, sacrificial love. (James 1:1)

DBRP - WEEK 40, Day 1, Monday, 1 October 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+55%2C+56%3B+proverbs+1%3B+Hebrews+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 1 October 18:

1. Isaiah 55:1, 2 -- "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to

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me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.” God's salvation is free, the gift of God in Christ received by grace through faith in Christ alone – GRACE: God's riches at Christ's expense. Yet instead of taking that eternal, priceless gift, people struggle with all their might to acquire a substitute that has no value and doesn't satisfy. Instead of accepting God's free salvation, comfort, peace, and security, people wear themselves out attempting to create their own salvation which is no salvation at all.

2. Isaiah 55:6, 7 -- “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” God gives people an opportunity to repent and be forgiven and opportunities to learn and grow, but those opportunities aren't endless. Don't waste the opportunities God gives you to obey, grow, and experience Him more fully. Some will miss the opportunity that was made available to them to find the Lord, but it will be of their own choosing. The Lord calls out to the lost and wayward: “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.... Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.” (Isaiah 55:1) God's word always accomplishes its purpose of revealing the hearts of men. To those who genuinely desire the Lord, He will break down all barriers and accomplish the impossible – “Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, ‘The Lord will surely separate me from his people’; and let not the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’ For thus says the Lord: ‘To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.’” (Isaiah 56:3-5) However, those who do not truly desire God will follow their own blind guides who will tell them what they want to hear to suit their passions and appetites – “His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. ‘Come,’ they say, ‘let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.’” (Isaiah 56:10-12) We are reminded in today's Hebrews readings that we are not led by such blind shepherds but rather by The Great Shepherd who gives us peace and equips us and empowers us to do His will for His glory – “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20, 21) Some will believe our testimony, and others won't. Either way, God's word will accomplish its intended purpose.

3. Isaiah 55:8, 9 -- "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

- The revelation of God does not come from intellectual pursuits but must come through the Spirit. There is no way to measure the difference between our thoughts and God's thoughts. Often, a person must forsake their thoughts and follow the Spirit because our thoughts are far from The Holy LORD.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Rarely does God do something exactly as we think He will. Our problem is that we try to second-guess God, saying, “Oh, now I know what God is planning to do!” Moses

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experienced this as he learned how God was going to deliver the Hebrews out of Egypt. God told him He would harden Pharaoh's heart. Yet, the result was not what Moses anticipated. Rather than allowing the Hebrews to leave, Pharaoh increased their hardship. Rather than becoming a hero among the Hebrews, Moses was despised by them for bringing greater suffering. Moses returned to the Lord and asked, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?" (Exod. 5:22). Much of the frustration we experience as Christians has nothing to do with what God does or doesn't do. It has everything to do, rather, with the false assumptions we make about how we think God will and should act. Have you ever done the will of God and then things seemed to become worse? Moses completely misunderstood what the results of His obedience to God would be. When things did not turn out as he anticipated, Moses became discouraged. God had told Moses what to do, but He had not told Moses what the consequences would be. It is foolish to attempt to do God's work using your own "common sense." God does not eliminate your common sense, He consecrates it. He gives you His wisdom so you can understand His ways. As you look back on God's activity in your life, you will recognize the supreme wisdom in how He has led you. As you look forward to what God may do, be careful you do not try to predict what He will do next. You may find yourself completely off the mark.

4. Isaiah 55:11 -- "...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

- Whether God's word is received or rejected by the listener, it has accomplished its purpose. We are messengers of God, not to be accepted by men but to proclaim the glory of God to all who must then choose.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- When God speaks, nothing remains the same. At the beginning of time, God spoke, and a universe was created out of nothing. God followed a pattern when He created the earth: He spoke; it was so; it was good (Gen. 1:3-4). This pattern continued throughout the Bible. Whenever God revealed His plans, things happened just as He said, and God considered the result "good" (Phil. 2:13). God doesn't make suggestions. He speaks with the full determination to see that what He has said will come to fruition. Whenever Jesus spoke, what He said came to pass. Lepers found that a word from Jesus meant healing (Luke 5:13; 17:14). The blind man discovered that a word from Jesus meant sight (Luke 18:42). Through a barren fig tree, the disciples saw that a curse from Jesus meant destruction (Mark 11:20). The sinner experienced forgiveness through a word from Jesus (John 8:11). How many attempts did it take Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead? Only one (John 11:43). There was never a time that Jesus spoke that what He said did not happen. What happens when Jesus speaks to you? Have you been reading the words of Jesus in your Bible without experiencing His word that transforms everything around you? Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they assumed that knowledge of the written Scriptures would give them life. They were satisfied with having the words instead of experiencing the person who spoke the words (John 5:39). How powerful a word from God is to your life! As you read your Bible and pray, listen to what God has to say to you about His will for your life.

5. Isaiah 56:1 -- "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed."

- Our life lived in grace is an opportunity to live in a way that brings honor and glory to a righteous and just God.

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- "Do what is right." This morning in Isaiah 55 God offers an "invitation to the thirsty" commanding, "Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts." (Isaiah 55:7) In Isaiah 56 God proclaims, "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed." (Isaiah 56:1) Proverbs 1 explains that the purpose of the Proverbs is to equip God's people with wisdom and prudence to do "what is right, just, and fair (Proverbs 1:3)," and the first book of Proverbs includes "wisdom's rebuke" to "Repent!" (Proverbs 1:23). Finally, in Hebrews 13, Paul urges his readers to "bear with my word of exhortation (Hebrews 13:22)" to "have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way (Hebrews 13:18)" – Love one another, show hospitality to strangers, share in the suffering of others, remain pure, be content, trust in the Lord without fear, openly profess the name of Jesus, etc. But in his final comments, Paul reminds us that such a life is not possible in our own strength, but only through the power of God: "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:21, 22) As Paul said, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

6. Isaiah 56:5 -- "I will give them an everlasting name." Those who endeavor to make a name for themselves on earth will, in the end, have no name at all. Those who build their identity upon Jesus will have an everlasting name. Legacy is left by those who obey God and teach others to obey (make disciples).

7. Isaiah 56:6 -- "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants that shall not be cut off." Life is about loving Jesus and serving Him on earth by loving others and drawing them closer to Jesus.

8. Isaiah 56:6-8 -- God's people are those who obey Him because they are His. Christians are disciples, followers of Jesus, However, may still call themselves Christians though they don't follow Him – these are CHINOs, Christians In Name Only.

9. Isaiah 56:10-12 -- "His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. 'Come,' they say, 'let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.'" Nations and churches fall when political and religious leaders stop warning of God's demand for obedience and His judgement against unrighteousness but instead pursue selfish ambitions.

10. Proverbs 1:4-5 – "...to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance." Everyone, young and old, need to continually study God's word.

11. Proverbs 1:20, 21 – "Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks...." God wants you to use His word to guide you through the noisy chaotic world to make wise decisions and not to be led off course like most everyone else.

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12. Proverbs 1:28 – “Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.” For those who continually ignore God’s wisdom, a day will come when God’s wisdom is no longer available.

13. Hebrews 13:2 -- "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The Bible expects you to be like the Good Samaritan to strangers. God may test you with a stranger in need.

14. Hebrews 13:4, 5 -- "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

- Family issues and financial issues are the biggest causes of stress and discontentment in most people's lives. The Bible says that the key to both these areas of life is to be grateful for and content with what God has given you, dedicating everything to His glory.

- All sexual immorality is forbidden and will be judged, but how casually we take sexual sin today.

15. Hebrews 13:5 – “Be content with what you have.” Discontentment is a sin that gives birth to more sin.

16. Hebrews 13:16 -- "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." Radical generosity is an expected trait of a Christian.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 Oct 18: Today, demonstrate gratitude and contentment in your relationships and with your finances. Appreciate what you have been given rather than dishonoring God in ungratefulness. (Hebrews 13:4, 5)

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 7, Sunday, 30 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+53%2C+54%3B+proverbs+30%3B+Psalm+113%2C+114>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 30 September 18:

1. Isaiah 53:2-3 -- “He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

- Jesus was not desirable to the world and, therefore, disregarded or rejected by the vast majority. Jesus did not seek to make Himself more appealing to the world, but rather focused on following, pleasing, and honoring the Father at all costs. Jesus said, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:37) The truth was hard and unacceptable to most. The message of “Repent, deny self, pick up your cross daily, and follow me,” coming from a man who Himself had no place to lay his head and who spent His time ministering to the poor and to the despised was a natural filter which separated the truly committed from the crowd. Out of the masses, Jesus called those who were “of the truth,” those whose hearts were receptive to the Holy Spirit’s call, receptive without the need of comfortable seating, dynamic sermons, professional musicians, impressive light shows, professional visual displays, and promises of self-actualization. Jesus called out to His sheep, those who knew His voice, realized they were powerless without Him, and were ready to follow Him at all costs. Jesus did not come to help the

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kingdoms of men but rather to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace on earth (requiring an acceptance of sin), but rather division, sifting God's people from the wicked. (John 12:51-53) Jesus did not proclaim the popular notion of peace on earth through the enlightenment of mankind but rather through surrender to Christ and the return of Christ, a peace that transcends all human understanding. True peace can only come through submission to the KING – "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." (Isaiah 54:13) When Jesus with all power and authority commanded us to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," He modelled the pattern we were to follow. When He sent the disciples out telling them to "take nothing with you," they were tasked to follow the pattern He modelled. Jesus exemplified the coaching model of "educate, demonstrate, replicate, evaluate, and remediate" – "I will teach you, then show you; then you try to copy me, and I will observe your efforts and coach you through improvement." We should not be trying to market Jesus, trying to make Him more appealing to the world around us; we should simply bear witness (in both word and deed) to the Jesus we know personally, serving as His ambassadors to those whose hearts are convicted by the Holy Spirit (not by our skillful efforts); testifying to the Truth, refusing to compromise it or cheapen it in order to keep the peace with the world. We cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit, and we must be careful not to try to replace the Holy Spirit's calling with pop-culture motivational techniques that rely on self. A church that seeks to make Jesus exciting creates 'disciples' who are prone to mistake emotions for the Holy Spirit. They may be 'spirit-filled,' but it is human spirit, which is short-lived and powerless.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- The coming of Jesus was like a tender plant in the midst of a parched ground. Parched ground offers little hope for survival; it is dry and too hardened to allow most plants to penetrate its crust. Yet Jesus was prophesied as a tender plant that would break through the hostile soil and overcome the dry and lifeless environment in order to bring life. When Jesus was born, His people were hardened to God's Word. There is no written record of God's having spoken to His people for four hundred years. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had studied and memorized the Scriptures, but the words were lifeless to them. So hostile had they become to the truth that when God's Son came to them, they killed Him. Nevertheless, despite the enmity of the people, Jesus brought life to all who believed in Him. Jesus is capable of bringing life to any person, society, or culture no matter how hardened or hostile they have become to the gospel. Even the most calloused sinner will discover that Jesus knows how to penetrate the heart and bring life where there was only bitterness. The work of Jesus in a person's life may seem fragile at first, but like the mustard seed, it will eventually grow into something strong. As you pray for someone you care about, don't be discouraged if this person has not responded to Jesus. Just as a tender plant finds a way to grow in a hard and unreceptive environment, so the love of Jesus has the ability to emerge in a life that seems completely unresponsive.

2. Isaiah 53 is an obvious and amazing prophecy of Jesus that could not have been understood at the time it was provided but was intended to be understood after it had been fulfilled, designed to reveal to us God's ultimate plan for our salvation through Jesus. Read Isa 53 with joy that you have a relationship with Jesus that the prophets of the Old Testament longed for, and share it with others.

3. Isaiah 54:1 -- "'Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,' says the Lord." God can turn everything around, regardless how impossible it might seem.

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4. Isaiah 54:2 – “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;

do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- When God comes to a life in power, it is always a time of rejoicing and expectation for the future! Isaiah described this experience as similar to that of a child born to a previously barren woman. The child’s arrival changes everything! Life cannot continue as usual! Whereas the dwelling place might have been large enough for two, it must now be made bigger. The child’s presence causes the parents to completely rearrange the way they were living. Isaiah proclaimed that when God comes, you must make room for Him in your life. You must “enlarge the place of your tent” because God’s presence will add new dimensions to your life, your family, and your church. You do not simply “add Christ on” to your busy life and carry on with business as usual. When Christ is your Lord, everything changes. Whereas before you may not have expected good things to come through you or in your life, now you should have a spirit of optimism. You ought to expect your life to become richer and fuller. You can anticipate God blessing others through your life. You can look for God to demonstrate His power through your life in increasing measure. As a Christian, how do you make room for Christ in your life? You repent of your sin. You allow Christ the freedom to do what He wants in you. You watch eagerly for His activity in your life and in your family and in your church. You live your life with the expectancy that Christ will fill you with His power in the days to come and will “stretch” you to do things in His service that you have never done before.”

5. Isaiah 54:5-8 – “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name.... For the Lord has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.” Throughout the Bible, God uses marriage as a symbol of His love relationship with His people, and He expects His people to model this love in their marriages as a testimony to a watching world. The Bible presents the marriage as the most important institution on earth. Jesus warned that no man should destroy what God has created in marriage. In a marriage, Christians are called to give more honor, respect, glory, and love to their spouses than they deserve, to pour out the grace that Christ exemplified. A married person first shows their appreciation for Jesus by how they treat their spouse. Your relationship with God brings you glory and honor you don't deserve, erasing all previous disgrace. Remember the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” How you forgive your spouse is how you should expect God to forgive you.

6. Isaiah 54:13 – “All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.” The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of God's children. All Christians want their children to be taught by the Lord which is only possible if they have salvation through Jesus and the embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

7. Isaiah 54:15 – “If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you.” If there is strife in the church or among God's people it is only because they have chosen to reject the power of the Holy Spirit that is available to them.

8. Proverbs 30:6 – “Do not add to his words....” Everything you need to know, God has told you. How you respond to God’s word is your choice.

9. Proverbs 30:20 -- “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” Salvation, relationships with God, and spiritual growth requires a humble, honest, repentant heart. The Christian never makes light of sin.

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10. Psalm 113:3 – “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised!” You should be praising God all day long, from the time you get up until the time you go to bed.

11. Psalm 113:4 -- "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!" What happens when a nation declares God's laws unconstitutional?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 Sep 18: Focus on intentionally praising the Lord all day today, every hour of the day. (Psalm 113:3)

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 6, Saturday, 29 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+50-52%3B+proverbs+29%3B+Psalm+112>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 29 September 18:

1. Isaiah 50:4 – “The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.” Do you know the word of God well enough to use it to sustain those who are weary? Do you wake up each morning to hear God’s word and to be taught by God’s word so you can walk by His word and teach His word? Dedicate every morning to Spirit-led, prayerful Bible study in order to be equipped to fulfill your purpose on earth and to sustain the weary.

2. Isaiah 50:5, 6 – “The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.” Still, it is not enough that we dedicate each morning the Spirit-led Bible study, you then have to live out what you have been taught by the Holy Spirit through God’s word, you have to be ready to deny self, to take up your cross, and to follow Jesus. Note the commonalities between the above verses and what you just read yesterday in Hebrews 12. How you respond to maltreatment reveals the truth of your faith and love for Jesus. God puts difficult people in your life to change you and to change them.

3. Isaiah 50:7 – “But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.” Those who follow Jesus do not respond negatively to negativity; they don’t return evil for evil; they return good for evil. They respond to abuse with forgiveness. They can do this because they have put their trust in the Lord. This, by the way, can only seem crazy to the world.

4. Isaiah 50:10-11 – “Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.” Jesus is the Light of life. Many people build their own small fires as a substitute for Jesus. Not only are these lights burdensome and dim, they always burn out quickly. Why not rely on the Light which is the lights all creation for eternity?

5. Isaiah 51:1 -- “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.”

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- Many seek righteousness, but they refuse to look to the source of righteousness, the author of righteousness, the Sovereign, Holy God who is Righteousness – they refuse to turn to The Rock, or stone, of Righteousness, Jesus (see verses below). God tells you that if you are truly seeking Him, you will dig into His word and learn from what He has given you. Many want to ‘hear’ a word from God, but they don’t want to heed the words He has already provided through the Bible. How you approach the Bible reveals how much you are truly seeking and pursuing. If you don’t ‘have time’ for the Bible, what does that reveal?

-- Matthew 7:24 -- “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

-- Matthew 7:25 -- And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

-- Matthew 16:18 -- And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

-- Romans 9:33 -- as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

-- 1 Corinthians 10:4 -- and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

-- 1 Peter 2:6-8 -- For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- As Christians, we ought never to overlook our heritage. An awareness of our Christian heritage helps us to understand our identity, and it gives us a sense of where God is leading us. The Israelites had a rich heritage. Their nation began as a result of Abraham and Sarah’s faithfulness. The generations that followed included Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph as their faithful leaders. God richly blessed His people and made them prosper. God continued to show favor on the Israelites by leading them out of Egypt into a prosperous land of their own. God established His nation through some of the most awesome miracles in history. God continued to provide strong leaders, such as Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Samuel, David, and Solomon. He sent mighty prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Unfortunately, in Isaiah’s day, God’s people had reached a point where they had forgotten their heritage. They lived as spiritual paupers rather than as heirs to a rich heritage and members of a royal priesthood. Your spiritual heritage is even richer than that of Isaiah’s generation. Your spiritual ancestors include Mary the mother of Jesus, John the Baptist, the disciples, the apostle Paul, and a host of saints down through the ages. Even more important, you look to Jesus as the author and finisher of your faith (Heb. 12:2). You may have a family history of faithfulness that goes back several generations. Do you see the full picture of God’s redemptive work? God’s plan involves you, just as it has included each Christian throughout the centuries. God wants you to participate in His continuing work to redeem a lost world. Your obedience today will provide a legacy of faithfulness to the generations that follow.

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6. Isaiah 51:1-3 -- “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.” God teaches us obedience through examples of faith from the past. Your faith lived out through faithful obedience should be an example for others.

7. Isaiah 51:4 -- “Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.” If God’s people would corporately repent and renew their vows to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, there would be revival, and renewal; the light would be bright, and the church would be a light among the nations.

8. Isaiah 51:5 – “My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples.” Some will be saved, and some will be judged.

9. Isaiah 51:6 – “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.” Faith requires you to trust in what you cannot see and in what has not yet occurred (which is hope – faith projected forward).

10. Isaiah 51:7, 8 -- “Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. For the moth will eat them up like a garment.” To be a follower of Jesus, the law must move from being in your head to being in your heart. You need to be motivated by love over duty. You need to be ready to do what God wants because you want to in love, and you need to be ready to do it regardless the consequences.

11. Isaiah 51:12, 13 -- “I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy?” The Christian has no business worrying about how others might judge their faith or what they might do to them.

12. Isaiah 51:15 -- I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name.” God’s past acts of salvation show He will fulfill His promises.

13. Isaiah 51:19 – “These two things have happened to you— who will console you? — devastation and destruction, famine and sword; who will comfort you?” If you have received the gift of salvation and have received God’s word but have refused to live in grace and by God’s word, who can help you? What is left for you? You are now doubly burdened, having ignored your God. Return to Him and walk with Jesus.

14. Isaiah 51:20-22 – “Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of the Lord, the rebuke of your God. Therefore, hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine: Thus says your Lord, the Lord, your God who pleads the cause of his people: ‘Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more....’” Repentance and revival are needed when God’s discipline and punishment dominates your life; with repentance and revival, the removal of God’s punishment is possible.

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15. Isaiah 52:5 – “‘Now therefore what have I here,’ declares the Lord, ‘seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail,’ declares the Lord, ‘and continually all the day my name is despised.’”

- Our power, freedom, and peace hasn't been taken away, we gave it away, and the world mocks Christianity because they see no power in it from our lives; we look and act just like everyone else. Jesus said that ALL power and authority had been given to us by the Father when He commissioned us to be His disciples and to make disciples of all the nations. If we don't feel that power, we are not operating with Him.

- To mock God's people is to blaspheme His name.

16. Isaiah 52:7 – “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” Are you proclaiming the Good News? Does your life reveal the majesty of God, and do your words proclaim His glory?

17. Isaiah 52:11 – “Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.” The Bible uses words twice, rarely, for emphasis. Only two times in the New Testament is a word used three times (“Woe, woe, woe” and “Holy, holy, holy”). This verse is meant to get your attention – leave the ways of the world, purify yourself as a vessel of the Holy Spirit of God.

18. Isaiah 52:13-15 – “Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.” These verses are a foreshadowing of Jesus, “lifted up” (on a cross), “highly exalted by many and appalled by others; disfigured and sacrificed (the sprinkled blood of the sacrifice) for the nations; the KING of kings.

19. Proverbs 29:25-26 -- "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe. Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the LORD that a man gets justice." True faith involves trusting the unseen God over all the other visible worldly powers.

20. Psalm 112:1-7 – "Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.... Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.... Surely he will never be shaken.... He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure, he will have no fear."

- The reality of God's love brings peace in any situation. We trust in God and lean not on our own understanding, knowing that our thoughts are as far from God's thoughts as the heavens are from the earth. We know that our Father has a plan for us that is greater than anything we could possibly imagine. In the storms of the sea, we can rest peacefully with Jesus in the back of the boat. As described in Isaiah 50:10, 11, we do not walk tormented in the darkness, trusting in the torch of our own understanding and abilities. We walk in the shining Light of God which surpasses all understanding. Jesus is the Light of the world.

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- It is impossible to obey if you don't really believe.
- How we respond to God's commands reveals what we really believe about God.
- How you respond to God's commands affects generations.
- "Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous." The light of Jesus will make you gracious, merciful, and righteous.
- Circumstances don't impact the Holy Spirit's availability to the faithful Christian.

21. Psalm 112:6-9 – "For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

- True faith makes you resolute, confident in hard times, steady, fearless, forgiving, and giving.
- Fear is a relationship problem.

22. Psalm 112:10 – "The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!" Those who are ungodly can't help but despise who you are in Jesus, but they are no factor.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 Sep 18: Walk confidently, boldly with Jesus today – obey, forgive, give, and proclaim the Good News. Be a light within your family and community. Glorify God with all that you are. (See today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 5, Friday, 28 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+48%2C+49%3B+proverbs+28%3B+Hebrews+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 28 September 18:

1. Isaiah 48:1 – "...who swear by the name of the Lord and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right." God knows the motives behind words and deeds. Many claim faith, and many do good deeds. However, often the motivation is self-righteousness and self-glorification rather than selfless love for God and for others. People are often deceived, but God isn't.

2. Isaiah 48:6-20-21 – God wants His people to be a witness to the world of what He has done to save His people.

3. Isaiah 48:9-11 -- "For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it."

- We tend to read the Bible with a self-centered perspective – "What does this mean to me and my life? What does God have in store for me?" It is not about us; it is all about Him. When God blesses or curses, the main point is His glory, not the quality of our lives. How often do you pray about what you want rather than for God's will to be done on earth for His glory, regardless the cost to you? Read carefully the Lord's Prayer, and see that Jesus is calling for a focus on God's glory and will rather than fulfillment

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of personal needs and desires. Focus on serving God, and trust God with your circumstances. Yes, God wants you to pray for your personal concerns, but within the context of His ultimate will. As we saw earlier, Hezekiah prayed for his health for self-centered reasons, and this was a curse.

- Glory belongs to God and to Him alone. No one can share it.

4. Isaiah 48:16 – “Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there.” And now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit.” God wants you to know His purposes. The first step is to draw near to Him, the to listen.

5. Isaiah 48:17 – “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.’ The Holy God loves you so much He has redeemed you, making it possible for you to have salvation.

6. Isaiah 49:1-5 – “Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’ But I said, ‘I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.’ And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength....” Serving God does not promise any earthly reward but rather may cost you everything, which is what is normally expected of any servant.

7. Isaiah 49:1-16 – God calls people to mission as He shows them the work He is about to do.

8. Isaiah 49:15 – “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- God never becomes preoccupied or neglectful toward one of His children. God said it would be more likely for a nursing mother to forget the infant at her breast than for Him to forget one of His children! The nursing mother has a keen sensitivity to her baby. Even if the infant is in another room the mother’s senses are in tune with her child. The mother knows when it is time to feed and care for the child. The mother never becomes so preoccupied with other things that she neglects the needs of her child. It is fitting that God chose this imagery to describe how He looks after His people, for He is more sensitive to the needs of His children than even the most loving mother. He anticipates every cry for help. Even before we can call out in need, God is responding with His answer (Isa. 65:24). This is one of the most comforting promises God has given to us: that He will never forget us. Don’t let the difficult circumstances you are facing convince you that God has forgotten you. Don’t ever assume that God is more concerned with the needs of other, more significant, more spiritual people than He is with yours. Scripture teaches that God looks upon you with the same love, interest, and concern as a nursing mother would look upon her infant. It should reassure you to know that your Father loves you like that!

9. Isaiah 49:6 – “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” God gives God-sized mission tasks.

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10. Isaiah 49:7 – “Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: ‘Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.’” God’s plan always included Jesus saving the Gentiles.

11. Isaiah 49:9 – “...saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture....” The Good News sets captives free.

12. Isaiah 49:11 – “And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up.” God warns those who trust in self rather than in Him.

13. Isaiah 49:15-26 – God is constantly showing His love to you.

14. Isaiah 49:19-21 – “Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land— surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.’ Then you will say in your heart: ‘Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?’” Even during time of trouble and exile, God blesses His people. Can you see God’s blessings through your trials is a way that gives you unshakable joy?

15. Isaiah 49:23 – Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.” God wants you to know Him personally and to have no shame in acknowledging Him to others.

16. Isaiah 49:26 – “I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” God’s purpose is to glorify Himself to the world.

17. Proverbs 28:5 – “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.” There is no justice outside of God’s laws.

18. Proverbs 28:7 – “The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.” Gluttony is ungodly.

19. Proverbs 28:9 – “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” Don’t bother praying if you are willfully not obeying.

20. Proverbs 28:13 – “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Hiding sin avoids responsibility and the subsequent discomfort of humility which motivates change of behavior. You cannot fix what you are not willing to be honest about.

21. Hebrews 12:1-4 --“Run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners

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such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”

- Sin is compared to extra weight carried by an endurance runner – it sucks the strength out of you and makes you a loser. Abandoning sin and worldly distraction is an act of faith by someone focused on Jesus. A follower of Jesus is ready to suffer and has no shame. A faithful Christian is a runner ready to win the endurance race of life.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Sin is our most persistent, determined, and pernicious enemy. Sin seeks to rob us of every good thing God has designed for us. Paul tells us that sin brings death (Rom. 7:11). Yet it is very subtle. Sin creeps into our lives when and where we least expect it. It packages itself so attractively that we are lulled into thinking that it cannot really harm us (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Sin stealthily and relentlessly entangles our lives. We will never be able to run the race marked out for us as long as we are entrapped in sin. We free ourselves from sin's only if we recognize it for what it is. If we call sin a “mistake,” a “bad habit,” or a “weakness,” we will never escape its grasp. We must not blame our sins on others. We must not allow pride to convince us it is too humiliating to admit the sin in our lives. Sin can blind us to its presence. It does not always command our attention but rather, it subtly and pervasively robs us of the spiritual power and victory that could be ours. The good news is that there is no extent to which sin can entangle us that God's grace does not abound still more to free us (Rom. 5:20). Has sin robbed your joy? Has it prevented you from being the best husband, wife, son, daughter, or friend you could be? Is it keeping you from spiritual maturity? If you have become entangled with sin, God can release you immediately, no matter how desperately entangled you may have become!

- Do you have godly joy? Joy (not happiness or pleasure) enabled Jesus to endure the cross. The author of Hebrews reminds us that our struggles against the temptations of sin are nothing compared to what Jesus joyfully suffered on our behalf. If we are struggling to resist sin, we have a joy problem which is, at its roots, a love problem. John said, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3) If we find His commandments to be burdensome, we need to examine the condition of our heart.

22. Hebrews 12:6 – “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- There is a tendency among Christians to view anything unpleasant that happens to them as the result of “spiritual warfare.” When a difficulty arises, many immediately ask God to remove their distress. The problem is that their predicament may have nothing to do with Satan or with spiritual warfare. It may appear far more glorious for us to explain our hardships as Satan's determined attacks against us, rather than admitting that we are merely reaping what we have sown and are being disciplined by our heavenly Father (Gal. 6:7). What is often mistaken as Satan's attack may actually be chastisement from our loving Father. If you have neglected your role as spiritual teacher to your children, God may allow them to fall into sin. If you have been dishonest at work, God may correct you by letting you face the consequences. It would be foolish to pray that God would ease your discomfort. God is disciplining you in order to gain your attention and bring necessary change to your life. How tragic never to make the connection between your problems and God's discipline. God's discipline will not help you if you dismiss it as Satan's doing or spiritual warfare. Not every hardship you face is the chastisement of God, but Scripture indicates that God will discipline you. If you misunderstand God's chastening, you may actually blame Him for not answering your prayers or failing to protect you from Satan. Meanwhile, God is warning you of the danger you face because of your sin.

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Are there difficult circumstances in your life? Could it be the discipline of God? God, whose nature is perfect love, will correct you because He has your ultimate good in His heart.

23. Hebrews 12:7 -- "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" The Bible gives you a completely different perspective on suffering and says that we should be thankful for it. Let the suffering God is allowing you to endure teach you and grow you to be more like Jesus.

24. Hebrews 12:8 -- "If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." Some who claim to be followers of Christ are illegitimate. How they treat those who mistreat them is the proof of their faith.

25. Hebrews 12:10, 11 -- "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." God intends for your suffering to build you up in holiness and righteousness, but not everyone is willing to be trained by the pain of suffering.

26. Hebrews 12:12, 13 -- "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."

- No more pity parties. Quit whining and focusing on how hard your life is. Toughen up and stop complaining about what God has allowed to happen to you. Get moving, and start serving God.

27. Hebrews 12:14 -- "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." "Strive" is a powerful word that implies maximum effort. How badly do you want to see the LORD? God wants you to work hard to get along with those who are hard to get along with and to seek holiness that you would truly fellowship with Jesus, truly know Him.

28. Hebrews 12:15 -- "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." From Henry T. Blackaby -- Bitterness has a tenacious way of taking root deep within the soul and resisting all efforts to weed it out. Bitterness occurs for many reasons. It might come from deep hurts you received as a child, hurts you cannot forget. Time, rather than diminishing the hurt, only seems to sharpen the pain. Bitterness can result from the hurtful words of a friend or coworker. Often the person who hurt you is unaware of the extent of your bitterness. You find yourself rehearsing the offense over and over again, each time driving the root of bitterness deeper within your soul. Bitterness can derive from a sense of being unjustly treated. Bitterness is easy to justify. You can get so used to a bitter heart that you are even comfortable with it, but it will destroy you. Only God is fully aware of its destructive potential. There is nothing so deeply imbedded in your heart that God's grace cannot reach down and remove it. No area in your life is so painful that God's grace cannot bring total healing. No offense committed against you is so heinous that God's love cannot enable you to forgive. When you allow bitterness to grow in your life, you reject the grace of God that can free you. If you are honest before God, you will admit the bitterness and allow God to forgive you. Bitterness enslaves you, but God is prepared to remove your bitterness and replace it with His peace and joy.

29. Compare Hebrews 12:16 with Proverbs 25:28

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 Sep 18: Practice suffering and enduring maltreatment, returning only forgiveness and love as an act of worship and love for Jesus. Allow suffering to further conform you to the image of Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 12)

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 4, Thursday, 27 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+46%2C+47%3B+proverbs+27%3B+Hebrews+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 27 September 18:

1. Isaiah 46:1, 2 – “Their idols are on beasts and livestock; these things you carry are borne as burdens on weary beasts. They stoop; they bow down together; they cannot save the burden, but themselves go into captivity.” Many turn to substitutes for God to ease their burdens in life, but these substitutes only add to their burdens. On the contrary, Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

- Proverbs 10:22 -- The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

2. Isaiah 46:1-13 – God placed exiled Israel in a crisis of belief: trust in the apparently victorious gods of Babylon or in the Almighty, Sovereign Creator. What do you do when your faith doesn't seem to “work”?

3. Isaiah 47:6 – “I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand; you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy.” God used Babylon to discipline Israel. God still uses world events for His purposes. Ultimately, He is working to refine His kingdom people as He glorifies Himself.

4. Isaiah 47:7-10 – “You said, ‘I shall be mistress forever,’ so that you did not lay these things to heart or remember their end.” The word “gebereth” in this verse can be translated as lady, queen, or mistress. The ESV version translates the word here as mistress, which seems fitting here as the word is used in current culture, though I think the intent in this verse refers to prideful haughtiness. A mistress seeks the benefits and pleasures (blessings) of a relationship without the commitment, fidelity, and selflessness of covenant or ‘marriage’ or union. Many Christians seek the blessings of God without true union with God. Many want a Savior but not a Lord and Savior. The Bible describes a Christian's relationship with God as a spiritual marriage, and the marriage between husband and wife is intended, in part, to be a physical representation of our marriage with Christ. Some want to be ‘married’ with Christ while keeping a relationship with the world on the side – this the Bible describes as spiritual adultery and whoredom. Do you view your sin as adulterous? In a human marriage, adultery is grounds for divorce, though divorce is not required. Do you understand the grace you have received from God who does not leave or forsake His unfaithful one?

5. Isaiah 47:8, 9 – “Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children’: These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day.” Power and wealth acquired apart from godliness are fleeting. In their apparent success, the wicked deceive themselves into thinking they have achieved superior wisdom and self-created security – this is an illusion that will be proven false. Have you not seen this proven time and time in again in the lives of the pridefully rich and famous?

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6. Isaiah 47:10, 11 – “You felt secure in your wickedness; you said, “No one sees me”; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’ But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.” The world's wisdom and knowledge deceive people to trust in themselves rather than God.

7. Isaiah 47 -- God treated Babylon the way Babylon treated the Jews.

8. Proverbs 27:6, 12, 13 – “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.... The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for an adulteress.” God expects us to care about people enough to tell them the truth, but He also expects us to do what we can to protect people from themselves.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Jesus never gave relief to people who were under conviction. When Zaccheus, in remorse for his sin, shared his generous plans for restitution, Jesus did not say, “Now Zaccheus, the important thing is that you feel sorry for what you did.” Jesus brought no comfort to him as he dealt with his sin (Luke 19:1-10). Neither did Jesus excuse disbelief. We never find Jesus saying, “Well, that's all right. I know I'm asking you to believe a lot, and that's not easy.” On the contrary, Jesus was quick to chastise His disciples when they failed to believe Him. Jesus loved His friends too much to condone or comfort them in their sin. It is possible to be too gentle with your friends. When a friend is under deep conviction by the Holy Spirit, do you try to give comfort? Don't ever try to ease the discomfort of someone whom the Holy Spirit is making uncomfortable! Be careful not to communicate to your friends that you find their lack of faith acceptable. You are not acting in true friendship if you condone disobedience or even if you look the other way. Kisses are far more pleasant than wounds, yet they can be even more devastating if they lull your friend into being comfortable with sin. In our attempt to appease our friends and our reluctance to share a word from God, we can actually cause great harm. If we see our friends in danger and do not warn them, God will hold us accountable for our silence (Ezek. 33:6). Are you a friend of such integrity that you would risk wounding your friends in order to deter them from their sin?

9. Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” God expects us to make each other better followers of Jesus. Is that the what you do with your friends?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- The Christian life is a pilgrimage. At times the road is difficult, and we get lonely. Sometimes we may become discouraged and consider abandoning the journey. It is at such times that God will place a friend alongside us. One of God's most precious gifts to us is friends who encourage us and lovingly challenge us to “keep going.” According to Scripture, a friend is one who challenges you to become all that God intends. Jonathan could have succeeded his father to become the next king of Israel. But he loved his friend David, and he encouraged him to follow God's will, even though it meant Jonathan would forfeit his own claim to the throne (1 Sam. 19:1-7). The mark of biblical friends is that their friendship draws you closer to Christ. They “sharpen” you and motivate you to do what is right. True friends tell you the truth and even risk hurting your feelings because they love you and have your best interests at heart (Prov. 27:6). Be careful in your choice of friends! Jesus chose His closest friends wisely. He did not look for perfect friends, but friends whose hearts were set to follow God. It is equally important to examine the kind of friend you are to others. As a friend, it is your duty to put the needs of others first (Prov. 17:17). Strive to find godly friends who will challenge you to become the person God

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desires. When you have found them, be receptive to the way God uses them to help you become spiritually mature. Strive also to be the kind of friend that helps others become more like Christ.

10. Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

- Faith is total confidence in the unseen. Faith is the basis for hope, which is faith projected forward. Faith enables us to move past our human perceptions and limitations.

- Faith looks forward, not backward, forward to God's promise and not backward to what might have been. (Hebrews 11:13-16) Faith sees God, not enemies. (Hebrews 11:27) Faith obeys God's commands no matter the cost or practicality. Faith anticipates miracles. (Hebrews 11:29, 30) Faith is not shaken in the absence of miracles. Faith dedicates life to promises that may not be realized in this life. (Hebrews 11:13) Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6) God must be more real to you than anything you can hold in your hands. You must trust Him enough to obey Him. Faith that cannot obey is not really faith. (James 1:17) How is your faith?

11. Hebrews 11:3 – “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” What you say about creation reveals your faith.

12. Hebrews 11:4-6 – “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

- Faith moves us to obedience.

- Without faith it is impossible to please God because God is always going to ask you to participate in His plans and activities which are impossible for you to understand.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Your relationship with God is largely determined by your faith. When you come to Him, you must believe that He exists and that He is exactly who He has revealed Himself to be in Scriptures. You must also believe that He will respond to you when you earnestly seek Him. Without this kind of faith, you cannot please God. Regardless of the morality of your life, the good works you perform, the words you speak, or the sacrifices you make for His sake, if you do not have faith, you will not please Him. It can be tempting to substitute religious activity for faith in God. Christians may claim they are being “good stewards” of their resources when, in fact, they are wanting to walk by sight rather than by faith (Heb. 11:1). They may refuse to do what God tells them unless they can see all the resources in place first. You may say, “I love God, but I just have difficulty trusting Him.” Then you are not pleasing to Him. You cannot struggle at the core of your relationship with God and still enjoy a vibrant fellowship with Him! Faith does not eliminate problems. Faith keeps you in a trusting relationship with God in the midst of your problems. Faith has to do with your relationship with God, not your circumstances. Some may say, “I’m not much of a person of faith. I am more of a practical person!” Yet you will never do anything more practical than to place your trust in the Lord! Nothing is more secure or certain than that which you entrust to God.

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13. Hebrews 11:11-12 – “By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.” Faith expects what seems impossible to everyone else.

14. Hebrews 11:13 – “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” It takes faith to do what God wants when there will be no earthly reward.

15. Hebrews 11:17 – “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son....”

- It takes faith to put everything on the line. Without faith, you will always hold something back.

- Faith fears God, not enemies.

16. Hebrews 11:29-30 – “By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.” Miracles should not surprise the faithful.

17. Hebrews 11 -- It doesn't take faith to do the possible; it takes faith to do what is impossible. God will call you to do the impossible to reveal Himself to both you and to the watching world.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 Sep 18: Consider where fear of man has hindered your faith. Pray that God will take away your fear. (Hebrews 11:23)

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 3, Wednesday, 26 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+44%2C+45%3B+proverbs+26%3B+Hebrews+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 26 September 18:

1. Isaiah 44:1 -- “But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!” God chose Israel, not the other way around. God chose you before you chose Him.

2. Isaiah 44:3 – “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” The dry ground does not water itself. Nor do people give themselves spiritual life. Only God can produce life, both physical and spiritual.

3. Isaiah 44:8 -- "Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any." Fear is a lack of faith in who God is and what He has promised. The more real God is in your life, the more confidence and courage you will have naturally. The true witness who has experienced God first-hand will have faith. Those who don't know God personally but only know about God have limited faith. Trust is formed in relationship. Counter fear by seeking to know Jesus better.

4. Isaiah 44:9-20 – “All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame.” How foolish is it for people to trust in the work of their own hands? God alone can be trusted. Many modern gurus share motivational testimonies of how they have discovered life success, but they are all eventually put to shame.

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5. Isaiah 44:22 – “I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.” First God saves by grace; then He demands obedience which remains a choice. Grace doesn't remove the requirement for obedience, it enables it and demands it. We don't obey to be saved, we obey because we have been saved. Obedience is the evidence of saving faith. The Christian does not have a holy perfection but a holy direction, a spirit-filled heart to be conformed to the image of Christ in sanctification. Followers of Christ, Christians, disciples obey Christ. Returning to God is about repentance from known disobedience, which is a continual process – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

6. Isaiah 44:28 -- "Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose.'" God raises up both good and bad leaders for His purposes. If you want good political leaders, go to God. Only revival can save the nation, not politics. Pray for the nation.

7. Isaiah 45:5, 6 -- "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other." God will use unbelievers to accomplish His purposes. Whether a person believes in God or not, God still determines their fate. Just because a person is used by God doesn't mean they are saved by God. The book of James tells us that demons believe in Jesus, but they don't have saving faith. Believers love and obey Jesus.

8. Isaiah 45:9, 10, 19, 22 -- “Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles?’ Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor?’ ... I am the Lord, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right.... Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” How foolish and arrogant is the person who denies the Creator? How foolish and arrogant is the person who acknowledges the Creator but denies His Lordship and authority over his life? How foolish and arrogant is the Christian who expects God to bless them as they go their own way in life, pursuing their own, self-proclaimed goals and objectives, seeing their life as merely a pursuit of happiness. God is God, and we exist to glorify Him, not to live for self. It is not about us. It is about Him. It is foolishness to resist the will of God in your life.

9. Isaiah 45:19 -- "I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right." God Has plainly revealed His word to the world, and it is not hard to understand. Still, people choose to ignore it.

10. Isaiah 45:22 -- “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!" God desires all to turn to Him and be saved.

11. Proverbs 26:3 -- "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools." Those who are not led by the Spirit are much like animals, responding only to the natural instincts and pain avoidance.

12. Hebrews 10:4 -- "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Sin has very real spiritual and practical consequences which religious ritual cannot fix. The debt of sin cannot be paid by man; it must be forgiven by God. Then, a purified heart must stop sinning in the future.

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13. Hebrews 10:16 -- "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," A person will not obey laws that are not on their hearts. Only God can give you a heart for Him.

14. Hebrews 10:24-25 -- "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." The more united you are with God, the more united you will be with other believers. Christians naturally have a longing to be around other Christians who share in their priority of worship. Who do you spend most of your time with? Are your friendships intentional partnerships in discipleship?

15. Hebrews 10:26-31 -- "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I don't think I have ever heard a sermon include these powerful verses. Have you? Grace demands obedience. Love demands obedience. Faith is revealed thorough obedience. A faith that isn't displayed through obedience is no faith at all. Do you see your continued sin as a profane trampling of Jesus?

16. Hebrews 10:34 -- "For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one." Do you display this sort of grace and joy?

17. Hebrews 10:38, 39 -- "'But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." Don't shrink back into sin, but have the faith to remain holy and pure.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 Sep 18: Today, meditate upon Hebrews and see your sin the way God sees it, and unthinkable offense before the God who has given you grace, forgiveness, and salvation through the blood of Jesus. Repent and live a life worthy of the grace you have received.

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 2, Tuesday, 25 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+42%2C+43%3B+proverbs+25%3B+Hebrews+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 25 September 18:

1. Isaiah 42:1-4 – "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law." Jesus didn't delight the Father by

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grand speeches but rather by His faithfulness and perseverance. Jesus did what no one else did – He loved and obeyed the Father at all times.

2. Isaiah 42:5 – “God, the Lord... spread out the earth and... gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it....” God gives all people physical life and spiritual life to those who are born of spirit through Jesus Christ. Those who have physical life walk on earth. Those who have spiritual life walk on earth in the Spirit. You can see who is alive physically because they have the signs of life. You can see who is born again in the Spirit because they bear the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5).

3. Isaiah 42:6, 7 – “I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”

- We are blind and trapped by sin until Jesus opens our eyes and frees us – we cannot enlighten or free ourselves. Those who have been enlightened have been called to spread the light. We are called to both be disciples (followers of Christ) and to make disciples. Disciples make more disciples as a natural part of disciple life. If you aren’t a disciple-maker, you aren’t producing the fruit of a disciple. God didn’t call us to just a one-on-one relationship with Him. He called us to participate in His reconciliation.

- “...to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.” Christians often mistakenly expect those trapped in sin to treat them as if they weren’t trapped in sin. But God gave us a mission to reach out to people who can’t help but hurt us. This is why Jesus said to truly follow Him, we would have to deny self and take up our cross in relationships. Hurting people hurt people; they will hurt you. Are you ready to be crucified figuratively in hard relationships and, out of love, say from the heart, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do”?

4. Isaiah 42:8 – “I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.” God shares His glory with no one. Never take the credit for what God has done in your life. Never let anyone praise you for your talent, skills, and abilities without you pointing to Jesus. Our job is to glorify Him, not ourselves.

5. Isaiah 42:13 – “...He stirs up his zeal,” Are you most known by others for your zeal for the Lord? If not, why not? For what do you have uncontrollable passion and dedication?

6. Isaiah 42:19, 20 – “Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the Lord? He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.” Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the Lord? He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.” There is no one more blind than the one who knows God’s word but does not obey it. The disobedient who claim to be Christian are deceived deceivers, false prophets. The mark of the true disciple is loving obedience, a truly changed life.

7. Isaiah 42:24 – “Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey?” Many church goers lament over the conditions under which they live, never considering that might be disciplining an unfaithful church. We are not just victims.

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8. Isaiah 43:6, 7, 10-12, 18-19 -- "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory.... 'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and I am God.... Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.'"

- God calls His people to Himself from all walks of life, all races, ethnicities, nationalities, and ages.

- Why were we created? What is our purpose on earth? Has God stopped performing incredible miracles for the sake of His people? Is God still ready to perform mighty works such as those seen by Moses and Joshua for the sake of His Glory? If we are not seeing His mighty works, what might that say about the condition of the church? "Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel...! But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities." (Isaiah 43:22, 24) What does God call His misguided children to do? "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance." (Isaiah 43:25, 26) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)

9. Isaiah 43:8 -- "Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!" God alone can bring spiritual awareness to those who do not have it and cannot gain it from their own abilities. We are called to proclaim Jesus, but the Holy Spirit does the convicting. You do not know who God will enable with your message. Just proclaim the truth and let God do the miraculous work.

10. Isaiah 43:10 -- "'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.'" God wants you to witness, not just to reach others, but also that you would grow in your own belief. If you do not proclaim Jesus, you will not grow in your faith the way God wants you to. You are not walking with Him and growing with Him if you are not discipling with Him.

11. Isaiah 43:11 -- "I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior." From what are we saved, from calamity, from evil in the world, from ourselves? No, we are saved from the wrath of God! Only God can forgive us, and He offers forgiveness only through His Son, Jesus. There is no salvation, no peace, no hope apart from Jesus.

12. Isaiah 43:12, 18, 19 -- "...and you are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and I am God.... Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" Witnesses testify to what they have seen or heard personally; anything else is hearsay. Some people base their faith only on what they have heard other people say about God, having had no personal experience of God. They know about God but don't know God personally and powerfully. Therefore, they really have no witness. God doesn't just want you to know the Bible, He wants you to know Him and His power in your life. He doesn't want you to simply believe what He has done in the past, He wants you to recognize the new things He is doing today. The more you perceive and know God, the more real and powerful is your witness.

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13. Isaiah 43:24 – “You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities.” God hates when the people who are called by His name sin and discredit Him, particularly after He sacrificed His Son for their forgiveness. The Bible says that when we receive forgiveness and continue in sin, we are trampling on the blood of Jesus. Meditate upon that for a while.

14. Isaiah 43:25 -- “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” The object of God's grace is Him, not us. All true religious thought and expression places God at the center and as the focus. Pay attention to how much modern religion, particularly with the "grace movement" makes man the focus. Jesus did not come that we could have good lives. He came to glorify the Father. What is the purpose of your faith?

15. Proverbs 25:1 -- “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.” Most of the Proverbs deal with how to treat other people because life is all about relationships, and our mission on earth is about relationships. Christians must strive to be better people in order to bring glory to God, but our message is not to proclaim goodness but rather Jesus, the only truly Good one, the one on whose grace we depend and seek to emulate.

16. Proverbs 25:6, 7 – “Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, ‘Come up here,’ than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.” Do not assume positions of spiritual leadership or lift yourself up as a spiritual leader. If God wants you to lead, someone else will confirm it.

17. Hebrews 9:14 -- "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Jesus' perfect sacrifice is intended to give you a clear conscience so that you can serve God unhindered by any fear or guilt. Again, grace enables obedient service.

18. Hebrews 9 – Christ is the ultimate sacrifice that atoned for sin once and for all.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Sep 18: End your guilt today by accepting that Christ paid for all of your sins once and for all. Walk in peace with God, and obey Him not out of guilt or fear but out of genuine love for Him and appreciation for the grace you have received for eternity. (Hebrews 9)

DBRP - WEEK 39, Day 1, Monday, 24 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+40%2C+41%3B+proverbs+24%3B+Hebrews+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 24 September 18:

1. Isaiah 40:3 – “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” John the Baptist was the voice in the wilderness preparing the people for Jesus.

2. Isaiah 40:8 – “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” God's word reflects God's perfect, eternal, unchanging character and will. Jesus is the embodiment and fulfillment of God's word – The Word. Things change, but God's word doesn't. God's word will be true always. God's promises are firm. Mighty people and mighty nations come and go. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:18) "And to Him was given dominion, glory and a

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kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:14)

3. Isaiah 40:9-10, 21 – “Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’ Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.... Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?” God’s work was evident to God’s people, always has been and always will be.

4. Isaiah 40:11 – “He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” God cares for the needs of his people and protects them.

5. Isaiah 40:12, 21-22, 26 – “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?... Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.... Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.” God controls everything and everyone; He has created all that exists for His purposes.

6. Isaiah 40:13-14 – “Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?” God has no teachers or counsellors and gives you complete access to go to Him for teaching and counselling. God’s people all have equal opportunity to receive His counsel but don’t listen and follow equally.

7. Isaiah 40:15-17 – “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.” Superiors on earth are powerless before God.

8. Isaiah 40:23-24 – “...who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.” The reign of human despots is an eye-blink compared to God’s eternal reign over the universe.

9. Isaiah 40:27-28 – “Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God’? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” God works in His timing for those He loves and so, at times, appears to be silent.

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10. Isaiah 40:30-31 – “Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” God’s power gives you unlimited potential in His mission but not in your efforts that are not in support of His mission.

11. Isaiah 41:2-3 – “Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets at every step? He gives up nations before him, so that he tramples kings underfoot; he makes them like dust with his sword, like driven stubble with his bow. He pursues them and passes on safely, by paths his feet have not trod.” God directed Cyrus of Persia as he became the world ruler. God used the ungodly leader Cyrus for His purposes and is using ungodly leaders today.

12. Isaiah 41:8 – “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend.” From Abraham on, God has loved and directed the work of His servants.

13. Isaiah 41:14 – “Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.” The Holy One opposes evil forces and as Redeemer saves His people. Fear not.

14. Isaiah 41:15-16 – “Behold, I make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff; you shall winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the Lord; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.” God called Israel to work for Him in His redeeming mission. Now, He has given us the message of redemption. God’s salvation brings joy and praise to His people.

15. Isaiah 41:17 – “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” God never totally forsakes His people who have a heart for repentance.

16. Isaiah 41:20 – “...that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.” God wants you to see His work.

17. Isaiah 41:22-24 – “Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come. Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing; an abomination is he who chooses you.”

- Idols, substitutes for God, leave you clueless about the past and the future.

- The things we choose to place ahead of God in our lives are not good or evil but rather reveal the good or evil that is in our hearts. Inanimate objects cannot sin; they are instruments of our sin. You may have heard people say, “Money is the root of all evil.” Not so! The Bible says, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” (1 Timothy 6:10) Money is neither good nor bad. It is the love and craving of money that reveals someone’s departure from both the First Commandment and the Greatest Commandment. The abomination is the heart that chooses to place anything ahead of God, even for a second. Similarly, nothing and no one can cause us to sin but only reveal the sinfulness that remains in

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our hearts. It is our response to sin that matters. God gives us the ability to respond with freedom – we are response able, or responsible for how we respond. Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan, but it was an external temptation. Jesus wasn't tempted in his heart; therefore, he remained without sin. It is amazing to listen to the language of people as they attempt to displace the responsibility of their sin onto someone else or something else. Adam blamed Eve and God for his sin. Smaller children always say things like, "The lamp broke," rather than "I broke the lamp." And adult 'children' use the same language – "I was provoked.... I couldn't help it.... I had been drinking.... Etc." I believe God places difficult situations and difficult people in our lives in part to test our hearts and to reveal to us the true condition of our hearts. One of the reasons humility is so important is that it takes humility to truthfully and consistently examine our own hearts and to hold ourselves accountable rather than attempting to project guilt elsewhere. This is also why Jesus tells us to focus on the plank in our eye rather than the speck in someone else's eye – we are responsible for our response. It is not what happens to us that reveals what is truly inside of us; it is how we respond to what happens to us. In fact, the worse the situation, the greater potential for our response to bring glory to God and to reveal the Truth of the Gospel to a watching world. The key is not to respond naturally but rather supernaturally. Do not allow yourself to be led by the flesh. Be led by the Spirit. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

18. Proverbs 24:10, 16 – "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.... for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity."

- What you really are is revealed in adversity.

- You must develop strength before you need. It during hard times, you use the strength you already have, not build the strength you need.

19. Proverbs 24:11, 12 – "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" If you remain silent while those you know walk in darkness with knowledge of 'The Way, The Truth, and The Life – Jesus, you will be held accountable by God.

20. Proverbs 24:19 – "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked..." Let God worry about the wicked while you focus on being faithful to Him, regardless of apparent outcomes. God knows what is going on and will judge the hearts of all people.

21. Proverbs 24:29 – "Do not say, 'I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.'" Do not chase after the poisonous snakes the bite you – the poison will just travel to your heart. Let God deal with those who offend you. Just continue to follow Jesus.

22. Proverbs 24:32 – "Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction."

- God wants you to compare the actions of others to God's word, consider the consequences of their actions, and learn from their actions, both good and bad.

- Truth is revealed every day to those with eyes to see.

23. Hebrews 8:1-7 – Earthly priests can't give you the relationship with Jesus that only Jesus can give. Salvation doesn't come from religious activity and following rules, it comes from a genuine love

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relationship with Jesus, first that He loved us and, in so doing, enabled us to truly love Him and to follow Him out of love because our heart's desire is to be one with Him. Obedience is an act of love, not a transaction.

24. Hebrews 8:9, 10 – "...not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...." We cannot obey God without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that enables love. Those who are not born again lack the Holy Spirit and cannot obey. Unsaved people can do "good deeds" but not in genuine, selfless love for Jesus.

25. Hebrews 8:11, 12 – "And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Our relationship with God begins with His grace enabling us.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 Sep 18: Don't seek merely to be a good person today, seek Jesus. Obey Him out of love, not out of a desire for personal righteousness or out of duty. Search your heart today and consider why you do what you do. Where you find that your motivation isn't truly love for Jesus and love for others, whom Jesus loves too, pray that God will soften your heart. Draw closer to Jesus. Seek the mind of Christ and to see all around you as He does. Deny self, take up your cross (suffer in forgiving love), and follow Jesus today. (Hebrews 8:1-7)

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 7, Sunday, 23 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+38%2C+39%3B+proverbs+23%3B+psalm+110%2C+111>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 23 September 18:

1. Isaiah 38:1 -- "Set your house in order, for you shall die." God's plan for you includes a time to die, but that is not the end of His plan for you. Contrary to what the world, the flesh, and the devil tell us, physical death is not the worst thing that can happen; in fact, the Bible says that for a Christian, to die is gain. Part of our testimony to the world will be how we approach the reality of death as was the testimony of so many in the Bible: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – "If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." (Daniel 3:17, 18); Job -- "Though he slay me, I will hope in him...." (Job 13:15); David -- "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers...." (Acts 13:36); Jesus -- "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42) Many live in denial with little regard for the reality of their inevitable death. Christians should live as this is their last day to serve God on earth and prepared for eternity with Him in Heaven, making the most of every opportunity to love God and others. Fear of death can cause us to sin greatly by undermining what would bring God the greatest glory and which would ultimately be best for us and others. The worst thing that can happen isn't that we die but rather that we dishonor God in disobedience and doubt of His perfect love, faithfulness, and grace; hence the saying, "Death before dishonor!" It was time for Hezekiah to die, but his flesh got the best of him, and

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he begged for more time. God gave him 15 more years which Hezekiah used to dishonor God, to give birth to one of the Bible's most terrible kings, and to set the conditions for his nation's demise. Your loving God knows when it is the perfect time for you to die and to join Him in Heaven.

2. Isaiah 38:5 – “Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.” As stated above, these were the worst 15 years of Hezekiah's life – he betrayed his country, and fathered one of the nation's most evil kings. These added years of life were worse than the death God had originally planned for Him. Foundational to our faith is understanding that God works all things, including death, together for good in ways we can't understand. When we are experiencing God's blessing, it is easy to believe that God knows what is best. But when God allows sickness and sorrow in our lives, we may be tempted to question His wisdom. The Lord told King Hezekiah that his life was coming to an end. God advised him to prepare himself for death and to plan to turn over the kingdom. Instead, Hezekiah pled for his life, begging God to spare him from death (Isa. 38:3). God loved the righteous Hezekiah and, in His grace, granted him an additional fifteen years to live, not simply to give Hezekiah what He wanted but rather to reveal truth to Hezekiah and to others through Hezekiah. Those fifteen years would prove that God's wisdom far exceeds human wisdom. During those added years, Manasseh was born, and he eventually succeeded Hezekiah as king of Judah. Manasseh, who reigned for fifty-five years, was the evilest king ever to rule over Judah (2 Kings 21:1). Manasseh encouraged the worship of idolatry throughout the nation. He passed his own son through fire according to the abominable practices of idolatry. He shed much innocent blood during his reign; every part of the nation suffered from his cruelty. Manasseh's wickedness provoked God to anger, but Manasseh ignored God's warning (2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chron. 33:10). All these hardships were caused by Manasseh, a king who would never have been born if Hezekiah had accepted God's will for his life! Furthermore, Hezekiah's extended reign led to Judah's eventual defeat by the Babylonians (2 Kings 20:12-20). So much suffering resulted from Hezekiah's unwillingness to accept God's will for him. God knows what is best. Whether your circumstances are easy or difficult, you can completely trust His guidance.

3. Isaiah 39:7, 8 – “‘And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good.’ For he thought, ‘There will be peace and security in my days.’” In his pride, Hezekiah set the stage for the kingdom's destruction, but when he learns of the inevitable consequences, his response reveals his selfish, self-centered heart. This once noble, courageous, god-fearing king has now become totally self-absorbed, only concerned about his own glory and his own security, caring little for his family or for anyone else who depends upon him. This is a Biblical warning to the reader. It is not how you start that matters, it is how you finish.

4. Proverbs 23:1-3 -- “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.” Many promise wealth and comfort with hidden agendas designed to gain control over you or your wealth production capacity.

5. Proverbs 23:12 – “Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.” God says you show trust in Him by studying His word and then applying His word. Study is essential, but study without application is only knowledge that puffs up. We love others through application.

6. Proverbs 23:13, 14 -- “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” The home is the school house of

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character development, and parental discipline is a critical part of the development process. The way parents discipline their children should serve as a model for children to understand how God disciplines His children.

7. Proverbs 23:17 -- "Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day." The Bible describes envy as one of the most dangerous of emotions. It involves resentment over the wealth, blessings, talents, good fortune, or achievements of another. The envious person feels a deep sense of injustice that can only be directed at God who provides all things to all people. This verse points out that envy is a deep spiritual sin which tempts you to rebel in your tantrum against God. Be very careful not to be envious of others, but rather be thankful for what God is doing in your life to bless you.

8. Proverbs 23:20 -- "Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat...." The Bible compare gluttons with drunkards, people who eat too much with people who drink too much. While many churches address sins associated with alcohol, statistics show that evangelical Christians are fatter as a group than the unbelieving population, and obesity is one of the top three leading causes of death in America. Both gluttony and drunkenness reveal a lack of self-control; self-control is one of the fruits of the spirit. So, these conditions are spiritual conditions which require repentance. Don't turn to Jenny Craig to solve that diet problem; turn to God and examine your heart.

9. Proverbs 23:24 -- "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him." Family life should bring joy.

10. Proverbs 23:26-27 -- "My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well." A young person's sexual sin can ruin their future, though their passions blind them from this long-view.

11. Psalm 110:1 -- "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Jesus used this verse to explain that David too waited for the Messiah, Jesus. David understood something about Jesus and looked forward to His coming. In Luke 20:41-44, Jesus uses Psalm 110 to reveal Himself as the Messiah.

12. Psalm 110:3 -- "Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours." Psalm 110:3 which is labeled "a Psalm of David" is actually a prophesy of the reign of Jesus Christ. In Luke 20, Jesus pointed out that this Psalm refers to him, his Son-ship, and his Kingship -- the Jews had missed the message of this Psalm. Jesus, who proclaimed "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.... The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel," reminds every one of the words of Psalm 110 -- "I make your enemies your footstool." As we have discussed in previous readings, God's Elect will reign on earth with Jesus upon His return (1 Corinthians 6, Revelation 20), and Psalm 110:3 gives another clue as to how events will occur -- "the dew of your youth will be yours." This statement can also be interpreted, "your young men will come to you like dew." This coincides with what is prophesied in Micah 5 concerning "the Ruler... born in Bethlehem" -- "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off." (Micah 5:7-9) These are the

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people who have diligently obeyed their King and have gone throughout the world, to every Nation, making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all of God's commands; advancing the Kingdom of God one heart at a time; preparing people across the globe for the return of Jesus; this is a global, spiritual insurgency, treading down and tearing to pieces the forces of darkness and the strongholds of evil. The "Christian Soldier" is in a battle every day, but not a physical battle but rather a spiritual battle – "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:5, 6) We are to live as "Ambassadors for Christ" and as a "Kingdom of Priests" in the midst of the kingdoms of men, not in timidity but as lions, destroying strongholds through divine power and the authority of Christ. We have been given our mission orders by Jesus himself:

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;
forward into battle see his banners go!
At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee;
on then, Christian soldiers, on to victory!
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise;
brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise.
Like a mighty army moves the church of God;
brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.
We are not divided, all one body we,
one in hope and doctrine, one in charity.
Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
but the church of Jesus constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never gainst that church prevail;
we have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail.
Onward then, ye people, join our happy throng,
blend with ours your voices in the triumph song.
Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King,
this through countless ages men and angels sing.

13. Psalm 110:4 -- "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews reveal that this priesthood of Melchizedek points to Jesus.

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14. Psalm 111:1 – “Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.” Will you do this at church today?

15. Psalm 111:10 -- “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” This phrase is repeated several times in the Bible for a reason. God is the source of all wisdom; the world’s wisdom is foolishness to God. All wisdom is founded on the Sovereignty of God. Any “knowledge” that does not start with that fundamental truth is a deception and a lie. Today, many say that science and faith are at odds. However, that is false. The word science comes from the Latin “scientia,” meaning “knowledge.” According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, the definition of science is “knowledge attained through study or practice,” or “knowledge covering general truths of the operation of general laws, esp. as obtained and tested through scientific method [and] concerned with the physical world.” The Bible says that nature reveals the truth of God; so, science will naturally point to the reality, truth, and Sovereignty of God. However, popular, politically biased “science” seeks to eliminate God, and therefore becomes, at its foundation, a destructive lie. Case in point: the theory of evolution taught in schools has its foundation in Charles Darwin’s publication “On the Origin of Species.” This publication refutes God’s truth. This lie had consequences which are revealed in the rest of the title of the original publication: “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life.” This ‘scientific’ lie fueled the concept of “Favoured Races” which led to previously unimaginable atrocities in Nazi Germany. Where is scientific deception taking us today? Where could we have gone if we relied on honest science that accepts the truths of God? What wonderful things might we have discovered, created, and cured had we not worked so hard to keep God out of the equation? We can only speculate.

16. Psalm 111:2 -- “Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.” Those who delight in the LORD study Him. Your study reveals your love.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 Sep 18: Is there a limit to your trust in, fidelity to, and obedience to God? Is there a place where self wins out? Do you love the blessing of God more than God Himself? Satan believed Job had a limit, and God allowed Satan to test Job. Hezekiah did great things but, as we read today, had a definite limit to his fidelity to God. The Bible says that Jesus was faithful to the cross -- “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8) Today, consider your limit – is your fidelity conditional? If God took everything away from you, would you love Him more and more, would you trust Him more and more, would you obey Him regardless? Pray that God will increase your fidelity and give you a heart for Him and not simply for what He can provide.

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 6, Saturday, 22 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+35-37%3B+proverbs+22%3B+psalm+109>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 22 September 18:

1. Isaiah 35:4 – “Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.’” Faith is a belief in God that governs what you think, decide, say, and do. Faith changes your entire outlook and approach. Faith causes you to do what seems crazy to those without faith. See in chapter 36 how much Hezekiah’s faith will be tested. It takes great faith to trust God when your life is on the line. It takes even greater faith to

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trust God when your decisions will impact the lives of your loved ones. God's salvation restores wholeness to a person.

2. Isaiah 35:4-6; 8, 10 -- "Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not...! He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.... even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.... everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

- Do not fear or be anxious child of God. Be strong; fear not! God brings healing and wholeness, and God's goal is to restore holiness, gladness, and joy to His children. Our perfect Father never abandons or ignores His children who He loves beyond our understanding. We usually can't answer the 'why' questions, but we can trust He has a perfect plan beyond our imagination. Today's Psalms remind us of God's "steadfast love" and that He "stands at the right hand of the needy one." I like the way God's protection is described in Psalm 91 -- "Under his wings you will find refuge." Be strong; fear not!

- "It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray." God's ways protect even the fool if he will follow them. You don't have to understand why, just obey. We all act foolishly sometimes, but take comfort that your foolishness doesn't separate you from God's love or negate His perfect plan. Life is a continual course correction of repentance, renewal, and recommitment. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- The nation of Israel was designed to have a place where other nations of the world could come to worship the true God. The temple in Jerusalem was to be the center from which the good news of God's salvation would spread to every corner of the world. But those who were supposed to be God's people forsook Him and practiced every kind of sin. Rather than being ambassadors for God, they disgraced His holy name. Rather than attracting the nations of the earth to God, they became stumbling blocks to those who were seeking the true God. The Israelites fell so far from God's original intent that God judged them and sent them into exile. Yet God promised that one day His people would be an avenue by which others could find salvation. It is God's desire that anywhere there is a Christian, God has a way for people to learn of His salvation (Rom. 10:14-15). Whenever an unbeliever meets a Christian, the unbeliever ought to be face to face with everything he needs to know in order to follow Christ. Sadly, however, Christians can be like the Israelites of Isaiah's day. We can be so involved in our sin that we are completely disoriented to God, ill-equipped to direct others to Him. If our lives are filled with hypocrisy, we may turn people away from God, rather than helping them come to Him. If our lives are filled with doubt or anger, we will impede others from coming to Christ. Our lives ought to be a highway of holiness, providing easy access to God for anyone around us who seeks Him. Ask God to remove any obstacle in your life that hinders others from coming to know Jesus.

3. Isaiah 36:4, 10, 9, 16 -- "On what do you rest this trust of yours?... is it without the Lord that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'" How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants? For thus says the king of Assyria: Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern." Are you able to discern between a false prophet and a true one? Do you believe everyone who says, "God

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put it on my heart to do this.”? How confident are you in God’s Word? Jerusalem was surrounded by a mighty, undefeated king who threatened to utterly, ruthlessly, and horrifically destroy the nation. Addressing the Jews in their own language, he claimed to speak for God and promised them peace and prosperity if they would surrender to him. Imagine the men on the walls listening to the king’s words thinking about the fate of their children and their wives – what would you do? With seemingly impossible odds, with logic seemingly against you, and with no signs or wonders as a “confirmation,” would you have the confidence to trust in God’s Word alone? This false prophet king confidently and convincingly spoke for God, but his words were blasphemy – he replaced God’s truth with a lie in God’s name. There are many convincing false teachers today. More and more, people are claiming that God loves what the Bible says He hates. Do you understand God’s Word well enough to know the difference? Do you have the confidence in your understanding of the truth to bet your life on it and proclaim it confidently regardless the personal cost? Hezekiah had Isaiah to help strengthen his resolve. You have the Holy Spirit; how much more fortunate are you?

4. Isaiah 36:5 -- “In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me?” You can’t serve two masters, and you can’t put your trust in both God and mankind. If you trust in God and make Him your LORD, you will naturally be at enmity with the world, and vice versa.

5. Isaiah 36:19, 20 – “Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” The world will try to convince you that your faith in the One, True God is no different than the faith of those who diligently follow false religions. The secular world considers all religions as equally valid or invalid. Of course, those who faithfully practice their religion consider all other religions invalid in some way. There are really only two religions in the world, the “Do” religion and the “Done” religion – salvation through a person’s efforts, or salvation through the work of Jesus Christ. Your faith must convince you, beyond any doubt, that Jesus is the only Way, Truth, and Life. Hezekiah had to remain faithful to God with the fate of the whole nation in His hands. What would you have done in his situation?

6. Isaiah 36:21 – “But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king’s command was, ‘Do not answer him.’” There is no value in debating your faith with those who lack faith. You will not be able to influence someone who the Holy Spirit hasn’t convicted. Proclaim Jesus to everyone, but don’t argue with the fool. Let the Holy Spirit do the convicting and convincing.

7. Isaiah 37:1 – “As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord.” When you lack faith, go to the Lord – get closer to Him, not further away.

8. Isaiah 37:7 – “Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.” God influences and controls people where you can’t. God can change the heart of your adversaries. Powerful is the person who trusts in the power of God to do what He can’t.

9. Isaiah 37:30 -- “And this shall be the sign for you: this year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that. Then in the third year sow and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit.” It may take years for God to answer your prayer. Do you have the faith to wait?

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10. Isaiah 37:35 – “For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.” God delivers those who are faithful to Him before unbelievers in order to reveal Himself to the world, not just to give His people what they want out of life. To receive the full blessings of God, you must live a life before others that truly seeks His will over comfort, security, and desires, a life that always points to Him.

11. Isaiah 37:36 – “And the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.” When you are trusting in God in accordance with His will, He will fight your enemies, and you won’t have too; and He will do what you could never do for yourself, again to reveal Himself both to you and to the world. If you rely on your own strength for your own purposes, the world will only see what you can do – that is no witness nor a powerful life.

12. Proverbs 22:6 – “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Habit patterns instilled in childhood are VERY hard to break. The strength of the family unit is vital to national strength.

13. Proverbs 22:7 – “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.” Christians should not be in debt to ungodly institutions.

14. Proverbs 22:9 – “Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.” Giving and generosity is all about perspective. What you really believe about God will be revealed in how you give. Fear makes people stingy.

15. Proverbs 22:11 – “He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.” Gracious speech is the product of a pure heart. A guilty heart produces bitter speech.

16. Proverbs 22:15 – “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” God expects parents to teach children discipline.

17. Proverbs 22:16 – “Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.” Again, God expects you to give to the needy.

18. Proverbs 22:8, 22 – “Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail.... Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate.” God expects you to end strife you have with anyone else. You will have to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus.

19. Proverbs 22:17-19 – “Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. That your trust may be in the Lord, I have made them known to you today, even to you.” Obeying the Bible helps you learn how to trust in the Lord, to grow in your relationship with Him.

20. Proverbs 22:24, 25 – “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.” Anger is a snare that will needlessly entangle you.

21. Proverbs 22:28 – “Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set.” God has established certain rights that you never have the right to take from another person.

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22. Psalm 109:4 – “In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer.” Don’t focus on your enemies, focus on God. Don’t worry about your enemies – pray.

23. Psalm 109:4 -- “In return for my love they accuse me.” When God called you to minister to a sinful world, He knew that sinners would treat you sinfully. When you love imperfect people as God commanded, they will treat you imperfectly. Taking a beating for the sake of that love is how you “take up our cross” and follow Jesus.

24. Psalm 109:21 – “But you, O God my Lord, deal on my behalf for your name’s sake; because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!” The psalmist understood that God would act for Himself, not merely for the psalmist. God’s goal is to reveal Himself and to bring glory to Himself, not to the delivered one. Live a life that will reveal God’s love and faithfulness.

25. Psalm 109:27, 28 – “Let them know that this is your hand; you, O Lord, have done it! Let them curse, but you will bless! They arise and are put to shame, but your servant will be glad!” Your faith grows when you see God work in your life. God’s work in your life is your testimony to others. Walk in the faith that you have so that God can strengthen your faith every time you see Him act in your life. If you only trust in your own understanding and walk in your own strength, you will never see God do what only He can do, and your faith will not grow.

26. Psalm 109:28 -- “Let them curse, but you will bless!” Our hope, joy, and fate rests with the LORD, not men.

27. Psalm 109:30 – “With my mouth I will give great thanks to the Lord; I will praise him in the midst of the throng.” As our readings have taught several times today, God’s goal is to reveal Himself. When you proclaim God, you become an agent of His purpose. When you walk with Jesus and reveal the blessings of Jesus in your life, you will grow in spiritual strength, and God will use your life more and more in accordance with His purpose. If you are faithful with little, you will be given much.

28. Psalm 109:30 -- “With my mouth I will give great thanks to the Lord; I will praise him in the midst of the throng.” Mature faith is able to “give great thanks” to the LORD in the midst of suffering, crisis, and chaos.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 Sep 18: With your mouth, give great thanks to the Lord today and praise Him in the midst of the crowd. (Psalm 109:30) See how this affects you, how the crowd responds, and how God works in the midst of others.

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 5, Friday, 21 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+33%2C+34%3B+proverbs+21%3B+hebrews+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 21 September 18:

1. Isaiah 33:1 – “Ah, you destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed, you traitor, whom none has betrayed! When you have ceased to destroy, you will be destroyed; and when you have finished betraying, they will betray you.” This verse reveals, once again, the Biblical principle that God will treat us the way we treat others.

2. Isaiah 33:2 – “O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.” In times of trouble, sometimes it is hard to wait on the Lord, but just like being lost

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in the woods, when you don't know where you are going, traveling aimlessly faster just makes the problem worse. In life, the world will tell you, "Don't just stand there, do something!" The assumption is your fate is in your control, and your inactivity is indecisiveness and weakness. God often says, 'Be still! Wait for my lead in this matter.' Waiting takes faith. When you don't know what God wants you to do next. Be faithful to the word God has already given you, and pray. Trust Him. If you absolutely must make a decision, ensure it is consistent with God's word, remain in prayer, seek the counsel of other faithful Christians, and trust Him with what you don't know and understand.

- Genesis 8:10, 12 -- He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.... Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

- Genesis 49:18 -- I wait for your salvation, O Lord.

- Numbers 9:8 -- And Moses said to them, "Wait, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you.

- Psalm 25:3 -- Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

- Psalm 25:5 -- Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

- Psalm 25:21 -- May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you.

- Psalm 27:14 -- Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

- Psalm 31:24 -- Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!

- Psalm 33:20 -- Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

- Psalm 37:7 -- Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

- Psalm 37:9 -- For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

- Psalm 37:34 -- Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

- Psalm 38:15 -- But for you, O Lord, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.

- Psalm 39:7 -- And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

- Psalm 40:1 -- To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

- Psalm 62:1 -- To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.

- Psalm 62:5 -- For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.

- Psalm 106:13 -- But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel.

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- Proverbs 8:34 -- Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.
- Proverbs 20:22 -- Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.
- Isaiah 8:17 -- I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.
- Isaiah 25:9 -- It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.
- Isaiah 26:8 -- In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.
- Isaiah 30:18 -- Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.
- Isaiah 33:2 -- O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.
- Isaiah 40:31 -- but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
- Isaiah 42:4 -- He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.
- Isaiah 49:23 -- Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.
- Isaiah 51:5 -- My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.
- Isaiah 64:4 -- From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.
- Lamentations 3:26 -- It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
- Micah 7:7 -- But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.
- Habakkuk 2:3 -- For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.
- Luke 12:36 -- and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.
- Acts 1:4 -- And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me;
- Romans 8:25 -- But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

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- 1 Corinthians 1:7 -- so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

- Hebrews 6:15 -- And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

- Jude 1:21 -- keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

- Psalm 37:7 -- Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

- Psalm 46:10 -- "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

3. Isaiah 33:5, 6 -- "The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is Zion's treasure." God is the source of all wisdom, justice, righteousness, security, and prosperity.

4. Isaiah 33:11 -- "You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you." The efforts of the ungodly are ultimately worthless and futile, regardless of how 'religious' they are.

5. Isaiah 33:13 -- "Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might."

- Nearness and farness from God aren't determined by physical proximity (which is meaningless in the spiritual realm), but rather by obedience. If God is "far" from you, it is not that He has moved but rather that you did in your disobedience.

- God blesses His people so the world can see, bringing glory to Himself through the lives of His people.

6. Isaiah 33:14-22 -- God intends for you to make Him your KING, to work for Him in His Kingdom on earth, to stay focused on Him and His purposes in your life and not to get entangled in the pursuits of some earthly "king" or kingdoms. God will be your KING or some human will be your king.

7. Isaiah 33:17 -- "Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; they will see a land that stretches afar." God's plan for you is to see Him as glorious King and have a personal relationship of love with Him.

8. Isaiah 33:21-24 -- God's Kingdom brings wholeness to His people.

9. Isaiah 33:22 -- "For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us." God will be your King or some human will be your king. Don't foolishly place our hope, allegiance or trust in anything or anyone other than God.

10. Isaiah 34:1, 2 -- "Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. For the Lord is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter." We are intended to be citizens and ambassadors of God's Kingdom (not earthly kingdoms), with a message to all earthly kingdoms. An ambassador is loyal to the nation that sent him, and he lives in a foreign land as an outsider. Ambassadors do not represent themselves, they represent their leader.

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Are you a good ambassador to the earthly kingdom in which you live which is also subject to God's coming wrath?

11. Isaiah 34:4 – “All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.” God’s judgment affects the entire universe. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it....” (Romans 8:20)

12. Isaiah 34:8 – “For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.” God has a concrete plan to help His people that people cannot see.

13. Isaiah 34:10 – “Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste.” God’s discipline may be temporary, but His judgment is permanent.

14. Isaiah 34:6, 17 – “Seek and read from the book of the Lord: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the Lord has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them; his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.” God’s written word shows you can depend on His promises.

15. Proverbs 21:3 – “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” God wants obedience, not empty religion.

16. Proverbs 21:9, 19 – “It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.... It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.” God’s word warns you to make wise marriage choices.

17. Proverbs 21:6-8, 13, 15, 18 -- God’s desire is that you foster environments of justice and mercy.

18. Proverbs 21:17 – “Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.” God warns you of the consequences you receive when pleasure becomes your substitute for God.

19. Proverbs 21:27 – “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent.” God does not honor religion that is not motivated by true love. Most people don’t consider themselves wicked, and most Americans consider themselves to be Christian, though their lives don’t look much different than the ungodly. God searches the heart to see the motives behind the actions. Good deeds done out of selfish motivation or out of a sense of self-righteous duty are not acceptable to God. The first and greatest command is love, which is selfless, focused solely on God first and then others. Search your heart for the true motives behind your actions.

20. Proverbs 21:30-31 – “No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.” When you do not include God in your planning, your plans become futile.

21. Hebrews 7:1-11 – Jesus does not point to the law, the law points to Jesus. It is not the law that makes us righteous, Jesus does. The aim is not merely to be good, it is to be one with Jesus.

22. Hebrews 7:16 – “...who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.” Jesus’ authority does not come from

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regulations but from His deity. Our righteousness does not come from our behavior but rather because of His declaration of our righteousness. Also, a disciple's authority comes from God not from human institutions.

23. Hebrews 7:19 – "... (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God." Again, lawfulness cannot make you righteous, only Jesus can. Living righteously is the natural product of being made righteous through Christ.

24. Hebrews 7:26 – "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." Only Jesus can satisfy your eternal need and give you eternal peace.

25. Hebrew 7:26-28 – "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever."

- Jesus Christ has paid for your sins "once for all when he offered Himself." It is finished – if you are a Christian you are forgiven, completely, unconditionally, and permanently. Nothing can be added or taken away from God's forgiveness – forgiveness through Christ is perfect. Under the priesthood of Jesus, we now have been made a "royal, holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:5-9) and a holy "kingdom of priests" (Rev 5:10, Exodus 19:6) among the kingdoms of men which are corrupt and ungodly. Among those nations, we serve our King as ambassadors, proclaiming the King's message to the fallen world. Today's readings in Isaiah state: "The Lord is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them (Isaiah 34:2)" but "the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; it is He who will save us. (Isaiah 33:22)." Your kingdom is "not of this world. (John 18:36)" You were once of this world but God saved you from this world, redeemed you, and made you a new creation, holy, set apart for His purposes and His glory (1 Cor 1:28, 5:10). You are now called to "seek the Kingdom" and to struggle "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12)." Today, pledge allegiance to your King and serve Him faithfully. Proclaim His message to the world. Remember, your obedience does not add to your salvation but contributes to your sanctification, fulfilling your purpose of being conformed to the image of Christ.

- Jesus' sacrifice covers all sin, once and for all.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 Sep 18: Obey Jesus today, not in an attempt to make yourself righteous but rather to grow closer to Jesus in love, grateful for His grace and imputed righteousness. (Hebrews 7)

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 4, Thursday, 20 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+31%2C+32%3B+proverbs+20%3B+hebrews+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 20 September 18:

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1. Isaiah 31:1 – “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!” In who or what do you put your trust your security – people, institutions, or God? When a person or a nation begins to rely on their own abilities rather than God, they are doomed. Many people won’t challenge the world because they rely on the world.

2. Isaiah 31:3 -- “The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.” You will either rely on the flesh or the Spirit for your personal decision-making. You will either trust God our people and systems created by man. How incredibly flawed and limited are people, and how awesome is God? Why do the blind still choose to be led by the blind? Because they do not know God to hear God and to trust God. “You do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:26, 27)

3. Isaiah 31:6 – “Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted.” God expects His sinful people to repent.

4. Isaiah 32:8 -- “But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands.” Noble things require planning. You may care, but do you care enough to plan? Planning reveals genuine commitment.

5. Isaiah 32:10-14 – God judges complacency.

6. Isaiah 32:14, 15 – “For the palace is forsaken.... until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high.” There is no hope apart from the Spirit.

7. Isaiah 32:17, 18 – “And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation.” Peace comes through righteousness, and righteousness comes from Jesus alone. Walking with Jesus brings genuine peace. Jesus’ first word to His disciples after He appeared to them after His resurrection was, “Peace.” Do you have peace in Jesus?

8. Proverbs 20:3 – “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.” Honorable people avoid quarrels.

10. Proverbs 20:4 – “The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.” You get what you put into it. Successful people are willing to make the daily sacrifices unsuccessful people aren’t willing to make in order to have a long-term payoff.

11. Proverbs 20:6 – “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” God seeks a rare commodity: a faithful individual.

12. Proverbs 20:9 – “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin?’” One of the most important attributes of a successful person is the ability to be humbly self-aware, to look introspectively through the light of the Spirit and identify their own weaknesses. Many, many, many people can’t see themselves, living in prideful denial, walking day-to-day with blinders on.

13. Proverbs 20:11 – “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” Everyone tries to put their best foot forward, but inevitably, your actions will reveal the truth of your heart.

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14. Proverbs 20:17 -- “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.” Dishonest gain only undermines the development of your ability to produce honestly and to become self-sufficient. It is like getting a hand-out but worse because it cost you your integrity, which is worth more than gold. Productivity is a character trait; dishonest gain robs you of your productivity and character. Dishonest gain is not just stealing; it can also be getting a job you never should have really had, getting paid to do work that doesn’t really add value, or getting paid when you aren’t really working at all. You know if you are being productive or not, but God knows even better.

15. Proverbs 20:21 -- “An inheritance gained hastily in the beginning will not be blessed in the end.” Comments on Proverbs 20:17 apply here also.

16. Hebrews 6:4-6 -- “For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.” If you are truly saved, you will never look at sin the same again. How could we hold Jesus in contempt by continuing in the sin for which He paid the penalty for us on the cross? To make light of sin is to make light of Jesus’ crucifixion. “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:26-29)

17. Hebrews 6:10-12 -- “God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

- Hebrews 6 speaks of an expectation of fruitfulness in the lives of the truly saved. Paul warns not to be lazy in obeying God. Rather than being “sluggish” in our new lives for Christ, Paul encourages us to be “imitators” of those who have modeled holiness and Christ-like character before us. Who within your church models the type of life you would desire to imitate? If someone were to poll your church congregation, your place of employment, or your community, how many people would pick you as their model for Christ-like character, the person they would most desire to imitate? God warns against being lazy or complacent in your faith, as you just read in Isaiah 32:10-14.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 Sep 18: Work hard to obey God today. Be diligent, not complacent or lazy. In your obedience, search your heart for your true motives. Are you seeking blessings from God our God Himself? Are you seeking to serve or be served? If your good deeds earned you absolutely nothing and cost you everything, would you do them just the same? 1 John 3:16 -- By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (Isaiah 32:10-14; Hebrews 6:11-12)

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 3, Wednesday, 19 September 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+29%2C+30%3B+proverbs+19%3B+hebrews+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 19 September 18:

1. Isaiah 29:1, 2 -- "Add year to year; let the feasts run their round. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation." Many sinners are living in ignorant bliss, unable to see their looming destruction.

- Matthew 24:36-39 -- "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

2. Isaiah 29:5-8 -- "...all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night." God can change the political reality overnight in inconceivable ways.

3. Isaiah 29:10 -- "For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers)." There is no spiritual vision unless God enables it. When a nation turns from God, its religious leaders lose their ability to discern God's will. However, they don't lose their jobs. They become blind guides.

4. Isaiah 29:13-14 -- "And the Lord said: 'Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.'"

- As people turn farther away from God, worship becomes empty ritual and tradition, void of real power. God's pure word is replaced by interpretations of God's word and opinions taught by men. God's ethic (God's rules of righteousness) is replaced by morality (what the people say is right, often in the name of religion). Jesus referred to these verses when He rebuked the religious leaders of His day -- "So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Matthew 15:8, 9) Many people who go to churches on Sundays and hear well scripted, motivational sermons by very talented, popular preachers are completely oblivious to what God is actually purposing and doing. Of note, I observe that today, most Bible study groups are studying a book about the Bible as their primary tool rather than the Bible itself.

- Unfaithful religion is not only powerless, it is condemned by God. You can't live a disobedient life and expect to have any spiritual discernment.

- "This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men... Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding' ...? 'Ah, stubborn children,' declares the Lord, 'who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out

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to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh.... For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions.... 'Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.... For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.' But you were unwilling.... For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. (Isaiah 29:13, 19; 30:1, 2, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 18) The Bible says that the Old Testament was given to us in part so that we could learn to avoid the mistakes of the past (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:16) Today we should pay attention to the pattern described in Isaiah of the turning away of God's people from God. The process is gradual, but the conclusion is swift. Isaiah describes an active church-going people whose hearts have actually drifted far from God. Rather than using God's word to draw closer to God in a genuinely loving relationship, God's word has become a self-help book for success, eventually replaced by more 'practical,' more understandable, more 'relevant' teachings of men. They use religion to justify their own selfish endeavors, forming a new morality. Rather than living lives for God, these pots tell the Potter to bless what they want to do. They attempt to drag God along in their pursuit of happiness and convince themselves that God is on their side. They are very busy carrying out plans that have absolutely nothing to do with God's plan, all in the name of faith, assuming the God will bless their 'good' intentions, particularly if they promise to talk about God on occasion with others. To resource their un-ordained pursuit of happiness, they turn to worldly institutions rather than to God. They place their hopes in governments, economies, schools, and social groups. They prefer to company and entertainment of the ungodly; and to avoid any discomfort, they squelch anything from God's word that disagrees with what has become sociably acceptable. They stop going to that old-fashioned, out of touch church in order to attend that very popular church that is more "in-tune" with the ways of modern society – as predicted, they "will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." (2 Timothy 4:3, 4) This church is not characterized by "rest" and "quietness," nor is it known for "strength." It is loud, busy, and powerless. Like a flimsy chair, when the slightest weight is placed upon it, it will collapse suddenly. I believe we need to pay very careful attention to the warning in the Book of Isaiah.

5. Isaiah 29:16 -- "You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?"

- How crazy is it that people seek to define God on their own terms. There can be no higher foolishness and arrogance.

- Again, when we live for ourselves, we place ourselves above God. Many Christians act like God exists for them rather than the other way around. Life is not about us, life is about Him.

6. Isaiah 30:1 -- "'Ah, stubborn children,' declares the LORD, 'who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt.'" Just because you say you are doing it for God doesn't mean God ever wanted you to do it. Many people confuse their ego with the Spirit.

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7. Isaiah 30:1, 2 – “‘Ah, stubborn children,’ declares the Lord, ‘who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!’” If your plans are not God’s plan for you, your plans are doomed from the start. If you think you will find security in society, your job, your government, or anything else other than God, you are wrong. Search the Bible and see that God almost always takes people off their planned course to lead them where He would have them go. Search the Bible and see that God always disciplines those who trust government over Him.

8. Isaiah 30:1, 9-14 -- “‘Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD, ‘who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin...;’ For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.’ Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel. ‘Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; and its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel.’”

- Many choose to go their own way, guided by their own desires rather than by the Spirit, and then they despise God’s word because it reveals the truth of their sinfulness. This is the path to destruction which eventually comes suddenly. We are to live our lives guided by the Spirit and the Word. There is no other way – we were created to love and serve God; it is our purpose. To live for any other purpose is actually meaningless, meaningless, meaningless – chasing after the wind.

- A sinful people refuse to listen to the truth of God’s word. For example, try to read publicly what the Bible says about homosexuality or divorce and see what happens.

- People or nations which trust human wisdom rather than God’s word are destroyed suddenly and unexpectedly.

9. Isaiah 30:15 – “For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.’ But you were unwilling.”

- Quietness is a mark of trust. Compare this verse with Jesus’ words: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

- Don’t be unwilling to rest and trust in the Lord.

10. Isaiah 30:20 – “And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.” The Lord often allows you to go through hard times to teach you. Your Teacher is always there and knows what is best for you.

11. Isaiah 30:21, 22 – “And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid

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with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, 'Be gone!'" When you turn to the Lord, He will guide you every step of the way, and the replacements for Him you once enjoyed will be despicable to you.

12. Proverbs 19:2 – "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." Think before you act.

13. Proverbs 19:3 – "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." You can't blame God for your foolish actions and their results.

14. Proverbs 19:4, 7 – "Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend.... All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him!" Money can buy friends, just not real ones.

15. Proverbs 19:11 – "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." God wants you to forgive the wrongs people do to you.

16. Proverbs 19:11, 19 – "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.... A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again." Over and over again, the Bible tells us to watch our tempers and to control our anger. However, many Christians are passive-aggressive. They don't initially respond to an offense, believe themselves to be obedient to God's commands, but they don't immediately forgive either; so, they stew on what happened and let their internal anger fester, only to continue on with a sinful heart. Then, their future encounters with that offender are always viewed in the light of that previous offense, wrecking hope of real peace and reconciliation. Unforgiveness often reveals in avoidance and withdrawal, failing to give the offender your very best. Is there anyone who would alter your joy if they walked unexpectedly into the room? If so, seek reconciliation with them.

17. Proverbs 19:14 – "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." God gave you the person you married for a reason.

18. Proverbs 19:16-17, 22 – "Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die. Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.... What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar." Your relationship with and obedience to God determine your life fulfillment and success.

19. Proverbs 19:18 – "Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death." When you don't correct someone who is sinning you are contributing to their destruction, and you are revealing your heartlessness.

20. Proverbs 19:19 – "A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again." Your temper is the result of a heart condition that must be addressed before you can control your anger. If you don't fix the heart, there is no control over sin.

21. Proverbs 19:22 – "...a poor man is better than a liar." Poverty is not the worst condition in life.

22. Proverbs 19:22 – "What is desired in a man is steadfast love." Life is about relationships. All relationships are based upon trust. Trust is based upon character and integrity. If you are a liar, you have nothing.

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23. Hebrews 5:7 – “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- The life of Jesus provides the model for our prayer lives. God is seeking to mold us into the image of His Son (Col. 1:27-28). If we are to act like Christ, our prayer lives must be conformed to His. Many Christians are unwilling to pay the price that Jesus paid when it comes to interceding with God. Jesus’ prayers came with vehement cries and tears and, “because of His godly fear,” He was heard by the Father. Why then, did the Father refuse His request? It was not due to any sin in Jesus’ life, nor was it because the Father did not love His Son. The Father said no, despite the unfathomable love He had for His Son, because He knew He could not spare His Son and save a world. Likewise, the Lord cannot always spare you and your family and complete His redemptive work in those around you. Are you willing for God to deny your pleadings? Will you intercede with the Father so deeply and intimately that even in the midst of your tears you are able to say, “Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done?” The Father will always relate to you out of the context of His love for a lost world. Has God said no to one of your requests recently? Accept His answer. Have you been learning obedience through what you have been suffering (Heb. 5:8)? If you have, God may choose to make you a source of salvation to others even as He did with His Son.

24. Hebrews 5:7, 8 – “...he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”

- Reverence affects your prayers and your obedience. Reverent disciples learn to be obedient through suffering. There is no growth in the comfort zone, and there is no comfort in the growth zone.

- We all endure suffering to some degree, but the good news is that through it we can become like Jesus. Are you willing to pay whatever price is necessary in order to become like Christ? There are some things God intends for your life that can come only through suffering. Even Jesus, the sinless Son of God, had to endure the suffering His Father to fulfill His purpose and to obtain His glory. If you become bitter over your hardships, you close some parts of your life from God. If you do this, you will never be complete. Some places in your soul can be reached only by suffering. The Spirit of God has important things to teach you, but you can only learn these lessons in the midst of your trials. Who throughout the Bible didn’t require days of suffering to God to build their character, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Paul? Don’t resent the suffering God allows in your life. Don’t make all your decisions and invest everything you have into avoiding hardship. God did not spare His own Son. How can we expect Him to spare us? Learn obedience even when it hurts!

25. Hebrews 5:12-14 -- "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

- God expects believers to train in doctrine in order to be a worthy teacher and a priest. God expects believers to hone their skills in righteousness. It takes constant training and practice to develop spiritual discernment. Discernment is knowing good from evil.

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- God expects you to grow spiritually which requires both disciplined study of God's word as well as practice in God's word and will. You have to both study hard and practice your faith diligently. Practice implies that you will get it wrong before you get it right.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Sep 18: Recommit yourself to discipleship today. Study God's word, walk in God's word with Jesus, rest in God, and wait to be guided by His Spirit, rather than simply your own judgment. Deny self, take up your cross today, and follow Jesus. Don't live for anything other than Jesus today (and every day from this day forward). (See today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 2, Tuesday, 18 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+27%2C+28%3B+proverbs+18%3B+hebrews+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 18 September 18:

1. Isaiah 27:4, 5 – “Would that I had thorns and briers to battle! I would march against them, I would burn them up together. Or let them lay hold of my protection. Let them make peace with me, let them make peace with me.” There is an old saying, “If you love flowers, you must hate weeds.” Our loving God hates sin, and sinners make themselves enemies to God. Though we all sin, God offers salvation, reconciliation, and peace through His Son, The Prince of Peace -- this is the Good News of the Gospel. But the Good News is only good news to those who accept it. To everyone else, the unrepentant who reject it, it is damnation.
2. Isaiah 28:1, 6-7 – “...and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed by wine, they stagger with strong drink, they reel in vision, they stumble in giving judgment.” God calls people to turn to Him, His Spirit, and His Justice for comfort rather than liquid spirits of alcohol. There is no escape from pain except through Jesus. People have many forms of escapism today – food, alcohol, entertainment, even exercise. Turn to Jesus.
3. Isaiah 28:7, 12-14, 16 – God insists that His people obey His word. This is very clear throughout the entire Bible. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.... Why do you call me Lord and do not do what I say?” Grace frees us from the requirements of the law, which has no power to save, and gives us the Holy Spirit which not only enables us to obey but also gives us a heart to obey. Those who genuinely desire to obey do not need a law to compel them to do what they already want to do. Where you lack obedience, you don't need a greater appreciation of the law, you need a greater appreciation for Jesus. Saul, who was driven by the law to persecute Christians, later became Paul who was compelled by the love of Christ to live for Christ, to be conformed to His image, and to obey the law of love. Focus on Jesus and follow Him.
4. Isaiah 28:10 -- “For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people, to whom he has said, ‘This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose’; yet they would not hear. And the word of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.”

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- Religion, ritual, legalism, and self-righteous are no substitutes for a genuine relationship with God filled with faith, hope, and love. The Pharisees had the rules, but they didn't have the relationship. Their righteousness was really no righteousness at all because they were guilty of disobeying both the First Commandment and the Greatest Commandment – Have no other gods, and love God totally. Rather, 'self' was both their idol and their love, and what obedience they had was driven by pride and self-righteousness. In Isaiah, God warns that there can be no rest in works of the flesh (self-righteous deeds) and no salvation. Only the Stone in Zion, the "Precious Cornerstone," Jesus Christ, can bring peace, rest, and salvation. To those who walk by the flesh rather than the Spirit, their religion is nothing but powerless, burdensome, joyless, thankless, rules upon rules that will lead them to misery and destruction. If works-based religion has left you flat, tired, and empty, turn to God for a genuine relationship that inspires the sort of true love that makes obedience a joy.

-- 1 John 5:3 -- For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

-- Matthew 11:28-30 -- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

- The word used here for "precept" is the word that describes a command that would be given a small child. The word "line" signifies the line a mason uses to measure layer upon layers of bricks. It appears here that God's people had a very childish approach to God's word and only saw it as a bunch of do's and don'ts rather than God's living word intended to draw them closer to God. God calls us to have a child-like faith, not a childish faith. Grow up in Christ.

- Turning from a genuine love relationship with God to a legalistic religion that calls for duty rather than love is departing from God.

5. Isaiah 28:15 – "...we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter." Placing your hope in anything other than Jesus is to place your hope in a lie. The inevitable result is destruction.

6. Isaiah 28:16-18 -- "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.' And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter. Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand;" Jesus is the Cornerstone who defeats death. Jesus brings grace but also justice. He will put an end to injustice. Whoever believes in Him will be saved. Whoever believes in Him will seek to live lives of justice, mercy, and grace in order to honor and glorify Him.

7. Isaiah 28:17-29:6 – Some people attempt to predict God's ways, but God reveals His ways through His word, empowered by the Holy Spirit. God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8, 9) However, He also says, "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." You can't predict God's actions, but He can reveal them if you are walking in the Spirit through loving obedience and surrender. What is God revealing to you through your Bible study, prayer, and the conviction of His Holy

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Spirit through daily activities and encounters? If you cannot hear God's clear word, check your heart and your obedience. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

8. Isaiah 28:21-22 – "For the Lord will rise up as on Mount Perazim; as in the Valley of Gibeon he will be roused;

to do his deed—strange is his deed! and to work his work—alien is his work! Now therefore do not scoff, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard a decree of destruction from the Lord God of hosts against the whole land." God's works are strange to the sinner, and He will destroy those who mock His word and ways.

9. Isaiah 28:23-29 – Like a farmer, God knows exactly what to do and when to cultivate His harvest.

10. Proverbs 18:1 – "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." Friendliness is a mark of unselfishness. Unfriendliness is selfishness. How friendly are you? If you are a Christian who says, "I'm just not a people person," you may want to check your heart and reexamine your mission from God of love and reconciliation.

11. Proverbs 18:2 – "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." Instead of just relying on and venting what you think is right, stop and humbly, carefully, consider the opinions of others, not just to validate or invalidate your own thinking but also to truly understand the other person. If you are correct, your beliefs will stand the scrutiny of critique. If the other person is wrong, the important thing is not to celebrate your debate victory but rather to pursue their reconciliation with Jesus. Don't win arguments; win souls.

12. Proverbs 18:6, 7, 21 – "A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.... Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." So many of our problems are caused because we can't control our tongues.

13. Proverbs 18:9 – "Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys." Careless work is a sin before God.

14. Proverbs 18:13 – "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame." If, while someone is talking, you are already devising your response, you are acting both foolishly and shamelessly.

15. Hebrews 4:1-11 -- Hearing God's word does not guarantee a changed heart, a closer relationship with God, or sanctification.

16. Hebrews 4:2 – "For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." The word must be believed in faith in order to have benefit. Without faith, you can't really hear the word.

17. Hebrews 4:8 – "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on." Joshua in the Old Testament pointed to Jesus' day as does the entire Old Testament.

18. Hebrews 4:12, 13 – "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of

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the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

- God's word shows you if your attitudes and thoughts please God.

- How has God's Word penetrated your heart lately? Has the Holy Spirit used certain passages in the Scriptures to strike at your conscience? Has the Counselor revealed a place where your life is not in conformity to Christ? Are you struggling with gossip, hatred, anger, bitterness, greed, pride, jealousy, fear, ingratitude, etc? Regardless of how well you hide your sin from public view, the Holy Spirit will convict you through God's Word. One response to the discomfort of conviction is to avoid reading the Bible; perhaps this is one reason why so many find it so hard to "find time" for Bible reading. Better to be continually washed by the Word (Eph 5:26). Others will approach the Scriptures superficially, avoiding too much painful introspection. Perhaps for them the Bible becomes "Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there (Isa 28:10)" as described in our readings this morning. However, the Holy Spirit looks beyond outward actions to address the motives of your heart. Far better to approach your daily Scripture readings with the prayer of the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23, 24)." Do not quench the Spirit (1 Thes 5:19). "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart (Hebrews 3:7)." Be transformed "by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2)." Read; respond, and walk in the Light (1 John 1:7). Let's continue to encourage each other along the way.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Does God's word ever cause you discomfort? When you read the Bible does what you read make you uneasy? Do you find when you listen to sermons, that the Scripture seems aimed directly at you? You are experiencing the reality that the word of God is alive and can read your thoughts and judge your intentions. When God's word speaks to you it is always for a purpose. God knows your heart and knows what you need to do to bring your life into conformity to Christ. If you have a problem with sinful talk, the word that comes to you will address the tongue. If you are struggling to forgive, God's word will confront you with His standard for forgiveness. If pride has a stronghold in your life, God's word will speak to you about humility. Whatever sin needs addressing, you will find you are confronted by God's word on the matter.... Regularly allow the word of God to wash over you and find any sin or impurity (Eph. 5:26). Always make the connection between your life and what God is saying to you through His word. Make a habit of taking every word from God seriously, knowing that it is able to judge your heart and mind.

19. Hebrews 4:14-16 – "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Jesus represents us in Heaven, understands us, cares for us, and invites us to ask for what we need.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Sep 18: Don't fall short of the promise you have received through the grace given you through Jesus. Despite your sin, by grace, you were made righteous through Jesus. Grace is your opportunity to walk in righteousness, to live righteously in worship to God, giving Him glory before others. Today, walk your gratitude and reflect the character of

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Jesus to others. Introduce others to Jesus, and encourage other Christians through your actions to walk more closely with Jesus who is our Joy, Comfort, and Peace on earth.

DBRP - WEEK 38, Day 1, Monday, 17 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+17%3B+hebrews+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 17 September 18:

1. Isaiah 25:1 -- "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure." From your heart, do you exalt and praise God because God is working "all things work together for good," for those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose? (Romans 8:28) Is God's truth so real to you that you can have joy even through trials? Likely, there are times when you don't feel like praising His Name. During those times draw closer to God in prayer and Bible study. In honest, humble prayer, praise His Name anyway, confess your sins, give thanks for the many blessings He has bestowed upon you, and presents your requests to Him. God will meet you where you are, strengthen you, and carry you through the hard times as He works His good plan in your life.

2. Isaiah 25:9 -- "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." When Jesus returns, will you be able to say you waited faithfully for Him? Jesus describes His church as a betrothed waiting for the wedding day. He describes worldliness and sin as adultery. Be found faithful on your wedding day.

3. Isaiah 25:11 -- "The Lord will lay low his pompous pride together with the skill of his hands." The LORD will put an end to the pride of those who put their trust in self.

4. Isaiah 25:11 -- "The Lord will lay low his pompous pride together with the skill of his hands." All the wondrous things people and nations have done for themselves will be meaningless when the Lord returns. We were created to serve Him, not self. Be faithful to your purpose.

5. Isaiah 26:3, 4, 11, 12 -- "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. O Lord, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them. O Lord, you will ordain peace for us." Perfect peace comes from focus and trust in God. Both Isaiah and Hebrews speak of the need for perseverance in faith and obedience in order to have "perfect peace" and "rest" in the Lord. It is the mind that is 'stayed' on the Lord that has security. Both books also warn against the opposite path of rebellion, going astray due to a hardening of the heart -- "As the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore, I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" Paul warns, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Paul is not speaking to unbelievers; he is earnestly cautioning 'brothers' to dauntlessly guard their hearts, ever mindful of the deceitfulness of sin which slowly erodes faithfulness and causes people to fall away. Paul commands the church to "exhort one another every day." The church is in great peril today because we have taken sin so lightly. Exhorting

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others is seen as judgmental and unsophisticated. We think too little of sin because we have lost perspective on the Holiness of God and the Fear of the LORD. Therefore, the church is largely unpeaceful, restless, and powerless. "O Lord, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it."

- Hebrews 3:18 -- And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?

7. Isaiah 26:8 -- "O Lord, we wait for you." Faith involves waiting in obedience on God when comfort doesn't come immediately.

8. Isaiah 26:9 -- "For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." God judges to bring glory to Himself, not simply to bring comfort to the persecuted. Do you see offenses to God as more terrible than the persecution of people? Do you hate sin mostly for the fact that it dishonors the Almighty or because of its negative consequences on earth? Much of the "social justice" movement today is merely a battle between special interest groups over who should get what from whom and finger pointing with one group demonizing the other.

- Luke 12:13-15 -- "Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'"

9. Isaiah 26:9 -- "My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you." What does your soul long for at night? Are you earnestly (with all of your might) seeking Jesus today?

10. Isaiah 26:10 -- "If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the Lord." God does not bless unrighteousness because He wants people to seek Him, not just His blessings.

11. Isaiah 26:19 -- "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise." God's people have life after death.

12. Proverbs 17:13 -- "If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house." You haven't truly repented of your sins from your heart if you turn right around and commit the sins for which you know Jesus died to pay -- repentance would make that unthinkable to you. If you are repeating the same sins over and over again (we all do in some way, such as in the case of anger), pray that God will give you a more genuine heart of repentance from a greater perspective of Jesus and the reality of His grace. Pray the God will cleanse you of ALL unrighteousness.

- 1 John 1:9 -- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

13. Proverbs 17:16 -- "Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?" Wisdom comes only from God. You can pay to get a great education, and you can acquire great knowledge, but knowledge is not the same as wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. You cannot buy wisdom or study harder to obtain wisdom. Only God can reveal to you what is right. To educate someone who is not Spirit-led is to create a more capable sinner, more skilled at doing sinful things. In fact, the secular humanist essentially worships knowledge and "science" (which is really a false science). Secular humanist knowledge is just a complicated lie, grounded on the assumption that God is irrelevant. This false knowledge has corrupted our culture in so many subtle ways that many Christians

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unwittily have blended it into their concepts of God and His will. Be very careful to test what is commonly called 'good' with the truth of the Bible.

14. Proverbs 17:20 -- "A man of crooked heart does not discover good." Again, good only comes from God. If you want to do good, you must be united with Jesus.

15. Hebrews 3:1, 2 -- "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house." Consider Jesus today; consider His faithfulness to the cross; now, model His faithfulness today.

16. Hebrews 3:6 -- "And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."

- Will you confidently boast about Jesus today?

- Christians with faith and hope are known for their confidence and joy.

17. Hebrews 3:7, 8 -- "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness...'"

- Today, you will be faced with decision points, whether you will do what God commands in a particular situation or whether you will do what is most comfortable, self-serving, or expedient. Don't harden your heart. Do not resist the Holy Spirit's conviction on your heart -- obey! A failure to obey hardens your heart, making it harder for you to hear and obey the Spirit in the future.

- Today's readings have much to say about the relationship between the heart and obedience. Isaiah 26:7-10 describes the righteous who walk in the ways of His laws and wait for Him because He is the desire of their hearts. Meanwhile, the wicked reject the grace of God and continue to do evil because they "regard not the majesty of the Lord." Their hearts have become hardened by their rebellion so that they have no perception of God. Hebrews says that when a person hears God's Word and fails to obey it, that person's heart becomes hardened because they have "turned away from the Living God." The sin of disobedience comes from unbelief -- ultimately, the sinner does not really believe that God is who God is ("I am who I am" -- Exodus 3:14). The person who continues in sin cannot experience the peace, rest, and joy that comes from a harmonious relationship with the Lord -- "And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So, we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief (Hebrews 3:18, 19)." Jesus said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.... You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (the ways of God). You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:10-17)." Today's readings from Hebrews say that we are to "encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:13)." So, let me encourage you as I remind myself to grow in your faith by remaining obedient to God out of love (not fear, pride, or guilt) so that your joy may be complete. Wait on the Lord and walk in His ways as the desire of your heart -- Today.

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18. Hebrews 3:10, 11 – “Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” Once again, you can’t enter God’s rest if you continually go astray. Walk with Jesus and remain in His rest.

19. Hebrews 3:12, 13 -- "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

- The fight against temptation is a daily struggle that never ends and that requires your maximum effort. Also, it is a fight you shouldn’t fight alone. You need accountability partners in your life.

- Be very careful! Sin deceives you.

20. Hebrews 3:16 -- "For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?" We must remember that most of the warnings in the Bible are not for unbelievers but rather for believers. Jesus' parable of the lost sheep is a message to those who are already His but who have strayed away. The Israelites chose to take a leap of faith and follow Moses, but their faith quickly waned. It is not how you start the race that counts, it is how you finish. Run the race to get the prize -- the prize is Jesus Himself.

21. Hebrews 3:19 – “So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.” If you stray, it is because of unbelief. All Christians are like the man in Mark 9:24 who said to Jesus, “I believe; help my unbelief!” We need the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in our faith and obedience. Will power is never enough. You grow by growing closer to Jesus. Pray for a closer relationship with Jesus, seek Him earnestly. Don’t just focus on good behavior, focus on the Son. The more you love Him, the more faithful you will be naturally. As a Christian you are a new creation, but none of us have been perfected in love. “For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.” (James 3:2) “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So, we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” (1 John 4:15-21) Your true belief in God and your true level of love for God will be revealed by how much you love others from your heart. If you have trouble loving others, particularly those who are hard to love, your problem is your relationship with Jesus. It is impossible not to love Jesus more and more if you are truly seeking to grow closer to Him, and if you are truly seeking Him, it will be impossible for you not to love others more and more. Consider your relationships today.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Sep 18: "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house." (Hebrews 3:1, 2) Consider Jesus today; consider His faithfulness to the cross; now, model His faithfulness today. "And we are his

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house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope." Hebrews 3:6) Confidently boast about Jesus today!

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 7, Sunday, 16 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+16%3B+psalm+107%2C+108>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 16 September 18:

1. Isaiah 23:9 – “The Lord of hosts has purposed it, to defile the pompous pride of all glory, to dishonor all the honored of the earth.” God will humble the nation, organization, family, or person that seeks to honor self over God. We were created to love and serve God, and our lives are meaningless apart from our relationship with Him. God cannot allow sin, which separates people from Him, go unchecked, and He will not allow man-made idols stand for long before they are destroyed. “I will destroy all your idols and sacred pillars, so you will never again worship the work of your own hands.” (Micah 5:13) “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

2. Isaiah 23:17 – “At the end of seventy years, the Lord will visit Tyre, and she will return to her wages and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.” In the of pursuit financial gain, financial security, and financial prosperity, many compromise their fidelity to God in order to maintain cooperative relationships with the ungodly. Jesus said, “You cannot serve both God and money.” Sooner or later you will have to choose one over the other. Many Christians don’t recognize how often they are choosing the world over Jesus every day, exchanging the Gospel for the American dream.

3. Isaiah 24:2 – “And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest....” All will face God’s judgment. Many ‘religious’ people will not be able to stand before God’s judgment, though they have convinced themselves that they are righteous.

4. Isaiah 24:16 – “From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One. But I say, ‘I waste away, I waste away. Woe is me! For the traitors have betrayed, with betrayal the traitors have betrayed.’” Words without deeds are empty and dead. Praising God while continuing in sin is mocking God – God is not fooled and will not be mocked. Throughout the Bible we are warned that religious activities, acts of charity, good deeds, etc, are no substitute for obedience, which is the true product of love for God.

5. Proverbs 16:2 – “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.” From Henry T. Blackaby – “How quick we are to question the motives of others, yet we are so slow to question our own! When others harm us, we may assume the worst of intentions. When we are guilty, we often excuse our offenses, concluding that others are far too sensitive! Regardless of how we monitor our motives, God weighs them in His scales of righteousness. It is futile to try to deceive God with our pious justifications, for He sees our hearts. Is it possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason? Of course! You can attend worship services with a heart that is far from worshipful (Isa. 1:10-17). Could you show concern for the poor and yet have a heart that is opposed to God? Judas did (John 12:4-8). Could you make bold statements of love for Christ and actually be aiding the work of Satan? Peter did (Matt. 16:21-23). Could you offer sacrifices to God and be in total disobedience to Him? King Saul did (1 Sam. 13:8-9). Could you pray with the wrong motives? James said you can (James 4:3). Many things cause us

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to do what we do. We can be motivated by good things, such as love for God, compassion, generosity, and faith. Or our actions can come from unhealthy motives such as pride, insecurity, ambition, lust, greed, guilt, anger, fear, and hurt. It is even possible to do the best things based on the worst motives. When the Lord measures our motives He looks for one thing: love. All that we do should proceed from our love for God and for others (1 Cor. 13). Take time to look past your actions to what lies behind them. Ask God to show you what He sees when He examines your motives.

6. Proverbs 16:3, 6, 9, 20 – God’s word emphasizes the importance of your commitment to Him and your trust in Him.

7. Proverbs 16:10, 13, 21-24, 26-28, 30 – God cares greatly about how you use words. Think of your words as a very sharp knife, which can be used as a weapon or a tool, used sparingly, kept sharp, and never used carelessly. And remember the first year of a knife fight – if you get in a knife fight, you are going to get cut.

8. Proverbs 16:5, 19, 22, 25, 27-30 – The Bible warns time and time again about the dangers of following the wrong people.

9. Proverbs 16:25 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- Things are not always what they seem. Proverbs warns that we can be deceived into believing we are going down the right path and yet be heading toward death, the opposite direction from God’s will. People do not naturally seek God or pursue righteousness (Rom. 3:10-18). Only as the Spirit awakens our hearts to the Person of Christ are we able to desire God’s will. If we make decisions apart from the guidance of the Spirit of God, we will be like a ship trying to sail without a compass. We will do what makes the most sense, based on our own wisdom. But what looks attractive may actually lead to sin, ultimately destroying what is precious to us, for our most profound human thinking is mere foolishness to God (1 Cor. 1:18-20). Only God knows the way that leads to life, and He wants to lead us to walk in it (Matt. 7:13-14). Don’t assume every opportunity that arises is from God. Satan will disguise himself as an “angel of light,” and his invitations will seem to be in your best interest (2 Cor. 11:14). Yet his way leads only to death (John 8:44). The word of God will be like a light to your path, guiding you in the ways of righteousness (Ps. 119:105). It can be perilous to follow a path that seems right without first consulting the Holy Spirit for guidance (John 16:13). Take time to seek the Holy Spirit’s direction when you face decisions. He knows the full ramifications of your choices. The Holy Spirit will assist you to understand truth and to experience abundant life. Trust Him as He leads you.

10. Psalm 107:1, 2, 8 – “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.... Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!” If you have been saved by Jesus, then say so! Proclaim your salvation to as many as you can.

11. Psalm 107:9 – “For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” Only Jesus can satisfy the longing of your soul. If you feel empty in any area of your life, turn to God to be filled.

12. Psalm 107:43 – “Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord.” Psalm 107 is a powerful testimony of God’s Love and Majesty. Be wise and meditate upon this chapter today.

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13. Psalm 108:2, 3 – “I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples.” Pray for a love for God that is so powerful your first desire in the morning is to be with Him in fellowship that is so powerful it is all you want to talk about with others.

14. Psalm 108:13 – “With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.” Let God worry about your enemies and your troubles. Focus your attention on Him, and let Him do what you cannot do anyway.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Sep 18: “Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord.” (Psalm 107:43) Psalm 107 is a powerful testimony of God’s Love and Majesty. Be wise and meditate upon this chapter today. The more you appreciate God’s love for you and His mercy and grace bestowed upon you, the more you will love others, forgive others, give to others and desire the same love in their lives. The better you know Jesus, the more you will trust Him, desire to please Him, get excited about Him, proclaim Him, and live for Him.

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 6, Saturday, 15 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+20-22%3B+proverbs+15%3B+psalm+106>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 15 September 18:

1. Isaiah 20:2 -- "...the Lord spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, 'Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet,' and he did so, walking naked and barefoot." The Lord commanded Isaiah to walk naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush. I suspect most wrote Isaiah off as crazy. What does it take for God to get your attention? As much as God reveals Himself to people, most refuse to see the obvious. Also fascinating is the fact that Isaiah obeyed God and was willing to walk naked for three years. Fortunately, we now live in an age where God speaks through His word and the Holy Spirit and does not demand such actions from us. Rather, the Bible calls us to be clothed in Christ (Galatians 3:26), which should be as obvious to others as Isaiah’s nakedness was to the Egyptians and Cushites.

2. Isaiah 21:8 -- “Upon a watchtower I stand, O Lord, continually by day, and at my post I am stationed whole nights." Are you paying attention when most aren’t? Are you alert to what God is doing in this day?

3. Isaiah 21:16 -- “Within a year, according to the years of a hired worker, all the glory of Kedar will come to an end." God is patient to judge nations, but when He judges, He judges swiftly. The glory of prideful people and nations is often destroyed instantly like the falling of a house of cards. To most it comes without warning, but not without warning to the faithful watchmen.

4. Isaiah 22:8-14 – “But you did not look to him who did it, or see him who planned it long ago.” The people went to great lengths to prepare to defend the nation against their enemies, but they didn’t do the one thing that was required – repent before the LORD. When they should have been mourning their sins, they were celebrating (vs, 12, 13). God’s judgment was upon them, and no military strategy could save them.

5. Isaiah 22:16 – “.... you have cut out here a tomb for yourself.” If our work is not committed to the LORD, we are just digging our own graves.

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6. Proverbs 15:1, 18 -- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Do your words bring peace or escalate strife?

7. Proverbs 15:4 -- "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." Do your words bring healing or pain?

8. Proverbs 15:7 -- "The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools." Do your words instruct or distract?

9. Proverbs 15:8 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." Don't ask for things from God while you knowingly continue to disrespect Him in sin.

10. Proverbs 15:8 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." Many will not truly appreciate the importance of this proverb because the wicked usually don't see themselves as wicked and remain confident in their "sacrifices" as if they are in good stead with God. Many prideful churchgoers believe this proverb to be intended for someone else. They confidently proclaim they have been "saved by grace" and then continue in sin without much concern, failing to produce the fruit of true repentance. Only the humble will take pause at this verse and go to their knees.

11. Proverbs 15:13 -- "A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed." Do your words lift people up or tear them down?

12. Proverbs 15:14 -- "The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly." Do you talk when you should be listening and learning?

13. Proverbs 15:16 -- "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it." If you are near to Jesus, your circumstances won't affect your joy. Paul said he had discovered the secret of contentment in any circumstances. The secret was learning to rejoice in the Lord, always, and remaining focused on your relationship with Jesus. (see Philippians 4)

14. Proverbs 15:23 -- "To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!" Do you know when to speak and when to be silent? Do you have a good, constructive sense of timing when providing advice to others?

15. Proverbs 15:26 -- "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure." Are your words gracious, always seeking the best for the other person rather than your own personal interests?

16. Proverbs 15:28 -- "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." As an ambassador of Christ (your purpose on earth), you must be very, very careful to think before you speak, remembering that your words must not be your own but Jesus'. Your words must mirror the words of the Bible. What you think and what you want doesn't matter and likely only stands in the way of God's truth. If you feel any self-centered emotion, better to keep your mouth shut than to misrepresent the Lord and Savior. Jesus warns that we will be held accountable for every careless word that comes out of our mouths. How seriously will you take God's warning?

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17. Proverbs 15:28 -- "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." Do you think before you speak?

18. Proverbs 15:31 -- "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise." Do you receive correction well?

19. Proverbs 15:33 -- "The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor." You must be willing to read God's word with a humble spirit and apply the correction of His word, revealed by the Holy Spirit, into your life.

20. Psalm 106:2, 3 -- "Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise? Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!" The more you genuinely appreciate God, the more you will desire to obey Him. If obeying God is challenging in some way, it is an appreciation problem, a relationship problem. Don't focus on the object of your temptation, focus on Jesus.

21. Psalm 106:6 -- "Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness." Remembering that you rely each day on God's grace should compel you to show grace to everyone around you who offends you.

22. Psalm 106:13 -- "But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel." We sin when, at the moment, we forget God.

23. Psalm 106:16, 17 -- "When men in the camp were jealous of Moses and Aaron, the holy one of the Lord, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan...." Jealousy and envy are sins of the heart that lead to sinful, destructive deeds. In actuality, jealousy and envy are not displays of resentment against another person but rather against God as you display ingratitude for what He has given you and resentment for what He has not given you.

24. Psalm 106:25 -- "They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord." Better to live in your tent given to you by the Lord than to envy the mansions of others. Obeying God often means not enjoying the frivolous or sinful pleasures enjoyed by others around you. When you start to feel sorry for yourself, know that you are experiencing a symptom of losing sight of God and His love for you. Truly trusting God to provide for you is to be grateful for what He has provided without worrying about what He is providing others, understanding that what God provides you is the very best for you. Have you not noticed that the richest people in the world are often the most miserable and untrustworthy? The Israelites in the desert longed for the comforts of Egypt, forgetting that in Egypt they were slaves.

25. Psalm 106:37, 38 -- "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood." How many abortions will American Christians commit this year?

26. Psalm 106:40 -- "Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage." "His heritage" -- Most of the warnings in the Bible are for the 'believers,' not the unbelievers. How is the Holy Spirit convicting you through God's word?

27. Psalm 106:41 -- "... he gave them into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them." God punishes by giving people terrible leaders.

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28. Psalm 106:42 – “Their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their power.” God punishes by giving victory to enemies.

29. Psalm 106:44 – “Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry.” God will accept genuine repentance.

30. Psalm 106:47 – “Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.” God intends for His people to honor Him and to be a light among the nations. Our nation’s problem is that the light isn’t bright enough because God’s people have not honored the Holiness of God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 Sep 18: Pray earnestly for corporate repentance in the church and for revival. In your prayer, pray that God will start with you, strengthening your commitment to Him, your love for Him, your faithfulness to Him, and your public glorification of Him.

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 5, Friday, 14 September 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+18%2C+19%3B+proverbs+14%3B+Hebrews+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 14 September 18:

1. Isaiah 18:4, 5 -- “‘I will quietly look from my dwelling like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.’ For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he cuts off the shoots with pruning hooks, and the spreading branches he lops off and clears away.” God waits quietly until He is ready to bring judgment on earthly powers who never see it coming. Many mistake his quietness for a lack of presence or awareness. As the student knows, during an exam, the professor remains silent.

2. Isaiah 19:2-4 – “And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, each against another and each against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom; and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their counsel; and they will inquire of the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the necromancers; and I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them, declares the Lord God of hosts.”

- God rouses the hearts of people and uses them to accomplish His purposes. God also uses the unbeliever for His purposes, but not to their merit. God controls what man cannot control, and nothing happens outside of His control. God punishes nations and people through events, circumstances, and people controlled by Him, though the unbeliever does not see His hand in it. God also orchestrates circumstances for the good of His children, though we often don’t understand what He is doing. We must learn to walk in faith, hope, love, obedience, joy, and confidence through all circumstances, patiently awaiting the final glory.

-- Romans 8:18-25 -- For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in

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this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

3. Isaiah 19:12 – “Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you that they might know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt.” God calls wise the one who knows the purposes of God.

4. Isaiah 19:16, 17 – “In that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the Lord of hosts shakes over them. And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians. Everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the purpose that the Lord of hosts has purposed against them.” God brings fear to the most powerful nations.

5. Isaiah 19:21-25 -- “And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

- An indicator that someone truly knows the Lord is that they fulfill their vows to the Lord. Talk is cheap, and gifts that don't cost the giver much are not usually worth very much.

- Peace in the Middle East (and whole earth) will only come through the Rule of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ --“Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it..... And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:2-3, 10) Are you placing your trust in worldly kingdoms or the Kingdom of God? Are you pledging allegiance to kingdoms of men or to the Kingdom of God? Are you seeking first the Kingdom of God or a kingdom on earth? Do you realize that all the kingdoms of man are at war with the Kingdom of God? Do you understand that God's people are to be Christ's ambassadors in foreign lands, sent on a mission of reconciliation with Him? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)

-- Joshua 5:13-15 -- When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

-- Zechariah 14 – (The Coming Day of the Lord) Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle.... Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle....

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Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.... And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.... Jerusalem shall dwell in security. And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.... Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths....

-- Daniel 2:44-45 -- And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

-- Daniel 7: 13, 14, 22, -- I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.... and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.... And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.

-- Revelation 12:5 -- She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,

-- Revelation 19:11, 15 -- Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.... From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

-- Revelation 20:4, 12, 13 -- Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

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-- 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3 -- Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

-- Revelation 1:6 -- ...and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

-- Revelation 5:10 -- and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

-- Revelation 20:6 -- Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

6. Isaiah 19:23 -- "And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them." Often God needs to discipline in order to heal and to bring true reconciliation. God cannot allow sinful behavior remain which divides.

7. Isaiah 19:24, 25 -- "In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.'" God has always had a plan to make disciples of all nations.

8. Proverbs 14:1 -- "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down." Your thoughts, words, and deeds will either build up or tear down. No matter how smart or good they might seem, if your thoughts, words, and deeds are not led by the Spirit, they are ultimately destructive. Jesus said that He didn't say anything or do anything that didn't come from the Father. He is our example.

9. Proverbs 14:2 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord." How you walk reveals how you really feel about God.

10. Proverbs 14:5 -- "A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies." Society has its morals (which comes from the word mores or accepted values of a people), customs, traditions, and common sense, but if they aren't grounded in the Truth of Jesus and aligned to God's word, they are lies. Don't be a false witness and proclaim a false gospel of morality, sound living, and accepted philosophies. And don't present the Bible as a supernatural self-help book. The Bible is intended to draw you closer to Jesus, not just to make you more comfortable on earth. Proclaim Jesus as the only hope for salvation, joy, peace, love, and unity. Too many Christians have substituted a message of goodness for the message of Jesus, the Gospel. Christians are often comfortable in crowds talking about their views of right and wrong but not about Jesus. We are not called to teach people how to perform good deeds; we are called to make Jesus more known to them. It is hard to be excited about and talk passionately about someone you don't really know that well personally. If you find it difficult to share your testimony, it may not be very real to you, a religion rather than a genuine relationship. Are you excited about sharing today the Jesus you know personally? How many times will you mention Jesus to someone today? When people talk about the issues of life today, will you talk about what is right or will you talk about Jesus who is real answer. Don't water down the Gospel today and point someone to a concept rather than the person of Jesus.

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11. Proverbs 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” The Bible warns us time and time again that we cannot possibly know the way we should go – this revelation can only come from God. If self is getting in the way of your relationship with God, you will go astray.

12. Proverbs 14:20 – “The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends.” Ungodly relationships and ungodly acts of kindness are ultimately selfishly motivated – the worldly friend wants something in return. Godly relationships are selfless, motivated by love alone, desiring nothing in return but to grow closer to the God who is Love.

13. Proverbs 14:34 – “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” God is the only security for a nation. The outcomes of elections don’t determine the fate of the nation, the people’s relationship with God does. Christian love does what worldly, self-centered love cannot do – it loves even enemies unconditionally. Is your love unconditional?

14. Proverbs 14:30 – “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.” The best thing you can do for your physical fitness is work on your spiritual fitness first. Many people dedicate an hour a day to exercise and carefully monitor what they eat. How many people spend an hour a day in Bible study and prayer, and how many carefully monitor what feeds their mind and heart? What will you gaze upon and listen to today? Eliminate the negative and stay focused on Jesus and positive things. “Do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.” (1 Corinthians 14:20) “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8) “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2) “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)

15. Hebrews 2:1 -- "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." You must pay very close attention to God's word, not just casually reading it but meditating upon it and applying it each day. We are always in danger of drifting away from Jesus' side. Grace is not a license to be complacent; quite the contrary, grace should compel us to strive for holiness with all our might. The casual Christian doesn't really understand the value of grace. If you owned a \$200,000 car, would you care for it differently than you would an old beater car? How do you treat the grace you have received through the blood of Jesus? The Bible says that continuing in sin is trampling on the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 10:29)

16. Hebrews 2:8, 9 -- "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." Jesus is in complete control, but this is not apparent in what we see day to day. In Matthew 28, Jesus reminded the disciples that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him by the Father. So, how much has been left for Satan and his followers? None! In that authority, Jesus has made us ambassadors and priests; therefore, His faithful followers are the most powerful people on earth. Do you walk confidently under the authority of the King of Kings? Faith comes not by what the world sees but by truly seeing the truth through Jesus, vision obtained through the Holy Spirit. Keep your eyes affixed on Jesus, and walk in faith, hope, and love.

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17. Hebrews 2:17-18 – “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Only the God/man could be a perfect sacrifice to reconcile us to God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Sep 18: Today, with a firm reliance on God's grace, pay closer attention to your obedience to God's commands in love. Seek purity, holiness, and wisdom with all your might. Resolve to live up to your calling as a disciple, ambassador (representative), and priest of Jesus. Proclaim Christ and Christ alone.

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 4, Thursday, 13 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+16%2C+17%3B+proverbs+13%3B+hebrews+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 13 September 18:

1. Isaiah 16:5 – “...then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.” God expects rulers to be instruments of justice and righteousness for all people, not instruments of greed and oppression.

- “The prophet has constantly kept before his mind the image of an ideal king. The ideal was partially fulfilled in Hezekiah, yet only partially; the prophet was sure One was coming who would fulfil it in its utmost meaning, and he steadfastly kept his eye on the bright day when God's throne should be established among the nations, and His sceptre should be extended over all. God does not exist merely to destroy, nor does He rule only in order that He may humble and crush; His purpose is one of equity, righteousness, blessing, cultivation.” (J. Parker, D. D.)

2. Isaiah 16:12 – “And when Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself on the high place, when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail.” Sin hinders prayers. Many people who are very active in the church still treat sin casually. This is unacceptable to God. Worship that is acceptable to God is obedience motivated by genuine love, with confidence, appreciation, and reliance on His grace. God is not deceived by outward appearances as people are, and He knows the truth of the worshipper's heart. “The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.” (Proverbs 15:29) “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” (James 5:16) “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (1 Peter 3:12)

3. Isaiah 16:14 – “But now the Lord has spoken, saying, ‘In three years, like the years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab will be brought into contempt, in spite of all his great multitude, and those who remain will be very few and feeble.’” God pronounced a judgment that would not occur for three years but was inevitable. Current prosperity is not necessarily an absence of judgment but merely the calm before the storm. God holds everyone accountable in His own way and in His own timing. Do not fret when the wicked seem to prosper – God is in control.

4. Isaiah 17:4-6 – “And in that day the glory of Jacob will be brought low, and the fat of his flesh will grow lean. And it shall be as when the reaper gathers standing grain and his arm harvests the ears, and as when one gleans the ears of grain in the Valley of Rephaim. Gleanings will be left in it, as when an

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olive tree is beaten— two or three berries in the top of the highest bough, four or five on the branches of a fruit tree....” God uses hard times (in this case an Assyrian invasion) to deal with the pride and vanities of His people, to discipline them and purify them. For those who are not saved, God’s judgment means condemnation. For those who are saved, God’s judgment means discipline and sanctification, that we would be conformed to the image of His Son.

5. Isaiah 17:7 – “In that day man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will look on the Holy One of Israel. He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands, and he will not look on what his own fingers have made, either the Asherim or the altars of incense.” Often God has to bring the prideful to their knees for them to see that they are truly powerless and totally dependent upon Him. Self-sufficiency is an illusion.

6. Isaiah 17:13 – “The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm.” All the powers that men can obtain and wield are absolutely nothing before God. The most powerful nation on earth can be decimated in a day, without any warning. The only foundation that is sure in the storms is the Rock of Jesus.

7. Proverbs 13:1 – “A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.” A scoffer is a person who simply won’t listen to reason and truth because of their pride. The Bible has much to say about scoffers:

- Don’t listen to scoffers, argue with scoffers, or associate with them. (Psalm 1:1)
- Scoffers enjoy and take pride in their rebuttal of truth and ignorance of truth. (Proverbs 1:22)
- Arguing with a scoffer will only cause you needless pain. (Proverbs 9:7)
- Scoffers hate those who speak the truth. (Proverbs 9:8)
- Scoffers refuse to accept a loving rebuke, no matter from whom it comes. (Proverbs 13:1)
- Scoffers seek wisdom and often claim wisdom, but they remain foolish because they are blinded by their pride and arrogance – you cannot fix what you are not willing to be honest about. (Proverbs 14:6)
- Scoffers will not seek the counsel of those who are wise but rather will surround themselves with people who tell them what they want to hear. Those who seek the truth are willing to listen to opposing views because truth can withstand any scrutiny. (Proverbs 15:12)
- A scoffer can must be controlled externally because they have no self-control. They need external discipline because they do not have internal discipline. (Proverbs 19:29; 21:11)
- All scoffers are arrogant and prideful. Pride leads to destruction. (Proverbs 21:24)
- Scoffers are the source of quarrelling. Where there is no scoffer, there is no quarrelling. (Proverbs 22:10)
- Scoffers are an abomination to mankind before the Lord. (Proverbs 24:9)
- Scoffers start fights that can destroy society; they increase disunity rather than unity. (Proverbs 29:8)

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- Scoffers cannot 'hear' (understand or accept) God's word, even if someone explains it clearly and shows it to them practically. They don't have an intellect problem; they have a heart (spiritual) problem. Sound reason and evidence cannot convince them. (Isaiah 28:14; Acts 13:41)
- Scoffers will be destroyed and face eternal judgment. (Isaiah 29:20)
- Scoffers will increase in the last days. (2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:18)
- Scoffers are led by their passions rather than by the Spirit. (Jude 1:18)
- Scoffers are fools. There are 118 Bible verses that deal with foolishness. Do a topical study on foolishness to learn more.

8. Proverbs 13:13 – "Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded." Ignoring God's word or making light of it is the same as despising it. When God speaks, it is either everything to you because it is the word of the KING, or it is nothing at all. To approach God's word casually is to disrespect the Majesty and Sovereignty of God.

9. Proverbs 13:20 – "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." The Bible is clear that only followers of Jesus are "wise," it is not an intellectual endeavor but rather a spiritual one. If you aren't walking with fellow committed Christians, disciples of Jesus, you will suffer harm. Are your friends strong Christians who are helping you get closer to Jesus every day while you help them do the same? Do your friends challenge and encourage you to be more like Jesus each day?

[Note: Here is a link to a video overview of Hebrews: <https://youtu.be/1fNWTZZwgbs>]

10. Hebrews 1:1 -- "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." The Bible gives us the great testimony of the prophets who were used mightily by God at critical times in history and who stand as great examples to us, but we, in our age, have been given so much more through Jesus, direct access to the Father and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. You don't need to have someone else speak to you on the God's behalf if you are willing to truly listen. In fact, you have been given the authority and power to be a disciple maker, and the Bible says you are called to be a priest on this earth (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). With great power comes great responsibility. What are you doing with Jesus in this age?

11. Hebrews 1:3 -- "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." The Bible says of Jesus, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15) Likewise, the Bible says, "we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." (1 Corinthians 15:49) In fact, we were "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." (Romans 8:29) Many ask, "What does God want me to do with my life?" Well, the Bible tells you – you are to become the image of Christ, the radiance (or reflection) of his glory. But imaging Christ is a process of development – "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18) The Spirit transforms us but we must choose to partner with the Spirit, to "live by the Spirit... [and] also keep in step with the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25) In describing Jesus' imprinting of the Father, the first chapter of Hebrews only mentions one character trait -- "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness."

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(Hebrews 1:9) As we endeavor to grow in the image of Christ, we must both plant seeds of righteousness (Proverbs 11:18) and remove weeds – “If you love flowers, you must hate weeds.” It is a two-fold process of growing the good while removing the bad. Many are familiar with Romans 12:2 which says, “be transformed by the renewal of your mind,” but we forget the whole verse – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” The first step is to make the ground ready for the seeds. You may have some plowing to do. We cannot partner with both the world and the Spirit. We all have to make a conscience choice to both love righteousness and hate wickedness. In this, the Bible gets pretty specific:

- Colossians 3:1-17 -- If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. When we finally get to heaven, May God say to us, “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.” (Hebrews 1:9) “Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.” (Luke 19:17)

12. Hebrews 1:9 – “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness....” Jesus hates wickedness. Do you?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 Sep 18: Focus on growing in wisdom today by getting closer to Jesus. We don't create wisdom, it emanates from the Creator and flows through us as we, the branches, remain connected to the vine of Jesus (John 15). Get closer to Jesus and get wiser. Walk with Him intentionally and thoughtfully today. Don't pursue mere 'goodness' today, pursue unity with Him. (See today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 3, Wednesday, 12 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+14%2C+15%3B+proverbs+12%3B+philemon>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 12 September 18:

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1. Isaiah 14:12, 13 -- "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God' The name "Day Star" is literally translated "shining one," and likely refers contextually to the king of Babylon, though some have recognized the similarities of the fall of this earthly ruler to the fall of Lucifer. Though the text does not refer directly to Lucifer or his fall, we do know that Satan works through people who are led by him. Jesus called those led by Satan children of the devil, rather than children of God. From beginning to end, the Bible describes a contest of kingdoms, between the Kingdom of God and those who worship God as LORD, and the kingdoms of men (led by Satan) who pridefully seek to usurp the Lordship of the Almighty in futility. Whether they acknowledge it or not, everyone has a leader. Everyone follows someone or something, and Jesus warned that a person cannot serve two masters, particularly two that are diametrically opposed. Sometimes, evil people can be influenced to do 'good' things, and sometimes 'good' people can be influenced to do bad things, but ultimately, everyone is either following Christ or an antichrist which offers another 'salvation,' a different gospel which is really no Gospel at all. Earthly leaders are either pointing to Christ or to an antichrist, there is no middle ground. Someone once said, "Leaders know the way and show the way." Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and The Life. No one comes to the Father but through me." All other "Day Stars" in their apparent glory will be consumed by the Light and be seen no more. Like a mighty oak, they will be cut down by God. As a leader, be careful not to communicate hope in anything other than Jesus.

2. Isaiah 14:13-14 -- "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" Sin basically involves placing self above God, thinking your hope and salvation depends on your personal power, thinking you're in control of your destiny, seeking to build your own kingdom on earth rather than seeking first the Kingdom of God. The message of the world (this shiny forbidden apple) is one of self-actualization, self-realization, self-determination, and self-motivation, and just plain selfishness -- humanism. These teachings creep into the church and many blend Christianity with humanism to form a false religion which suggests that God wants me to have what I want and wants to support my little kingdom on earth until I die and go to heaven. Be careful not to change "Thy will be done on earth," with "My will be done on earth."

3. Isaiah 14:16-17 -- "Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?'" Even our greatest accomplishments are temporary and insignificant unless they are in fulfillment of God's eternal plan. Do not labor in vain.

4. Isaiah 14:24-27 -- "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.... For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" God has a plan for the world from which He will not deviate and which cannot be altered. His plan is revealed in His word.

5. Isaiah 15 -- There comes a point when it is too late to mourn and cry out for mercy because judgment has already been decided.

6. Proverbs 12:1 -- "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." God disciplines you to teach you. Don't despise His discipline -- learn from it. Do you have the eyes to see God's discipline in your life, and do you have the heart to accept it? God disciplines you through your

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circumstances, not that every difficult thing that happens to you is discipline, but some are. Often, you will not understand why things are happening. When you face challenges, simply seek to draw closer to the Lord in obedience, reliance on His grace, and confidence in His never-ending love.

7. Proverbs 12:2 – “A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of evil devices he condemns.” God condemns those who reject His mercy and grace through Jesus.

8. Proverbs 12:15 – “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” Fools are very confident in their foolishness.

9. Proverbs 12:16 – “The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.” It is wise to ignore insults, but many can't resist the temptation to respond. Those who respond are led by emotion rather than the Spirit. When you are insulted, your faith, hope, and love are being tested. You will reveal in that instant what you really believe, who you really trust, and who you really love more, self or God. The biggest struggle in life is the battle against self-centeredness and selfishness. Your immediate response, what you do without thinking, reveals the truth of your faith and your heart. Take notice. If you do not respond to insults and offenses as Jesus would, you have a relationship problem. Don't try to justify your poor behavior. Get closer to Jesus. Don't try to shift responsibility from yourself by focusing on what the other person did to you. Their actions are between them and God. You are responsible to God for your responses. Humbly repent to God when your actions don't adequately reflect Christ-like sacrificial love, when you fail to truly deny self, take up your personal cross, and follow Jesus' example of, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.”

10. Proverbs 12:18, 25 – “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.... Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.” The words of a Christian should bring healing and gladness, though sometimes they may be difficult to receive at first. Your words are very powerful; they change the environment and impact the hearts of others. As an ambassador for Christ, you have been charged with speaking only for Jesus, not for yourself, in every moment. You're called to communicate reconciliation, to make Jesus more known to others and to seek to bring everyone around you closer to Him through what you say. Jesus warned that we would be held accountable for every careless word that comes out of our mouths.

11. Proverbs 12:26 – “One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.” Let God's good word take away your stress.

[Note: Here is a link to a video summary of Philemon: <https://youtu.be/aW9Q3Jt6Yvk>]

12. Philemon 1:1 – “Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother....” Paul had many jobs in his life, he was a Jew, and he was a Roman citizen, but he identified himself, first and foremost, as a fully committed follower of Jesus and a member of the family of Christ. How do you introduce yourself to others? For what are you most known?

13. Philemon 1:1, 2 – “To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier....” Christians are both workers and soldiers. Do you work for the Kingdom and fight for righteousness? Is that your focus today, or are you consumed by the worries of the world and wrapped up in earthly pursuits? It is critical that you walk through the day with the right perspective and focus, that you are not distracted. Your world view will impact every decision you make. Seek first the Kingdom one day at a time. The truth of the Bible cannot be just a philosophy to you, it must be your action plan.

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14. Philemon 1:3 – “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul’s goal was that others might truly know, receive, and enjoy the grace and peace that comes through Jesus. Are you known by others as unnaturally graceful, gracious, and peaceful? Do the words that come out of your mouth exude surprising grace and peace? In the most chaotic environments, do you remain unflustered like Jesus sleeping in the back of a boat tossed about by the storms of the sea while everyone else panicked? If not, ask yourself why not.

15. Philemon 1:4-7 – “I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.” Do you always thankfully pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ? How about today? Are others hearing about the impact your love and faithfulness is having on others? Are you knowing Jesus and making Him known to others more and more with each day, and are you praying that others would do the same? Does your love bring comfort and refresh others?

- We cannot fully mature in Christ outside of relationships with others. The sharing of our faith is required to truly “know” the power of the Spirit within us. God has given us the mandate of discipleship and evangelism. If we are not faithful to Christ in our relationships, we live fruitless lives.

16. Philemon 1:8, 9 – “Though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus.” Do you command others to do what is right or do you appeal to them? Which approach is more loving? Are your emotions held captive (as a prisoner) by the love of Christ?

17. Philemon 1:14 – “I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.” Paul wanted to give others the opportunity to do what they should by their own choice, inspired by love, rather than forcing them to do it. This comes with risk and takes great patience.

- Obedience out of a sense of duty or responsibility does not have the power of obedience inspired by love.

18. Philemon 1:17 – “So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.” Paul’s appeal was grounded in relationship. His influence was empowered by the truth of his character. He was persuasive because he was genuine, selfless, and loving, not because he had positional authority or the power of threat. His authority was from Jesus, the authority of the Truth. Rules without relationship leads to rebellion.

19. Philemon 1:18 – “If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.” Paul ensured there were no personal issues, issues, or debts that would distract from his appeal. Do not let unsettled matters between you and others distract them from the truth you proclaim. Let no debt remain but the debt of love. Philemon had no excuse to keep him from listening to Paul and accepting his appeal.

20. Philemon 1:20 – “Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.” Paul could freely and confidently ask, and Philemon could confidently accept, because Paul was not

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motivated by any selfishness. Being solely committed to the work of Jesus, Paul presented Philemon with a decision of whether or not to serve Jesus, not Paul.

21. Philemon 1:21 – “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.” Love causes us to do more than what is asked or expected. Jesus said walk an extra mile, even for the unrighteous Roman centurion.

22. Philemon 1:25 – “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” Paul began all conversations with a focus on grace and peace and ended all conversations with a focus on grace and peace. One of your biggest challenges today and everyday will be to not lose focus on your purpose and mission as an ambassador for Jesus and a reconciler. In your interactions with others, you cannot, as an ambassador, represent your own interests or speak on your own behalf but must represent Jesus and speak on His behalf; and regardless matter at hand, you must not lose focus on the goal of revealing Christ a bit more to the other purpose and seeking their reconciliation with Jesus, drawing them just a bit closer to Jesus. Don’t let the “issue,” whatever it may be, become the focus and a distraction from Jesus. Overwhelm the other person with the grace and peace of Jesus. Be willing to lose the argument or suffer temporal loss in order to win the true victory.

“Cross” Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 Sep 18: Today, critique your every encounter with every person with whom you interact. Did you represent Jesus or yourself? Were you motivated by emotion or love? Did you leave the other person overwhelmed by your display of grace, mercy, and peace? Were your words refreshing and renewing? Did you leave them with a greater understanding of Jesus? Were you faithful with the moment? Did you walk away feeling closer to Jesus, with contentment and peace? If you fell short, don’t worry, just pray, repent, and get closer to Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 2, Tuesday, 11 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+12-13%3B+proverbs+11%3B+titus+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 11 September 18:

1. Isaiah 12:1 -- "... your anger turned away, that you might comfort me." God doesn't want to deal with you in anger but rather comfort you, but as a loving, perfect Father, God does discipline His children. Don't let sin hinder your joy in the Lord. Learn, grow in Christ-like character, and be thankful for the love of Abba, “Daddy.”

- Hebrews 12:5 -- And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

- Romans 8:28, 29 – And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son....

2. Isaiah 12:3-6 -- " With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel." Genuine worship starts with confession and repentance, then joyous gratitude for salvation and total

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reliance on God. Those who know God naturally worship Him and eagerly proclaim His Name to all. Those who are challenged proclaiming Jesus have a relationship problem.

3. Isaiah 13:11 -- "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless." God will judge the world at a time when people remain arrogant, prideful, and blind. Like Sodom and Gomorrah (v19), the world won't see it coming. Even those who claim to be religious will be surprised in judgment.

4. Isaiah 13:6-20 -- God expresses His anger in concrete ways to punish sin. Many churches have stopped preaching this message for a much more popular god that is only love, mercy, and peace, not justice, a god that accepts anything and everything. God is a God of mercy and grace but also justice, which is required of a truly loving God. Imagine just one day on earth where there was absolutely no justice – it would be hell on earth. Growing closer to God results in becoming more, not less, passionate about justice and righteousness, while also growing more passionate about grace and mercy through Jesus. Good leaders struggle with how to administer justice combined with appropriate levels of mercy and grace. Justice is giving people what they deserve. Mercy is not giving people what they deserve, and grace is giving people good they don't deserve. Only God can rightly administer justice, mercy, and grace.

- Zephaniah 3:5 -- The Lord within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.

- Matthew 5:43-45 -- "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- 1 Peter 2:19 -- For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

5. Isaiah 13:17 -- "Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold."

- A people who are motivated by materialism and earthly gain are no match for those who are inspired by a higher calling. Napoleon said, "There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit."

- Gold and silver are meaningless on the day of Judgment.

6. Proverbs 11:2 -- "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom." Pride comes when you start thinking about yourself more than about God, when you start serving your own interests ahead of God's – this is disgraceful.

7. Proverbs 11:11 -- "By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown." As the church goes, so goes the nation. Our nation will be blessed if God's people proclaim the Gospel clearly and communicate His truths boldly within the public discourse as the conscience of the nation. If the wicked are louder and more influential than God's people, our nation will not endure it.

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8. Proverbs 11:28 – “Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.” Our national motto is, “In God we trust.” Is this true? If we trust in anything else, we are doomed as a nation.

9. Titus 3:1 – “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work....” God commands us to obey the government.

10. Titus 3:2 – “...to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” We are not allowed to speak poorly of anyone but must show humility towards ALL, regardless of how much they deserve it.

- “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.... I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:2-11) Those who are guided by the Spirit see things from a spiritual perspective and view others from that spiritual perspective, rather than the way everyone else sees things. Understanding the realities of the spiritual condition of those who are trapped in sin, particularly from our position of having been freed from sin by grace through Jesus, we can only respond to sinners with “gentle... perfect courtesy.” Those “Christians” who quarrel and who are led by their passions are not guided by the Spirit, and we should avoid them.

- We must remember that those sinful people who cause so much pain and destruction are deceived and enslaved. Again, what did Jesus say on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

- Saved by grace, we must bestow grace to all.

11. Titus 3:9 -- “But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.” Don't let foolish debates get in the way of Jesus and His Gospel. While everyone else gets wrapped up in national politics and church politics, proclaim Jesus and the word of God which cuts through all the foolishness. Arguments over non-essential, debatable topics outside of the clear Gospel message aren't likely to bring people closer to God or to each other. We are on a mission of reconciliation which requires gentle perseverance. Read 1 Corinthians 8 where Paul warns us to let our superior knowledge get in the way of love. Paul was dealing with a church where many still believed there were many gods rather than One God. Paul warned those who knew better not to act in ways that would simply drive the immature away from Jesus and back into sin. Never compromise the truth, but don't present it in a way that can't be handled by others. Would you feed an infant a steak, and then punish the infant for not eating it?

12. Titus 3:10, 11 -- “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” Avoid the divisive person who is not a reconciler. Our mission is clear, the mission of reconciliation, not division. (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19) There is no reconciliation among people unless there is first reconciliation with Jesus. Our aim is not the proclamation of “diversity” but rather the proclamation of “unity” – the combination of two words: unity and diversity. God created us to be part of a universe

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– many different people, serving different roles in different ways, united in Jesus to fulfill the purpose of God, glorifying Him that His will be done “on earth as it is in Heaven.” Read John 17, Jesus’ last recorded prayer before the Cross – his prayer is that we would be one with God and, therefore, with each other. Apart from God, there can be no unity, and diversity isn’t a strength but rather a divider. While everyone else is proclaiming diversity, proclaim unity – unity in our diversity through unity with Jesus.

13. Titus 3:14 – “And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.” God calls us to work in order to take care of our daily needs and to help others, not to build personal empires. Living in and with excess only robs you of your peace and joy while denying others what they need. Living in excess is a sin; make no mistake about that.

14. Titus 3:15 -- "Grace be with you all." Paul ends his letter with a reminder of the grace we have received. Keeping that in perspective today and everyday will help you live out Titus 3:1-9. Seek to see every moment through the reality of the Cross.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 Sep 18: Today, endeavor to ignore the controversies and dissensions plaguing the world today and focus on Jesus who is the remedy to all of those foolish problems. Don't take sides in the arguments of the day, but rather proclaim the word of God and seek to guide people closer to Jesus. (Titus 3)

DBRP - WEEK 37, Day 1, Monday, 10 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+10%2C+11%3B+proverbs+10%3B+titus+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 10 September 18:

1. Isaiah 10:5 – “Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!” The Sovereign God uses wicked nations, bad leaders, and devastating circumstances to discipline and judge His disobedient people, desiring them to repent and return to Him, while glorifying His holy Name.

2. Isaiah 10:5-11 – “I send him.... But he does not so... think.” God often uses people to accomplish His purposes without them realizing it.

3. Isaiah 10:5 -- “When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.”

Accomplishments don’t always equate to approval. God allowed Assyria to fulfill their wicked intent and to succeed over His people for a time, but His intent was to hold them accountable as is His intent with all the wicked. When the wicked seem to prevail, draw closer to the Lord and wait upon Him. God is good and works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

4. Isaiah 10:6-11 – “...but it is in his heart to destroy....” Human pride leads to arrogant disregard for human life and for God. Do you see the effects of human pride around you today?

5. Isaiah 10:13 -- For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones.” The prideful and arrogant tell themselves that they have accomplished something from their own strength, wisdom, talent, and personal power. Even Christians are susceptible to prideful thinking, attempting to build their own thrones and idols while telling themselves God is with

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them in their prideful activities. Be very careful not to become self-serving and not to pursue your own kingdom on earth. God will bring down the throne you sit on or the idols you prioritize in your life over Him.

- Psalm 127:1, 2 -- Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

- Psalm 60:11 -- Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!

- Psalm 20:6-7 -- Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

- 1 Corinthians 15:58 -- Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

- 1 Peter 1:17 -- And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile....

- Psalm 37:25 -- I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

- Isaiah 1:13 -- Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

- Psalm 33:12-22 -- Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds. The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. ...

6. Isaiah 10:15 – “Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!” How foolish is it for a person to think that they are in control? The Sovereign God is in complete control while the wicked continue to boast. In completely blind arrogance, the ungodly have no perception of God's sovereignty and holiness. In unabashed conceit, many today have decided that God is not part of the equation for life. Some of the world's most acclaimed leaders sit at the height of foolishness in their secular humanism. Do not be deceived by their counsel.

7. Isaiah 10:16 – “Therefore the Lord God of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire.” God humbles proud nations and proud people. Watch and see.

8. Isaiah 10:20 – “In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.” In sinful times, we must put our trust in God rather than in the sinful institutions around us. Our allegiance and loyalty must remain in God no matter how powerful the sinful might appear. We must not compromise with the ungodly because we think we depend upon them.

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9. Isaiah 10:21, 22 – “A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return.” Few remain faithful when society turns from God. Will you be counted among the remnant of faithful?

10. Isaiah 10:23 – “For the Lord God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.” God will keep His promises and will save His remnant. Do you trust God in His promise enough to walk in faith today? Faith is believing God today; hope is trusting God with the future; and love is the product of faith and hope.

11. Isaiah 10:24-34 -- God's sovereignty means that even in the most difficult times, we should only fear Him.

12. Isaiah 11:1-3 – “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.” This is a prophesy of Jesus.

13. Isaiah 11:3, 4 -- “He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.” It is impossible to make good decisions solely from human perceptions and intellect which are too limited to see and understand the whole picture. Decisions based upon the very best of our mental, emotional, and physical capacities are inevitably flawed in some way. Our physical urges seek instant gratification without regard for long-term consequences, our emotions are self-centered, and our minds can process what little information we can perceive which is often misinterpreted. However, the Holy Spirit is unlimited and holds all truth. It is only our connection with the Holy Spirit which gives us any real power. No spiritual power is generated or created by us, only received by God. We must be guided by the Holy Spirit through obedience to God's word, which is often beyond our understanding. Only through the Spirit can a person judge the reality of any situation. Spiritual discernment comes from relationship with Jesus which grows in our obedience to Jesus and quality time with Jesus, walking with Him in spirit and in truth day-by-day. We must humbly seek the mind of Christ in every decision. All decisions must be prayerful ones, seeking to understand through spiritual discernment what is impossible to understand through human intellect. If you think you have it figured out on your own, check yourself, and pray for greater humility.

14. Isaiah 11:12 – “He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” Without the leading of the Shepherd, God's sheep scatter. Obedient surrender keeps you close to Him and, by definition, close to other disciples. Disunity is a sign of scattering. The Shepherd leads all the sheep in the same direction, with a sense of collective purpose. The good sheep dogs in the world (church leaders) only drive the sheep closer to the Shepherd. Do you have a sense that your church is closely following Jesus together, growing ever closer along the way? And do the problems people face only drive you and others closer to the Shepherd and to each other?

15. Proverbs 10:3 – “The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.” Sinners are working against God, and He will deal with them.

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16. Proverbs 10:5 – “He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.” Make the most of the opportunities God has given you while they still exist. Opportunities are fleeting. Don’t hesitate to do what you know you should do.

17. Proverbs 10:8 – “The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.” Stop talking and start obeying.

18. Proverbs 10:12 – “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.” Love covers over wrongs because it is willing to be mistreated without demanding justice. Love responds with mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

19. Proverbs 10:19 – “When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.” Be wise and be quiet.

20. Proverbs 10:20 – “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.” A person’s heart determines their worth and the value of their words.

21. Proverbs 10:21 – “The lips of the righteous feed many....” Do your words nourish others?

22. Proverbs 10:23 – “Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.” Fools joke about sin. Question your heart if the TV shows you enjoy watching make light of sin or even joke about it. God forbid that we would be entertained by what God abhors.

23. Titus 2:1-11 – “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.” Teachers must not only be experts in Biblical doctrine, but they must also be models of self-control (evidence of the Spirit). This means that they are not controlled by emotions, cravings, or passions. They have a proven ability to control their tempers, their egos (no boasting “I did this [or that]”), their appetites (not gluttons or in debt), and their passions (they keep relationships peaceful, pure, and holy). Bible knowledge alone does not make a teacher. Teachers must embody the teachings. In pride, many without any real credibility seek to teach from their puffed-up knowledge. Even the ungodly will eventually see through a hypocrite (actor). A teacher must not only know the doctrine but show the doctrine. Jesus stood out from the Pharisees in part because He genuinely walked the talk, sacrificing all to do it. The price of leadership is sacrifice. There is no worldly profit in leadership though many seek to make it a living.

24. Titus 2:2-6 – “Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.” With spiritual growth comes ever-increasing humility and self-control. Galatians 5:22, 23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Laws, rules and moral codes cannot give you these qualities, they come from the Spirit; as you grow closer and closer to Jesus, these qualities will naturally grow in your life. You cannot use willpower to get them, they flow from Jesus to you. If you lack things like gentleness and self-control, you don’t have a willpower problem, you have a relationship problem -- Jesus is not ‘big’ enough in your life because you are too distant from Him. When Jesus talked about removing the plank

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in your eye before trying to take the splinter out of someone else's eye, He was speaking about proximity. Hold a splinter close to your eye, and it appears to be a plank, blinding you from everything else. What is very close to you determines how you see everything else in relative perspective. Ensure that Jesus is so close to your eye that you cannot see around Him but must see everything through Him. Do you have trouble controlling your emotions (self-control)? Then, something has gotten between you and Jesus. Don't let problems and temptations get between you and Jesus. Keep Jesus between you and everything else.

- In the short chapter of Titus, self-control is mentioned four times. Words used to describe self-control are sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, loving, steadfast, pure, hardworking, kind, submissive, respectful, a model of good works, a person of integrity, dignified, sound in speech, well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, lawful, upright, zealous, and godly. Other Bible verses include attributes such as humble, patient, gentle, quiet, forgiving, gracious, charitable, sober, diligent, frugal, discerning, etc. While we certainly appreciate God's grace in the face of our inadequacies, we must still consider our shortcomings as unacceptable in our lives and must continuously strive (empowered by the Spirit) to eliminate them. No Christian filled with the Holy Spirit would consider using God's grace as a pass for a lack of self-control. Those within the church who make light of sin in the name of grace should be rebuked "with all authority." We must train our character as the professional athlete trains the body.

25. Titus 2:7-8 – "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." Words and deeds go hand-in-hand and are both requirements of our calling. You must walk your talk. Some Christians talk without integrity, nullifying their message. Some Christians convince themselves that all they have to do is demonstrate goodness, without words, to be a good witness to others. However, the Bible is clear, we have to proclaim the truth BOTH in word and deed. People will judge your words by what they see in your life, and they will judge your good deeds by what you say. When others admire your lifestyle, that is your chance to proclaim Jesus rather than give glory to yourself.

26. Titus 2:11-15 – "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you." God gives you grace through Jesus not just so that when you die you can go to Heaven and not so that you can continue to live your life as you please with the comfort of knowing that your sins won't be held against you. Grace opens the door to a life of discipleship, sanctification, and witness on earth, a chance to grow closer and closer to Jesus in obedience and purity, to glorify Him on earth through how we live, and to make disciples among the nations. Grace calls us to be "zealous for good works." Grace gives us the authority to boldly "declare these things; exhort and rebuke." Don't conceal your faith as a chameleon Christian or go along to get along. "Let no one disregard you." Make sure everyone knows exactly why you are so different – Jesus is your life.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 Sep 18: All day today, keep your mind on Jesus and see how that effects your self-control. (See notes above on Titus 2)

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 7, Sunday, 9 September 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+8%2C+9%3B+proverbs+9%3B+psalm+104%2C+105>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 9 September 18:

1. Isaiah 8:8-10 – "...and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel. Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us." "God with us (Immanuel)" means salvation for those who accept Jesus and condemnation for those who don't. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Those who choose to put their trust in and give their allegiance to anything or anyone other than Jesus are lost.

2. Isaiah 8:12-22 -- "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary.... Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples.... To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness."

- Don't worry about all the things everyone else is worried about. Focus your thoughts, energy, and activities on Jesus and serving Him today as His ambassador to a foreign land.

- Disciples follow the teachings of Jesus which are bound up in their hearts and minds.

- Our national problems are not political; they are spiritual. Even the church can be tempted into seeking sanctuary in worldly institutions rather than in The Lord. If the church would truly honor The Lord as holy, living according to His word and proclaiming His word, the entire nation would be blessed. A dimmed light promotes darkness. To the teaching and to the testimony!

3. Isaiah 8:13, 14 -- "But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary." The world fears the wrong things. Those who fear the LORD have nothing else to fear. Those who don't fear the LORD have everything to fear.

4. Isaiah 8:19 – ".... should not a people inquire of their God?" Where do you go for answers?

5. Isaiah 8:20 – "If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."

- The "dawn" is spiritual birth through the Holy Spirit. You must be born again through faith in Jesus to truly live by God's word. Anyone can study God's word, but the Holy Spirit empowers you to live God's word. True Christians proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit within them. "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12) "...the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." (Matthew 4:16) "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (John 3:3) "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:7) "Blessed be the

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God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....” (1 Peter 1:3)

- We need is God's word, which is living. There is no revelation apart from God's word.

6. Isaiah 9:2, 6, 7 -- “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” See in Matthew 4:12-17 how Jesus fulfills this prophecy. Jesus reigns! All power and authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him by the Father, and He will return to reign on a new earth. We are ambassadors for Him and His Kingdom in a foreign land. Our job is to proclaim His Majesty as KING of Kings for all who might listen as we prepare for His return.

7. Isaiah 9:6, 7 – “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” Only Jesus can be completely trusted to govern.

8. Isaiah 9:13 – “The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the Lord of hosts.” Nations and people refuse to heed God’s warnings. How has our nation been warned? God will not be mocked.

9. Isaiah 9:15, 16 – “...the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; for those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up.” A rebellious nation is deceived by both governmental leaders and church leaders. In a sinful nation, the church often becomes an accomplice to evil. In Matthew 4, we see that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 9:2 with this introductory statement: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Is your church calling for repentance? Are you?

10. Isaiah 9:19 – “Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire; no one spares another.” God disciplines and punishes nations through war, social unrest, corrupt political leaders, economic failure, famine, illness, etc. To suggest such things today is considered ignorant and fanatical. Read the record of the Bible and see. God is in control of the things people cannot control, and He uses those things to reveal Himself and His truth to those who have the eyes to see.

11. Isaiah 9:20, 21 – “They slice meat on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours the flesh of his own arm, Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh; together they are against Judah. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.” The wrath of God is unimaginable.

12. Proverbs 9:6 -- "Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight." Following Jesus requires a radical life change, a departure from the path everyone else is taking.

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13. Proverbs 9:12 -- "If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it." All of your choices have consequences in your life. The first decision, the foundational decision you must make is what are you going to do with Jesus.

14. Proverbs 9:13 -- "The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing." The foolish are 'loud and proud;' they are blind to the fact that they know nothing. Let your few soft words be the word of God.

15. Proverbs 9:18 -- "But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol." The foolish can rarely see their own foolishness.

16. Proverbs 9 -- The voices of wisdom and folly constantly compete for your attention. To whom will you listen?

17. Psalm 104 -- When you consider the Sovereignty and Majesty of God, it can only cause you to say, "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.... Bless the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord!" If your heart isn't yet filled with this level of adoration for the Lord, pray that God will more clearly reveal His Glory to you as you meditate on verses such as found in Psalm 104.

18. Psalm 104 -- Everything is perfectly orchestrated by God. Everything is totally dependent upon God.

19. Psalm 104:24 -- "O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all." The natural laws and the laws of ethics (justice) were both created by God in perfection. They both determine the order of things, and the outcomes (or consequences) of God's natural and ethical laws are inextricably linked, reliable and predictable. If we attempt to defy God's natural laws (the laws of science or nature), we will face devastating consequences. Likewise, if we attempt to defy God's moral ethical laws, we will face devastating consequences. Again, God will not be mocked. There are predictable consequences for every action. God's word can guide you down the path of predictably good consequences. Do not be deceived by following the teachings of man rather than the teachings of God. God is the author of "principles" (the truth about how life works) and "ethics" (justice), but man is the author of "values" (mankind's interpretation of principles) and "morality" (mores, customs, what is generally considered good and acceptable by the majority). Today, we use all these words interchangeably, and values and morality are preached rather than God's principles and ethics. This is the story of the Book of Judges where the people did "what was right in their own eyes."

20. Psalm 105 -- God has orchestrated history for His purposes and is still in total control. He holds the future in His hands.

21. Psalm 105:4 -- "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!" The Christian life is a daily endeavor to grow closer to Jesus and to know Him intimately. A popular song in the 1960's said it like this: "Day by day, oh, dear Lord, three things I pray: To see thee more clearly, Love thee more dearly, Follow thee more nearly, day by day." Is that your prayer today?

22. Psalm 105:43 -- "So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing." God does not intend to keep you from trials and tribulations but rather to lead you through them with joy and singing. God intends both good times and bad times to draw you closer to Him. He is where we find joy despite circumstances.

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23. Psalm 105:44, 45 – “And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples’ toil, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the Lord!”

- God blesses you that you might obey Him and reveal His Glory and Majesty to the world. He intends His people to reveal Kingdom principles to the world through their actions and influence. Christians translate God’s spiritual principles and ethics into the physical world, living by the motto, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

- God's purpose for His people has always been obedience to Him, motivated by love, for His glory.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 Sep 18: Today, this Sunday, seek with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength to grow closer to Jesus and to proclaim Him to all around you. (see today’s verses and notes above)

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 6, Saturday, 8 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+5-7%3B+proverbs+8%3B+psalm+103>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 8 September 18:

1. Isaiah 5:1-7 – “...and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?...”

- God created us to love Him for eternity and to serve Him on earth, to glorify Him on earth, and to manifest His will on earth. He loves us beyond measure and has commissioned us for our earthly purpose with all power and authority. He has given us all that we need and has provided us His Holy Spirit to empower us. If we fail to fulfill our purpose on earth, it is not because He did not adequately support us.

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- The prophet Isaiah told the story of a man with a vineyard on a fertile hill. The man cultivated the ground and removed the stones so that nothing would hinder the vines’ growth. He planted only the best quality vines. He built a tower in the middle of the vineyard so he could watch for wild animals and intruders. He constructed a wine vat so that he would be ready for the ripe grapes. Then he waited. Rather than producing good grapes, however, the vineyard produced worthless ones. The story illustrates the relationship between God and His people. God has done everything necessary for us to produce an abundance of spiritual fruit in our lives. He saved us when we were without hope. He gave us His Holy Spirit to produce fruit in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23). He removed our sin so that we are free to serve Him. We have the Bible in numerous translations. We have access to more Christian books, music, videos, conferences, schools, radio and television stations, magazines, and seminars than ever before. There are churches of every kind and size. We have teachers and pastors to instruct us and encourage us. Most of all, we have direct access to God through prayer. Jesus said that to whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:48). One day God will hold us accountable for all that He has done for us. He will ask us to show Him the fruit of all of His bountiful provision for our lives. What will He find?

2. Isaiah 5:5 – “And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.” When God removes His protections, there is no hope.

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3. Isaiah 5:6, 10, 25, 26 – “I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.... For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.... Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still. He will raise a signal for nations far away, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth; and behold, quickly, speedily they come!” God punishes nations by allowing lawlessness to go unchecked, by allowing the rise of corrupt governmental and church leaders, by bringing natural disasters, famines, and plagues; through economic collapse; and by sending foreign nations to war against them.

4. Isaiah 5:8-10 – “Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing: ‘Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.’” During what seems to be its most prosperous time, the ungodly nation falls like a house of cards.

5. Isaiah 5:11, 12 – “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord, or see the work of his hands.” The rebellious church and ungodly nation prefer entertainment over worship.

6. Isaiah 5:13 – “Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.” We suffer because we have sought to serve ourselves and lead ourselves rather than to serve God and to be led by Him.

7. Isaiah 5:18, 19 -- “Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, who say: ‘Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!’” Pay attention church: There are many active church members who are excited about the return of Jesus and His judgment on the wicked, not recognizing that they have failed to be the salt and light on earth God called them to be. Many point a finger at “the world” and blame the rapid proliferation of sin upon them, as if sinners have a choice but to sin, ignoring that the growing darkness is the result of the dimming of the light, ignoring that the salt no longer preserves because it has lost its saltiness. The church fails to see the burden of responsibility that rests upon us. Those who have been given the lamps have put them under bowls and then complained about the darkness. Christians should not blame a sinful world for being sinful and hope for the sinners’ judgment, rather Christians should repent of their compromise and recommit to a wholehearted approach to the Great Commandment and Great Commission. If the nation is getting darker, it is because the light is not bright. “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17)

8. Isaiah 5:20 -- “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.... Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them,

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and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.”

- Are we not celebrating sin in America today? Does anyone see an outcry from the church?

- Ok. This is very simple. Who decides what is good and what is evil? Where do we find out what is good and what is evil? What happens when people start to think they are the judges of what is good and what is evil? Who is our only hope?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- It is Satan's practice to convince people that what God calls good is actually evil and what God declares evil is, in fact, good. Satan persuaded Adam and Eve that their disobedience, rather than their obedience, would guarantee a full life. They believed him and immediately began to experience sin's consequences! Despite the absurdity of Satan's logic, he continues to deceive people into doubting what God has clearly said. King Saul sought Samuel's affirmation for the sacrifice he had offered, even though he had acted in direct disobedience to God's command (1 Sam. 15:13). Ananias and Sapphira expected praise from the early church for their offering, though they were blatantly lying (Acts 5:1-11). An Amalekite soldier sought David's gratitude for killing Saul, God's anointed king (2 Sam. 1:1-16). We, too, will face the temptation to call something good that God has declared wicked. We may be persuaded that we can accomplish more good by lying than by telling the truth. We may claim that we are mobilizing Christians to pray for someone in sin when, in fact, we are spreading gossip. We may assert that we are following God's will in our job when, in fact, we are striving to pursue our own ambitions. We will also be tempted to call evil that which God declares is good. God says it is good to love our enemies, yet we might decide our task is to hold them responsible for their actions. It is so important to hold ourselves accountable to God's word. God does not need us to find exceptions for His commands. He requires our obedience.

9. Isaiah 5:21 -- “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!”

- Today's sinner considers himself a part of history's most “enlightened” generation, but we are enlightening ourselves to extinction.

- It is a curse to a nation, a people, a church, and a Christian to trust in human wisdom rather than the word of God.

10. Isaiah 5:24 -- “They have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” When we, as a nation, reject God's law, there is no hope. No politician, no technology, no social reform, no economic plan, and no military strategy can save us from destruction. The only hope for our nation is collective repentance and revival. We need to put far more energy into publicly proclaiming Jesus than we do in supporting political candidates. I observe that Christians talk more about politicians in everyday conversation than they do about Jesus.

11. Isaiah 5:25 -- “Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people.” God's anger starts with His people, though we act like the grace that we have received in salvation frees us from all accountability.

12. Isaiah 5:26-30 -- We will certainly be shocked when God enables foreign nations to have a great military victory against us. Perhaps we have forgotten how horrific total war can be.

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13. Isaiah 6:2 – “Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.” The seraphim were created and equipped to serve God in a very specific way; they even had wings that enabled them to be in the presence of God, covering their face and feet. We too have been made to serve God specifically on earth, physical bodies to transform His will into tangible results on earth.

14. Isaiah 6:3 -- “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” In the Bible, words are repeated to show emphasis. The only attributed of God repeated three times in the Bible is “Holy”, not “Loving”, not “Merciful”, but “Holy.” In Revelation, the Bible says another word three times: “Woe, Woe, Woe” because the world fails to honor God as Holy. Sin defies God’s holiness.

15. Isaiah 6:5 – “And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’” From Henry T. Blackaby -- An exalted view of God brings a clear view of sin and a realistic view of self. A diminished view of God brings a reduced concern for sin and an inflated view of self. Isaiah may have been satisfied with his personal holiness until he saw the Lord in His unspeakable glory. Isaiah’s encounter with holy God made him immediately and keenly aware of his own unholiness and the sinfulness of those around him. It is impossible to worship God and remain unchanged. The best indication that we have truly worshiped is a changed heart. Have we so conformed ourselves to a sinful world that we are satisfied with unholy living? Have we sunk so far below God’s standard that when someone does live as God intended, we consider that person “super-spiritual?” If we only compare our personal holiness to those around us, we may be deceived into believing that we are living a consecrated life. Yet when we encounter holy God, our only response can be “Woe is me!” You will not see those around you trusting Jesus until they recognize a clear difference between you and the rest of the world. God wants to sanctify you as He is holy. When God deals with you, there will be a radical degree of purity about your life that is absolutely different from what the world can produce. The world, including those closest to you, will be convinced you serve a holy God by your consecrated life.

16. Isaiah 6:7 -- “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” As per the note above, we were given lips to communicate God’s will and word to others. Isaiah’s mouth had to be cleansed because He could not stand before the Lord having failed to honor Him as he had been created to do.

17. Isaiah 6:8 – “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me.’ And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people....’”

- Isaiah answered the call to proclaim God’s truth to the people, and God sent him with His word. Will you answer the call and be sent?

- It takes a pure heart to see God (Matt. 5:8). You can attend church services, read your Bible, and pray, but if sin fills your heart, you will not see God as you should. Sanctification prepares you to see and hear God more clearly. It enables you to serve Him more powerfully. Only God can purify your heart. Allow Him to remove any impurities that hinder your relationship with Him, and then your service for Him will have meaning as you offer Him your consecrated life.

18. Isaiah 6:9-13 – “Go, and say to this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest

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they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.' Then I said, 'How long, O Lord?' And he said: 'Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.' The holy seed is its stump." Isaiah was given a hard message of judgment to deliver to the people. Are you willing to tell people the truth they don't want to hear?

19. Proverbs 8:1-8 -- Wisdom is readily available to anyone who is willing to listen and take heed.

20. Proverbs 8:13 -- "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." A true follower of God hates evil as much as God does. Reread today's Isaiah chapters to understand how much God hates evil.

21. Proverbs 8:17 -- "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." Who does God love? See Psalm 11:5, and Psalm 45:7 to see who God hates. Did you think the Lord loves everyone equally like pop culture proclaims?

22. Psalms 103:7 -- "He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel." From Henry T. Blackaby -- Are you satisfied with merely knowing the acts of God, or do you also want to know His ways? There is a difference. This difference is illustrated in the lives of the children of Israel as compared to Moses. The Israelites witnessed the miracles God performed; they walked across the dry Red Sea just as Moses did. They ate the manna and quail from heaven even as Moses did. They were content to receive God's provision without ever knowing God Himself. Yet Moses saw beyond the provision of God to the person of God. Others, such as the Egyptian magicians, might perform miraculous acts, but no one else did things the way God did (Exod. 7:11-12). The way God acted provided a window into His nature. If Moses had been content with only God's power, he could have accepted the presence of an angel and been victorious in his efforts (Exod. 33:15). But Moses wanted to experience more. He wanted to experience God Himself, not just God's activity. Some today, like the Israelites, are content to experience God's activity without ever coming to know God. They are the recipients of answered prayer, yet they never come to know the Provider. They are blessed by God's providential care over their families, their homes, and their jobs, yet they are satisfied not knowing the One from whom the blessings come. They benefit from God's protection, yet they never become acquainted with the Protector. Have you come to know God more personally as a result of your experiences with Him? As you observe the acts of God, look beyond them to the revelation of His character (Gen. 22:14; John 6:35).

23. Psalm 103:8-10 -- "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities." Our Heavenly Father is the perfect parent we never had and never can be. He disciplines us, not to destroy us but rather to conform us to His will which is for our ultimate best. He will continue to discipline out of us those things which hinder our unity to Him. He allows us to suffer, not to hurt us but rather to build up our Christ-like character. He never gives us what we deserve, which is complete condemnation. In His discipline is love. Because He loves us, He disciplines us and lets us go through difficulties, always under His loving control, that we might grow to know Him, His joy, and His peace. Rejoice, even in suffering, because you know He is doing great things in your life. Yes, it is very hard to keep this perspective in the midst of trials which is why it is so

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important to always remind yourself of this fact during the easy times so you can be mentally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared for the hard times.

24. Psalm 103:11, 12 – “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” The heavens never end and neither does God’s love for us. If you travel east on the globe, you will never arrive at west (notice the Bible does not say, north to south) – God’s forgiveness for us never ends; there is nothing we can do that is not unforgivable by God if we will turn to Him in true repentance.

25. Psalm 103:13 – “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.” The Lord does not show compassion to everyone all the time in the same way. He shows compassion to His children who honor Him as Lord. God will not be mocked. He knows who are really seeking Him as BOTH Lord and Savior.

26. Psalm 103:15, 16 -- “As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.” The proud, arrogant, and rebellious seem to completely lose perspective on their lives, failing to understand that the temporal is nothing compared to the eternal which is in God’s hands.

27. Psalm 103:15, 16 – “As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.” Our time on earth is very fleeting. Our relationship with God is eternal. Invest in what lasts, without losing sight of the fact that eternal life started the day you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Our time on earth is a time to serve God here and now, planting seeds and cultivating them for eternity. Make the most of today for eternity.

28. Psalm 103:17, 18 -- “But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.” God’s love is steadfast and everlasting, but it is not for everyone, contrary to what many will preach.

29. Psalm 103:20, 21 -- “Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!” God’s people are not the ones who say they obey His word and do His will. God’s people are not the ones who carelessly proclaim God’s grace. God’s people are the ones who truly obey and do His will. The rebellious are very quick to use words like “love” and “grace” to excuse sin. “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor 6:9, 10) “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” (Gal 6:7) “Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift are from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:16-18)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Sep 18: Begin the day by getting your mind right about why you are on earth, what God intends for your life, who you serve, and how God intends you to serve Him. Meditate deeply upon how you will make the most of the day for God’s glory. Consider

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deeply what might distract you or drag you into the worries of the world. Focus on your mission of reconciliation today, drawing others closer to Jesus. Consider how you will communicate to others today, how you will steward the resources and opportunities God will place before you. At the end of the day, assess how you did. Consider how you revealed Jesus during the day. Make today's preparation for the day and assessment of the day a daily habit.

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 5, Friday, 7 September 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=isaiah+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+7%3B+titus+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 7 September 18:

1. Isaiah 3:1-3 – “For behold, the Lord God of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply, all support of bread, and all support of water; the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the skillful magician and the expert in charms.” There is no hope for a nation when God takes away His support.
2. Isaiah 3:4-7 – “And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them. And the people will oppress one another, everyone his fellow and everyone his neighbor; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the despised to the honorable. For a man will take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying: ‘You have a cloak; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule’; in that day he will speak out, saying: ‘I will not be a healer; in my house there is neither bread nor cloak; you shall not make me leader of the people.’” When a nation is judged by God, He gives them incompetent leaders, and lawlessness prevails.
3. Isaiah 3:8, 9 -- “Because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence. For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it.” How relevant are these verses within the context with today's socio-political situation? “Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.” (Isa 3:9)
4. Isaiah 3:12 -- “O my people, your guides mislead you and they have swallowed up the course of your paths.” This verse speaks to God's people – those who should have known better and maintained their holiness were deceived by popular teachings and failed to be the conscience of their nation.
5. Isaiah 3:16-26 – “The Lord said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes... therefore the Lord will... lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils. Instead of perfume there will be rotteness... and branding instead of beauty. Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle. And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground.” One of the signs of a falling nation is that people become focused on vanity and sensuality. How relevant are these verses within the context with today's socio-political situation?
6. Proverbs 7:1-3 -- “My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write

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them on the tablet of your heart." Only the Spirit can give us any real discernment. If we could maintain perfect union with the Spirit through perfect love for God, we would need not the law. However, God gives us His word and His grace knowing our imperfections. He uses it to protect us, to reveal His holy nature to us, and to reveal our sinful nature to us that we might rely upon His grace, remain in repentant transformation, and be guided in sanctification. As we walk in God's word we grow in Christ-like character. As we walk in the word, we become more attuned to the counsel of the Holy Spirit. If you are not hearing from God or seeing the clear activity of God in your life, consider how you treat God's word and the quality of your prayer life.

7. Proverbs 7:6, 7 -- "For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, I have perceived among the youth, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense." As we remain in God's word and under the daily teaching of the Holy Spirit, God will enable us to see life events from His perspective. We will notice what other people don't notice and will see truth to which others are blind.

8. Proverbs 7:7, 8, 25 -- "I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner." If we choose to walk along the same paths as the wicked, to the street corners of sin, we are setting ourselves up for failure and distancing ourselves from the Source of Love, Peace, Security, Wisdom, and Justice -- Jesus. In honor of our LORD, we must preemptively choose a completely different path, not going where everyone else goes. "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." (Matthew 7:13)

9. Proverbs 7:10-13 -- "And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait. She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him...." The sinful person is loud, showy, busily wandering, and driven by passions and emotion rather than by the Spirit.

10. Proverbs 7:16 -- "I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen...." The sinful crave luxuries and comfort rather than God's presence in their lives.

11. Proverbs 7:18 -- "Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love." Worldly love is really self-centered desire for personal satisfaction. Though, the worldly still call it love.

12. Proverbs 7:19 -- "For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey...." With worldly "love," there is always a victim, someone being used by someone else. We may romanticize it, but it is still just selfishness.

13. Proverbs 7:23 -- "...till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life." An arrow to the liver is an inevitable death, but it is slow and painful. So is sin.

[Note: Here is a link to a video overview of Titus: <https://youtu.be/PUEYCVXJM3k>]

14. Titus 1:6-9 -- "...if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to

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the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

- Titus 1:6-9 sets the standards for a leader. We have largely neglected this standard to our own peril.

- God holds His people to a very high standard of conduct, and He expects His ambassadors to "rebuke those who contradict... sound doctrine." How have we failed to meet this expectation in the modern church? How does Jesus feel about the Lukewarm?

-- Revelation 3:16 -- So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

15. Titus 1:10, 16 -- “For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers.... They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.” There are those who talk the religious talk and go through the religious motions, but they are disobedient and, thereby, deny God. Jesus said that those who love God obey God. What comes out of your mouth today, how you spend your money, how you treat others, who you choose to partner with, how you respond to ungodly behavior, and what you choose to watch on TV, or the internet, are all great indicators of how you really feel about God.

16. Titus 1:15 – “To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- Your heart’s condition will be expressed through your life. It will be evident by your attitudes, your words, and your behavior. Jesus said that you can clearly see others only when your own eyes are unobstructed (Luke 6:42). If your vision is hindered by sin, you will not look at others properly. If your heart is pure, you will approach life without malice. You will not question the motives of everyone around you; you will not doubt the truth of everything others tell you; you will not look for fault in others. Instead, you will look for the good in others, finding what is praiseworthy. You will not be naive or gullible, but you will seek what is good rather than what is evil. If your heart is pure, you will see others the way God sees them (Matt. 6:22). If your heart is defiled, everything with which you are involved will seem corrupt as well. You will assume evil motives in others because you know what you would do given the same circumstances. You will be cynical about what you hear because your own words are deceitful. You will be drawn to evil people and evil things. How do you look at the words and actions of others? Are you critical of them? Are you judgmental? If so, ask God to purify your heart. Once He has, you will be free to see yourself and others as God does.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Sep 18: Based on the standards for leadership provided in Titus, consider where you might be falling short. Are you above reproach? Do you have a clear conscience? How is your temper? Do you have self-control? Are you disciplined? Are you holy and pure? Are you able to instruct others from sound doctrine? Do you have the courage, compassion, and capability to rebuke others in love, not pride? Pray that God will refine your leadership.

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 4, Thursday, 6 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=isa+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+6%3B+2+tim+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 6 September 18:

[Note: Provided is a link to a video summary of Isaiah 1-39: <https://youtu.be/d0A6Uchb1F8>]

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1. Isaiah 1:3 – “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” It is far better to be dumb and obedient than smart and disobedient.

2. Isaiah 1:13, 16 -- “Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.... Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil.” Obedience and worship go hand-in-hand because love and faithfulness go hand-in-hand. Don’t bring your gifts to God from a position of disobedience, and don’t think that your charitable acts and kind words to others make up for refusal to obey God in other areas. Deal with your disobedience first.

- “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1 Timothy 1:5) Love comes from 1) a pure heart, 2) a good conscience, and 3) a sincere faith.

- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

- “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26-31)

3. Isaiah 1:24 -- “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.” Sinners make themselves enemies of God. Don’t behave in ways that place you at odds with the Father. He loves His children, but cannot stand idle while His Sovereignty is challenged (even for a minute) and the family name is disparaged.

4. Isaiah 2:6, 7 -- “They strike hands with the children of foreigners. Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots.” Prosperity in no way means security. Security is in the hands of the LORD.

5. Isaiah 2:10 -- “Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty.” We are not “saved” from merely the negative consequences of sin on earth. We are saved from the wrath of Almighty God. The most terrible thing about sin is NOT the earthly consequences we face but rather the fact that we have offended and defamed the Sovereign, Holy God. The Bible uses repetition to add emphasis to a word, much like we use an exclamation point. For example, when Jesus says, “Truly, truly I say....” throughout the Book of John, He is placing great emphasis on these truth statements – really pay attention. There are only two words in the New Testament repeated three times for highest emphasis: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8) “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!” (Revelation 8:13) God’s holiness is not something to be taken lightly.

6. Proverbs 6:6-8 – “Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.” Self-control, discipline, and diligence bring great personal power.

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7. Proverbs 6:12-19 – “A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing. There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” Mouth, eye, feet, fingers, and heart -- do yours bring glory to God and always promote love, or do they bring destruction?

8. Proverbs 6:20-24 – “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.” Parents are to teach their children how to protect their hearts through obedience to God’s word.

9. 2 Timothy 4:2 -- “Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience.” In a large part, Christians have lost the essential skill of rebuking with patience and gentleness. Some think we shouldn’t be rebuking at all. If you truly love others, you must be willing to tell them the truth. If you are truly loving, you will tell the truth in a loving way. Be careful not to tell the truth merely to get what you want or to defend your own position – this is ultimately selfish and unloving. If you can’t speak truth unselfishly, hoping merely for the best for the other party, it is usually best to just keep your mouth shut and pray for them. Ambassadors never represent themselves.

10. 2 Timothy 4:3-5 -- “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” Modern church teachings are accommodating passions rather than challenging them. Churches today are growing both in size and in disobedience. The waters of God’s word are being muddied and replaced with filthy cisterns created by men. Remain in God’s word and compare what you are reading with what you are seeing in the church. The truth is self-evident. Those who continue to stand for the truth will suffer but must continue to testify to the truth.

- Proverbs 25:26 -- Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

- Ezekiel 34:18 -- Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?

- Ezekiel 34:19 -- And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

- Jeremiah 2:13 -- For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

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11. 2 Timothy 4:7 – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- There is much satisfaction in finishing something you have begun! The success of a race is determined not only by how well you begin but also by how well you end. Many athletes can begin a race impressively, but if they stumble or are injured or lack the stamina to finish, their good start is useless. Paul rejoiced that he had not only begun the race but he had also finished it. His prize was a robust faith in God and a life filled with God’s powerful presence. The Christian life is not easy. Some mistakenly assume that once they become children of God, their struggles are over. Many Christians begin their walk with Christ enthusiastically, but as the pressures mount, they lose heart and abandon their pilgrimage. Paul described His Christian life as a battle. There were times when he struggled, and only through perseverance could he continue. It may surprise us to know that the great apostle had to struggle at times to be faithful to God. Paul faced persecution, misunderstanding, betrayal, and death threats. His Christian life was anything but easy, yet he persevered. Your faith in God is not proven by beginning the race but by enduring to the finish. Publicly announcing your commitment to Christ in your church does not compare with a lifetime of devotion to His cause. Use Paul as your model. Live your life in such a way that you can one day conclude, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith!”

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 Sep 18: Keep it simple today: Read God’s word in prayer, obey God’s word, and love others by sharing God’s word. Do not seek to defend yourself (thereby drawing attention to yourself rather than Jesus) but rather seek to draw others closer to Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 3, Wednesday, 5 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=song+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+5%3B+2+tim+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 5 September 18:

1. Song of Solomon 8:8, 9 -- "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar." Purity should be guarded by the whole family, even by the whole community. How much needless pain is caused by acceptance of promiscuity and infidelity? It destroys people and society, but most importantly, it takes people out of fellowship with God.

2. Proverbs 5:3-6 – “For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.” Sin is selfishly choosing pleasure and self-gratification over love, faithfulness, and obedience, with no consideration of the consequences or the inevitable destruction to follow. Most egregious, sin is an affront to the Sovereign LORD. The sinful are blind to the reality of sin because their eyes are not on God. Even ‘private’ sins have a ripple effect that eventually hurts others.

3. Proverbs 5:7, 8 – “And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.” Laws and social moral codes ultimately can’t keep you from sin, only faith can. Faith gives more value to the unseen reality of God revealed in His word than the apparent physical reality in front of us. Do you believe God and His Majesty is more real and more wonderful than the ‘shiny apples’ at your fingertips?

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4. Proverbs 5:11, 12, 14 -- "At the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, 'How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!'" You will reap what you have sown in life, and at harvest time, you can't do anything about what you planted (or failed to plant), and what you planted will be clearly visible for all to see. Choices always have predictable consequences.

5. Proverbs 5:15 -- "Drink water from your own cistern." Be content and thankful for what, and who, God has given you. Your contentment is like rays of sunlight on flowers, causing them to blossom.

6. Proverbs 5:17 -- "Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you." Protect what God has given you.

7. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 -- "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people."

- What is most striking about these verses is that they are describing the church -- those who appear to others to be godly. However, because of their hearts, these religious people don't have the power of God in their lives. Though they might have Biblical knowledge, their hearts prevent them from actually obtaining the truth. Therefore, their lives are powerless. That is why "in the last days there will come times of difficulty." Without light, darkness grows. If the salt loses its saltiness, there is no preservative for society. When we see society growing dark, we need to consider the condition of the church.

- Ungodliness causes difficulty and strife. At the heart of all sin is selfish self-centeredness. Many lovers of self call themselves godly or righteous. Do you see the product of godlessness in our society today? How about within the church? Christians, as priests and ambassadors, must model Christ-like character to a world in "difficulty." If you see darkness growing, it is because the light of God's people is growing dim through infidelity.

8. 2 Timothy 3:12 -- "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." If you are not being persecuted for your faith, what does that mean?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- Living a godly life will not insulate you from hardship. Paul said that the more blameless your life, the more likely you will be persecuted. According to Paul, "evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13). As the world increasingly embraces sin, worldly people are becoming increasingly intolerant of godliness. Darkness cannot tolerate light; the more your life illuminates the presence of Christ, the more you should expect opposition from the forces of darkness. Your Christlike nature will be offensive to those in rebellion against Christ's Lordship. You may have recently repented of your sin and taken a new step of obedience to God. Perhaps you expected to experience God's blessing immediately as He demonstrated His approval of your obedience. Instead, you were met with opposition. The persecution may have come even from other Christians who misunderstood your motives. Perhaps you obeyed God, and still your actions were met with criticism instead of praise. If you are sincerely following the Lord's direction, don't be discouraged. Paul warned that those who seek to live godly lives will suffer persecution. Do not be surprised when this happens to you. If the world crucified the Son of God, surely the world will be hostile to anyone who lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Persecution may be the best evidence that your life is like that of Christ. Jesus

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warned that the world hated Him, the Savior, and so it would certainly misunderstand and mistreat His disciples (John 15:18).

9. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- All Scripture is profitable! Knowing this, we cheat ourselves when we do not access every book, every truth, every verse, and every page of our Bibles for the promises and commands God has for us. Because every verse of Scripture is inspired by God and gainful to us, we should not pick and choose which verses we will read and study. We should not claim verses we like and ignore those that convict us! If we are to become mature disciples of Jesus, we must allow every Scripture to speak to us and teach us what God desires us to learn. Scripture enables us to evaluate the soundness of doctrines that are being taught. Scripture ought to be the basis for any reproof or correction we bring to another. If you are not firmly grounded in God’s Word, you will be bombarded with an assortment of doctrines, lifestyles, and behaviors, and you will have no means to evaluate whether or not they are of God. You cannot develop a righteous life apart from God’s Word. Righteousness must be cultivated. As you fill your mind with the words of God, and as you obey His instructions, He will guide you in the ways of righteousness. Scripture will equip you for any good work God calls you to do. If you feel inadequate for a task God has given you, search the Scriptures, for within them you will find the wisdom you need to carry out His assignment. Allow the Word of God to permeate, guide, and enrich your life.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 Sep 18: Don’t fret over what you see happening around you today. Continue to serve your purpose as a witness, a reconciler, an ambassador, a disciple-maker, an example of Christ-like character. Be faithful to God, knowing that He is in control and is with you every step of the way. Don't lose hope or give up on your calling. Your job is to know Christ more and more with each day and make Him known more and more to those around you. In Christ there is peace, joy, rest, and hope. If you begin to lose your peace, joy, rest, and hope, check your heart and your position with Jesus. The problem is never the circumstances around you, the problem is your perspective based upon your relationship with Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 2, Tuesday, 4 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=song+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+4%3B+2+tim+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 4 September 18:

1. Song of Solomon 5:9 -- "What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women?" Love causes you to see in someone what others might not see.
2. Proverbs 4:4 -- “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.” We must live by God’s word rather than popular opinion or man’s ‘wisdom’. God’s word brings life as God’s word leads you to The Way, The Truth, and The Life, Jesus.
3. Proverbs 4:7 – “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.” The first step to becoming wise is the make wisdom your top priority, seek wisdom as if seeking for treasure, never forgetting that all true wisdom comes from God and leads us naturally closer to Jesus. Wisdom is unity with God.

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4. Proverbs 4:13 – “Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.” Keeping God’s word first and foremost in your heart takes great effort. You must guard against things that would tempt you to let it slip out of your thinking and away from your top priority.

5. Proverbs 4:14, 15 – “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.” We must intentionally avoid the path of evil on which the majority are walking. Narrow is the path of life which few take.

6. Proverbs 4:18, 19 – “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” Your dawn gets brighter and brighter the closer you get to Jesus as you walk in the word, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

7. Proverbs 4:23-27 – “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.” Above all else, you must guard your heart by walking the word and avoiding evil. In perfect love, we would be compelled by love to obey all of God’s commands, and it would not be difficult for us – “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3; see also 2 Corinthians 5:14) However, we aren’t yet perfected in love, rather we are being sanctified in love, growing over time as we continue our endeavor to walk in God’s word as disciples of Jesus. As toddlers, we stumble and fall quite a bit, but in adulthood we can run and leap, still with much room for increased agility; and without continuous practice, we can ‘get out of shape’ and lose our abilities. In our process of sanctification, the Bible commands us to do things we often really don’t want to do – the commands are burdensome. However, if we are willing to obey, the burden eventually becomes light and eventually no burden at all, rather a joy, the natural fruit of our character. It starts with duty (a willingness to do what we must) and is transformed into love (a passion to surrender self to God and to others). But we must remain vigilant in love, careful not to grow complacent and let our love diminish – “I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:3-5) We must be careful to guard our love, our hearts, and Proverbs gives some practical steps: “Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.” There are things we must do, and there are things we must ponder. Consider what Paul said, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. (2 Corinthians 5:14-16) Paul guarded his heart by pondering the love and grace he had received through Jesus. The greater we appreciate the love of Christ, the more we are compelled to love, no longer viewing others as we once did. If God’s commands are still burdensome, it is a proximity problem – you need to get closer to Jesus -- “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

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8. 2 Timothy 2:2 -- "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The Great Commission requires faithful followers who are able and willing to teach others. Teachers must first be faithful. God did not call us to make believers but rather disciples, people who are willing and able to follow and the disciplines of faith.

9. 2 Timothy 2:3 -- "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." Are you willing to share in suffering? The disciplined life is a tough one, not for the weak willed.

10. 2 Timothy 2:4-7 -- "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say." Get serious and fully committed about serving the LORD. Don't get entangled in worldly affairs; don't be undisciplined or complacent in your obedience. Do the hard work required. Dedicated professionals pour their everything into their callings – it's all or nothing. A half-hearted troop does not last very long, nor does an underprepared athlete or a slack farmer. All of these endeavors require daily hard work and sacrifice for a day that comes much later – the battle, the competition, or the harvest. On that day, the level of your preparation is ultimately revealed; there is no making up for what you didn't do day after day beforehand. Paul encourages us to consider what great sacrifices people make for earthly gain as we reflect upon our calling as Ambassadors for Christ and as God's priests on earth. How much more commitment should we place towards our Heavenly calling? "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) How much effort will you put into your eternal calling given to you by God Himself?

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

- Philippians 3:12-14 -- Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- Ephesians 6:11-16 -- Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

11. 2 Timothy 2:15, 16 -- "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble." Know the word of God well, and protect yourself against false doctrines which appeal to many but are not taught in God's word.

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12. 2 Timothy 2:18, 19 -- "They are upsetting the faith of some. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" False teachers will hurt the faith of some, but trust that God will protect His children, and let the genuine walk of your faith validate the truth you proclaim. False teachers don't live out love consistently; the faithful do. Those God has called and who remain in God's word will see the difference.

13. 2 Timothy 2:21 -- "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work." Your holiness validates your words. There are many preachers, but not many disciple makers, and reconcilers. The talented can give great messages, only the Spirit filled can love and lead in love.

14. 2 Timothy 2:22 -- "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." Followers of Christ are not led by emotions but by the Spirit; they pursue love with a pure heart.

15. 2 Timothy 2:23 -- "Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels." Only the foolish and arrogant quarrel.

16. 2 Timothy 2:24, 25 -- "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness."

- Rather than quarreling, we are commanded to endure evil. Are you willing to do that?

- From Henry T. Blackaby -- There should be no quarrelsome Christians. The truth of God is within us; we need never be intimidated or frustrated by those who do not accept God's truth. At times people may disagree with you regarding God's Word. Perhaps they question the way you say He is leading you, or they may challenge your faith in God. At times like these it is never helpful to argue. You will never debate anyone into the kingdom of God. You will never persuade someone that God has spoken to you by out-arguing them! Only God can convince others of the veracity of His word to you. If you will allow God to vindicate you in His time, and in His way, a time will come when the wisdom of your choice will be evident (Luke 7:35). If you find yourself often quarreling with others, you need to ask God to clearly reveal your motives and to forgive you for your disobedience to His clear command. If your motivation for arguing comes from your desire to be right, or to be exonerated, or to gain the esteem of those listening to you, you are acting selfishly, and God will not honor you. God is not interested in how right you are. He is interested in how obedient you are. God's command is not that you win arguments, but that you are kind and forgiving when others mistreat you. You bring God no honor by winning a dispute in His name, but you reflect a Christlike character when you demonstrate patience to those who mistreat you or misunderstand your motives. Arguing may never win people to your view, but loving them as Christ does will win you many friends over time!

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 Sep 18: Today, quarrel with no one, but be kind to everyone, particularly to those who offend you. (2 Tim 2:24, 25)

DBRP - WEEK 36, Day 1, Monday, 3 September 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=song+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+3%3B+2+Tim+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 3 September 18:

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1. Song of Songs 3:5 -- "Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." God intends for men and women to wait in abstinence and chastity for their future marriage partner, and throughout the Song of Songs you will hear Beloved warn the "Daughters of Jerusalem" not give their wedding crown to another before marriage. Today, our sex obsessed culture has characterized abstinence and chastity as unnatural, unrealistic, abnormal, and impossible. Some would even suggest that teaching abstinence and chastity is downright irresponsible. As a result, most miss the full blessings God intended for the marital union and enter their marriage with psychological, emotional, spiritual, and sometimes physical "baggage" that God never intended. There is no such thing as "safe sex" outside of a marriage between one man and one woman.

2. Solomon 3, 4 -- God created us to be physically attracted to the opposite sex, and He gave us very specific rules for relationships to keep us from the destructive sin of lust. What God created is good. Sin takes God's good creation and perverts it with selfishness.

3. Proverbs 3:9, 10 -- "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine." Serve God faithfully, and don't worry about your life's provisions -- He will give you all and more than you need without your worry.

4. Proverbs 3:7 -- "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil." R. C. Sproul wisely said, "The Word of God can be in the mind without being in the heart; but it cannot be in the heart without first being in the mind.... I cannot read God's mind; however, I can read God's Word.... We need to be very careful to go to the pages of the Scripture to learn about God's will and the leading of the Spirit, and not simply to listen to the popular teachings of the Christian subculture in which we live.... To be a Christian is to be a theologian -- a student of God and his will. The church is where believers should be nurtured in the practice of correct theology. The contemporary disdain for theological content and emphasis on self-image and emotions were not shared by the apostolic church.... The issue for Christians is not whether we are going to be theologians but whether we are going to be good theologians or bad ones.... [However] We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work." We must study God's word in order to be ready to obey God's word. However, many use Bible 'study' as a form of procrastination -- reading more rather than doing more. This is akin to the person who is constantly looking for a better workout or diet but never exercising or controlling their food intake. Our problems are not usually caused by a lack of knowledge; they are usually caused by disobedience and infidelity to God. Even Christians who rarely open their Bible's understand enough about God's demands for forgiveness, honesty, generosity, etc, to defy them. God's commands are not hard to understand, but they require a heart that truly desires to obey them, a commitment to discipline and self-control that is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Pleasing God requires humility, a proper fear of the Lord and then consistently choosing to "turn away from evil," and to turn closer to God. What will you choose today?

- Isaiah 45:22 -- Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:9 -- For they... report... how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.

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5. Proverbs 3:28 -- “Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it’—when you have it with you.” See a need; meet the need. Don’t worry, it’s all God’s stuff anyway, so you’re not losing anything.

6. 2 Timothy 1:3 -- “I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.” Do you thankfully serve God each day with a clear conscience?

7. 2 Timothy 1:6, 7 -- “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” The spiritual gift of faith God has already given you must be fanned into flame. You must choose to walk in power and self-control.

8. 2 Timothy 1:7 -- “...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- The only fear that God encourages in a Christian’s life is the fear of God (2 Cor. 5:10-11; Heb. 10:31). Fear of people does not come from God. The problem is that many Christians fear people more than they fear God. Their fear hinders them from pleasing God because they waste their efforts appeasing other people. Timothy was a young man, timid by nature, and probably not strong physically (1 Tim. 5:23). He knew of Paul’s frequent trials and persecutions. He knew that he, too, might suffer those same persecutions. Paul reminded his young colleague that fear of others does not come from God. Fear causes us to stop and question what God has clearly told us to do. Perhaps we were confident in our obedience until persecution came; now we doubt whether we heard God correctly. Most fear is fear of the unknown. We do not know what lies ahead of us, so we become apprehensive. Our imaginations can magnify problems until they seem insurmountable. We need a sound mind to see things in proper perspective. That is why God gave us His Holy Spirit, to enable us to see things as God sees them. Fear is no excuse to disobey God. There is no reason to live in fear when you have the mighty presence of the Holy Spirit within you. Fear will enslave you, but Christ has come to set you free. Ask God to free you from any fear you are experiencing and to open your eyes. As He reveals the reality of your situation, He will enable you to continue in obedience.

9. 2 Timothy 1:14 -- “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.” We are empowered by the Holy Spirit, but we must employ the power within us by choice. 1 Peter says, “To those who are... in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ..., preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” Through the power of the Holy Spirit, in awe and gratitude for the grace you have received through the blood of Jesus, compelled by love, pursue holiness in your life.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Sep 18: Motivated by love, pursue purity, holiness, and obedience today, and from this day forward, don’t act as if the grace you have received through the blood of Jesus is a small or cheap thing.

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DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 7, Sunday, 2 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=song+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+2%3B+psalm+101%2C+102>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 2 September 18:

1. The Song of Solomon: The Song of Solomon is a lyrical poem written to extol the virtues of godly love between a husband and a wife. The title basically means, "The poem of all poems," or "The best poem of all." The name implies that the poem was written by Solomon, though the characters in the poem are likely not intended to represent him directly, particularly since Solomon didn't get marriage right. The poem describes God's design for marriage between one man and one woman who love each other spiritually, emotionally, and physically. The poem addresses sexual activity directly, countering ungodly notions of ascetism (denial of all pleasure) and hedonism (the pursuit of sinful pleasure), both of which have influenced some church traditions. The book has three sections: courtship (1:1-3:5); the wedding (3:6-5:1); and the maturing marriage (5:2-8:4). In the courtship phase, the poem addresses the demand for restraint and purity while dealing with passions and insecurities. The poem then describes the powerful emotions and passions of the wedding and consummation, not often preached from pulpits. Then, the poem discusses the challenges experienced in a mature marriage – there is conflict and reconciliation. The poem ends by describing a husband and wife who are confident and secure in their marriage and who yearn for each other's presence. Throughout church history, many have sought to interpret the Song of Solomon as an allegory, a parable, or a metaphor for deeper theological issues. Certainly, the love story of the Song of Solomon has parallels to other spiritual truths, such as the love of Christ for the church, but the Song of Solomon is simply intended to be "a spirit-inspired expression of love between a bride and her groom. A love that is not to be ashamed." (R.C. Sproul) The Song of Solomon is intended to teach spiritual truths to be practically applied in our lives.

2. Song of Solomon 1:15 – "Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful." God created us to be attracted to the opposite sex, and He desires us to have physical relations within the bounds of marriage. Sex outside of biblical marriage is sin and destroys what God intends for us. Sin turns what God intended for good into something bad. At the heart of sin is selfishness, substituting God's command of love for our self-centered desires.

3. Song of Solomon 2:16 – "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies." Love and fidelity are inseparable, and they are both choices that reveal your character and true heart.

4. Proverbs 2:1-5 -- "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God." Don't miss this important if-then statement. What is your treasure? What are you crying out for?

5. Proverbs 2:7, 8 – "...he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints." God does not give wisdom to everyone equally or protect everyone equally. God enlightens and protects "those who walk in integrity" as His "saints."

6. Proverbs 2:17 – "...who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God...." Your marriage covenant is tied to your covenant with God. Your marriage relationship reflects your

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spirituality. If you are married, how much you really love God is most revealed in how you love your spouse. How much you really value the forgiveness and grace you have received through Jesus is most revealed in how you forgive and show grace to your spouse.

7. Psalm 101:1 – “I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will make music.” Just as love and faithfulness go together, love and justice also go together.

8. Psalm 101:1-4 -- “I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will make music. I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.” Psalm 101 is an oath of allegiance to God, and a commitment to fidelity to the KING. It starts with praise for God’s combined “steadfast love” and “justice” (accountability to Divine Law). It is critical for the reader to understand the Hebrew word interpreted here as “steadfast love” -- *chesed* (kheh'-sed). Modern Christianity has significantly missed the depth of this word because (as Biblical scholars agree) it really has no precise equivalent in our language. This fundamental lack of understanding has distorted our concept of grace: Much has been written and debated about this word, but in summary, *chesed* cannot truly be understood apart from the words “justice” or “righteousness” because *chesed* describes a type of mercy and grace that can only be appreciated when compared to God’s passion for and insistence on righteousness and justice. Below offers a great explanation:

- “When we try to estimate the depth and the persistence of God's loving-kindness and mercy, we must first remember his passion for righteousness. His passion for righteousness is so strong that he could not be more insistent in His demand for it, but God's persistent love for his people is more insistent still. The story of God's people throughout the centuries is that her waywardness has been so persistent that, if even a remnant is to be preserved, God has had to show mercy more than anything else. It is important to realize that though the Hebrew *chesed* can be translated by loving-kindness and mercy without doing violence to the context, yet we must always beware lest we think that God is content with less than righteousness. There is no reference to any sentimental kindness, and no suggestion of mercy apart from repentance, in any case where the Hebrew original is *chesed*. His demand for righteousness is insistent, and it is always at the maximum intensity. The loving-kindness of God means that his mercy is greater even than that. The word stands for the wonder of his unfailing love for the people of his choice, and the solving of the problem of the relation between his righteousness and his loving-kindness passes beyond human comprehension.” (N.H. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, London, 1944).

- Anyone with a true appreciation of God’s *chesed* would refuse to take sin lightly – quite the contrary. When king David contemplated God’s *chesed*, he renewed his vow to “know nothing of evil.” Our church today does not understand *chesed*, so we walk much like the world. I believe God is calling us to repentance. One of the first steps is to clean out your own house. One thing that has truly surprised me is what Christians will choose for entertainment – scenarios that are abhorrent to God. Our entertainment is a testimony against us. We can no longer ignore what we have allowed into our homes and minds. Be honest. Repent; sin no more.

- Psalm 101:3 – I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.

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- Philippians 4:8 -- Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

- 1 Corinthians 15:33 -- Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

- Galatians 6:8 -- For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

- Matthew 5:29 -- If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

- 1 Timothy 4:7 -- Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;

- Galatians 5:19-21 -- Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- James 4:4 -- You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- Galatians 5:13 -- For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- Romans 12:2 -- Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Romans 6:1-23 -- What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- Matthew 6:22 -- "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,

- 1 John 2:15 -- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 -- Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- 2 Timothy 4:4 -- And will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

- Matthew 5:28 -- But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

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- John 4:23-24 -- But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

- Psalm 119:1-176 -- Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

- Revelation 3:16 -- So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

- Titus 1:14 -- Not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

- Romans 1:32 -- Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

- Romans 6:23 -- For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Proverbs 13:15 -- Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin.

- Psalm 1:1-6 -- Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

- Proverbs 21:4 -- Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

- Exodus 20:7 -- "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

- Matthew 10:16 -- "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

- Job 31:1 -- "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?

9. Psalm 101:3 -- "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless." Time to turn the TV off.

10. Psalm 101:3, 4 -- "I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil." Have you separated yourself completely from what is ungodly?

11. Psalm 102:18 -- "Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord." The Bible should inspire you to praise the LORD.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 Sep 18: Endeavor to see your sin as God sees it, to see your sin in the context of God's Holiness and God's chesed (kheh'-sed). The more you truly know

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Jesus, the more you hate sin. When you understand Jesus' love, it compels you to obedience and love for others. In worship today, seek the mind of Christ, to see yourself and others from His perspective, to truly develop a reconciliatory heart. (See today's notes)

DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 6, Saturday, 1 September 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eccl+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+1%3B+psalm+100>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 1 September 18:

1. Ecclesiastes 11:4-6 – “He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.” Worry, fear, and pessimism are paralyzing, debilitating, and dispiriting. Often a fear of failure or a fear of the future will prevent people from trying or investing. So, they are left with nothing. Planning, planting, investing, experimenting, giving, forgiving, evangelism and so many other essential actions all rely on faith, hope, patience, and perseverance. Many things won't come out as you had hoped, but many things will turn out far better than expected. Don't let hard times or uncertainty slow you down or keep you from trying. What would you do if the nation were invaded and you lost everything and were exiled to a harsh foreign land? Consider what Jeremiah told the Jews exiled to Babylon: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ‘Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.... I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.’” (Jeremiah 29:4-14) Trust God with your future and continue to plan, invest, and work with great expectation, regardless the lack of apparent promise in the current situation. God is bigger than the apparent barriers and setbacks. As Winston Churchill said in a speech on October 29, 1941 (a perilous time) to Harrow school where he had failed out as a boy, "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense." No single day in history was more decisive for the creation of the United States than Christmas 1776 when Washington crossed the ice-choked Delaware River in a raging storm with a largely untrained army to attack a fortified professional Hessian army. In the previous months since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, George Washington's army hadn't won a single battle, and he had lost 90% of his strength. Those who crossed the Delaware River were exhausted, lacking resources, and near the end of their enlistments. A loss at Trenton would mean the end of the Cause. However, against all apparent odds, George Washington's victories at Trenton and Princeton saved the American Revolution. Proverbs 3:5, 6 -- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

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2. Ecclesiastes 11:7-10 – “Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. So, if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.” It is important to live life joyfully, contently, but soberly. Each day comes only once, and we don't know how many we will have. The Bible tells us to plan for the future but concentrate on today, making the most of every opportunity. We are to be thankful, joyful, and content, not worrying but rather praying in faith all day. We are to work hard, but not too hard, quietly and with our hands so that we can be self-sufficient and can give to others in need. Our daily priority is relationships -- loving others, considering them greater than ourselves. We are on a mission of reconciliation, bringer others closer to God and each other. You get one life – use it well, and make your last day on earth your best day. The Bible guides us on how to live life to its fullest. "And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." (1 John 1:4) How is your joy today?

3. Ecclesiastes 12:1 -- “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’.” Solomon had sought to learn it all and do it all in his pursuit of wisdom, but he recognized too late that, in his pride and vanity, he misapplied his life chasing all the wrong things; the ripple effect of his poorly lived life would be pain and suffering for countless generations. Because he drifted from God’s commands, God’s kingdom was permanently divided under Solomon’s leadership. Life is cultivated one day at a time, and whatever one plants today grows over time. We all reap what we sow. On his chair of regrets, Solomon pens a warning to the generations to come: “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Don’t chase after vanities, wearing yourself out attempting to build for yourself a meaningless kingdom on earth. Don’t exhaust yourself rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Enjoy life living for the Lord! Psalm 100 tells us today to keep things in perspective: “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” Jesus said, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:24-27) Build your life on the Rock of Jesus! Remember, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1) Proverbs 10:22 says, “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.” However, when we strive to create our own wealth, much sorrow is added. And after all that needless toil and sorrow, our worthless creations will ultimately be “burned up” like “wood, straw, and hay” in “the fire” on “The Day” – “Let each one take care how he builds”. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) Jesus also said, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” Jesus explained this analogy – “Whoever

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does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.... any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:25-33) Completing the house built on the Rock of Jesus requires a full-time, life-time commitment, investing all that you have. However, this is the blessed, joyful, fruitful life that is not lived in vain.

- Psalm 2:1 -- Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

- Psalm 60:11 -- Vain is the salvation of man!

- Psalm 127:2 -- It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

- Jonah 2:8 -- Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

- Mark 7:7 -- in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

- 1 Timothy 1:6 -- Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion,

- Proverbs 31:30 -- Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

- Isaiah 45:18, 19 -- “I am the Lord, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right.

- Jeremiah 18:11, 12 -- ‘Thus says the Lord, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, everyone from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’ “But they say, ‘That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’

- 1 Corinthians 15:58 -- Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

- 3. Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 -- A life not lived for God is meaningless and futile.

4. Ecclesiastes 12:11-14 -- "The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." The Creator, the LORD has given us His word, His wisdom; wisdom comes only from God. Everyone else has a false, often appealing, opinion. Avoid all of those false teachers. Go to the Way, the Truth, the Life, Jesus. If you need a counsellor (we all do), seek the counsel of the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit who uses God's word to convict your heart of truth. Spirit led Bible study, prayer, and fellowship is your best success plan. Walk with God, not with the world. The way of man seems right to him, but ends in death. Get past the pointless search for 'something else' and obey God. In the end, you only answer to God.

5. Proverbs 1:3 – “...to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity....” The wise always deal with others in righteousness, justice, and equity.

6. Proverbs 1:4, 5 – “...to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance....” The Proverbs are

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provided to help the youth understand what they haven't experienced and to remind the experienced lest they forget. Everyone needs the continual coaching of the Holy Spirit who instructs from God's word.

7. Proverbs 1:7 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The Proverbs are of no value to those who refuse to put them into practice.

8. Psalm 100:2 -- "Serve the Lord with gladness!" Are you serving the LORD gladly today? Can others see your gladness?

9. Psalm 100:4 -- "Enter his gates with thanksgiving." Do you have a spirit of thanksgiving today, confident that the LORD is your God, that you are His beloved, and that He loves you perfectly and unceasingly? Do others marvel at your thanksgiving?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 1 Sep 18: Serve the Lord with joy, gladness, and thanksgiving today, walking with Jesus, on the mission of reconciliation. Make today a masterpiece. (see today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 5, Friday, 31 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eccl+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+31%3B+1+Tim+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 31 August 18:

1. Ecclesiastes 9:2 -- "The same life events happen to the righteous and the wicked." We are called be faithful regardless the circumstances. God does not promise earthly rewards for our obedience, nor should this ever be our motivation. Our obedience should be motivated by love for God, the natural response to grace. Having said that, the Bible does promise that God will bring good out of our circumstances, while the rebellious only receive bad out of their circumstances (whether or not the circumstances appear good or bad). Again, see Romans 8:28.

2. Ecclesiastes 9:11 – “Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.” Despite our best efforts, life is unpredictable and uncertain. However, the faithful Christian can walk confidently, boldly, contently, and joyfully, knowing that God is guiding him or her in His perfect, unfailing love. The God who is Love is in complete control. Be at peace and rejoice, even when life is hard.

3. Ecclesiastes 10:1 -- "A little folly outweighs wisdom and honor." It doesn't take much to destroy trust and confidence or ruin a reputation. Once you lose trust with someone, it is very hard to get it back. As an ambassador of Christ, guard your reputation carefully in order to bring glory and honor to the Name of Jesus.

4. Ecclesiastes 10:10 -- "If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength." Invest time to "sharpen your axe" (improve your productive skills) so you can chop down more trees in the end. Being busy is not the same as being productive and effective. Sharpen your skills, sharpen your methods, and increase your abilities. Work wisely. Wise work is always obedient and makes the most of every opportunity.

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5. Proverbs 31:8, 9 – “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Leaders stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. Christians must be leaders; it isn't an option.

6. Proverbs 31:11 – “The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.” All relationships are based on trust which is earned through love and faithfulness.

7. Proverbs 31:30 -- "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." Character is not the way you look, or what you say, or what you accomplish, or even how you act; character is what is in your heart, how much you walk in love for the LORD and for others.

8. 1 Timothy 6:1 – “Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.” God wants you to treat everyone with honor so that you won't hinder your witness to them.

9. 1 Timothy 6:6 -- “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” Our readings today emphasize the need for Christians to live life in contentment. Today Paul said, “But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.” (1 Timothy 6:8) However going even further, he also said elsewhere, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.... For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (Philippians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 12:10) What does it take for you to be content, to enjoy the life that you have? How much sin, frustration, anger, bitterness, jealousy, envy, strife is the result of discontentment? James said that our fights are caused because of discontentment -- “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.” (James 4:1, 2) Discontentment causes imbalance in our lives and causes us to stray from God and His intended path for our lives. Discontentment causes us to focus on what we don't have rather than enjoying the blessings and gifts that God has given us. We are constantly seeking a better situation rather than making the most of the opportunities right in front of us. Soon nothing is ever quite good enough. (Ecclesiastes 9:9, 10) The hustle, bustle, and noise of the rat race can cause us to miss the calm, quiet voice of wisdom offering a path that leads to joy (Ecclesiastes 9:17, 18) Solomon offers much more advice on how to live the content life: guard your honor, and don't do foolish things that only make your life harder. (Ecclesiastes 10:1-3) John Wayne said it this way: “Life is hard; but it is harder when you're stupid.” When you do mess things up, even really big things, stay calm and don't give up. (Ecclesiastes 10:4) Don't make life harder or more complicated than it has to be. Focus on the basics. Master the skills and work hard at the job you do. Don't get caught up in risky schemes that are likely to collapse on you or come back to bite you. (Ecclesiastes 10:8-15) Through good old, simple hard work, take care of your basic responsibilities, and be a good steward of what God has already given you, and you will eliminate most problems in life – “Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.” (Ecclesiastes 10:18) Finally, don't be an instigator. (Ecclesiastes 10:20) “Aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands... so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11)

10. 1 Timothy 6:10 -- "It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs." Self-control is required to avoid temptations. A person's physical appetite is similar to their emotional appetite. A Christian requires self-control to battle all sins which play on our appetites.

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11. 1 Timothy 6:11, 12 -- "But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." The Christian must simultaneously flee and pursue. Growing in faith is a fight, a struggle.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 31 Aug 18: Today, evaluate your self-control. Where do you lack self-control? Galatians 5 tells us that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, not mere human will power. Pray for the power of Holy Spirit to give you the self-control you currently lack, and submit to the Holy Spirit.

DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 4, Thursday, 30 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eccl+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+30%3B+1+Tim+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 30 August 18:

1. Ecclesiastes 7:2 -- "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart." We live in a world of denial and escapism, which is based on fear, doubt, an inner sense of hopelessness, and a lack of knowledge of God -- "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Corinthians 15:32) Life is short, and it is often very challenging, but it is not without purpose and meaning, which is revealed in God's word. The Bible calls us to live victoriously in the knowledge and hope of Jesus, which is our testimony. Jesus has overcome the world and death. We will still suffer and die, but our suffering is our sanctification, our ministry, and our fellowship with Christ; and to die is to be with Christ in eternal joy. Philippians 1:18-27 -- "Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...." Endeavor to live victoriously but also acknowledge that at times we are all weak and need help from others. The Bible tells us to live in mutually supportive community so that the strong support the weak during their times of personal crisis. Support others with the strength you currently have, and accept the support of others when you need it.

2. Ecclesiastes 7:5, 6 -- "It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity." Ecclesiastes encourages us to enjoy life but also warns us to take life seriously. Surround yourself with other committed disciples of Christ who get it, and journey with them.

3. Ecclesiastes 7:10 -- "Say not, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask this." There is no sense talking about how great things once were. There is an old adage, "The older I get, the better I was." We tend to magnify the good memories of the past and minimize the negative memories. From that distorted perspective, we can become cynical about the current state of

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things. Even if things truly are worse now than they were before, talking about the past doesn't fix anything. Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle.

4. Ecclesiastes 7:13 -- "Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?" Anything you're trying to do that isn't from God is pointless.

5. Ecclesiastes 7:29 -- "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." God only intended you to do the good works He prepared in advance for you. We are so easily distracted by the worries of the world, and we needlessly complicate our lives.

6. Ecclesiastes 8:6, 7 -- "For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be?" The limits of our human knowledge cannot be over emphasized. The very simplest of God's works are far beyond our comprehension. We cannot walk securely in our knowledge, instincts, or strength; we must be guided by the Holy Spirit, and we must trust God in what He has not revealed to us. God said to Abram, "Go... to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1) More often than not, God tells His servants to walk in faith to a place prepared for us by God that will be revealed when we get there. And in that journey, God will not always clear our path of challenges and tests. Didn't God corner the Israelites in at the Red Sea before opening it up? Didn't God make the Israelites step into the raging Jordan River before stopping the waters? Didn't God make Daniel face the giant? Didn't God make Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego go into the fiery furnace? Didn't God make Daniel go into the Lion's Den? Didn't Jesus have to endure the cross before is Resurrection? Through all of these circumstances, weren't there opportunities for doubt and fear? But didn't God use all these events to reveal Himself in a way never seen before? Don't waste too much time asking God to reveal the future to you. Trust Him, obey Him today, one day at a time, and watch Him work in mighty ways.

7. Ecclesiastes 8:8 -- "There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it." We cannot escape or opt out of our responsibilities to God, and all of our decisions have consequences.

8. Ecclesiastes 8:10-11 -- "Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil." The world is unjust because man is corrupt. Even the church fails to hold people accountable. Justice will come from God but in his timing. Because many seem to prosper in sin, pride, arrogance, and doubt grows. Do not be deceived. God will not be mocked. Jesus promised that His followers would be persecuted in this evil world. Do not lose heart. God will bring all things into account, and if you are a disciple of Jesus, you have already entered into eternal life (John 17).

9. Proverbs 30:5, 6 -- "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar." Walk in God's word.

10. Proverbs 30:8 -- "Remove far from me falsehood and lying." We take falsehood far too lightly. There are many forms of deceitfulness, many we justify, but all are serious and damage our character.

11. Proverbs 30:20 -- "This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I have done no wrong.'" We make light of sin, but God certainly doesn't.

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12. 1 Timothy 5:3, 4 – “Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.” God expects Christians to care for their elderly parents and grandparents so they don't require the resources of others. Too often people expect the church or the government to fulfill their responsibilities to their families. This should never be.

13. 1 Timothy 5:8 -- "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Questions?

14. 1 Timothy 5:21 -- "I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality." Everyone must be held accountable equally and must also be cared for equally.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 30 Aug 18: Don't worry or lament about the way things were – it is a waste of time and energy; focus on making today what it should be. Today is your day, make the most of it. You cannot do anything about the past, and the future is in God's hands. Be faithful with whatever God puts in front of you today, especially the little things – “Everyone wants to change the world, but no one wants to help Mom with the dishes.” Obey God's commands of love now, and trust God with the outcomes. (Eccl 7:10)

DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 3, Wednesday, 29 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eccl+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+29%3B+1+Tim+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 29 August 18:

1. Ecclesiastes 5:1 -- "To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools." To hear God, you have to be near God. Of course, this question of nearness is not about physical space but rather spiritual relationship, nearness in spirit. Jesus' stated goal for us is that there would be no distance between us and Him, that we would be “one” with Him, in perfect unity -- “...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21) And Jesus revealed that those who were one with Him would, by definition, be one with each other – “...that they may be one, even as we are one.” (John 17:11) Our closeness with God is revealed in our closeness to others in God. Nearness is an issue of the heart – “...people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me....” (Isaiah 29:13) Nearness is about faith – “...she does not trust in the Lord; she does not draw near to her God....” (Zephaniah 3:2) Under the Old Covenant, based on adherence to the Law, revealed in the Old Testament, there were limits to how close the sinner could get to God – the Levitical priests offered sacrifices for the sins of the people, and only the High Priest could enter the inner room and only once a year on the Day of Atonement. But now, through Jesus, “Let us... with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Jesus has opened up the Holy of Holies to us through His death on the cross. “Not only must we draw near to Christ, we must draw near to Him in confidence. This does not mean that we come arrogantly demanding forgiveness as a right. We draw near in confidence not because of our own ‘rights’ but because of the person and work of Christ. We are confident because God, who was not obligated to redeem us, nonetheless promises to forgive us if we submit to Christ. Drawing near in confidence means that we firmly believe God's promise of grace in Christ.” (R.C. Sproul) “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed

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with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). In Christ, we have unmerited and inalienable salvation and access to God to draw near to Him in total assurance and confidence. So, do not quench the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, or get out of step with the Spirit through fear, pride, or disobedience – "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." (James 4:7-10)

- John 3:36 -- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- John 14:15 -- If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

- Acts 5:29 -- But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

- Acts 5:32 -- And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:14 -- If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

2. Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 -- God expects you to keep your word and do what you said you were going to do. God warns us not to make vows carelessly.

3. Ecclesiastes 5:10 -- "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money." The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Ultimately, money will not satisfy because we were made to love God and serve Him, not to serve self.

4. Ecclesiastes 5:13-17 -- Riches and career successes are temporary and have no eternal value.

5. Ecclesiastes 5:20 -- "For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart." Joy comes from God.

6. Ecclesiastes 6:3 -- "If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he." You must choose to enjoy life.

7. Proverbs 29 -- All of Proverbs warns us and coaches us to understand that there are predictable consequences for not walking in the ways of God. Nothing can be more foolish than not doing what the Creator and LORD told you to do or doing something He told you not to do.

8. Proverbs 29:11 -- "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back." Have you ever said something like, "I'm only venting"? Venting your emotions is foolish. Don't do it.

9. Proverbs 29:18 -- "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." Many ask what God wants them to do in their life as they stare at an uncertain future. God wants you to "do" His word, one day at a time. God's word is the light for your feet, and the Holy Spirit will guide you from it. Our problem is not that God has not given us enough information to do what we should do; our problem is that we have not obeyed what He has already commended us to do.

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10. Proverbs 29:22-25 – “A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor. The partner of a thief hates his own life; he hears the curse, but discloses nothing. The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.” Why make life harder than it has to be by listening to your emotions or to others rather than listening to God?

11. 1 Timothy 4:1 – “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons....” Yes, some will ‘fall from the faith.’ But genuine faith does not fail. Those with genuine faith, a gift not earned, have complete assurance in their salvation.

12. 1 Timothy 4:7 – “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness....” Godliness requires training.

13. 1 Timothy 4:12 -- “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” Timothy desired to serve the Lord, yet he lacked confidence. He was young and sickly, and he did not possess the outward bearing that would instantly command the respect of others. (1 Tim 5:23) He, no doubt, seemed an unlikely candidate to boldly preach the Gospel to both believers and unbelievers during an age of persecution in the Roman Empire. Paul urged Timothy not to let his insecurities thwart him or cause him to be influenced by those bolder, more confident, more accepted, seemingly more successful teachers who preached popular lies. Paul urged Timothy NOT to argue with those who proclaimed “irreverent, silly myths.” (1 Timothy 4:7) Rather, Paul urged him to live as an example of godliness – “train yourself for godliness” – with the same diligence a professional athlete would have to train for the games – “toil and strive.” He urged Timothy to live a life that was spotless in “speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity,” to be a model for others to follow. Timothy’s life was to be the evidence of the God who called him. And from that position of holy credibility, Timothy was to preach the truth boldly and fervently (as opposed to living just a quiet example as some Christians suggest we should do). Paul told Timothy to “command and teach these things” – yes, command! Despite his youth and physical frailty, Timothy had some distinct advantages over his seemingly more powerful adversaries – he was empowered by the Holy Spirit; he was sincere; and he was well trained and experienced “in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine”. Paul urged Timothy to confidently press forward as a well-trained Ambassador of Christ under the authority of Christ – “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.” And Paul encouraged Timothy to continue to strengthen his abilities – “Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.” Paul reminded Timothy of the two indissoluble, essential attributes that make a great leader – character and competence – and he reminded him to be self-aware of these attributes in his life: “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Timothy was not to reduce himself to the level of those who desired to fight him – “Never wrestle with a pig in the mud because you both get dirty, and the pig likes it.” Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Under the authority of Christ who has empowered us with the Holy Spirit, we have been called to serve as his Ambassadors, a kingdom of priests, proclaiming the truth to the kingdoms of the world, commanding obedience to the LORD. Our strength and authority don’t come

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from our human abilities or position. Nothing should intimidate us. Even our weaknesses are used by God to demonstrate to the world His strength (2 Corinthians 12:9) We should “boast all the more gladly of [our] weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon [us].” I am afraid that the “seeker-sensitive” church has become too concerned about appealing to the world through superficiality rather than living holy lives while shamelessly proclaiming the truth to those who need to face the realities of sin against a Holy God. As Proverbs says, “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.... and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.” Don’t remain silent, and don’t argue; just lovingly and graciously speak the truth straight from the word of God, and let the Holy Spirit work in the hearts of others. Our words should be like “public reading of Scripture,” teaching and, yes, even exhorting, but always with love, gentleness, and humility. (1 Timothy 4:13)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 Aug 18: Train for godliness today. (1 Tim 4:7)

DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 2, Tuesday, 28 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eccl+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+28%3B+1+Tim+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 28 August 18:

1. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 – “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.”

- From Henry T. Blackaby: The beauty in the way God designed the four seasons is that, though each one is distinct, they all work together to bring life and growth. Spring is a period of freshness and new life. Summer sees growth and productivity. Autumn is a time for harvesting the rewards of past labors. Winter is the season of dormancy and closure. Each season has its own unique beauty and makes a significant contribution to life. Just as God planned seasons in nature, He planned seasons in life as well. Life has its springtime, when we begin new things and look excitedly toward the future. Summer comes and we work diligently in the heat of the day at all that God has assigned to us. With autumn comes the fruition of things begun at an earlier time in our lives. Winter brings an end to a particular period in our lives. Sometimes winter brings hardship, but we remain hopeful, for another spring is just around the corner! In God’s perfect design for our lives, He has planned for times of fruitfulness and activity. He will also build in times of quiet and rest. There will be times when He asks us to remain faithful doing the same work day after day. But there will also be periods of excitement and new beginnings. By God’s grace, we will enjoy seasons of harvesting the fruit of our faithfulness. By God’s grace we will also overcome the cold winters of heartache and grief, for without winter there would be no spring. Just as it is with the seasons of nature, these seasons in our lives work together to bring about God’s perfect will for each one of us.

- Negative things aren’t necessarily evil things. Many things we consider negative, undesirable, or even tragic are an important part of life and may actually be what God desires for His glory and your life in ways you cannot understand. Even when people do things with evil intent, God brings about a greater

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good according to His perfect plan, with His promise that nothing can separate us from His love. Romans 8:28 tells you that when you are called according to God's purpose, ALL things will result in good. Wasn't this Moses' and Joseph's story? Without an explanation from God, Moses had to wander the desert alone as a fugitive for forty years before he could be ready to lead millions of people in the desert for forty years. Remember what Joseph said to his brothers who had sold him into a life of slavery – “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Genesis 50:20) Wasn't Jesus glorified through crucifixion and resurrection? The most awful event in history, the crucifixion of The Father's Son, was used by God for the salvation of many. Trust God with both the "good" and the "bad," and wait to see what good He will ultimately bring about. Also, look to see what He might be teaching you about what you need to change in order to avoid pointless, self-induced suffering caused by sin.

2. Ecclesiastes 3:11 -- “Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” God has created us to desire Him, and we will never be totally satisfied on this earth without being in His presence.

3. Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13 -- “I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.” Be joyful, do good, and learn to enjoy work, after all, you were created to do all these things. Many wrongfully think work is the result of original sin. Quite the contrary – God works and created people to work for Him. God gave Adam a job before He gave him a help-mate. Sin caused needless, unproductive toil as men sought to work for themselves rather than for God and with God. God made you to work for Him alone, in partnership with Him, and in His power. Joy is found in working diligently for the Kingdom, in fellowship with God, experiencing ever-increasing revelation of Him through the process.

- Work hard, but enjoy life, and have fun in the process. Life does not last forever; make the most of it. (Ecclesiastes 3:22) Don't let emotions such as pride, fear, vanity, guilt, or jealousy cause you to turn work into a life crushing, joy killing idol. (Ecclesiastes 4:4) Even ministry done for the wrong reasons or in the wrong way can become an unintended burden in life. Do not let work get in the way of your relationships -- “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.” (Ecclesiastes 4:8) “Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.” (Proverbs 23:4) The wise person lives a balanced life with all four seasons -- a ‘summer season’ of hard work, growth and productivity; an ‘autumn season’ of harvesting the rewards of labor; a ‘winter season’ of dormancy and rest; and a ‘spring season’ of new beginnings. Key to balance is obedience, faith, and contentment. First, we should walk in obedience, doing only what God desires us to do, not adding our own burdens to life from sin. “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” (Proverbs 16:3) To the hurried person who says, “There is just not enough time in the day to do everything I need to do,” the old Pastor reminds him, “There is just enough time in the day to do exactly what God wants you to do.” What are you busy doing God never asked you to do? Second, work in faith -- “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow.” (Matthew 6:33) Third, learn to be content with what God has given you – “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5) Finally, do not be troubled by a sense of injustice, inequality, unfairness, or a feeling that you are not getting due credit for your efforts or a proper return on investment. When you labor for God, you never labor in vain.

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- John 16:33 -- 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."
- 1 Peter 5:7 -- Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- Ephesians 5:15 -- Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,
- Romans 12:2 -- Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- Colossians 3:17 -- And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- Matthew 6:33 -- But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- Philippians 4:13 -- I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
- Mark 6:31 -- And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.
- 2 Timothy 1:7 -- For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.
- Genesis 2:2-3 -- And on the seventh day God finished his work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all his work that He had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.
- Isaiah 41:13 -- For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."
- John 5:30 -- "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me.
- 1 John 2:15-17 -- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
- Luke 10:38-42 -- Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to Him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."
- Galatians 5:22 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- Psalm 127:1-2 -- A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

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4. Ecclesiastes 4:4 -- "Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind." What motivates you to do what you do? Would you still do all that you do if you got no credit for it or if someone else got the credit for your work?

5. Ecclesiastes 4:8 -- "... one person... has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, 'For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?' This also is vanity and an unhappy business." Many people try to find life meaning and fulfillment through their work, but there is nothing that can fill the God-sized hole in a person's heart but God. Work is not your goal; unity with Christ is your life goal. Work resources loving deeds.

6. Ecclesiastes 4:10-12 -- "For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken." God never intended for a person to go it alone.

7. Proverbs 28:5 - "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely." Expect less and less justice as the nation moves farther and farther away from God. The hope of our nation is Jesus, only Jesus.

8. Proverbs 28:6 - "Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways." Your integrity before God is more valuable than anything money could buy.

9. Proverbs 28:7 -- "The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father." Gluttony is a form of lawlessness. The church population is guilty of gluttony. A 2006 Purdue study found that the fundamental Christians are by far the heaviest of all religious groups, led by the Baptists with a 30% obesity rate compared with Jews at 1%, Buddhists and Hindus at 0.7%. Similarly, a 2011 Northwestern University study tracking 3,433 men and women for 18 years found that young adults who attend church or a Bible study once a week are 50% more likely to be obese. The Pawtucket Heart Health Program found that people who attended church were more likely than non-church members to be 20 percent overweight and have higher cholesterol and blood pressure numbers. Finally, a 2001 Pulpit and Pew study of 2,500 clergy found that 76% were overweight or obese compare to 61% of the general population at the time of the study. Christians should be models of self-control.

10. Proverbs 28:9 - "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Prayer rests on relationship with God. If you have a relationship problem because of sin, you have a prayer problem. Don't be like a foolish child who asks for gifts from his parent while behaving badly.

11. 1 Timothy 3:1-4 -- "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive...." Church leaders must first be able to lead themselves (self-controlled, sober-minded, gentle, etc) and then lead their families (the husband of one wife.... keeping his children submissive). Note also that the prerequisite for teaching is noble character, not just knowledge. Too many people breach what they teach. True understanding is revealed in application. Why would you take

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fitness advice from someone who is out of shape? Why would you listen to a preacher who doesn't lead in love? Didn't Jesus say to judge the tree from its fruit?

12. 1 Timothy 3:9, 10 – “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” This could not be clearer. Leaders must have a clear conscience and be tested as blameless. Leaders are to be held at a much higher standard – no excuses.

13. 1 Timothy 3:14, 15 – “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” How ought an ambassador, a representative for Jesus Christ behave? Don't be complacent with God's holiness.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 Aug 18: Examine your leadership inside-out: are you leading yourself well and those closest to you? Don't seek a greater leadership position; seek to be a greater leader. Greater responsibility will come from your moral authority. (1 Tim 3:1-4)

DBRP - WEEK 35, Day 1, Monday, 27 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eccl+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+27%3B+1+Tim+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 27 August 18:

[Note: Here is a link to a video overview of Ecclesiastes: <https://youtu.be/lrsQ1tc-2wk>]

1. Ecclesiastes 1:2 -- "'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.'" Some Bible versions use the word “vanity” rather than “meaningless.” The book of Ecclesiastes addresses the futility of life apart from God. Apart from God, despite all of our great efforts to make sense out of things and to control life, life seems to have no purpose and meaning, and our efforts seem pointless. Apart from God life can be very dark and depressing. In fact, reading most of Ecclesiastes can feel quite depressing. However, Ecclesiastes deals with some of the biggest questions about life that have been asked throughout all of human history. What is the point of trying? How could Paul face such pessimistic views of life and deal with the challenges of life and yet say, “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58) “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” The anchor for Paul's soul was his hope in Jesus is Christ. (Hebrews 6) As you read Ecclesiastes, read it from the context of your revelation of Jesus the “teacher” of Ecclesiastes did not have.

2. Ecclesiastes 1 -- Our questions about life and the afterlife cannot be answered by human knowledge.

3. Ecclesiastes 2 -- There is no substitute for God in your life. Eternal life is knowing God, and life is about growing closer and closer to God. Joy comes from our relationship with God. Many, far from God, seek to find joy and fulfillment in other places -- pleasure, wealth, accomplishments, work, etc - but this only leaves you empty and spiritually immature.

4. Proverbs 27:1 - "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Make today count. You cannot change the past, and you cannot count on tomorrow. Faithfulness and growth are accomplished one day at a time, one moment at a time, one thought at a time. You should make plans for the future, but God has a plan for you beyond your imagination. If you are faithful, one step at

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a time, He will direct your path to where He intends for it to go. Many people work hard to achieve their life goals only to miss what God had really intended for them all along. Today, God is at work all around you on His Kingdom agenda, instead of chasing your own pursuits, join Him in what He is already doing today, and watch Him work mightily in your life. It starts with faithful thoughts. Align your mind to the mind of Christ, today, and your perspective on everything else in life will change; you will begin to see the opportunities around you that you never saw before.

5. Proverbs 27:5, 6 - "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." It is unloving not to rebuke someone who needs it. It is also unloving to rebuke someone in a way that is not helpful to them. We must speak the truth in love, not in pride, anger, or resentment. Ambassadors for Christ represent Christ, not themselves. If you find yourself about to speak God's word in a self-centered, self-righteous, angry, or otherwise emotional way, do not add to your sin by opening your mouth. Go to the Lord in repentance, and pray that He will give you a Christ-like heart that seeks true reconciliation for and with others. Pray for a heart that seeks only the best for your enemies that you will be a worthy ambassador for Christ.

6. Proverbs 27:7, 8 -- "One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home." A person starving for love is more susceptible to sin. Most destructive behavior comes from an unmet need or desire as the sinner seeks to fulfill that unmet need or desire in a wrong way. Don't just target another person's sin, target the root of the problem and the deception which keeps them in bondage.

7. Proverbs 27:18 -- "Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored." If your boss or leader is wrong, and you can protect him from his mistakes, you will only benefit from it.

8. 1 Timothy 2:1, 2 -- "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." Paul urged Christians to pray for government officials and powerful people in a highly corrupt society and during a time when the church was greatly persecuted. He urged for this response rather than loud protests against the ruling authorities. His obvious point is that prayer is much more powerful than protest. He saw corporate prayer as the solution to the problem, not just a last resort of helpless victims. You have direct access to the Holy Spirit, the power of God Almighty. If you are living according to His will, your prayers are the most powerful force on the planet.

9. 1 Timothy 2:4 -- To be clear, God, "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Are you working to please God today by preaching the Good News to everyone around you?

10. 1 Timothy 2:8 -- "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling." Once again, Paul believed prayer to be our primary weapon system in the spiritual war we are in. He could not be more emphatic about our need to pray for others rather than engaging in angry quarrelling. Are you an effective prayer warrior?

11. 1 Timothy 2:15 -- "Yet she will be saved through childbearing-if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." Paul is not saying that salvation comes through childbearing. We know through the rest of Paul's writings and the whole of Scripture that salvation comes through genuine faith

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in Jesus. Genuine faith results in an obedient life that fulfills God's purpose in life. Paul points out that, in obedience, women play a critical role of creating and developing the next generation of believers that will continue the faith through the currently wicked generation. The most powerful institution on the earth is the Christian family. The greatest leadership role on the planet is that of parent. A person has no greater discipleship opportunity than being a parent. Christians think generationally.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 27 Aug 18: Practice prayer and evangelism today. Start in your own family. Consider writing down the names of everyone within your extended family, praying for them all, sharing Jesus with them all consistently, and journaling your experiences. (See notes above)

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 7, Sunday, 26 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+41%2C+42%3B+proverbs+26%3B+psalm+98%2C+99>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 26 August 18:

1. Job 42:5 -- "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." There is a big difference between knowing about God and truly knowing and experiencing God personally. An encounter with God drives you to repentance, humility, and surrender. Witnesses testify to what they have seen and experienced personally, not what they have been told about by others, which is only hearsay. Pray for and seek a more genuine, personal relationship with Jesus today. Job lived a very righteous life, but God put Job through great trials, primarily for God's glory (which is our purpose), but also to draw Job closer to Himself in a real and personal way. If you are trusting in the Lord, He will reveal His character more and more to you through your trials. You will see, even if everyone else abandons you, the Lord will never leave you or forsake you. Your love and faith will only grow when God leads you through the dark times. This is the point of Romans 8:28 -- "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." With this perspective, we can trust that all circumstances are ultimately used by God for His glory and our good, drawing us closer to Him in love. Through our trials, God is often accomplishing several things at once -- revealing Himself to you in a greater way, revealing the truth of you to you in a much greater way, revealing Himself to others through His relationship with you, using you to accomplish specific things on this earth, and preparing you for greater things in the future. You are never just a hapless victim. Likely, we will not understand why God is allowing us to go through our trials. This is where faith (trusting God in the moment), hope (trusting God with the future) and love (being satisfied and fulfilled by Him alone as the essence, purpose, and goal of your life) come in.

- God may take you through hard times in order to tear down your idols, things that you rely on more than God, things you care about more than your relationship with God, things that define your life more than God. Even your righteousness can become an idol as it had for Peter and for Saul (Paul). God may need to show you that His love and faithfulness towards you does not depend on your love and faithfulness towards Him. He may need to show you that His strength and power is not dependent on your strength and power. He may need to take things away in your life that you will see that He is the Life. He may need you to lose your way that you can see that He is the Way. He may need you to become disillusioned so that you can see that He is the Truth. He may need the bottom to come out

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from underneath you so that you can see that He is the Rock, the immovable foundation. In hard times, draw closer to Him, not further away.

2. Job 42:7 -- "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right." Job's friends apparently spoke from God's word, but they misapplied God's word by judging Job for an assumed hidden sin, claiming to understand what God had not revealed to them. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. All of Job's friends had knowledge but not wisdom which can come only from right relationship with God. Wisdom comes only from God through the Holy Spirit's counsel from God's word. Pray for wisdom today.

3. Job 42:8 -- "And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly." God forced Job's friends to humble themselves before Job who they wrongly accused. Job in turn prayed for those who treated him inappropriately. Our goal is not to seek justice for ourselves but rather God's mercy and grace for our offenders and their reconciliation with God through Jesus – we are to intercede for the wicked. Is that your heart, a heart that seeks reconciliation and peace with God for all? Pray for this sort of heart.

4. Proverbs 26:6-10 – "Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence. Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools. Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool. Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools. Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard." A fool given a message will either fail to deliver the message or will transmit the message in a way that was never intended, causing enmity rather than peace and healing. The Bible says, "God, through Christ, reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) We must be very careful not to be foolish messengers who fail to deliver the Gospel or who deliver the message in a way never intended by Jesus. We are responsible to God for not only what we say (or don't say) but also how we say it. You cannot be a faithful ambassador for Christ if you are representing yourself in any way. It's not about you.

5. Proverbs 26:11 – "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." Sin is gross.

6. Proverbs 26:17 – "Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears." This proverb verse reminds me of an account of Jesus found in Luke 12: "Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'" (Luke 12:12-15) Getting involved in quarrels can cause us and others to become distracted from the heart of the matter, the need for reconciliation with God through Jesus. Don't cheapen the message of the Gospel by getting wrapped up in needless worries of the world.

7. Proverbs 26:23 – "Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart." Compare this verse with Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly

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appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” (Matthew 23:25-27) You can say all the right things from the wrong heart and reap only woes. You may fool others, but you won’t fool God.

8. Proverbs 26:28 – “A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” Lying and flattery are extremely destructive and unloving, a disregard for the Greatest Commandment of love given to us by the Almighty.

9. Psalm 99:1 -- "The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!" When was the last time God's Holy Sovereignty caused you to tremble and quake? In the Book of James, the Bible says that even the demons believe in Jesus and "shudder." Many Christians do not even display a demon level of faith. Knowledge of Jesus should overwhelm you with His holiness and drive you to your knees in powerful worship - knowledge of Jesus is life changing and causes you to see everyone and everything completely differently. Pray for this level of knowledge of Jesus.

10. Job 99:4 -- "The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob."

- Today the Bible reminds us of what God loves – justice. This verse provides context to the remainder of Psalm 99 where God’s relationship with His servants is described: “They called to the Lord, and he answered them.... they kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them. O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy!” (Psalm 99:7-9) They called to the Lord with humble and repentant hearts, and God answered them. But then it describes God’s expectation of obedience while His servants walked in grace. With forgiveness also came punishment, discipline because God is not only a merciful God, He remains a just God. The phrase “but an avenger of their wrongdoings” is translated in other versions as “though you punished their misdeeds.” Modern Christianity often describes a mercy/grace-only God who cares little about sin, which is downplayed as merely the natural human response to victimization or chemical imbalances – “God understands and doesn’t judge us for our sins,” they say. But the Bible calls sin, “sin” and says that God punishes His children for it, though in a merciful way. See for yourself if this message does not come through loud and clear in the Bible, though not so loudly in churches anymore. Just today we read that “the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: ‘My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.’” And in Proverbs we read, “will he not repay man according to his work?” Of course some will argue that these are Old Testament verses and that they no longer apply to us, but the New Testament reconfirms time and time again that God still loves justice and punishes even His forgiven children for their transgressions, though not eternally -- “But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.... My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our

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good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.... Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” (1 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19) 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” This verse seems to apply that God’s love takes away all punishment, but you have to consider this verse in context to John’s whole message: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3) To be “perfected in love” is to be perfectly obedient in love, a condition that removes any fear of punishment. Until that state, “do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.” Also, “do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof.” (Proverbs 3:11) The end of Psalm 99 gives us our most important reminder: “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy!” The main problem with the church in America today is that we have forgotten that, first and foremost, “God is holy!” We make light of sin because we make light of the holiness of God – His only attribute that is repeated three times in the Bible for highest emphasis – “Holy, Holy, Holy”! (Revelation 4:8) The only other word repeated three times in the Bible for emphasis is, “woe, woe, woe,” for those who don’t honor the holiness of God, repent, and put their faith in Jesus. (Revelation 8:13) To appeal to the world, we have downplayed the Holiness of God and the sinfulness of man; as a result, complacency has crept into the church. When we make light of sin, which demands the wrath of God and eternal damnation, we marginalize the urgent demand for salvation through Jesus Christ. The Good News is good news in context to the bad news – all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and the wages of this sin is eternal death.

- Imagine just one day on earth where there was no justice at all - it would be hell on earth. Christians, as preservative salt on earth who seek justice, not just by proclaiming God's just position on every issue but primarily by bringing others to a relationship with Jesus where they can understand and appreciate justice as well as mercy and grace. The Bible says that justice comes only from God, not from men. The only hope for justice on earth is corporate repentance and revival.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 26 Aug 18: Pray for an ever-increasing and life-changing relationship with the person of Jesus for yourselves and for others. Seek as your top priority today to draw closer to Jesus and to draw others closer to Jesus. (See the notes above)

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 6, Saturday, 25 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+39%2C+40%3B+proverbs+25%3B+psalm+97+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 25 August 18:

1. Job 39:26 -- "Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south?" Popular culture says that you are in control of your destiny. However, the wise understand how powerless they really are and how dependent they are on God's grace, protection, and direction. The wise also understand the incredible limits of their knowledge and understanding, while the foolish boast in their understanding and even convince themselves that they can define God, or disprove God, the Creator. Consider the fact that the public school systems have removed God from the quest for knowledge in America and teach that God is not involved in the creation process, which they teach is the product of chance rather than purpose. But the Bible says, “How clearly the sky reveals God's glory! How plainly it shows what he has done!” (Psalm 19:1) “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

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the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" Paul said that God's Creation leaves us no excuse for unbelief: "What may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:19,20)." God challenged Job to consider how the hawk reveals God's incredible glory and the limits of man's understanding. The hawk can see up to 8 times more clearly than the sharpest human eye and can see colors, as well as ultraviolet light, which means that they can perceive colors that humans can't. They can reach speeds of 150 miles while hunting. Hawks mate for life, and the male does tricks in the air to impress a female, in a courtship dance that might last over 10 minutes. Hawks build nests out of sticks often over three feet wide, and when they lay eggs, both the male and female sit on the eggs, taking turns to hunt for food. Hawks are able to live just about anywhere -- you can find them in tropical, moist areas and mountainous plains. Like many birds, the hawk migrates in the spring and the autumn, but different kinds of hawks choose different times in both of the seasons to migrate south or north. Who doesn't get a bit excited when they see a hawk in nature? How could anyone convince themselves that these wonderful creatures are the product of mere chance? Job asked for answers from God, but rather than answer Job's questions, God told Job to consider His unfathomable glory, power, wisdom, and sovereignty. Jesus said, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:25, 26) "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" God's glory, power, wisdom, and sovereignty are truly unfathomable, but so is His love. Rest in His during hard times.

2. Job 40:2, 4 -- "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?... Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth." A personal encounter with God leaves you overwhelmed and completely humbled by His holiness. It is impossible to be close to God and have a pride problem.

3. Job 40 -- If man cannot even understand the complexity of nature, how can man think he can comprehend the fullness of Nature's Creator. How arrogant and foolish is the man who forms an opinion about God based upon his personal knowledge and experience?

4. Proverbs 25:16 -- "If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it." Too much of a good thing can make it a bad thing for you.

5. Proverbs 25:21, 22 -- "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you." When we obey God and respond to evil with kindness, we are trusting God to cover our losses and give us what we didn't rightly receive from others. He will more than make up the difference.

6. Proverbs 25:28 -- "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." Self-control, which is critical to your life, is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

7. Psalm 97:1, 2 -- "The Lord reigns.... righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne." Relate these verses with Job 40:2, 8 -- "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him...? Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" Our Lord, the Almighty, the Creator, is

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Sovereign. Is it possible for the created entity to fully understand its Creator? Again, how foolish is it for mere people to define God from their perspective. I am always amazed when “teachers” from their vast wisdom obtained from less than 80 years of life on this planet attempt to challenge the truth of God and his Word. Man’s wisdom is foolishness in God’s sight (1 Cor 3:19), and there is no possible way to measure how distant our thoughts are from God’s thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). We cannot possibly understand why God does what he does, or where He is taking us in life since our steps are directed by Him. (Proverbs 20:24) We must walk in faith, hope, and love trusting that Our “Daddy” IS love; that NOTHING can “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38, 39); and that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) So, “trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5,6)

8. Psalm 97:110 -- "O you who love the LORD, hate evil!" Compare this verse with Proverbs 8:13 and Amos 5:15. Do you hate evil? Hate evil, not those who are in bondage to evil - free them.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 25 Aug 18: Be on a rescue mission today. Work to free the captives of sin. When you are offended, see the situation from God's perspective - hurting people, naturally, hurt people. Don't hate the sinner, hate the evil that has trapped the sinner; seek to free the sinner through love; do not try to counter evil with anger but rather with peace and mercy. Shock people by your loving response to all offenses today. (Proverbs 20:6, 9; Psalm 97:110)

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 5, Friday, 24 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+37%2C+38%3B+proverbs+24%3B+1+Tim+1+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 24 August 18:

1. Job 37:1; 19 -- "At this also my heart trembles and leaps out of its place.... Teach us what we shall say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness." Does God's immeasurable greatness, power, and holiness leave you overwhelmed and speechless? Does the truth of who God is leave you humble and surrendered?

2. Job 37:24 -- "Therefore men fear him; He does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit." Many who won't respond humbly, submissively, and obediently to God based on what is clearly revealed to us about Him through Creation and His word, look aimlessly for a more 'special' revelation, for a deeper enlightenment, a hidden revelation, for miraculous signs or miraculous abilities. Some search within God's Bible for secret messages and codes, though they neglect the very simple commands within the Bible of love, forgiveness, charity, hospitality, worship, evangelism, fellowship, and worship. For most, there is a massive chasm between knowing and doing, based on pride. "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority." (John 7:17) "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

3. Job 38:4, 36 -- "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?... Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind?..." How incredibly foolish is it for us, mere humans, to question God, to doubt Him, to challenge Him, to demand answers or proof from Him, to attempt to define Him, to make light of Him, to ignore Him, or to disobey Him?

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4. Proverbs 24:17, 18 – “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.” We are on a mission of reconciliation. God has called us to love and forgive our enemies, regardless of what they do to us, always hoping for their salvation from our hearts. If we rejoice in their punishment, we demonstrate that we do not have the heart of Jesus, that we don’t fully appreciate the grace we have received, and that Jesus is not truly the Lord of our hearts.

[Note: Here is a link to a video overview of 1 Timothy: <https://youtu.be/7RoqnGcEjcs>]

5. 1 Timothy 1:2 – “To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” On behalf of Jesus, Paul offered others “grace, mercy, and peace.” Is that what you do? Also, Paul considered other Christians his family in the faith. Do you?

6. 1 Timothy 1:5 -- “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Love comes from 1) a pure heart, 2) a good conscience, and 3) a sincere faith. Since our greatest command is love, we should seriously consider where we sit on these three essential elements. Our Great Commandment from God is “love.” Our “charge” is love. So, naturally, since love is our life’s duty, given to us by God who IS love, we should strive to become experts, masters of love. We must be both students and practitioners, involving both diligent study and practice as we forget about our old lives and follow the Master of love. You can’t do what you don’t know, so, understanding God’s word on love is foundational to our sanctification. We cannot love apart from Biblical knowledge -- to love we must be “transformed by the renewal of [our] mind[s].” (Romans 12:2) The Bible has much to teach us about true love, and we have much to learn as we have grown up in a world that teaches a type of love that is 180-out from God’s love. God is careful to remind us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8, 9) We must forget what we thought we knew about love and our personal opinions about what love is and submit to God’s definition of love. How many verses in the Bible speak directly about love? Do you know them all? The Bible, however, is very clear that knowledge alone does not make us loving. In fact, knowledge that is not “of the Spirit” or applied in obedience (even knowledge about love) can be a prideful thing that “puffs up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1) Our aim is to “know (become one with) the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,” and to “be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:19) So, what does the Bible teach us about love today? Love comes “from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” These are powerful words. If we truly desire to obey God’s Great Commandment, we must relentlessly pursue purity -- “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8) “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.” (Psalm 119:9) If we truly desire to obey God’s Great Commandment, we must have a good conscience: “So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.” (Acts 24:16) How important is a clear conscience as we seek to walk with God? Jesus told us: “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23, 24) Finally, if you want to obey God’s Great Commandment, you must live by faith. “We walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7) “And without faith it is impossible to please him.” (Hebrews 11:6) “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.” (Proverbs 3:5-7) Without faith, we will not be willing to take the great leaps required for purity and a

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clear conscience, and we will lack the confidence required to draw near to God. (Hebrews 11:6) How are you doing in the areas of purity, conscience, and faith? What is the quality of your love?

- John 21:15-17 -- When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

7. 1 Timothy 1:6, 7 – "Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions." Some are more focused on the study of God's word than on the doing of God's word. That is like being a sports commentator, having never played to game. You may be interesting to listen to, but you don't put points on the scoreboard. Absolutely, you must know the game, but knowing is for doing, you must get on the field and move the ball forward.

8. 1 Timothy 1:8 – "Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully...." The Word of God must be used properly to be a blessing in someone's life, drawing them closer to Jesus. Some use the word of God inappropriately and hurt other people. As Proverbs 26:9 says, "Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." To use the law lawfully, you must first be in obedience to the Greatest Commandment of love.

9. 1 Timothy 1:12 – "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service...." God appoints the faithful to service, not the unfaithful. The fruit of the minister's life reveals if they were really appointed by God or just an imposter.

10. 1 Timothy 1:13, 14 – "...though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." The ungodly sin out of ignorance (not that ignorance is an excuse); but those who have received God's grace, have been given the power of the Holy Spirit, and continue in unrepentant sin profane the blood of Christ – "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:26-31) To be clear, the Lord will judge His people.

11. 1 Timothy 1:18, 19 – "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith...." God's word helps us maintain the three elements required for love mentioned above.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 24 Aug 18: Today, evaluate yourself from the three qualities in 1 Tim 1:5. Pray for growth in these areas.

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 4, Thursday, 23 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+35%2C+36%3B+proverbs+23%3B+luke+24+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 23 August 18:

1. Job 35:3 – “What advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?” Love does not serve God for profit. Jesus made it clear – “So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” (Luke 17:10) God does not owe us special treatment for obeying Him as we were created to do, nor should we seek special reward. Obedience should be motivated only by love, not by a sense of duty or a hope for reward.
2. Job 35:7 – “If you are righteous, what do you give to him? Or what does he receive from your hand?” Again, if we served God perfectly, we would only be doing our duty, nothing more than that. However, we too often expect great praise and special treatment for our partial obedience (which is ultimately disobedience).
3. Job 35:12 – “There they cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evil men.” Many people cry out to God from a position of arrogance, and God does not respond to the arrogant heart but rather the truly humble one.
4. Job 35:16 – “Job opens his mouth in empty talk; he multiplies words without knowledge.” We should all do a lot less talking and a lot more listening in both our relationship with God and our relationships with others.
5. Job 35 -- We think too much of ourselves and too little of God to the point where we actually start to think that God owes us something. In our arrogance, we think we can talk to God about "fairness" as if we have some sort of rights before the Perfect One who created us for His purposes.
6. Job 36:5 -- “Behold, God is mighty, and does not despise any; he is mighty in strength of understanding.” We should stand in awe, wonder, and amazement that God even tolerates sinful man and furthermore would pour His love upon us.
7. Job 36:10 – “He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they return from iniquity.” God commands the wicked to repent.
8. Job 36:11 – “If they listen and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness.” Being in fellowship with God, under any circumstances, is contentment. A lack of contentment is a heart problem, not a resource problem.
9. Job 36:14 – “They die in youth, and their life ends among the cult prostitutes.” Job lived in a very wicked time, yet he remained holy, set apart for God. Are you pure and holy in these wicked days?
10. Job 36:15 – “He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity.” Affliction is often used by God to humble us, teach us, and draw us closer to Him.
11. Job 36:18-23 – “Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing, and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside. Will your cry for help avail to keep you from distress, or all the force of your strength?...

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Take care; do not turn to iniquity, for this you have chosen rather than affliction. Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him? Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?" Affliction draws some people closer to God and others farther away. In affliction, many question God, become angry with God, blame God, and even deny God. Elihu warned Job not lose perspective in his pain of God's sovereign righteousness. If you are not currently going through affliction, you will. How will it affect your relationship with God?

12. Job 36:26 – "Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable." How arrogant is it for man to believe he can decide for himself who God is and who God isn't?

13. Proverbs 23:1-3 - "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food." The Bible warns that politicians will make many promises and offer many gifts in order to stay in power - this is a deception. Have you ever seen a poor politician?

14. Proverbs 23:6, 7 - "Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies, for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. 'Eat and drink!' he says to you, but his heart is not with you." Many people will fake generosity in order to get something in return, and many relationships depend on reciprocity. Love is a gift, requiring and expecting nothing in return. Only relationships grounded in love are reliable under all circumstances.

15. Proverbs 23:9 - "Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words." Fools aren't really listening to what you have to say. With many, you are wasting your time trying to speak truth to them. Sometimes it is best to save your energy for those who are being moved by the Spirit to hear.

16. Proverbs 23:10 - "Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you." God is the Redeemer who holds everyone accountable for all of their words and deeds.

17. Proverbs 23:17 - "Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day." What is the most powerful influence in your life, God or others, popular opinion or the word of God? Your actions will reveal who you are really following.

13. Luke 24:1 – "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared." As described in Proverbs 31, the godly women were up early in the morning making the most of the day. They started their day honoring Jesus.

14. Luke 24:6, 7 – "He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." The Holy Spirit will remind you of the word of God for the situation at hand if you are listening to the Spirit.

15. Luke 24:11 – "...but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." Witnesses testify to what they have personally seen God do, not what they heard about from someone else. Tell people what God has done in your life. (Luke 24:9) Not everyone will believe you, but some will.

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16. Luke 24:28-31 -- "So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."

Cleopas and the other disciple who walked with Jesus on the Road to Emmaus came to a cross roads, though unrecognized to them – a decision point that seemed minor but in actuality was quite significant. As the stranger walking with them (Jesus) prepared to journey onward into the evening, they had to choose whether to be obedient to God's word or not: "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:34) The Bible demands special hospitality to sojourners and travelling strangers, and hospitality dictates that God's people open their homes to them as Job proudly proclaimed to be his standard practice – "the sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler." (Job 31:32) Remember at the city gate of Sodom, Lot insistently opened his home to two strangers who in actuality were angels, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Genesis 19; Hebrews 13:2) Jesus used hospitality as a test when he sent out his disciples to evangelize – "He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And he said to them, 'Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you... shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.'" (Mark 6:8-11) So, Cleopas and his friend had a decision to make, invite the stranger to their home or let him go on his way. It was a small, quickly made decision. If they had said nothing, Jesus would have walked on, and that would have been the end of the story. No one would have called them out for their lack of hospitality as the decision would have gone unnoticed. Cleopas and his buddy would have gone on with their lives unaware of the opportunity they had missed due to their insensitivity to the will and activity of God. However, the Bible says that they "urged him strongly." Because of their obedience in this small matter of hospitality, "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." They were faithful with a little thing and were given much, much more – their lives would never be the same again; they were first-hand witnesses to the risen Christ. I believe God works much the same way in our lives. Every day we come to countless small decision points or cross roads, places where we must choose obedience or self-centeredness. It's in the everyday, small decisions that our character is formed, where our spiritual eyes are opened (or closed), where we prove our readiness for greater things. We often ask, "What does God want me to do with my life?" But the answer is to walk in faithful obedience, one day at a time, making the most of every opportunity that God places before us, particularly during those seemingly insignificant moments. If we are faithful in the little decisions, God will reveal His bigger plan for us. If we are unfaithful in the little things, we will likely walk on contently, unaware of the great opportunities we missed. I believe God is at work continually all around us, but we remain insensitive to his activity because we are distracted with the worries of the world and our own plans. We are very busy at work hoping that God will bless what we are doing, rather than seeking to become a part of what God is already doing in accordance with His plan. In our self-induced hurriedness, we walk right by countless "sojourners" without even noticing them, unaware of the great opportunities we missed. Jesus walked differently, always noticing and engaging that person in the crowd that everyone else was ignoring. Jesus saw what others couldn't see because He was in tune with the Father, doing only what he saw is Father doing. What will God show you today if you walk in obedience to Him with your eyes open for His activity?

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17. Luke 24:32 -- "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" As you walk with Jesus, how is the Holy Spirit opening the Scriptures to you, and what has been the impact to your life? Is your heart burning today? From Henry T. Blackaby -- Jesus joins those who are earnestly seeking Him. Two men walked along the road to Emmaus discussing the confusing events that had just occurred in Jerusalem. They thought they had understood the happenings of their day, but the death of Jesus had left them disoriented to God and His activity in their world. They had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah, but His death had left them perplexed and discouraged. They needed answers. God reads the heart and knows the honest pursuit of His will by His children. Jesus drew near to these men, walked with them, and opened their minds to what the Scriptures said about Him and about the events of their day. As Jesus was speaking, their hearts burned within them! As they listened to Jesus relate the Scriptures to what they were experiencing, they knew in their hearts that they were hearing God's truth. Their doubts vanished, excitement overcame them, and they raced back to share the truth with their friends! If you become bewildered by circumstances in your life, Jesus can reorient you to Himself through the Scriptures just as He did for these two men. From your human perspective, the situation may be confusing and discouraging. It takes the presence of Christ to open your eyes to the truth of the Scriptures. Have your circumstances confused you? You need Jesus to give you His perspective. Once you've heard from Him, you'll be like these two men, excited to join God in what He is doing around you and eager to include others in the experience.

18. Luke 24:36 -- "As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, 'Peace to you!'" Jesus first word is "Peace."

19. Luke 24:45 -- "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...." God must open your mind to understand the Scriptures.

20. Luke 24:52, 53 -- "And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God." A genuine encounter with God inspires continuous praise and worship.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 23 Aug 18: Approach every relationship, particularly the hard ones, with an invitation for peace. Be on the mission of reconciliation today, bringing others peace that can only come from Jesus. (Luke 24:36)

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 3, Wednesday, 22 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+33%2C+34%3B+proverbs+22%3B+luke+23+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 22 August 18:

1. Job 33:6, 7 -- "I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay. No fear of me should alarm you, nor should my hand be heavy upon you." As described in chapter 32, Elihu speaks after Job's three friends have finished speaking. Elihu was angry at Job for "justifying himself rather than God;" he was also angry with Job's friends because they could not refute Job. Interestingly, while Elihu is speaking, the Lord cuts in and settles the matter (chapter 38). Furthermore, in Job 42 the Bible says that God was angry with Job's three friends but apparently not with Elihu. So, it would seem that Elihu, unlike the three friends, spoke the truth. However, Elihu's words generally sound the same as theirs. So, how was Elihu's approach to Job different than that of Job's three friends? It appears to me that, while Job's friends sought to find a hidden sin in Job's life to explain his suffering, Elihu focuses on the Holiness

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and Sovereignty of God. How could we possibly claim to understand the ways of God from our simple perspective? Will we reduce God to a simple disseminator of rewards and punishments based on our ideas of justice? Would we accuse God of injustice? Must God answer to us? God is not unjust and does no evil, but are we, mere mortals, in any position to question God or to judge His actions? Will brilliant men teach us something about God which God has not revealed? Can a man add to God's word? Note that Elihu does not seek to find Job's hidden sin but rather challenges him on the words he heard Job say, "I am in the right, and God has taken away my right; in spite of my right I am counted a liar; my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression." Elihu could not explain Job's pain (because Elihu is not God), but Elihu understood that God is God, Holy, Righteous, Loving, Merciful, Sovereign.

2. Job 33:14 - "For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it." God speaks though people may not perceive it. God is spirit and speaks to us through the Spirit's conviction as we read and apply His word, the Bible. God calls us to walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh by remaining in His word and obeying His word. When you are walking with God, you will hear His voice through the Spirit's counsel and conviction at the moment – what you do next is critical. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27) The cause of silence is often spiritual deafness, but not always.

3. Job 34:9 – "For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God.'" If you are serving God for profit, it is not for love. The unloving don't follow God because they don't see the profit in it. Love is a sacrifice of self for another inspired by the heart, not by a desire for a pay back.

4. Job 34:17 - "Shall one who hates justice govern?" The foundation, moral authority, and the legitimacy of government is justice. God is just and the source of all justice. There is no justice apart from Him. If a nation seeks justice apart from God, lawlessness follows. The ungodly and unjust are unfit for government, though God often allows the unjust to govern for a time for His purposes, to reveal the fallacy of man's righteousness and the truth of His holiness, righteousness, sovereignty, mercy, and grace.

5. Job 34:31-33 -- "For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne punishment; I will not offend any more; teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more'? Will he then make repayment to suit you, because you reject it?" We have nothing to bring to the negotiating table with God, and there can be no greater arrogance than to think somehow God would negotiate on our terms or bargain with the mere mortal. Can we really say to God, "I will not offend anymore"? If God revealed your sin to you in a greater way, would you really never sin again? Has any of us mastered self? And if we had finally mastered self, would that be justification to free us from accepting responsibility for our past behavior? Proverbs ask, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin'?" (Proverbs 20:9) Sometimes, as spoiled children, we might say to the Father, "That's not fair!" But the last thing we want from the Father is what is fair or what we truly deserve – that would be eternal death. We must never lose sight of the fact that we operate under God's unmeasurable mercy and grace. Often, we take this for granted, and our head knowledge of grace does not guide our hearts. Our perspective on grace affects everything.

6. Job 34:33 - "Will he then make repayment to suit you, because you reject it?" Many people ask for forgiveness, but continue in sin (not producing the fruit of repentance) and then expect God to reward them in their disobedience. Forgiveness begins with repentance and results in an obedient heart. Most Christians are too complacent in their obedience, presuming upon God's grace.

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7. Job 34:37 – “For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God.” We all sin and “miss the mark,” but is quite another matter to intentionally sin with full awareness of God's commands and God's G.R.A.C.E. -- God's Riches At Christ's Expense. While we may make light of rebellious sin, God doesn't -- “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26-31)

8. Proverbs 22:7 -- “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.” Avoid all debt because God's people should not be slaves to the world.

9. Proverbs 22:9, 16 – “Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.... Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.” How many times does the Bible tell you to take care of the needy?

10. Proverbs 22:11 – “He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.” Gracious speech is the mark of a pure heart.

11. Proverbs 22:26 – “Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts.” Avoid getting entangled in commitments to the ungodly. Don't make promises you cannot keep.

12. Luke 23:8, 9 – “When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer.” Many seek Jesus selfishly for personal gain, but Jesus responds to the repentant and surrendered.

13. Luke 23:11 – “And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.” When Jesus refuses to speak with unrepentant sinners on their terms, they only end up hating Him and rejecting Him.

14. Luke 23:12 – “And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.” The ungodly may not agree on much, but they are united against Christ.

15. Luke 23:15 – “Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.” Many see Jesus as harmless, no factor, and they fail to recognize their pending eternal judgement.

16. Luke 23:20-25 – “So Pilate decided....” A personal decision concerning Jesus cannot be avoided. If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice. The choice is yours; you cannot blame anyone else.

17. Luke 23:28-31 – “But turning to them Jesus said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children....’ Being led to His horrible death, Jesus' concern was for others.

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18. Luke 23:34 – “And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’” Jesus modeled forgiveness for us. How far does your forgiveness go?

19. Luke 23:34, 35 – “And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!’” Your forgiveness should not depend on how others respond. Again, How far does your forgiveness go?

20. Luke 23:40-43 -- “‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.’” Things to consider: had the criminal been baptized? When did Jesus say the criminal would enter into paradise? Also, quickly turn to Psalm 22:12-18 and compare these verses to Luke’s account of the crucifixion. Also, re-read Isaiah 53 – Powerful!

21. Luke 23:43 – “And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.’” One dying criminal went to heaven; one did not.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 22 Aug 18: Take up your cross today and follow Jesus by forgiving others who offend you, regardless what they did or how you think they will respond. Display the love of Christ and proclaim the Gospel to all around you. There is still hope for the other criminal. (Luke 23:34-43)

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 2, Tuesday, 21 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+31%2C+32%3B+proverbs+21%3B+luke+22+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 21 August 18:

1. Job 31:1 -- "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?" You must decide and act to avoid temptation and sin. For example, reject TV shows and social media sites that glamorize or make light of what God abhors. If you allow yourself to be entertained by evil, you will have a hard time ever taking sin seriously enough again.

2. Job 31:4-40 - "Does not he see my ways and number all my steps?" Job understood, in order to call Himself a follower of God, he had to actually follow God in obedience. Many call themselves Christians but don't obey Jesus and grow as a disciple, a true follower of Jesus. Job sought with all of his heart and effort to walk with God on earth, and he viewed how he treated others as the evidence of his love for God. No doubt, something will keep you busy today. You will do what everyone else is doing, what you want to do, or what God wants you to do. The world will say, “Don’t just stand there, do something!” Perhaps God is saying, “Don’t just do something, stand there!” Prayerfully wait for God’s lead. Keep your eyes open to see where He is at work around you and be a part of His business. This was Jesus’s approach -- “So Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.... Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise’.... ‘I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me’.... So Jesus said to them, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me’.... For I have not spoken on my

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own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.” (John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49) How do you know where God is at work and how you should invest your time, energy, and effort? Daily study of God’s word will help you filter what matters from what doesn’t matter; what is profitable for the Kingdom from what is unprofitable; what is right to do from what is wrong to do; and what is God’s priority versus everyone else’s priorities. The Holy Spirit will convict you from God’s word at the moment; be faithful with the moment. There is just enough time today to do exactly what God wants you to do. There is not enough time today to do what everyone else wants you to do.

3. Job 31:7-10 -- “...If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbor’s door, then let my wife grind for another....” Job expected God to treat him the way he treated others – “For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38) We see this pattern in God’s response to people throughout the Bible. For example, Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the Israelite baby boys, and God responded with a similar plague. There are only two recorded stoning incidents recorded in the New Testament, the stoning of Stephen and the stoning of Paul who incited the stoning of Stephen. There are many, many other examples.

4. Job 31:16-34 -- “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail....” Again, Job gives us a model for how we should live our lives.

5. Job 31:29, 30 -- “If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him (I have not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse)” God has always expected His people to love their enemies.

6. Job 31:32 – “...the sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler....” God expects your door to be open to traveling strangers.

7. Job 32:2, 3 -- “So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. But Elihu... became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him.” The fourth guy: I have always been fascinated with Elihu, a character easily missed in a casual reading of Job, but a critical character in the story. Elihu isn’t introduced to the reader until this point in the story; thus far, the exchange has been between Job and his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. For days, Elihu has been on the sidelines listening to Job’s friends condemn Job while Job continues to justify himself. Now, he can remain in silence no longer and is compelled to speak from his understanding which he has obtained not through experience of age but from the “breath of the Almighty.” The Book of Job says that God was angry with Job’s three friends because they had not “spoken what was right.” However, the Lord didn’t get angry with Elihu, and it would appear that Elihu’s words convicted Job and set the stage for the Lord’s response to Job “out of the storm.” What is different about Elihu’s response that separates him from the other three friends? Read on and see if you can understand the difference.

8. Job 32:4 - "Now Elihu had waited to speak...." Elihu is an interesting character – he was the youngest to speak and the last to speak, which is a sign of wisdom. His words to Job are very similar to what God will finally say to Job to settle the issue. Elihu respectfully encouraged Job to stop defending his own righteousness but rather to focus on God's righteousness. He encouraged Job to trust God's fidelity in circumstances that seemed unfair.

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9. Job 32:8 - "But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand." The knowledge of God cannot be obtained through human intellect but must come from the enlightenment of the spirit by the Spirit.

10. Job 32:13 - "Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom; God may vanquish him, not a man.'" Hiding behind theology, Job's three friends acted as if they understood what God was doing when they didn't. They assumed that since Job was suffering greatly, he must have sinned greatly. They spoke on behalf of God wrongly. Elihu reminds them that God is Job's judge, not them.

11. Job 32:21, 22 - "I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person. For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away." We are called to speak the truth, not what people want to hear, what will make them feel good, or what we think they need to hear. Also, we should not judge the merit of another person's words based upon their position or their intellect but rather against the standard of God's word.

12. Proverbs 21:1 – "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." God is in control of world leaders.

13. Proverbs 21:7 – "The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just." It's not that we don't know what we are supposed to do; we just refuse to do it.

14. Proverbs 21:13 – "Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered." God will treat you the way you treat others.

15. Proverbs 21:17 – "Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." Many people are pleasure seekers rather than Christ seekers.

16. Proverbs 21:25, 26 – "The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back." Laziness is selfishness. Christians work hard and give freely out of selfless love for God and others.

17. Proverbs 21:27 – "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." The religion of the selfish is unacceptable to God. How much of teaching today is based on what God will do for you rather than our call to glorify Him? How often do Pastors and teachers seek to enthrone congregations about the blessings of God rather than God Himself? The more we consider the Holiness of God, the more we understand that life is not about us, it's about Him.

18. Proverbs 21:28 – "A false witness will perish, but the word of a man who hears will endure." Above all else, don't misrepresent the LORD.

19. Proverbs 21:30, 31 – "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord." God is in complete control. God is sovereign. How important is it for you to surrender to God's authority and leading?

20. Luke 22:2 - "And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people." During the time of the Passover, the religious leaders were seeking to murder the Son of God in order to maintain their status and security on earth. Today, many churches are willing to sacrifice Jesus for sake of the American Dream.

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21. Luke 22:19 -- "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is a symbolic reminder that Jesus died for us, and is now in us. Just as we are what we eat physically, Jesus within us is who we are spiritually - our spirit is made from the Spirit of God.

22. Luke 22:26 - "...the leader as one who serves." The greatest leader is the humblest and the one who serves others most. This is the exact opposite of what the world expects of leaders.

23. Luke 22:27 -- "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves." From Henry T. Blackaby -- The measure of greatness in the kingdom of God differs vastly from that of the world. Our society idolizes the rich, the powerful, the beautiful, and the athletic. We even make celebrities out of those who brazenly flaunt their immorality. The world claims it is demeaning to serve others. However, God's kingdom completely rejects the world's measure for esteem, giving the greatest honor to the one who serves most. The person who serves selflessly, lovingly, without complaint, and without seeking recognition is highly regarded in the kingdom of God. When Jesus and His disciples entered the upper room, the disciples looked for a prominent place to sit; Jesus looked for a place to serve. As they awkwardly waited to be served, Jesus took a towel and basin and washed their feet (John 13:1-15). We Christians like to refer to ourselves as servants, but we are seldom content to be treated as servants! We are tempted to adopt the world's evaluation of importance. But when we look to Jesus as our model, we see that it takes a far more noble character to serve than to be served. The world will estimate your importance by the number of people serving you. God is more concerned with the number of people you are serving. If you struggle to be a servant, your heart may have shifted away from the heart of God. Ask Jesus to teach you selflessness and to give you the strength to follow His example. Watch for Jesus' invitation to join Him in serving others. It will come.

24. Luke 22:29 - "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom...." You, right now, are part of the Kingdom of God.

25. Luke 22:34 -- "Jesus said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.'" God knows your limitations better than you do and will use your failures to reveal to you the truth of your character.

26. Luke 22:35 -- "And he said to them, 'When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?' They said, 'Nothing.'" God will place you in challenging conditions to build your faith.

27. Luke 22:36 - "...let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one." Jesus expected his disciples to be equipped and ready to defend themselves. God's people have always been ready to defend themselves.

28. Luke 22:42 -- "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." God expects you to pray for what you want with a heart that accepts His perfect will regardless the difficulty of His answer.

29. Luke 22:43 - "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." When you take the hard road for Jesus, you don't walk alone.

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30. Luke 22:44 – “And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” From Henry T. Blackaby -- Prayer is not difficult to understand. It is difficult to do. When was the last time your heart so grieved for those you were interceding for that your entire body agonized along with your mind and heart? (Heb. 5:7). We are a generation that avoids pain at all costs. This is why there are so few intercessors. Most Christians operate on the shallowest levels of prayer, but God wants to take us into the deep levels of intercessory prayer that only a few ever experience. Deep, prolonged intercession is painful. It involves staying before God when everyone else has gone away or sleeps (Luke 22:45). It involves experiencing brokenness with the Father over those who continually rebel against Him. How many of us will experience this kind of fervent intercession? We long for Pentecost in our lives and in our churches, but there is no Pentecost without Gethsemane and a cross. How do we become mature in our prayer life? By praying. When we do not feel like praying is precisely the time we ought to pray. There are no shortcuts to prayer. There are no books to read, seminars to attend, or inspirational mottoes to memorize that will transform us into intercessors. This comes only by committing ourselves to pray and then doing so. Why not accept God's invitation to become an intercessor? Don't allow yourself to become satisfied with shallow, self-centered praying. Stay with God in prayer until He leads you to pray at the level He wants.

31. Luke 22:46 -- "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." Prayer is your best defense against temptation, but prayer takes diligent effort.

32. Luke 22:48 -- "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Many proclaim love for Jesus outwardly while they are betraying Him inwardly.

33. Luke 22:49 – “And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” If you are asking God for an answer, be sure to wait for the answer.

34. Luke 22:51 – “But Jesus said, ‘No more of this!’ And he touched his ear and healed him.” Jesus cared for others even though they led Him to die.

35. Luke 22:61, 62 - "And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly." God will have to expose your false pride before you will be ready to serve Him humbly. Pride always stands in the way of your life mission. Seek to remove all pride from your life.

36. Luke 22:67, 68 -- ""If you are the Christ, tell us."" But he said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer.'" Only God knows who will believe and who will not believe - you don't. Proclaim Jesus, and leave it to the Holy Spirit to do the convincing. Remember, the knowledge of God comes from spiritual enlightenment, not intellectualism.

37. Luke 22:67-71 -- Witness is useless to those who have already chosen not to believe.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 21 Aug 18: Look for evidence of pride and self-righteousness in your life today. Pray that God will bring you to true humility that you may serve Him with all of your heart. Remember, you were created to be an Ambassador for Christ, not an ambassador for yourself, for any institution, for moralism, or for intellectualism. Do not be ashamed of the 'foolishness' of salvation through Jesus alone. (see 1 Cor 1 and Luke 22:61-68)

DBRP - WEEK 34, Day 1, Monday, 20 August 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+29%2C+30%3B+proverbs+20%3B+luke+21+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 20 August 18:

1. Job 29:2-4 -- "Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me...."

Job longed for the days when he walked confidently in his child-like (not childish) faith. Was there a time in your life when you worried less than you do now? Children often have more faith than adults. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Do you put all hope and trust in your 'Abba' (Daddy), and do you walk confidently in His love and protection?

2. Job 29:4, 5 -- "...when the friendship of God was upon my tent, when the Almighty was yet with me...."

Job wrongly assumed his hard times meant God was no longer his friend, and Job erroneously equated God's blessings with God's presence. Do you ever judge God's love for you based upon what you are going through? Do you misinterpret hard times as God abandoning you? Don't all good parents allow their children to face challenges in order to develop them because they love them?

3. Job 29:11-17, 21-25 -- "When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved, because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth.... Men listened to me and waited and kept silence for my counsel. After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them. They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouths as for the spring rain. I smiled on them when they had no confidence, and the light of my face they did not cast down. I chose their way and sat as chief, and I lived like a king among his troops, like one who comforts mourners.

- It is instructive to consider the quality and content of Job's righteous life before he was incapacitated by Satan's attacks. Job was admired and respected by all and was a successful, powerful, and influential man because he was a man of true wisdom who walked in integrity and genuine compassion. Job was obedient to God, spoke the truth, took care of people, and fought for what was right. Job had a genuine heart for others, and it showed in all he did and said. What seems to have been most noteworthy in the eyes of God was the countless early morning hours Job spent praying for his loved ones, a sacrifice for others done in secret. (Job 1:5) One can contrast Job's life with that of his "friends," those "worthless physicians" and "miserable comforters" who had the word of truth but lacked requisite compassion and humility; therefore, they lacked wisdom. As Paul said, "'all of us possess knowledge.' This 'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:7) Job's friends said all of the right things and were engaged in acts of ministry (as witnessed in their presence with Job), but their true hearts eventually revealed themselves. Job characterizes them with the same word that Jesus used to characterize the Pharisees -- "whitewash." (Job 13:4; Matthew 23:27) They looked good on the outside but were bad on the inside. As is described in Proverbs 16:2, Job's friends had likely convinced themselves that they were in fact righteous, but God knows the heart. How does God see your heart? How would the Bible describe the quality and content of your life? Pray for Godly wisdom that starts with the fear of the Lord and applies knowledge from a heart of love.

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- Job showed his love for God and honored God by taking care of the needy and defending the weak – he had a reputation in the community for being that sort of person. His credibility came from how he treated people. Do you have a reputation in your community for taking care of the needy and defending the weak? When you are strong, do you prioritize taking care of those around you who are weak and needy? Unfortunately, when Job was weak, the strong around him did not take care of him in return. Who takes care of you when you are weak? God expects Christians to take care of each other. Christian ministry should start in the family.

4. Job 29:21-24 -- “Men listened to me and waited and kept silence for my counsel. After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them. They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouths as for the spring rain. I smiled on them when they had no confidence.” Are you a source of godly wisdom to those around you? Do people come to you to hear God’s truth?

5. Job 29 -- Job's self-description is not much different than God's description of him in the first three chapters. His life is a good example for us to emulate.

6. Job 30:10 -- “They abhor me; they keep aloof from me; they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me.” Christians should anticipate that others will not treat them fairly. Keep perspective: God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). All love comes from God (1 John 4:7). The closer you are to Jesus and the more you know Him, abide in Him, and obey Him, the more you can love others as His love overflows from you to others. (Read John 15 to understanding abiding in Him) So, leading others closer to Jesus implies that you are closer to Him than they are, which by definition means you can love them more than they can love you – the exchange of love will be uneven, ‘unfair.’ Some don’t know Jesus at all -- “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8) Those who God has called you to reach can’t love you back, which is why Jesus said, “I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16).” Jesus calls us to love the unloving, to take up the cross in our relationships and share in His suffering as an act of worship and fellowship with Him. Our love for others, particularly for the unloving, is how we love Jesus -- “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.... God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.... We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:10-12, 16, 19-21) Being a leader in love is never a “fair trade,” it is a gift, a crucifixion of self. Christians don’t love others for personal gain but rather as an act of worship to God who is love. Don’t expect equal love back from those to whom you give it. Love to glorify God, not to get a return on investment, and don’t be surprised or resentful when those less loving than you fail to return the favor. Grace is a gift. You will always be frustrated, disappointed, and bitter if your acts of kindness were self-centered.

7. Job 30 -- Job hadn't changed, but everyone's attitude towards him did when he himself became needy. People tend to avoid and even ostracize the poor, suffering, sick, and needy, displaying the condition of their hearts. How we treat those who can do nothing for us and who are hard to be around reveals our character.

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8. Job 30 -- Job simply wanted people to treat him the way he treated others; however, as stated above, reciprocation for kindness is rare. The likelihood of reciprocation should never influence how we treat others, and we must not allow ourselves to become bitter when our kindness is not repaid.

9. Proverbs 20:2 – “The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his life.” If you become an enemy of the state, it will most likely not work out well for you at all. The Bible warns us to be very careful to submit to ruling authorities whenever possible. When it is not possible, either leave or expect great persecution.

10. Proverbs 20:3 – “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.” If you find yourself in a quarrel, whether you started it or not, you are being foolish. It takes two to tango." Never wrestle with a pig in the mud because you both get dirty, and the pig likes it." If you chase to the poisonous snake that bit you, the poison only goes more quickly to your heart. In a game of chicken between two drivers, the one with the nicest car loses. Any more analogies required?

11. Proverbs 20:4 – “The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.” What you do today determines your future; you won't get today back, and you can't make up for what you failed to do in the past. Make the most of today.

12. Proverbs 20:5 – “The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” Only God knows the truth of another man's heart, but with wisdom, we can have a better understanding of the motives behind another man's actions.

13. Proverbs 20:6 – “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” Love and faithfulness are your most precious and valuable qualities. Guard them well. Faithfulness is the proof of love. Jesus said that those who really love Him would be known by their obedience and by how they love those who don't love them back.

14. Proverbs 20:7 – “The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!” The best thing a parent can do for their children is obey God and display for them the unmerited, sacrificial, unconditional love of Christ.

15. Proverbs 20:9 – “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin’?” Stay humble, and be patient with others. You have problems with sin too. If you are closer to Jesus than they are (and you don't really know), then your job is to show them how to get closer to Him, not to push them further away by your words and behavior.

16. Proverbs 20:10 – “Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord.” Don't cheat people in your business dealings, but more importantly, don't short change people in your evangelism. Don't value one person more than another when both souls are equally valuable to God, and don't consider yourself worthy of grace and others deserving of justice when you rely on grace just as much as they do.

17. Proverbs 20:11 – “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” What you do proves your true character and reveals what you truly believe and value.

18. Proverbs 20:12 – “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.” Wisdom is submitting yourself to your Creator to do what He actually created you to do. You can teach a bear to ride a bicycle, but at best, it would be only mildly entertaining for a moment and ultimately pointless.

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Many live their lives like a circus act, accomplishing pointless feats. Learn to see things from God's perspective and to walk in daily obedience.

19. Proverbs 20:15 – “There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.” Everyone is talking, but few have anything of value to say.

20. Proverbs 20:22 – “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.” Don't waste your time seeking justice for yourself; pursue grace and reconciliation.

21. Proverbs 20:28 – “Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.” Leadership is all about relationships, having a right relationship with Jesus and then influencing others to seek Jesus more and more. Leaders know the way and show the way. Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. Show people Jesus.

22. Proverbs 20:29 – “The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.” Strength fades away, but character endures.

23. Luke 21:1-4 – “Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, ‘Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’”

- It takes both love and great faith to give abundantly, giving because you really have a heart for others while trusting God to provide for your needs in the future. Hoarding is motivated by selfishness and fear, not trusting God with your future provision. According to Psychology Today, "For decades, surveys have shown that upper-income Americans ... are particularly undistinguished as givers when compared with the poor.... lower-income Americans give proportionally more of their incomes to charity than do upper-income Americans.... ‘Empathy and compassion appeared to be the key ingredients’ in the generosity of the poor." God's people should have an abundance mentality and give generously whether they are rich or poor. True faith holds nothing back and trusts God completely to provide for the future. Tithing is an act of faith, a practice of faith, and a primer for greater giving. If you tithe, God will reveal to you clearly that you cannot outmatch his generosity. If you won't tithe \$10, you won't tithe \$10,000.

24. Luke 21:8 – [And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them.”] Many are deceived by false Christianity.

25. Luke 21:12, 13 – “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.” Both, churches and governments will persecute true followers of Christ. God allows Christians to suffer so they can witness to their persecutors. Most of the time Christians aren't called to face great tribunals for their faith but rather they are called to face local accusers in daily encounters.

26. Luke 21:13, 14 – “This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer.” Our nation is turning away from God, and judgments will come. This is your opportunity to witness. Be like the poor widow and give your all to Jesus during these times. Don't overthink it, just proclaim Jesus to the best of your ability without holding back, and trust God with the outcomes.

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27. Luke 21:16 – “You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death.” Godlessness divides families. How much does your faith depend on the approval of others, particularly those very close to you? Remember this was one of Job’s tests – “Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.’” (Job 2:9) What did Jesus say? “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37) Jesus was not suggesting we shouldn’t love our families; He was pointing out that we cannot truly love our families without loving Him first and foremost – all love flows from Christ. Our calling is to draw our friends and family closer to Christ, understanding that in their distance, they cannot and will not love as they ought and will persecute us. We mustn’t be surprised by this and must love them all the more – “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.... do good to those who hate you.... But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35-36)

28. Luke 21:17 – “You will be hated by all for my name’s sake.” Are you willing to be hated by all for Jesus?

29. Luke 21:29-36 -- We must be careful not to get caught up in the worries of the world and miss God's activity all around us. We must have the eyes to see the signs of the times and what God is doing.

30. Luke 21:34 -- “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.” Some Christians try to ignore the growing ungodliness around them while others fall into deep despair and defeatism, neither group having much of an impact on the culture. Don’t conform to sin or feel defeated by sin, but stand boldly and joyfully in the face of sin without compromising your holiness or your message. Now is your time to witness!

31. Luke 21:36 – “But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” God does not intend to take His people out of these hard times but rather intends to give them the strength to endure through them. Don’t worry today but pray that you will have the strength to face the challenges ahead without compromising your holiness or your message.

-- John 17:11, 14, 15, 21, 23 -- I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.... I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.... As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.... that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.... I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 Aug 18: Today, recognize that you were born into these days for a purpose; today is your day to witness. Resolve that today and every day you will make the most of every opportunity to proclaim Jesus to as many people as you can. Don’t be concerned with

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how well your message is received. Leave that to the Holy Spirit. Just proclaim Jesus. How many people will hear about Jesus from you today?

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 7, Sunday, 19 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+27%2C+28%3B+proverbs+19%3B+psalm+95%2C+96+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 19 August 18:

1. Job 27:1-6 -- "As God lives..., as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit.... till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days." The most important thing to Job was his integrity -- being truly integrated (completely united as one) with God. Above all else, Job did not want his life to disintegrate (dis-INTEGRATE -- to break apart from God). Job paid a heavy, heavy price for his integrity, but he refused to surrender it, the one thing he had left that was truly his, something no one could take away from him, a treasure more valuable than gold and silver. Remember, it was his integrity that made him the target of Satan in the first place -- "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?'" (Job 1:8) Satan thought he could break Job through life crisis. Job believed that, with enough pressure, Job would disintegrate by denying his faith and compromising his fidelity to God. However, Job, being a man of unmatched character, refused to let circumstances define him. He refused to play the victim, to make excuses for personal failure. Regardless of what others did or said to him, regardless of what troubles befell him, regardless how unfairly he felt he was being treated, he remained resolute and faithful. Destitute, abandoned, lying in filth, covered in festers and boils, Job remained the richest, mightiest, proudest, strongest man on the planet -- he had what no one could ever buy, a treasure that eluded all around him, a treasure that can never be stolen, only given away -- integrity and wisdom in the Lord. Job ends today's exchange with these words: "'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'" The treasure of wisdom is found in the God-centered heart. The Bible says to guard the treasure within your heart "above all else," a heavenly treasure "where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Proverbs 4; Matthew 6:24) Today's Psalms say that God "loathes" people who are careless with their invaluable treasure -- "They are a people who go astray in their heart." (Psalm 95:10) How much is your integrity, your fidelity to God, worth to you? What does it take for you to give it away? No one can take it.

2. Job 28:18, 20, 23, 28 -- "The price of wisdom is above pearls.... 'From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding...? God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.... Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'" In his tremendous pain, Job could not understand why God was allowing him to suffer -- it made no sense to him and seemed unfair. But Job did not trust in his own understanding but rather "waited upon the Lord." Job describes the incredible efforts men commit to pulling precious metals and stones from the earth to obtain wealth, and he points out that even if men valued wisdom enough to search for it with the same level of commitment (which they don't), true wisdom could not be found through human capabilities alone -- it must be given by God. "God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.... And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'" (vs. 23, 28) Job understood that true wisdom can only come from God; it cannot be found by man's efforts apart from God's word and His enabling. The Bible tells us to diligently seek

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wisdom, but not from our own intellect but from God Himself. A big part of wisdom is simply remaining faithful and obedient to God's clear word when you don't understand the why behind it – trusting and obeying. Proverbs 18:2, 4 reminds us that everyone thinks they have wisdom, and everyone has an opinion about what is true, but among the oceans of words that have been spoken in the name of truth, words of wisdom are but a bubbling brook. Wisdom can be found from God's word through the Holy Spirit, and today's Psalms warn, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (Psalm 95:8)." Concerning those who don't live by God's word, but rather substitute it for the "wisdom" of men, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways (Psalm 95:10)."

- Proverbs 3:1-8 -- My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

3. Proverbs 19:1 – "Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool." Riches aren't the measure of your success but rather the quality of your character, your Christlikeness, your unity with Christ, your integration (integrity) with Christ.

4. Proverbs 19:2 – "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." You can be sincerely and enthusiastically wrong and go headlong into destruction.

5. Proverbs 19:3 – "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." Don't blame God when you reap the consequence of your own bad decisions.

6. Proverbs 19:4 – "Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend." Friendship based on personal benefit is not really friendship.

7. Proverbs 19:7 – "All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him!" Your poverty, despair, and trials can be a great filter to separate your real friends from your fair-weather friends. What sort of friend are you?

8. Proverbs 19:11 – "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." Patience is a mark of wisdom.

9. Proverbs 19:13 – "A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain." The quality of family life is critical. Your house should be a sanctuary. Fathers have a responsibility to preserve the sanctuary.

10. Proverbs 19:14 – "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." Only God can change the heart of a spouse. God uses marriage as a school-house for Christian character development, united two very imperfect people so that they can learn to deny self, carry their respective crosses in the relationship, and following Jesus together. Remember, Jesus never quit on Judas, even in complete betrayal. God hates divorce.

11. Proverbs 19:18 – "Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death." External discipline is a wall of protection for those who lack internal discipline, giving them a

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hope for the future. If you love someone who lacks internal discipline, you must protect them with rebukes.

12. Proverbs 19:20 – “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.” A wise person is humble enough to accept rebukes and discipline and the protection that comes with them.

13. Proverbs 19:21 – “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” If what you are doing is not what God intends, you are wasting your time and energy. If you find yourself harried, stressed out, and resentful, you are likely doing something God never asked you to do. Most people are struggling to build a life for themselves while God intends us to live our lives solely for Him, having denied ourselves. The psalmist warns, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1) The problem is that we don’t like the house God is building because in that house we are but servants, the lowest of the low. We are like the disciples who come to the dinner table fighting over who will get the best seat and who will be served first while Jesus prepares to wash feet (John 13:1-15). Today, Jesus says, “let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.” (Luke 22:26) In God’s economy, the person who serves selflessly, lovingly, without complaint and without seeking any recognition is the prominent one in the Kingdom. We Christians like to refer to ourselves as servants, but we are seldom content with being treated as servants! Pride and fear tend to take over. But the true measure of character is selflessness. Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” (Luke 16:13) You cannot serve God and others while serving your own self-interest. Pride and fear seem to be the two primary motivators for selfishness – we want credit in order to feel important, and we fight for our own self-interest because, deep down inside, we don’t really believe that God will provide if we walk the selfless, humble, servant walk. Therefore, we seek first our own kingdom rather than the Kingdom of God. If we are not careful, even our service to God can become a prideful thing and our security blanket. Jesus also said, “So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” (Luke 17:10) Pray that God will help you eliminate pride and fear within your heart. Pray that God will teach you selflessness. Stop jockeying for position, rest in the peace of the Lord.

- Psalm 84:10 -- For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

- Ecclesiastes 7:29 -- See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

- Ecclesiastes 12:12-13 -- My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

- Matthew 11:28-30 -- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

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- Luke 12:22-34 -- And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

14. Proverbs 19:22 – "What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar." All relationships are based on trust which depends on fidelity. Are you faithful? Be "Semper Fidelis Coram Deo" – Always Faithful In The Presence of God.

15. Proverbs 19:24 – "The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth." Some people simply won't take the good advice and help you offer just as some people will reject the perfect Love of God.

16. Proverbs 19:25 – "Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge." The wise don't need pain to learn obedience. Animals are trained with beatings and treats, but godly people accept the gentle instruction of the spirit.

17. Proverbs 19:27 – "Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." Never will you lack the requirement for daily Bible study, prayer, and Christian fellowship.

18. Proverbs 19:29 – "Condemnation is ready for scoffers, and beating for the backs of fools." If you are taking a beating, you may be getting persecuted, or you may be a fool. Many fools claim persecution when they are really receiving prosecution.

19. Psalm 95:1 – "Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!" When was the last time your joy in the LORD caused you to shout aloud?

20. Psalm 95:6 – "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" Worship is motivated by thanksgiving and awe.

21. Psalm 95:7, 8 – "For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...." God will speak to you today in subtle ways – do not harden your heart. Disobedience comes from a hardened heart. Do what God has put upon your heart. Remember, partial obedience is disobedience. Delayed obedience is also disobedience.

22. Psalm 96:3 – "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!" Will you declare the glory of God today?

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23. Psalm 96:7 – “Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!” God wants you to worship as a family.

24. Psalm 96:10, 11 – “Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it. Let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.’” God is merciful, but He is also just. Only God understands how to rightfully apply justice, mercy, and grace – how He does this is beyond our comprehension. We all seem to want God to administer justice to those who hurt us, but we want God to show us mercy when we hurt others. We suffer the injustices of the world, but we know that only God’s mercy creates the opportunity for injustice to even occur, since He hasn’t already condemned us in his wrath. Ultimately, God will bring justice, and all of creation will rejoice in His justice. But today, we rejoice in and proclaim His mercy and grace, while we hope (trust) in the final revelation of His justice. As instruments of God’s mercy and grace, we have been called to a ministry of suffering while we serve as ambassadors to an unjust world. And Peter warns us to not lose perspective and to have both patience as well as a sense of urgency, understanding that the Lord delays in His coming for the sake of sinners, but His return is imminent: 2 Peter 3:9-12 – “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” Be gratefully patient in your suffering but be ardent in your evangelism.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Aug 18: Today, declare the glory, righteousness, and faithfulness of God to as many as possible today. (Psalm 96)

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 6, Saturday, 18 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+18%3B+psalm+94+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 18 August 18:

1. Job 25:4-6 – “How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure? Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes; how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!” The physical environment is tainted by the effects of sin, but among God’s physical creations, only man stands in rebellion against God’s purpose and needs God’s forgiveness. Though not perfect, bugs, birds, and bears all do what they were intended to do. But man, intended to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, willfully works against God’s purpose and will. Bildad understood that, in God’s sight, the dirt of the earth is cleaner before God than man. Unfortunately, in our pride, we don’t take God’s holiness as seriously as He does, we tend to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and we tend to presume upon God’s grace, taking it for granted. Remember Uzzah who was struck down by God after attempting to prevent the ark of the covenant from falling out of an ox cart? (2 Sam. 6:5–11) Though Uzzah’s intentions were likely good, not wanting

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the ark to get dirty, he foolishly presumed his sinful hands were cleaner than the ground. Throughout the book of Job, the point is reiterated -- we are all sinners, with no ability to make ourselves pure before God and in need of God's mercy and grace. Wisdom requires humility and a proper fear of the Lord. Don't let pride cause you to lose perspective, even for a second.

- Job 4:17 -- Can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?

- Job 11:4-6 -- For you say, "My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God's eyes." But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

- Job 15:14 -- What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?

- Job 15:15 -- Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight;

2. Job 26:1-3 -- Then Job answered and said: "How you have helped him who has no power! How you have saved the arm that has no strength! How you have counseled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge!" Bildad's words were principally true but not at all helpful to Job in understanding his current situation. In fact, Bildad was only making Job feel worse by using biblical principles to blame Job for his current condition. Bildad claimed to have an understanding he didn't really have. We must not only know the Bible, we must also know how to properly apply God's word to the current situation, communicating God's words to others in a way that is actually helpful. This takes more than knowledge, it takes wisdom, which is knowledge rightly applied.

3. Proverbs 18:1 -- "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." Unfriendliness comes from selfishness.

4. Proverbs 18:8 -- "The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body." Gossip changes the fiber of who you are like food changes the makeup of your body.

5. Proverbs 18:9 -- "Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys." Carelessness and complacency destroy and are ungodly.

6. Proverbs 18:13 -- "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame." A person who interrupts is the fool mentioned in verse 18:2 who cares only about his own opinions and who is not really interested in listening or understanding.

7. Psalm 94:7, 8 -- "...and they say, 'The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.' Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise?" Sinners have lost perception of the holy, omnipresent God and of His Sovereignty as LORD. They are the "dullest of the people."

8. Psalm 94:11, 12 -- "The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile. Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law." Throughout the Bible, God points out that "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." (Isaiah 55:8) So, Proverbs counsels: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil..... Do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." (Proverbs 3:5-12) How important is Bible

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study in our daily walk with the Lord? Here are just a few thoughts from Psalm 119: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.” Read Psalm 119 to understand more. I give thanks that God has given us so many resources and tools with which to study His Word, I pray that more and more Christians would return to God’s Word. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

9. Psalm 94:12, 13 – “Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law, to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.” God’s discipline is painful but is intended to be a blessing to teach you how to live in the future while growing closer to God each day. Those who don’t despise God’s blessings and who are willing to learn will be blessed. Those who defy God’s discipline and insist on repeating their folly will be cursed.

10. Psalm 94:19 – “When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.” In times of trouble, fear, pain, or sorrow, it is God’s comfort and support that you need.

11. Psalm 94:20 – “Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute?” If a person, an organization, or a nation defies God’s commands, they are defying God Himself. If a nation makes laws promoting what God condemns, the nation has become an adversary of God.

12. Psalm 94:23 – “He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the Lord our God will wipe them out.” God is patient and gracious, but He will deal with all unrighteousness. Condemnation comes to those who reject His Son, Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Aug 18: Today, pray for the nation, that there would be a reawakening of God’s people, a corporate repentance, and a Spirit-filled revival across God’s people that would influence the government to honor God in its legislation. (Psalm 94:20)

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 5, Friday, 17 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+17%3B+luke+20+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 17 August 18:

1. Job 23:12 -- “I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.” Job hungered for God's word more than food, understanding that God’s word was more important to his life. Remember how we were first introduced to Job in chapter 1: “In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.... Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him.’” Job stood out as a man among men before God because he prioritized God’s word in his life and obeyed it. Do you treasure God’s word more than your food, and do live by His every word? Notice in Luke 20 today how Jesus responds to every attack against Him by others with God’s word (like he did against Satan’s temptations in the desert) and how he knew God’s word by heart in perfect detail. Jesus knew from memory God’s word so well that he even defeated the

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arguments of the ‘teachers of the Law’ by point out the tense of a verb – God “is” the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as opposed to “was” the God of Abraham....). What did Jesus say about God’s word? “It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).’” Today in America, most people are physically overweight but malnourished in God’s word. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Disease, over 70% of Americans are overweight, and of them, 38% are obese. Meanwhile, 11% of Americans report having read the whole Bible – one can only speculate on the honesty behind the individual claims. Of course, reading and studying are two different things; studying God’s word and studying under the teaching of the Holy Spirit is quite another; and obeying God’s word through the power of the Holy Spirit is yet another. Are you having trouble finding time to prayerfully study God’s word each day? Here is an idea guaranteed to help: pledge not to eat until you have completed your prayer and Bible study. Another suggestion is avoid reading books about the Bible rather than the Bible itself. A trend in the church today is that Christians are preferring secondary sources rather than the Source. Don’t muddy the waters.

2. Job 23:27 -- “Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes —I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” What an amazing verse from one of the oldest books in the Bible! Most people would guess this verse came from the New Testament. In his condition, how did Job have such great faith in and passion for his Redeemer who he did not know by name? Why after the Revelation of Jesus do so many have such little passion for and faith in the Savior?

- John 20:28, 29: Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

3. Job 24 – From our human perspective, we cannot understand what God is doing, and His actions may even seem unfair or uncaring at times. How often do small children say to their parents, “That’s not fair!” when the children don’t understand why their parents have denied them what they want for reasons the children can’t understand? The difference of understanding between God and people is far, far greater than the difference between a parent and a child. Are you prepared to trust and obey God when it seems to make no sense at all, when life is at stake?

4. Job 24:1-4 – “Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?” Sometimes it is hard to understand why God delays in punishing evil people.

5. Job 24:5-12 – “...the poor... without clothing... the fatherless child... wicked men.... [the hungry and the thirsty]” Sometimes it is hard to understand why God allows so much suffering.

6. Job 24:13-17 – “...the murder... the adulterer... [the thief]” Sometimes it is hard to understand why God allows so much injustice.

7. Proverbs 17:1 – “Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.” Don’t complicate life with needless strife. Life is already hard enough. Have an attitude of gratitude.

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8. Proverbs 17:3 – “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.” God uses trials to test your heart. How differently do you act when times get tough? Why does God test the heart? He already knows what is in your heart, but He wants you to see it.

9. Proverbs 17:4 – “An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.” You are becoming more of what you are every day in part because what you feed grows. Your heart inclines your ear, and in turn, your ear affects your heart – it is either a vicious cycle or a virtuous one. Endeavor to incline both your heart and your ear towards the Lord.

10. Proverbs 17:6 – “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.” God brings unity to family.

11. Proverbs 17:9 -- “He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.” Great verse! 1 Peter 4:8 says this: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

12. Proverbs 17:10 – “A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.” Wise people value rebukes.

13. Proverbs 17:15 – “He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.” God is a God of justice.

14. Proverbs 17:27, 28 – “Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.” Christians are to be quiet and even-tempered.

15. Luke 20:1, 2 -- “One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, ‘Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.’”

- The chief priests and scribes ask an important question: Who gave Jesus the jurisdiction, power or right to take control, to give orders, to make binding decisions, and to enforce obedience? And by what power did Jesus heal? The answer to the question of who gave Jesus authority defines the scope of Jesus’ power – who and what is subject to it. In Luke 20, Jesus does not come right out and answer the question. However, later Jesus proclaims that “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18) Jesus explains that his total authority comes from the Father, “And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.” (John 5:27, 7:17, 10:18, 12:49) Jesus explains that the Father has “given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.” (John 17:2) This authority has been given to no one but Jesus. The purpose of the miracles was to prove Jesus’s total authority – “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the man who was paralyzed— ‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.’” (Luke 5:24) It is by virtue of his total dominion and power that Jesus proclaimed that all should fear Him – “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!” (Luke 12:5)

- What is particularly amazing is that just as the Father transferred power and authority to the Son, Jesus also transferred power and authority to his disciples – “And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every

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affliction.” (Matthew 10:1) To his disciples Jesus said, “Behold, I have given you authority over all demons.... [and] over all the power of the enemy. (Luke 10:19) Wow! Followers of Christ have been given authority and power because they “have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.” (Colossians 2:10) Because of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, Jesus says, “when (not if) they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say.” (Luke 12:11) The Bible says that, though we live in power, under the authority and dominion of Christ, the evil powers and those who have rejected God’s authority continue to wrestle hopelessly against God (2 Peter 2:10; Jude 1:6-8) -- “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12) We are reminded to boldly “Declare [truth]; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15), remembering that “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Colossians 2:15) Do you live boldly as Christ’s Ambassador, armed with the power of the Holy Spirit that is within you, with authority given you by God Himself? Are you faithful to the charge you have been given? Jesus gave us (and modelled) some specific rules for how we should handle our powerful authority and responsibility -- 1: Don’t abuse it or misuse it out of selfishness. (Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42)) 2: Exercise your authority faithfully even over the smallest matters. (Luke 19:17) 3: Never attempt to speak under your own authority or act under your own authority. Do and say ONLY what God instructs. (John 7:17; John 8:28; John 12:49; John 14:10; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 9:8) 4: Never misrepresent God’s authority, act falsely, or seek your own glory. (John 7:18) 5: Never forget that your authority comes with great responsibility, a charge received by God. (John 10:18) 6: Remain subject to governing authorities which have also been empowered by God. (Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1) 7: Use your authority for building up, not tearing down. (2 Corinthians 13:10) Live today faithfully and mightily. The Holy Spirit is within you.

- Revelation 20:4 -- Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

16. Luke 20:1-8 – There is no sense arguing with cynics about the authority of Jesus. Seek those who have a heart to hear the Gospel. Reason with the reasonable.

17. Luke 20:14 – “But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’” Materialism, pride, and envy led religious leaders to kill God’s Son.

18. Luke 20:20 – “So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.” As happened with Jesus, people, even religious leaders, will seek to entrap Christians to falsely accuse them before the government. Many will appear sincere. Christians must be careful but still bold.

19. Luke 20:25 -- “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Caesar had the authority to coin money and to demand taxes, but God has authority over all, including governments. Jesus obeyed Caesar but God first.

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20. Luke 20:41-44 – Jesus was an expert on God’s word, without aid of electronic devices, commentaries, or other study aids. God expects His Ambassadors to be experts too. How are you doing?

21. Luke 20:46-47 – “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” The teachers of the law pursued their religion selfishly. Christians who follow Christ are, by definition, selfless. Beware of anyone who seeks personal glory, honor, or attention. True followers of Jesus seek to glorify Him alone. Pride is not a fruit of the Spirit, but rather a fruit of the flesh. Those who like to use the “vertical pronoun” of “I” usually have a pride problem.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Aug 18: Today, resolve to become a true Biblical scholar, but even better a Biblical follower, motivated with a true love for Jesus. (Luke 20:41-44)

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 4, Thursday, 16 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+16%3B+luke+19+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 16 August 18:

1. Job 21:2, 3 -- “Keep listening to my words, and let this be your comfort. Bear with me, and I will speak, and after I have spoken, mock on.” A person in pain sometimes just wants someone to listen to them.

2. Job 21:14-21 – “They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’ Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me.” The truth is that the wicked may appear to succeed on earth but will receive punishment in the afterlife, though this truth isn’t always satisfying the persecuted on earth.

3. Job 22:7-9 – “You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. The man with power possessed the land, and the favored man lived in it. You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed.” Not helping the needy is sin.

4. Job 22:22-30 -- “Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents, if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver. For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways. For when they are humbled you say, ‘It is because of pride’; but he saves the lowly. He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands.” Eliphaz preached powerful words, but you can preach a fine sermon to the wrong audience and waste your time and theirs. Though misapplied to Job’s situation, Eliphaz offers some powerful doctrinal truth that is valuable advice in general. As Eliphaz did, these verses are worth your effort to memorize. Is the Almighty your gold and your precious silver? Have you dug deep for Him?

5. Job 22 -- Job's problem was not that God could not see or did not know what was happening to Job. Job’s challenge was that God did not intend to respond to him because Job was being tested. "During

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the exam, the teacher is silent." We will all be tested. How well we do will depend on how prepared we are for the test. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10)

6. Proverbs 16:1 – "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." God's plan for your life trumps your plan for your life. God's plan is to draw you closer to Jesus and to use you to draw others closer to Jesus. If what you are doing isn't for that purpose, it is not only pointless, it is in direct opposition to God's will. He will not bless it.

7. Proverbs 16:2 – "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit." Many people tell themselves they are serving God when they really aren't. God knows the difference. Do you? Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to you the truth of your motives.

8. Proverbs 16:3 – "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." You were made to serve God, not to serve yourself. Serve God and be blessed beyond your expectations.

9. Proverbs 16:4 – "The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." The meaning of your life is about what God wants, not what you want.

10. Proverbs 16:13 – "Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right." Wise people know the value of surrounding themselves with people who will tell the truth.

11. Proverbs 16:17 – "The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life." The upright move as quickly as they can away from evil.

12. Proverbs 16:20 – "Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." The purpose of this Bible study is to live out this proverb.

13. Proverbs 16:23 – "The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips." Your heart guides your mouth.

14. Proverbs 16:32 -- "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."

- It is far better to avoid a conflict than to win a conflict.

- The greatest battle anyone faces in life is the battle against self or the battle against the "flesh." Jesus' parable of the sower and Ephesians 2:1-3 (provided below) describes the three "enemies of the soul": the world, the flesh, and the devil. At the Council of Trent, Thomas Aquinas warned, "Nevertheless, let those who think themselves to stand, take heed lest they fall, and, with fear and trembling work out their salvation, in labors, in watchings, in alms-deeds, in prayers and oblations, in fastings and chastity: for, knowing that they are born again unto a hope of glory, but not as yet unto glory, they ought to fear for the combat which yet remains with the flesh, with the world, with the devil, wherein they cannot be victorious, unless they be with God's grace, obedient to the Apostle, who says; We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; for if you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." Of the three (the world, the flesh, the devil), the flesh remains the most dangerous because this is the enemy "inside the wire." Satan tempted Jesus in the desert with worldly riches and glory, but Jesus was not tempted within; unlike Adam and Eve who chose to entertain in their minds and hearts the ideas of the devil and then act upon them. Jesus was "tempted" because he didn't "feel tempted." We must take measures to protect ourselves against as many

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external temptations as possible from the world and the devil, and the Bible is full of instruction on how to do that (see Proverbs 4 for many). However, we must be even more diligent to battle the insider threat, the enemy or temptation within ourselves. As Proverbs warns, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) One of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 is self-control. Proverbs 25:28 says, “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls,” and Peter points out that knowledge (including Bible knowledge) is of no value without self-control. (2 Peter 1:6) The battle is within; it is daily; and it will never end. However, we don’t fight the battle alone our unarmed. The Holy Spirit is also within us as our internal security, far more powerful than the flesh.

- Ephesians 2:1-3 -- And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 -- No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

15. Proverbs 16:33 – “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” God leaves nothing to chance.

16. Luke 19:7 -- “And when they saw it, they all grumbled, ‘He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’” The account of Zacchaeus (along with other accounts such as the one about woman accused of rape and those of the tax collectors described in Matthew and Mark) is often wrongly applied by those who would partner with the world, suggesting that Jesus didn’t make a big deal out of sin and holiness and that those who do are “judgmental.” What they fail to notice in this story is that Zacchaeus is not just a sinner, he is a repentant sinner seeking Jesus, a sinner who desiring reconciliation and seeking to make restitution – “And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.’” (Luke 19:8, 9) Jesus isn’t just partying with sinners. Jesus is engaging Zacchaeus who is “seeking to see who Jesus [is].” (Luke 19:3) Concerning the tax collectors described in Matthew and Mark, the Bible says that they weren’t just Jesus’ sinful drinking buddies, they were followers of Jesus – “And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.” (Mark 2:15) Perhaps these were the same tax collectors described in Luke 3:12 – “Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’” In fact Matthew was a tax collector who had relationship with Jesus because he responded to Jesus’ call to “follow me.” The relationship they had with Jesus was one of repentance and reconciliation which never involved Jesus compromising His holiness or His message. What was Jesus’ message to the woman accused of rape? “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.” (John 8:11) Concerning the unrepentant tax collectors, Jesus continued to speak negatively of them and didn’t make light of their sin or hang out with them. (Matthew 5:46, Matthew 18:17) Zacchaeus is repentant, unlike the self-righteous who criticizes Zacchaeus for being a “sinner.” To the self-righteous, Jesus warns, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.” (Matthew 21:31) Jesus is “a friend of tax collectors and sinners,” repentant ones. (Luke 7:34) These are they who Jesus describes in

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Luke 18 – “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’” In our associations with the world, as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission, we must be careful not to partner with or conform to the world. We mustn’t water down the Good News message that calls sin, sin; describes the need for salvation from the wrath of God (not just from the consequences of sin); proclaims God’s grace and free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone; and proclaims the new life in Christ. If we make light of sin, we are dishonoring (even mocking) the LORD, deemphasizing the need for salvation, and cheapening God’s grace through the blood of Jesus. If we make light of sin, we are being very unloving.

17. Luke 19:8 -- “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” Zacchaeus demonstrated repentance by offering restitution to those he had sinned against, and this was very costly to him. God expects us to make restitution and to seek reconciliation whenever possible. Restitution repays more than was taken.

18. Luke 19:11-27 – “... ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief’.... He said to him, ‘I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant!’” God does not appreciate you hoarding salvation to yourself but expects you to invest it in bringing others to salvation as an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

19. Luke 19:28-38 -- “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Jesus has shown He is already King.

20. Luke 19:40 – “He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.’” Followers of Jesus cannot help but proclaim Him and cannot be prevented from doing so. In the Books of Acts (chapter 4), when Peter and John boldly proclaimed Christ to the rulers, elders, and scribes, Peter and John were warned not to speak to anyone else about Jesus. They replied, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” Later (Acts 5), the Apostles were imprisoned and beaten for talking about Jesus (nearly executed) and eventually released. “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” (Acts 5:41) Are you one of those people who simply won’t shut up about Jesus?

21. Luke 19:42 – “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” Peace can only come through Jesus. Those who seek peace in some other way miss Jesus all together.

22. Luke 19:46 – “My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.” Many practice the religion called Christianity to promote their own prosperity and self-interest. Christianity should not be a pursuit of God’s blessings on earth but rather a pursuit of an ever-increasing closeness with and love for Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Aug 18: Today, don’t just seek goodness and blessings from God but rather seek Jesus Himself.

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 3, Wednesday, 15 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+15%3B+luke+18+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 15 August 18:

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1. Job 19:2 -- “How long will you torment me and break me in pieces with words?” Your words can really hurt people.

2. Job 19:4, 5 – “And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself. If indeed you magnify yourselves against me and make my disgrace an argument against me....” Often people criticize others just to feel better about themselves and to lift themselves up. Criticism of others is usually a sign of insecurity and a guilty conscience.

3. Job 19:7-20 – God will allow you to go through hard times. In any situation, God intends to do several things at once: reveal Himself to you in a greater way; reveal the truth of you to you in a greater way; tear down the idols in your life that have caused to prioritize or trust in something other than Him; draw you closer to Him and grow you in Christ-like character; reveal Himself to others through your situation in a greater way; and use you as His instrument of grace in the lives of others. Hard times often create a crisis of belief, challenging whether or not you really believe what you say you believe. God knows the truth concerning the limits of your faith, but often He needs to reveal those limits to you.

4. Job 19:13-19 -- “He has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me. My relatives have failed me, my close friends have forgotten me. The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger; I have become a foreigner in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy. My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. Even young children despise me; when I rise they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me.” People tend to avoid the needy and the suffering. When people are suffering, they expose the truth of life most people hope to deny, and they have little to give back to others in relationship. Relationships that are based on self-centered motives will not be dependable. How you treat others when they are in need and suffering, when they have nothing to offer you, when the relationship is costly, reveals the level of your love for them and for God. When people are in need, show them the love of God and free grace. When you are in need, and people don’t treat you as they should, exposing the limits of their love, show them God’s love and free grace.

5. Job 19:25-27 – “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!” Job had hope in salvation and resurrection through Jesus Christ which he did not completely understand. He knew that Jesus would eventually return to reign on earth but didn’t know Him as Jesus.

- Matthew 13:17 -- For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

- 1 Peter 1:10-12 -- Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

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6. Job 20 – The wicked perceive salvation in earthly prosperity and riches, but that lasts only until God brings judgment on the wicked and their sins. From our limited human perspective, God’s perfect justice may seem unjust while sinners seem to prevail and the godly seem to suffer. However, God will make all things right in ways we cannot possibly imagine. Trust in Him and obey Him regardless the near-term cost to you.

5. Proverbs 15:1, 18 – “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.... A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.” God wants you to deal with difficult people in a way that turns away wrath and quiets contention. Is that what you do?

6. Proverbs 15:1-4 – “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.” Proverbs 15:1,2 and 4 speak about the power, potentially positive or negative, of our words. Verse 3 interjects to remind us of the holy, omnipresent, omniscience of God, perhaps to remind us of what Jesus said in Matthew 12:36 – “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.”

7. Proverbs 15:6 -- “In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.” Compare Proverbs 15:6 with Proverbs 10:22 and 15:16 – “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.... Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.” You may accomplish your goals, but if they are not from the LORD, they will only add sorrow to your life.

8. Proverbs 15:8 – “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.” The wicked may also be very religious, and there are churches full of people who don’t recognize that God counts them among the wicked.

9. Proverbs 15:12, 31, 32 – “A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.... The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.” Reproof is a critical part of character development.

10. Proverbs 15:15 – “All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.” An attitude of affliction makes every day miserable, but an abundance mentality and cheerfulness bring out the best of life.

11. Proverbs 15:24 – “The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.” Everyone is on a path that is either going upward or downward.

12. Proverbs 15:25 – “The Lord tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow’s boundaries.” God protects the weak.

13. Luke 18:1 – “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Prayer should be our substitute for fear and hopelessness.

14. Luke 18:1-8 – “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart....” Prayer is not a one-shot affair.

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15. Luke 18:10-14 – “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Prayers must be humble to be acceptable.

16. Luke 18:14 – “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” People judge outward appearances, but God judges the heart. God knows who is truly repentant and who isn’t. God knows who is truly seeking Him and who isn’t.

17. Luke 18:17 – “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” God wants you to have a child-like faith, not a childish faith. Child-like faith trusts Dad to provide every need and rests securely in Dad’s protection.

18. Luke 18:18-30 -- “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” People are motivated at the lowest levels by fear, pride, and greed. People are motivated at a higher level by duty, but the only motivation truly worthy before God is the motivation of love. If you love something more than Jesus, you will not follow Jesus far because your idols will draw you from Him. God’s first command to you is to love Him unconditionally. He can see the truth of your motivations that are behind your religious activity and good deeds. Dutiful action is not the same as loving action and will not last in the fire. None of us are perfected in love, and often we find ourselves obeying out of the lesser motivation of duty, but with a reliance on God’s grace, and in honest humility, God will use our dutiful efforts to grow us in love. Just don’t allow your duty to become prideful. One of the first signs of pride is comparing yourself to others. Re-read the story of Mary and Martha while they ate with Jesus or the story of the Prodigal Son for examples of prideful comparison.

19. Luke 18:22 -- “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” The first step – deny self:

- Matthew 16:24 -- Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

- Mark 8:34 -- And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

- Luke 9:23 -- And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

- Matthew 10:39 -- Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

- Matthew 16:25 -- For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

- Mark 8:35 -- For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

- Luke 9:24 -- For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

- Luke 17:33 -- Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

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- John 12:25 -- Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

20. Luke 18:27 -- "But he said, 'What is impossible with man is possible with God.'" God can do the impossible of transforming the human heart. We cannot fix our hearts or anyone else's -- only God can.

21. Luke 18:41, 42 -- "'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me recover my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.'" God knows what you want but still wants you to ask in faith.

22. Luke 18:43 -- "And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God." When you truly experience the power of God in your life and truly appreciate it, you will follow Jesus and glorify Him unashamedly. If you have trouble proclaiming Jesus to others, perhaps you don't know Him and appreciate Him as well as you should.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 15 Aug 18: Once again, consider your motivation for why you do what you do. Where are you still motivated by fear, pride, and duty rather than true, unconditional love? "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24) How are you doing on step one?

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 2, Tuesday, 14 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+14%3B+luke+17+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 14 August 18:

1. Job 17:11 -- "My days are past; my plans are broken off, the desires of my heart." Would you remain loving and faithful to God if all you cared about on this earth was gone?

2. Job 18:4 -- "You who tear yourself in your anger, shall the earth be forsaken for you, or the rock be removed out of its place?" Again, though Job's friends misapply truth, their words have great value if rightly applied. Your anger usually harms you. Your anger won't change the world, just make you feel worse about it. Your anger usually causes you to focus on the perceived problems rather than the possible solutions. Your anger usually results in greater divisions rather than greater unity. Even if you are fundamentally right on the matter at hand, your anger often makes you wrong in your response. It is far easier to complain than to do the good works God would have you do. "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." ("The Supreme Conquest and Other Sermons Preached in America." New York, F. H. Revell company, 1907) There is such a thing as righteous anger, but it is extremely rare among people, if ever really pure.

- Acts 26:14 -- It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

- Ecclesiastes 7:9 -- Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

- Colossians 3:8 -- But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

- James 1:19-20 -- Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

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- Proverbs 16:32 -- Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

- Romans 12:14 -- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

- Ephesians 4:26 -- Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger

3. Job 18:5-18 – It is one thing to warn people of the consequences awaiting the wicked, but it is another thing to decide in your own mind who is wicked and who isn't, and who deserves God's punishment and who doesn't – we are all wicked and deserve God's wrath apart from salvation through Jesus and apart from His righteousness imputed to us. Don't act as if you are any better than anyone else because you have received mercy and grace through Jesus – "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

(Ephesians 2:8, 9). Do not be prideful, rather desire for other worthless sinners like you that they receive the free gift of forgiveness too. And remember, God is the judge others, not you. God knows the heart of another person; you cannot. God knows how He is moving in the heart of another person; you don't. You never know what God is doing in someone's life. No matter how bad a person may seem to you, as if you are any better, remain faithful as God's minister of reconciliation and seek to help that person know Jesus more and more. Do not be an obstacle between that person and Jesus by misrepresenting Him and His grace in your pride.

4. Job 18 -- God alone determines who He will punish, when, and how; and God's judgment of people will be different than yours. We must be careful not to make Bildad's mistake of deciding who deserves God's punishment.

5. Proverbs 14:1 – "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down." In any environment, you are either adding value or taking away. You are either building up or tearing down. You are either reconciling or causing divisions. You are never having no impact. God has made you in physical form on purpose to translate His spiritual truths into physical reality on earth, that His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Every word that comes out of your mouth and every action you take will change your environment in either a creative way (as a representative of the Creator) or a destructive way (as an agent of the Destroyer). Who will you represent in your environment today?

- John 8:42-46 – "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.... You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires....'"

6. Proverb 14:4 – "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox." More important than how much you have is how much ability you have to make more. Having wealth is not as important as having the ability to produce wealth in the future. Seek production capacity.

7. Proverbs 14:8 – "The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving." Based on what you are doing now, where will your life be many years from now? Will you have spiritual maturity, wisdom, wealth, health, quality relationships, etc? Are you doing everything you need to do today to achieve the quality of life and quality of character you want in the future? Wisdom involves considering carefully where you are headed and making the changes required to get to where you really need to go in fidelity to God's will.

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8. Proverbs 14:11 – “The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.” Godliness may not make you rich on this earth, but it will protect you from the calamity that comes from ungodly gain. Those who build their mansions on unrighteousness are building upon a foundation of sand. Outward appearances can be deceiving too. You can build a mansion on a bad foundation, but when the foundation gives way, the house is worthless.

9. Proverbs 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” Sinful people often think they are doing right.

10. Proverbs 14:13 – “Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief.” Superficial relationships are deceiving. People hide their emotions from others.

11. Proverbs 14:17, 18 – “A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.” It is foolish and destructive to make emotional decisions.

12. Proverbs 14:30 – “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.” Your emotions affect your physical health.

13. Proverbs 14:34 – “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” How are we doing in the US?

14. Luke 17:1 – “And he said to his disciples, ‘Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!’” It is one thing to be tempted, but it is quite another thing to contribute to sin by tempting others. Everyone influences others around them. When you sin, you add to the collective sin which increases the influence of evil in the world. You cannot help being tempted, but you can prevent giving in to sin and negatively influencing others.

15. Luke 17:3, 4 – “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” This is pretty clear – first, watch your own behavior, but still rebuke those who are sinning, ready to forgive them every time they ask for it with a genuine heart. Don’t act as if someone is a worse sinner than you. Don’t act as if you are not totally dependent on grace too. In your total dependence on grace, you have no right to without grace from others, nor do you have the right to withhold the truth which is often a healing medicine bitter to the taste. God expects you to both rebuke and forgive. Love calls for both.

16. Luke 17:5-10 – “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ And the Lord said, ‘If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” Jesus softly rebukes the disciples by saying that they already have enough faith to follow Jesus with power, but they lack the will to obey because they are selfishly motivated. The first step to following Jesus is to deny self. You won’t follow Jesus very far if your motivation is self-centered.

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17. Luke 17:7-10 -- Anything we do for God is only what should be expected. We should not think that we have done anything deserving some kind of special reward. If your heart is seeking some sort of payment for doing what ought to be expected from someone who loves someone else, you are not operating from a heart of love. Love is a gift, not something you give at a price.

18. Luke 17:14 – “When he saw them he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went they were cleansed.” Jesus sought to influence the priests so they would repent and fulfill their purpose in leadership, but few did.

19. Luke 17:18 – “Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Faith is a personal decision that has nothing to do with family background. Everyone chooses for themselves.

20. Luke 17:20, 21 -- “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” The Kingdom of God is, in part, the spiritual realm that exists wherever God’s people are. Jesus will return to establish a physical Kingdom in the future. In the meantime, we are ambassadors, priests, and kings, representing the spiritual kingdom. The Kingdom of God is within you.

21. Luke 17:26-30 – “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” In both the time of Noah and Lot, the societies were oblivious to their sins and impending judgment and destruction. The Bible says that the same will be true for society when Jesus returns – many will think they are spiritual and godly when God’s judgment falls upon them. Only the spiritually discerning will be able to see the signs of the times. Few in churches will be able to face God’s judgment. Jesus’ warning should be sobering to those paying attention.

22. Luke 17:33 – “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.” Following Jesus will require that you do things that seem contrary to your own survival, such as giving when you have nothing left to give, and obeying God when government or popular opinion say you can’t or shouldn’t.

23. Luke 17:34, 35 – “I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.” Jesus’ return occurs instantly at both nighttime and daytime because it occurs simultaneously across the globe.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Aug 18: Today, obey God and follow Jesus without using a self-proclaimed lack of God-given ability as an excuse for your disobedience. Don’t tell yourself that you haven’t been given enough power from God to be faithful because you have. Take personal responsibility for your sin and search your heart to understand why you choose sin over fidelity to Jesus. Learn to love Jesus by working diligently to obey Him today while searching your heart for those places where you still lack love. (Luke 17:5-10) As you continue to humbly study God’s word, the Holy Spirit will use it to convict you of where you are yet to be perfected in love – “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

DBRP - WEEK 33, Day 1, Monday, 13 August 2018

2018 Defenders Bible Reading Plan Study Notes

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=job+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+13%3B+luke+16+>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 13 August 18:

1. Job 15:1 – “But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation before God.” Sin hinders your ability to relate with God.
2. Job 15:6 – “Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you.” Christians should not condemn others but should expose bad behavior to the light of God’s word.
3. Job 15:14 – “What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?” Job and his friends are in agreement concerning the sinfulness of man and the Holiness of God.
4. Job 15:15 – “Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight.” We have no hope of meeting God’s standard of righteousness without the righteousness of Jesus being imputed to us. Even 1/3 of the angels were cast out of Heaven. What hope does a mortal have of obtaining righteousness on his own, and even if (s)he could, a debt for previous sins would still be owed.
5. Job 15:14-16; Job 16:19-21 -- “What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous? If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes, how much less man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks up evil like water!... Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.” Job knew that in himself he had no righteousness and of his own merit could never stand before God. But his hope was in a Holy Intercessor whose name he did not yet know. Not so with the Pharisees though. They trusted in their own righteousness and built kingdoms for themselves on earth to provide for their own comfort and security and to glorify themselves – all this instead of using the resources God had provided them to serve God and others in need. Jesus said this to them: “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.... You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.” What does my bank statement reveal about the condition of my heart?
6. Job 16:1-6 – “...miserable comforters are you all. Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you and shake my head at you. I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain.” In his suffering, Job needed comfort, not a condemning sermon. Condemning other people seldom helps them.
7. Job 16:10 – “Men have gaped at me with their mouth; they have struck me insolently on the cheek; they mass themselves together against me.” Insecurity causes people to attack others who remind them of their own vulnerabilities.
8. Proverbs 13:4 – “The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.” Good things come to those who work for them.
9. Proverbs 13:3 – “Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.” Rash words can ruin you

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10. Proverbs 13:11 – “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.” There are no shortcuts with the things that really matter in life like relationships, health, financial security, and spiritual development. It must be developed every day, little by little over time to produce results over time. Successful people are willing to do today what unsuccessful people aren’t in order to have tomorrow what unsuccessful people won’t.

11. Proverbs 13:13 – “Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.” Why not read and heed the word God has given you that you might be blessed?

12. Proverbs 13:22 – “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.” Godly parents don’t just plan for their children’s future but also their children’s children. Godly parents think generationally.

13. Luke 16:1-9 – Christians should be experts in forgiveness. Our hope of salvation is based upon forgiveness through Jesus. We must therefore live out forgiveness day-by-day.

14. Luke 16:8, 9 -- “The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” Jesus’ parable of the dishonest manager is directed primarily at the listening Pharisees who were both lovers of money and were “those who justify [them]selves before men, but God knows [their] hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15) This parable was a real attention getter particularly because the manager (who is commended for his shrewdness) is an unsavory sort, the type that was particularly loathed by the poor crowd also listening who had regularly been victimized by such unscrupulous middlemen. Though this parable seems to be about money and generosity, I think it is really about humility, forgiveness, and mercy. Sin is a debt that cannot be repaid. “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) The dishonest manager was shrewd because, recognizing his guilt and his doomed position before his master, he showed mercy to those indebted to him, though their debt wasn’t even really to him but rather to the master he served. Not so with the Pharisees. In their “unrighteous wealth” (self-righteousness), as dishonest managers (pretending to be right with God themselves), they demanded every “penny” from those in debt (sinners), as if that debt were due to them rather than to God. Jesus is essentially saying that the Pharisees are worse than the highly unscrupulous manager described in the parable. This parable reminds us that we have no righteousness of ourselves, but righteousness is imputed to us through Jesus Christ. Self-righteousness is “an abomination in the sight of God.” In our position of owning nothing (having no righteousness but only that which is Christ’s), no one can really be in debt to us, only to God. In our position of relying totally on God’s grace, all we can possibly do is forgive. With our “unrighteous wealth” (self-righteousness) we would be wise to “make friends for ourselves,” by forgiving or cancelling debts (again, not that it is even possible to be owed debt) before we meet our Master. Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity. We are totally dependent on forgiveness which came through the sacrifice of Jesus. How then can we claim to be Christian without giving total forgiveness to all? Jesus died on the cross for our forgiveness. How far are you willing to go to forgive others?

15. Luke 16:9 – “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” God expects us to “manage” his resources in a way that spreads His love to others.

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16. Luke 16:10 -- "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much." God tests you each day with small decisions to see if He can trust you with bigger decisions. How you respond to the person who cuts you off in the parking lot reveals whether or not you are ready to handle bigger challenges.

17. Luke 16:10-12 -- How we manage worldly wealth has eternal implications.

18. Luke 16:13 -- "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." You will either serve Jesus or earthly pursuits -- you can't serve both, and everyone chooses to serve something. Anything that is a higher priority than Jesus is an idol.

19. Luke 16:15 -- "And he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'" God knows the truth of you while others only see your outward appearance. God generally abhors what the world praises because people seek to honor themselves rather than glorify God. Even Christian leaders tend to seek personal recognition. We should seek to point to Jesus always and to ourselves never.

20. Luke 16:15 -- "And he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'" A Christian's goals and measures of success will be 180-out from the world's goals and measures of success.

21. Luke 16:18 -- "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." In what year did the American church reject this teaching? The slippery slope continues to get steeper.

22. Luke 16:22 -- "The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried...." God cares for those the world ignores. Do you?

23. Luke 16:31 -- "He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" Disbelief is not from a lack of evidence, it is a heart problem. No amount of evidence can convince someone to repent and follow Jesus if they are not convicted by the Holy Spirit. We cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit. Our job is simply to proclaim Jesus to all in word and deed and to be ready to respond where the Holy Spirit leads.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 13 Aug 18: Today, seek no credit for yourself, but give all glory to Jesus. How many times will you tell others about Jesus today?

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 7, Sunday, 12 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+13%2C+14%3B+prov+12%3B+psalm+92%2C+93>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 12 August 18:

1. Job 13:3 -- "But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God." Job was not trying, nor did he intend to defend himself before men; Job only wanted to speak to God.

2. Job 13:4 -- "As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all." Job's judgmental friends were completely unhelpful. Our words should bring healing, not that they will always be pleasant. As Proverbs teaches, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," and "Better is open rebuke than

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hidden love.... Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.... It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. (Proverbs 27:5,6; Proverbs 30:6; Ecclesiastes 7:5) The physician handles the scalpel delicately, does not cut carelessly, and always cuts to heal, leaving as little scarring as possible. Proverbs 12:18 says, "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." (Proverbs 15:4) The fruit of the spirit include gentleness, and the Bible tells us that "if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." (Galatians 6:1) We must remember that all of our words must be grounded in love and that we have been given "the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:8). We are called to "Aim for restoration." (2 Corinthians 13:11) Christians are in the people business, and the Bible is particularly interested in how we treat one another. How are you doing on the one-anothers below?

- Romans 12:10 -- Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
- Romans 12:16 -- Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
- Romans 13:8 -- Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- Romans 14:13 -- Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.
- Romans 15:5 -- May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,
- Romans 15:7 -- Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
- Romans 15:14 -- I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.
- Romans 16:16 -- Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
- 1 Corinthians 4:6 -- I have applied all these things... that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.
- 1 Corinthians 6:1, 7 -- When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints...? To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?
- 2 Corinthians 10:12 -- But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.
- 2 Corinthians 13:11 -- Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
- Galatians 5:13 -- For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- Galatians 5:26 -- Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

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- Galatians 6:2 -- Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- Ephesians 4:2 -- with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- Ephesians 4:25 -- Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.
- Ephesians 4:32 -- Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- Ephesians 5:19 -- addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,
- Ephesians 5:21 -- submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Colossians 3:9 -- Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices
- Colossians 3:13 -- bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
- Colossians 3:16 -- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12 -- and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,
- 1 Thessalonians 4:9 -- Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 -- Therefore encourage one another with these words.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 -- Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:15 -- See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
- Hebrews 3:13 -- But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
- Hebrews 10:24 -- And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,
- Hebrews 10:25 -- not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- James 4:11 -- Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.
- James 5:9 -- Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

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- James 5:16 -- Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
 - 1 Peter 1:22 -- Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,
 - 1 Peter 4:8 -- Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
 - 1 Peter 4:9, 10 -- Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:
 - 1 Peter 5:5 -- Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
 - 1 Peter 5:14 -- Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.
 - 1 John 1:7 -- But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
 - 1 John 3:11 -- For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
 - 1 John 3:23 -- And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.
 - 1 John 4:7 -- Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.
 - 1 John 4:11 -- Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
 - 1 John 4:12 -- No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.
 - 2 John 1:5 -- And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another.
3. Job 13:5 – "Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom!" Silence is often our wisest option. If you are not speaking as an Ambassador for Christ with a definite word from God, remain silent.
4. Job 13:7 – "Will you speak falsely for God and speak deceitfully for him?" Job's friends used their 'biblical' knowledge inappropriately to speak falsely for God and to wrongly judge Job and his situation. You must be very careful not speak beyond your actual wisdom.
5. Job 13:15, 16 – "Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face. This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him." Job did not understand his situation but trusted in God and in his relationship with God. Job saw salvation in His special relationship with God. To know God is to love God. To love God is to trust God, no matter what.
6. Job 13:16 – "This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him." Job understood that God will reveal the truth of every matter and judge the hearts of all people.

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7. Job 13:24 – “Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy?” It is hard for us to understand what appears to be God's silence or even absence. Even righteous Job, the one hand-picked by God, struggled with this -- the Bible reveals Job's struggle with us intentionally to give us strength in our trials. What we cannot see requires faith.

8. Job 13 -- There are times in life when human advice is no longer helpful, only the Holy Spirit can be your Counsellor.

9. Job 14:1-5 -- Job's suffering caused him to consider the frailty of life and the true sinfulness of man. Any illusions of control over life were gone. Whatever pride he had was removed. Sometimes God needs to take people to a low point for them to see the reality of His Sovereignty and their total dependence on Him.

10. Job 14:7-17 -- We must all deal with what happens after death and the eternal consequences of our sin.

11. Job 14:10 – “But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?” We all have to come to terms with the fact that life is hard and then we die. One of the biggest lies ever told is that life is supposed to be easy. Another is that we are in control of our destiny, that all the right decisions and the right circumstances can produce a Heaven on earth. Many seek various forms of denial in life, but Christians, who understand God's purpose for their life, remain joyful in the face of the reality of life.

12. Job 14:13-15 – “If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.” Faith's hope is that, in life, we can find joy in a love relationship with Jesus and that God will provide resurrection after death, forgiveness of sins, and answers to life's questions. Without faith, life is a very hopeless proposition.

13. Proverbs 12 -- Today's proverbs speak of the wise person's approach to building economic security. First, a wise person does not make deceptive wages and does not get rich taking advantage of others (Proverbs 12:2). A wise person's integrity produces stability in all areas of life. (Proverbs 12:3) A wise person marries well. (Proverbs 12:4) The wise don't just jump from one thing to the next, they do long-range planning and follow their plan without distraction. (Proverbs 12:5) The wise man is guided by sound thinking that comes from years of Spirit-led character development, and because of his outstanding character, he gains a great reputation. (Proverbs 12:8) The wise person does not spend money to impress others or pretend to be wealthy; rather, the wise person uses money to provide for self and others and to build. (Proverbs 12:9) The wise person has a giving heart and uses growing resources to further provide for others. (Proverbs 12:10) The wise do not pursue get rich quick schemes and are not driven by the need for instant gratification. Rather, the wise work diligently day by day to build wealth little by little over time; his wealth is built the old-fashioned way – with his hands. (Proverbs 12:11, 12) The wise man learns to work well with others, deals patiently and honestly in all relationships, and accepts counsel from other wise Christians. (Proverbs 12:13-19) The wise pursue peace knowing that conflicts destroy. (Proverbs 12:20) The wise mind their own business and do not get entangled in worthless arguments. (Proverbs 12:23) A wise person works hard, does not worry, and avoids friendships with the ungodly. (Proverbs 12:24-27) The wise person stays on the path of life.

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14. Proverbs 12:9 – “Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread.” Don’t seek honor; seek to be honorable.

15. Proverbs 12:15 – “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” Wise people get advice from other wise people.

16. Proverbs 12:16 – “The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.” Wise people are not easily annoyed or angered.

17. Proverbs 19:20 – “Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy.” Sin is based on lies.

18. Psalm 92:1, 2 – “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night....” Praising the LORD from the beginning of the day until the end is good for you. Make this your habit. Sometimes you might not feel you have a heart of praise. Praise anyway and see how your heart changes.

19. Psalm 92:5-7 – “How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever.” Only a fool rejects God and His wisdom, trusting in their incredibly limited and perishable knowledge. Why not go to the Creator of the Universe to guide you through your life?

20. Psalm 92:6 – “The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this....” If you cannot find reason to praise the LORD all day, understand that it is because there is a problem with your senses. You need to adjust your focus, get tuned in with God. You cannot see what is obvious because of a heart problem.

21. Psalm 93 -- God is all powerful, omnipresent, omniscient, unchanging, and perfect. He loves you perfectly and provides what is perfect. We can trust God completely though we cannot possibly understand what He is doing.

22. Psalm 93:1 – “The Lord reigns.” How much you really believe this will determine how you respond to any situation, whether you will trust and obey Him or instead sin.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 Aug 18: Today, pray and meditate upon the Sovereignty and Holiness of God and the implications to your daily living. Meditate upon what it means to serve the KING on this earth. Consider what the Bible means by, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16) Visualize trusting God and obeying Him regardless personal cost. (Job 13; Psalm 92, 93)

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 6, Saturday, 11 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+11%2C+12%3B+prov+11%3B+psalm+91>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 11 August 18:

1. Job 11 -- Like his friends, Zophar misapplies truth. He knows God's word doctrinally but not contextually. The Holy Spirit must guide our Biblical application.

2. Job 11:6 – “Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.” If God gave us what we deserve, we would only know death and eternal damnation. Those who say that God isn’t fair, do not

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understand the penalty we all deserve for cosmic treason committed against the LORD Almighty through sin. God is gracious and merciful in His patience, but there is a limit to His patience.

3. Job 12:9 – “Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?” All of creation testifies to the truth of God. Only a fool says in his heart there is no God. Today, there are many ‘sophisticated’ fools who, in the name of ‘science’ say there is not God. True science can only point to God, but there is a false secular religion guised as science which deceives many. Wisdom teaches that God is in complete control of all circumstances and works all things according to His purposes. Walk with God and trust Him through all things.

4. Proverbs 11:3, 5-6, 8, 14 -- God knows you need a guide in life.

5. Proverbs 11:12-13 – “Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.” A wise person knows when to be silent

6. Proverbs 11:20 – “Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those of blameless ways are his delight.” Blameless ways include blameless motivations and thinking. It is not just what you do that matters, it is why you do it too.

7. Proverbs 11:25-27 -- Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it. Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor, but evil comes to him who searches for it.” God expects you to care for others.

8. Proverbs 11:28 – “Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.” Money cannot purchase security.

9. Proverbs 11:30 – “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.” Bearing fruit involves guiding people to Jesus.

10. Proverbs 11:30 -- Wise people build positive relationships and are change agents in the lives of others by pointing them to Jesus.

11. Psalm 91:2 – “I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” Whoever trusts the LORD will take refuge in Him, obeying Him in faith regardless what human wisdom says. Your decisions and actions will reveal in whom you really place your trust. Trust is revealed in selfless, wholehearted obedience to God, regardless of the apparent situation at hand.

12. Psalm 91:11, 12 -- “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” Satan quoted Psalm 91 when he sought to tempt Jesus in the desert – “Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ““He will command his angels concerning you,” and ““On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”’ (Matthew 4:5, 6) Jesus responded to Satan by quoting from Deuteronomy (the book most quoted by Jesus) -- “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” His quote came from Deuteronomy 6:16, a verse which refers back to Exodus 17 where the thirsty Israelites on the verge of stoning Moses asked, “Is the Lord among us or not?” For further context, Deuteronomy

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6 is also the “Greatest Commandment” chapter which commands, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.... It is the Lord your God you

shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.” Satan accurately quoted from God’s word, but with evil intent and out of context. He wanted Jesus to fall into the common trap of approaching God’s word from a self-centered perspective that places the interests of man over the will of God; that places God in the position of being man’s servant rather than the other way around; that transfers glory from God to man. Of course, Jesus would not fall into that trap, and in one simple quote, proclaims that God is LORD, “Him you shall serve.” We must be VERY careful not to approach God’s word with a self-centered focus – “What will God do for me?.... How does this apply to my life and what I want out of life?” In that position, we can quote from God’s word inappropriately and drift away from the true will of God. Similarly, we must be careful not to place ourselves in the seat of God (The Judge) when dealing with others. This is what Job’s friends did. Job’s friends quoted great spiritual truths but inappropriately, placing themselves in the position of the Judge – “You Deserve Worse.” What makes us judgmental is not when we reveal sin to others out of love but when we attempt to be the Judge as if we were the Righteous One, the deliverer of the sentence. Placing ourselves in this position is an affront to God. Key to understanding and rightly applying God’s word is denying self, picking up our cross daily, and following Jesus from the heart as His ambassador.

- John 5:19 -- So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”

13. Psalm 91:14 – “Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.” Again, holding fast to Jesus involves denying self, taking up your cross daily, and following Him no matter what. The words, “holding fast” reveal that this will be challenging. As the worries of the world work to pull you away from Jesus – hold fast!

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 Aug 18: Your goal today and every day is to know Jesus more fully and to help others do the same. Let nothing distract you from your goal today. Understand from Romans 8:28 and John 17 that everything that God allows to happen to you today is to draw you closer to Him. See all circumstances today through that perspective. Through good or bad, keep your eyes on Jesus. Hold fast to Him and praise Him. At the end of the day, consider how Jesus further revealed Himself to you. Are you closer to Jesus now than you were this time last year?

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 5, Friday, 10 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+9%2C+10%3B+prov+10%3B+Luke+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 10 August 18:

1. Job 9:2 -- “But how can a man be in the right before God?” There is no one and never has been anyone who could claim righteousness before God apart from Jesus who becomes righteousness (Romans 10:4) for those who live by Grace through faith in Him. Job appreciated the Holiness and Sovereignty of God, knowing that no person could meet His standard apart from His righteousness imparted to them. He did not know that Jesus would fulfill this requirement.

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2. Job 9:11 – “Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.” The Spiritual God is not perceived in the physical, though His activities may be.

3. Job 9:15 – “Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.”

- Even when we appear right in our own eyes, we still fail in sin. Our very thoughts are impure before the Lord. We all depend upon the mercy and grace of God.

- Before we walked in Grace, we relied upon God's mercy. Grace is getting a gift we don't deserve. Mercy is not getting what we do deserve. God is both gracious and merciful to us every day, and that reality should inspire how we treat others every day.

4. Job 9:17 -- "For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause" It is impossible for us to fully understand God's purposes and ways, and it is the height of arrogance to suppose that God owes us an answer. In faith, we ask for answers and trust Him when there is silence. However, when there is silence, we must be cautious not to presume to know what God is thinking or doing. We must simply remain obedient and lean not on our own understanding.

5. Job 9:20 – “Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.” Job knew he could not see his own unrighteousness or count on his own righteousness. If God’s mercy and grace depended upon Job’s righteousness, Job had no hope. Job’s friends told Him to repent and be saved, but Job did not know from what to repent.

6. Job 9:27, 28 – “If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face, and be of good cheer,’ I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent.” A positive mental attitude won’t solve our spiritual problems. Your hope does not rest in your attitude but rather in God’s providence.

7. Job 9:33 -- "There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both." No third party can solve your relationship problems with God or come between you and God, and you don't need to go through another person to get to God. Through salvation, we have direct access, a personal, one-on-one, constant relationship with God. However, Romans 8:34 also says, "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." The Holy Spirit within you is your Counselor, Teacher, and Guide, and Jesus is your constant advocate before the Father who you can confidently call "Daddy." Of course familiarity should never breed contempt. The love we receive demands our complete and humble gratitude and respect.

8. Job 10:12, 13 – “You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit. Yet these things you hid in your heart; I know that this was your purpose.” Job knew God loved him and, therefore, could not understand why He was letting him suffer. However, he knew God had His purpose. Romans 8:28 says that God works all things, good or bad, together for ultimate good for those called according to His purpose. In John 17, Jesus tells you what that purpose is.

9. Job 10:15 -- "If I am in the right, I cannot lift up my head, for I am filled with disgrace." Job lived a responsible life and was prepared to take responsibility for His actions, but he did not understand what he had done wrong to deserve his pain. Like his friends, Job could not understand that God was not simply working through a contractual relationship with him based simply on rewards and punishments but rather was trusting Job with affliction for His glory. God's purposes go far beyond our desires and

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our comfort. God was using Job for a purpose far beyond life. Job was on a mission he did not choose. Job could not see this and was filled with doubt and uncertainty. Job's friends were of no help at this point because their vision was worse than his.

10. Job 10:18 -- "Why did you bring me out from the womb?" Because Job couldn't understand what was happening to him and because he had lost his illusion of control, he assumed his life was a failure, purposeless and meaningless; yet he couldn't have been further from the truth. Do you lose hope when everything seems to go wrong and you lose the respect of your friends in your apparent failure?

11. Proverbs 10:3 -- "Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands and favor the designs of the wicked?" Results in life come from God.

12. Proverbs 10:4, 5 -- "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame." God's word calls you to be as productive as you can, while you can, so that when you can't produce you have something to sustain your needs and the needs of those who depend upon you.

13. Proverbs 10:8 -- "The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin." God's commands are not complicated or hard to understand. Those who debate about them or attempt to redefine them through sophisticated arguments are seeking ways to justify rebellion against God.

14. Proverbs 10:20 -- "The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth." What you say reveals what is in your heart.

15. Proverbs 10:22 -- "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." God's commands are intended for you to have complete joy on earth (see John 15). We should obey God because we love Him, not merely to receive blessings for ourselves. However, obeying God does promote His blessings with no added sorrows. Trouble comes with wealth achieved outside of God's will.

16. Proverbs 10:25 -- "When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever." The storms of life hit everyone, but the godly stand firm on the Rock, Jesus.

17. Proverbs 10:29 -- "The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the blameless, but destruction to evildoers." God's will is unyielding and results in blessings or curses depending on how a person responds to it. God wants us to choose blessings.

18. Luke 15:1-3 -- "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 'But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So, he told them this parable..."

- Through parables in Luke 15, Jesus reveals the difference between the pharisaical attitude toward sinners and the Christian attitude. While the Pharisees in their self-righteous indignation despised sinners and looked forward to their punishment, Jesus, with love and compassion, greatly desired to save sinners and bring reconciliation to their broken relationship with the Father. In his parables, Jesus describes a heart for reconciliation that is as enthusiastic or desperate as one would be searching for a lost treasure or lost child. How desperate are you to bring people to Christ for their reconciliation?

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-- From 2 Corinthians 5: "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves.... For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

19. Luke 15:7 -- "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

- The Pharisees, who saw themselves as the protectors of God's standards, likely felt Jesus was condoning sin or making light of sin by reaching out to sinners. However, Jesus was doing neither. His message from the very beginning of His ministry was, "Repent," and Jesus kept Himself holy and blameless in the midst of sinners, always proclaiming the truth in love. Jesus was 'about His Father's business' of bringing the lost back to Him, and Jesus makes to point that all of God's Kingdom, His true subjects, rejoice greatly when the lost are found. In fact, Jesus repeats the point three times, which is an old way of demonstrating the highest degree of exclamation -- "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.... It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:10, 32)

- Usually, the parable of the lost sheep is preached to extol the virtues of evangelism -- reaching those who do not know about Jesus. Evangelism is certainly the call of the church, given by Jesus in the Great Commission (Matthew 28); however, the parable of the lost sheep refers to reconciling believers who have gone astray, sheep that are already part of the fold, not unbelievers who aren't yet part of the fold. Jesus first calls us to bring repentance to the church that light might shine from the church to unbelievers. Unrepentant sinners are not fit for evangelism. You don't have to be perfect for evangelism, none of are, but you must be repentant and humbly reliant on God's grace in order to proclaim God's grace; and those to whom to seek should see the evidence of your faith in your changed life. We need corporate repentance and revival in our church.

20. Luke 15:15, 16 -- "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything." Too many Christians have sought to partner with the world for their prosperity, denying the birthright in Christ, only to discover that the world is heartless and has nothing for them.

21. Luke 15:18 -- "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you." Returning to the Father starts with genuine repentance.

22. Luke 15:19 -- "I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." The truly repentant person is more than happy to be a servant.

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23. Luke 15:20 – “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” Reconciliation requires action by the offender and a willingness by the offended to receive the offender. God runs to those who are truly repentant.

24. Luke 15:29 -- "I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends."

- Though the older son stayed with the Father, He did not share the Father's heart of compassion and grace. Rather, the 'faithful' son had a heart of pride and resentment towards His brother, and in his pride, he judged both his brother and his father. The self-righteous arrogantly demand justice be administered against others, forgetting their own reliance on grace and the blessings they have received from God. The self-righteous display the traits of the flesh -- anger, bitterness, jealousy, envy, etc. Sin is a loss of perspective of who God is, who we aren't, and what God wills. When we display sinful attitudes towards others it is because we have made ourselves more important than God. This is idolatry.

- Jesus' parable about the prodigal son is as much about the older son who remained as it is about the wayward son or the father. Year after year the older son labored for his father, waiting for a future reward. He had seen the brokenness his brother's rebellion had caused his father. Yet when his brother returned, the older son did not rejoice with his father. He felt no pleasure in seeing his father happy. His concern was for himself and the injustice he perceived he'd been dealt. He felt like a martyr and totally missed the blessing of celebrating with his father.

- It is possible to serve God year after year and yet have a heart that is far from Him. You might be one of the hardest workers in your church and yet be filled with bitterness because others do not share your load. You can become so preoccupied with your spiritual labors that when God works miracles in the lives of those around you, you cannot rejoice.

- If you serve the Lord out of pride, duty, or habit, but not out of love, joy, and gratitude, you will feel like a martyr. You will envy those who are experiencing joy in the Lord while you feel weighed down by the work you are doing. This is not the abundant life your Father has planned for you. Come to the celebration, spend time with the Father, and share in His joy! [Blackaby]

25. Luke 15:31, 32 – “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’” Eternal life is knowing Jesus, relationship with Jesus is our reward, both on earth and in Heaven. We should not desire anything else in life or envy the wicked who pursue other things. Our earthly joy should be both in knowing Jesus but also in helping others know Him too. We should not resent the sinner but hope that they would come to Jesus. Rejoice in the grace given to those who were once trapped in evil.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 Aug 18: Luke 15 is all about God's desire for His lost people to repent and return to Him through Jesus, reuniting with Him. Today, make your total desire knowing Jesus more and more and helping others do the same.

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 4, Thursday, 9 August 2018

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+7%2C+8%3B+prov+9%3B+Luke+14>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 9 August 18:

1. Job 7:1 -- "Has not man a hard service on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired hand?" We should anticipate that life in this sin-corrupted world will be hard. If you are not currently going through a crisis, you certainly will, and we know life ends in death. But even through our inevitable trials, we can trust that God is bringing about an unimaginable goodness that we can't comprehend in our present condition. (Romans 8:28) And we can have joy in our hope in eternal life through Jesus. And this hope we have is not hope in a wish (such as "I hope my team wins.") This hope is confidence in a promise made by God Himself, confirmed through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Faith is trusting God today, regardless of our human perceptions, and hope is trusting God with the future, regardless of our human perceptions. Part of successful living is accepting life for what it is, challenges and all, and finding joy in faith. God has not called us to live in denial, as if the storms of life won't come for us. God calls us to live in faith, hope, love, joy, peace, radiantly, and powerfully through the storms, with Him, as an act of worship and as a witness to others. "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock [of Jesus]." (Matthew 7:25) Paul described life as a fight, a race, a challenge requiring endurance. The race is set before you -- run it well, and remember, it is not how you start that matters most, it is how you finish:

- 1 Corinthians 9:24 -- Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

- 2 Timothy 4:7 -- I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

- Hebrews 12:1, 2 -- Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

2. Job 7:16 -- "I loathe my life; I would not live forever." Job did not want to live any longer but did not consider taking his own life due to his submission to God. Being willing to lose your life for a cause is not as hard as being willing to give your life up totally while living, denying self regardless the pain to serve God in the here and now.

3. Job 7:17 -- "What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him." Job understood that he had a special relationship with God. He was not just a sophisticated animal. In his heart, every person has a sense that (s)he should have a special spiritual relationship with God, though (s)he may not understand it and though many struggle against their conscience to deny it.

4. Job 8:8-10 -- "For inquire, please, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have searched out. For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words out of their understanding?" Bildad, unlike many today, understood the foolishness of a person trusting in his/her own understanding from his/her exceedingly limited experience and perspective. He reminded Job of the generations of testimony handed down proclaiming

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the faithfulness of God. Of course, he wasn't telling Job anything Job didn't already understand about God. It is amazing how many in this generation have so quickly rejected the faith of their parents.

5. Job 8 -- Bildad's counsel to Job was all based on a false assumption that Job's pain was punishment from God for sin. Bildad's words were true but misapplied because Bildad spoke of what he could not understand. Bildad was being judgmental because He assumed to know God's judgment of Job.

6. Proverbs 9:1-3 -- "Wisdom has built her house...." Wisdom is organized. Wisdom brings forth order and structure out of chaos. Wise people are orderly, organized, and disciplined.

7. Proverbs 9:13 -- "The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing." Foolish people are characterized as loud, ignorant, and lacking in self-control and discipline, always encouraging others to join them in their foolishness. Unwise people are "loud and proud."

8. Proverbs 9 -- Both wisdom and folly are inviting. Every person must decide to which they will respond and to whose voice they will follow.

9. Luke 14:1-6 -- "And he said to them, 'Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?'" The Pharisees read, interpreted, and applied God's word from a self-centered vice selfless perspective. Jesus challenged the Pharisees with the Golden Rule, and it offended them. Godliness offends the ungodly, in part, because it exposes their own selfish hearts.

10. Luke 14:7-11 -- "... do not sit down in a place of honor.... go and sit in the lowest place.... For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Literally, it is hard for people to give others preferred seating, particularly if they are in positions of social status, but Jesus expects that attitude and so much more from His followers -- He expects us to give others honor above ourselves and to leave it to Him to give us honor. A Christian who honors himself, who seeks praise for himself or herself is unfaithful. God calls us to embody humility. How is that going for you? True faith should drive you to complete humility. Pride is anti-Christian. We must cultivate humility, for it does not come naturally. One of the many paradoxes of the Christian life is that when God sees your genuine humility, He exalts you. (Review Proverbs 16:18 and Proverbs 25:27)

11. Luke 14:12-14 -- "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Again, Jesus reiterates His demand for us to break from all worldly norms and expectations and give our very best (not scraps, hand-me-downs, or things we don't care about) to the poor, knowing that there will be no earthly return on investment. The value of a gift or offering is determined by how valuable it is to you, and what you give is a demonstration of how much you love. But it also takes faith and hope to give, trusting that God wants you to give and hoping (having complete confidence) that God will provide for your future needs though you gave away what you had. How many different ways do Christians justify not giving? Which homeless deserve your very best, only the 'responsible' ones? Christians are called to give abundantly without prejudice, demands, or expectations. See the need, meet the need. See the opportunity to love, love. I reminder: giving doesn't just involve things, it also involves time and effort. Sometimes it is harder to give time or effort than it is to give money or things.

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12. Luke 14:15-24 -- Jesus compelled us, the poor, unworthy, and spiritually homeless to join His banquet. The truth of what Jesus has done for us should incentivize our response to the poor and needy. We should also heed His warning that many who are invited to His banquet don't actually show up.

13. Luke 14:26 -- "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." This statement in the Bible can be confusing. How can God, who issues the second greatest commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" turn around and tell us we must hate our father and mother? To understand this statement from Jesus, we need to first review the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." The foundation of all other commandments rests on this one commandment, and our ability to love others is fully dependent on the quality of our love for God. Before we break any other commandment, we have broken the first commandment. God is love, and the key to knowing God is loving God; without God there is no love, only artificial substitutes. I believe what Jesus is saying is that to truly be His disciple, your love for God must be so great, that comparatively speaking, it makes your love for anyone else seem like hate – your love for Jesus must be larger than life itself. Jesus goes on to warn us to "count the cost" of discipleship – "any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." Why do you do what you do? What really motivates you? What concerns you? Where do you go for approval? In what do you invest? What is most important to you in life? If something or someone has more of an influence on your daily decisions than Jesus, then you have found your idol. There is a reason why I am in continual repentance and continually grateful for the Grace of God.

14. Luke 14:27, 33 -- "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.... In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Jesus' demand for wholehearted, total commitment follows his parable of the "Great Banquet" which describes those who are too "busy" and concerned with the worries of the world to accept his invitation. This parable is similar to the "Parable of the Sower" in the Book of Matthew: "The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful (13:22)." We are busier than ever today. How hard does it seem to even find time to read the Bible every day, even more so to meditate upon it and put it into practice on a daily basis? How much time can we find in the day to walk with the Lord? At the end of a day, consider in what you invested your thoughts, time, energy, efforts, and resources. Was it directed toward advancing the Kingdom or was it oriented on self-preservation and worldly success? How much of what we "have to do" do we really have to do? When a man lamented that he didn't have enough time in the day to do all that he needed to do, his Pastor replied: "You have just enough time in the day to do the things God wants you to do." I pray for the wisdom to know the difference:

- "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

15. Luke 14:28 -- "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" Today, Jesus challenges us to truly consider the radical, fanatical steps and the personal cost required to follow Him. After many parables, He gives us the bottom line: "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)

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Again, this is not metaphorical -- He means it quite literally. Consider how rich Christians are today; yet, most are in deep debt, usually as a result of having been unsatisfied with having what they could afford.

16. Luke 14:33 -- "So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." Following Jesus is an all-or-nothing proposition. You must surrender your whole life.

17. Luke 14:34, 35 -- "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." You were created to be in union with Jesus and to serve Him on earth. If you are not serving your purpose, what good are you?

18. Luke 14:35 -- "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Today, Jesus wants you to really evaluate the fidelity and impact of your discipleship. Are you extreme, radical, fanatical, and truly shocking (even offensive) to other 'Christians' like Jesus was to the religious leaders?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 9 Aug 18: Why do anything half-way? Why not live life to its fullness and experience the fullness of joy that comes with wholehearted commitment to following Jesus? Today, recommit to denying yourself, to taking up your cross daily, and to following Jesus wholeheartedly, regardless of how crazy everyone else thinks your commitment is. (Luke 14; 1 Kings 18:21; Matthew 6:24; Revelation 3:16; James 1:22-25; James 4:8)

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 3, Wednesday, 8 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+5%2C+6%3B+prov+8%3B+Luke+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 8 August 18:

1. Job 5:17 -- "Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty." Compare this verse with Proverbs 3:11 -- Eliphaz responded to Job with sound Biblical doctrine. However, it was misapplied because Eliphaz was using it in a judgmental fashion, assuming that God was punishing Job for an unspoken sin. We can judge whether a person's actions are consistent with God's word, but we can never presume to know what God is doing in someone's life.

2. Job 6:14 -- "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty." The counsel and advice Job's friends were offering him was more than unhelpful, it was hurtful. Job did not need a study of doctrine in his suffering, he needed the comfort of friends.

3. Job 6:21 -- "For you have now become nothing; you see my calamity and are afraid." Job rightly pointed out that judgmental people are really insecure and fearful. Job's friends blamed Job in an effort to make sense out of a terrible situation that scared them.

4. Job 6:28-30 -- "But now, be pleased to look at me, for I will not lie to your face. Please turn; let no injustice be done. Turn now; my vindication is at stake. Is there any injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity?" Friends need to support one another by telling each other the truth in trust. Job's friends were telling him to repent, and Job was seeking understand what they saw in him that he couldn't see in himself. Everyone has blind spots in their character only others can see. Who will tell you about your blind spots? Are you willing to listen and change?

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5. Job 5, 6 -- Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. Job's friends had 'Biblical' knowledge but wrongly applied it because they were not guided by the Holy Spirit and its fruit of love. Job desperately needed the comfort of friends, not a sermon.

6. Proverbs 8:12, 13 -- "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."

- By definition, to fear the Lord is to hate evil, and with wisdom (the first of God's creations) comes God honoring decisions and actions (prudence and discretion). Growing wisdom and obedience is the natural product of growing spiritual maturity. In our readings from Luke, Jesus points out that knowing him and having a fruitful life involves more than just hearing his words; it involves action:

-- "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." (James 3:13)

-- "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)

7. Proverbs 8:13 -- "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil." Godliness equates to purity, holiness, and humility.

8. Proverbs 8:35, 36 -- "For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death." When you obey God's commands, you harmonize with God's perfect order and produce conditions that enable God's blessings upon your life. God does not bless sin. All of God's creation functions in accordance with God's wisdom. To live in wisdom is to live in harmony with God's will, order, and creation. This brings natural blessings. To operate against wisdom is like trying to defy the law of gravity and jumping off of a cliff. Natural consequences are inevitable.

9. Luke 13:8, 9 -- "And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" God patiently waits for people to repent and accept Jesus, but there is a limit to His patience.

10. Luke 13:10-17 -- Without love, God's word and commands will be misapplied. When Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father, the religious, using God's word, called Him a sinner.

11. Luke 13:15, 16 -- "Then the Lord answered him, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?'" Many people use religion as an excuse to act unloving and to treat others poorly. Truth approached in a self-centered, selfish perspective becomes untrue in that person's application.

12. Luke 13:18-21 -- "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." The kingdom appears insignificant but grows into something miraculous. God uses your seemingly insignificant deeds to do amazing things, you need only be faithful in the little things.

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13. Luke 13:22-30 – “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’” Knowing about Jesus, knowing His teachings, and being around Him won't save you. You must truly 'know' Him in genuine relationship, having been saved by faith in Him, putting all your trust and hope in Him, and seeking to obey Him.

14. Luke 13:24, 25 -- “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’”

- Some people approach God half-heartedly and selfishly – that won't work. It is all or nothing, and it's all for Him. God knows the heart.

- How different is Jesus' message than the popular, worldly message of universalism being taught by so many today (often in the name of Jesus). Consider some of Jesus' other less quoted statements that we have read from the Book of Luke so far:

-- Luke 8:12 -- The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

-- Luke 8:20-21 -- And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

-- Luke 9:26 -- For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

-- Luke 10:13-16 -- Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.

-- Luke 11:23 -- Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

-- Luke 11:27, 28 -- As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

-- Luke 12:8 -- The one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

-- Luke 12:51-53 -- Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

-- Luke 13:5 -- No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

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15. Luke 13:25 – “When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’” The opportunity to know Jesus doesn’t last forever.

16. Luke 13:27 – “But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’” Salvation is a relationship with Jesus, not an acquaintance.

17. Luke 13:29 – “And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.” God’s plan includes people from throughout the world.

18. Luke 13:31 – “At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” Some Pharisees helped Jesus.

19. Luke 13:34 – “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” We tend to interpret much of the Bible verses dealing with judgment as applying to unbelievers, but most of those verses are spoken to God’s people, the church. Judgment comes with the salt loses its saltiness, and the light loses its brightness. As goes the church, so goes the nation.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Aug 18: Endeavor to show radical hospitality and charity today, holding nothing back from those you can help in love. Use the opportunity to proclaim the love of Jesus. (Luke 13:15, 16)

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 2, Tuesday, 7 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+3%2C+4%3B+prov+7%3B+Luke+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 7 August 18:

1. Job 3:11 -- “Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?” Job was in such great sorrow, he wished he had never been born, but he was not suicidal – he still had faith and hope in God.

2. Job 3:20 -- “Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul.” Job, like so many others, could not understand why God let people be born into suffering. From his perspective, it didn’t make sense. Again, from an earthly, man-centered perspective, life makes no sense.

3. Job 4:4, 5 – “Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees. But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed.” Job’s friend criticized him for not being strong in suffering after Job had helped so many others. In fact, when you are strong, you should help strengthen others, and when you are weak, you need support from others, not mere criticism. God will sometimes make you weak to both humble you and to give others an opportunity to love. When others offer to help, let them. When others don’t help you in your need, just turn more completely to Jesus. Avoid being resentful of others. Job was in great pain and questioned God, but never doubted God or showed contempt for God.

4. Job 4:7 -- “Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?” Job’s friend assumed Job was suffering because of his sin. Again, the ‘friend’s’ comfort of Job turned to criticism.

5. Job 4:17 – “Can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?” Eliphaz trembled in fear and dread at the recognition that all men are guilty before God. All men fall short of the

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glory of God, and the penalty for our sin is eternal death. But in His perfect love, mercy, and grace God sent His son to pay the penalty for our sin -- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)." That eternal life began the moment you were saved, and you are surrounded by God's love in all circumstances:

- Luke 12:6-7 -- Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- Luke 12:22-32 -- And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

- Job 13:15 -- Though he slay me, I will hope in him;

- Psalm 37:5 -- Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.

6. Proverbs 7:1 -- "My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you." As we walk thorough a life that, like Job discovered, is impossible to fully understand in what God has not revealed, we must remain faithful to what He has revealed plainly. We must do what He has told us in His Word. We must walk in the word, guided by the Holy Spirit, one day at a time.

7. Luke 12:1-3 -- "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops." The word "hypocrite" literally means "actor." The Pharisees acted more righteous than they really were. Hidden sins will always grow and transform your life, and they aren't really hidden anyway because God sees them all. It is important that we don't "act" good outwardly while harboring sinful thoughts inwardly. We must confess the truth of our hearts. Jesus, once again, warned His followers not to act godly but rather to be godly from the heart.

8. Luke 12:4-7 -- Don't worry about what others think about you, only what God thinks about you.

9. Luke 12:13-15 -- "'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to them, 'Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'" Most of what we worry about and fight about has nothing to do with what God wants us to be thinking about. God doesn't want us building our personal kingdoms on earth, He wants us seeking the Kingdom of God. His goal for our lives is to be transformed into the image of His Son Jesus, having the character

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of Christ. He can take care of the resources you need. Often, people ask God to help them with matters that have nothing to do with His will, to take their side in meaningless struggles. God is not our servant, we are His.

10. Luke 12:18-21 – “I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

- This rich fool was following the typical retirement plan most people, middle-class and up, are following today: save up so you can retire at a reasonable age, enjoy life, and depend on no one. The fool’s plan was condemned by God. Today’s readings further reveal the difference between how God thinks and how we think – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8, 9) But what does God say? “‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:20, 21) What is Jesus’ retirement advice:

- “I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Luke 12:22-34)

- Have we replaced fidelity to God for the American dream?

11. Luke 12:32, 33 -- "Fear not.... Sell your possessions, and give to the needy."

- Why do Christians act like Jesus meant this figuratively? This chapter reveals how serious He was.

- Fear prevents you from being generous and giving your possessions to others. It takes faith to please God.

- Jesus explains that we are to make the most of today and live with a sense of immediacy: “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.... Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.... And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.... Everyone to whom much was given, of him

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much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” (Luke 12:37-48) God gives us resources, talents, and opportunities to serve Him, not ourselves. The Bible says that we are to work to take care of ourselves and others, but it doesn’t say exactly how much we should save up for contingency (except for the 10% that goes to the church storehouse), but it has much to say about radical giving. For example, just a couple of days ago we read, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it’—when you have it with you. (Proverbs 3:27, 28) This verse also describes God’s intent for us to live interdependently rather than independently. However, much of our financial planning is based on independence, which robs us all of corporate power. Specifically, the Bible says that the church has a responsibility to take care of the elderly, widows, orphans, and the needy. Also, the Bible says we are to support those who dedicate themselves faithfully to full-time church work. When the church is unfaithful in these responsibilities, people are denied God’s common grace, a lack of trust and unity grows in the church, workers go un-resourced and struggle needlessly, and full-time church workers are tempted to act like the neglected Levite in Judges who sold his ministry to Micah in order to make a living. Independent living breeds selfishness, sin, and weakness.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:32-34)

- After Jesus gave the parable of the rich fool, he then told his disciples not to be like the pagans who focus their thoughts and efforts on taking care of their basic needs and comforts – where to live, what to wear, what to eat/drink, etc. Rather, he told them to have faith that God would provide for them and to seek His Kingdom, to focus all of their thoughts and energies on the Kingdom. He told them that their hearts would either be focused on God’s Kingdom or the world. Jesus said this another way in Matthew, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Matt 6:24)

- Jesus told his disciples not to worry about tomorrow but rather to do good to those in need today. Rather than storing up in barns, Jesus told his disciples to sell what they already had in order to take care of the poor. Did he really mean it? I think he did. Isn’t that crazy? In man’s economy, it is; but in God’s economy, it isn’t. Consider how we use our resources today. Most Americans are overweight. We have an abundance of everything and yet are in debt. Yet, so many in my community are in need. Is it time for radical obedience?

12. Luke 12:35 -- “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning....” Jesus expected us to act as if He were returning at any minute. How should Jesus’ call for readiness change how we handle our possessions and how we treat others?

13. Luke 12:47-48 – “And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” Those who know God’s word and don’t obey it are held more accountable than those who do not know God’s word.

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14. Luke 12:51 -- "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division." Another statement of Jesus' rarely quoted.

15. Luke 12:51 – “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” Nothing divides a room more than the name Jesus. You will either choose Him as your Lord and Savior and follow Him or you won’t.

16. Luke 12:56 -- "You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?" How do you interpret current times? Is the Holy Spirit revealing to you through God’s word what cannot be understood through human observation? People who merely act religious really have no spiritual power and do not know what God is really doing or saying. Don’t be fooled by the self-centered Bible reciter.

17. Luke 12:58 – “...settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison.” Get right with God now.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 Aug 18: Have the faith and fearlessness to give radically today. (Luke 12:32, 33) When you give, have the courage to proclaim the Name of Jesus. (Luke 12:51) As an act of worship and as a good steward, dedicate to God your T.O.T.A.L. L.I.F.E. – time, opportunities, talents, assets, leisure, labor, influence, finances, and expertise.

DBRP - WEEK 32, Day 1, Monday, 6 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Job+1%2C+2%3B+prov+6%3B+Luke+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 6 August 18:

Note: See this video summary on Job: <https://youtu.be/GswSg2ohqmA>

1. Job 1:1 – “Job... was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”

- The one who fears God turns away from evil.

- Job glorified God with his life. His obedience and integrity were the product and evidence of his love for the Lord. However, Satan challenged his motives: was he obedient because he genuinely loved the Lord, or was he obedient merely because he wanted blessings from the Lord? Did Job love God, or what God did for him? If God took everything away from Job, would Job love God just the same?

- In Luke, Jesus explains that his followers are obedient: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” But then he chastises the Pharisees for their false “obedience” that came from wrong motives – pride, self-centeredness, and self-righteousness.

- Why do we do what we do? What motivates our behavior – fear, pride, jealousy, anger, greed, or is it love? Men see our outward actions, but the Bible says that the Lord “tests the heart.” (Proverbs 17:3, 1 Thes 2:4) When I look at myself, I know that I have all the character traits of a child – it’s a growth process, and Dad teaches us along the way. I have to listen intently to my Father and work to obey Him as best as I can today. My love is growing stronger every day and the fear is diminishing, but it has not vanished. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18) None of us are perfected in love and free of fear and pride, but we should strive for increased love and confidence in Jesus.

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2. Job 1:5 – “...he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all.” Godly people are characterized by prayerfulness. Job never stopped praying for his family. To describe the holiness of Job, the Bible comments on his obedience and his prayer life.

3. Job 1:9, 10 – “Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.’” Satan questioned whether Job truly loved God or merely the blessings of God. If God took all the blessings away, would you still love Him the same?

4. Job 1:13-19 -- Many died tragically at the hands of Satan, ultimately to fulfill God's purposes. From our perspective, we tend to place man's desires and lives supreme over God's purposes, but God has a higher plan in which we all play a part; this is almost impossible to understand.

5. Job 1:20-22 – “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.” In terrible, unexplainable calamity, Job worshipped God and did not blame Him.

6. Job 2:1-6 -- Integrity chooses what is right over selfishness. You cannot have integrity and also be selfish. Job held on to his integrity, but Satan believed that with enough discomfort, Job would start being selfish. How much discomfort does it take for you to start being self-centered?

7. Job 2:10 – “But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” What we say can be as sinful as what we do.

8. Job 2:13 -- During a time of pain and sorrow, sometimes the best thing a friend can do is just be there. At a time like this, words may not be helpful. Just share the load of the sorrow, and comfort with solidarity.

9. Proverbs 6:6-8 -- “Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer.” God expects you to have self-discipline and a strong work ethic. You were created as a worker. Diligence is a godly virtue.

10. Proverbs 6:6-11 – “...Without having any chief, officer, or ruler....” God expects you to be self-disciplined and self-driven. You should require no one or nothing other than the Holy Spirit to motivate and control you.

11. Proverbs 6:20 – “My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.” God's plan has a critical role for both a mother and a father in the life of a child.

12. Proverbs 6:24 – “...to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.” Married men and women who parent well teach their kids how to remain faithful in their future marriages.

13. Luke 11:2 – “And he said to them, ‘When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name.

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Your kingdom come.” Genuine prayer honors God as LORD and honors Him as Holy. Genuine prayer starts by placing God at the center and not self. Are your prayers focused on what God wants and on bringing Him glory, or are they focused on what you want?

14. Luke 11:4 – “...and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation.” When Jesus taught The Lord's Prayer, He was making a point about self-examination, self-centeredness and forgiveness. He was saying, put God first, be content with what God gives you, and forgive others in the same way you want God to forgive you.

15. Luke 11:11-13 -- “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

- I love these verses in Luke because, as a father, I can relate. There is no way to describe the love I have for my kids even though my heart is hard. How much more love does the perfect Father who IS love give to us? God's love for us is truly indescribable and unfathomable, and nothing can separate us from His love, not even us. Everything that happens to us in our lives is filtered through His love, though at times it may not seem that way. We cannot understand why God sometimes allows bad things to happen to us, but we can trust that God is Semper Fidelis (Always Faithful) in His love for us. He will never leave you or forsake you.

16. Luke 11:13 – “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Jesus says that what we should be begging God for is the Holy Spirit, unity with Him.

17. Luke 11:24-26 -- “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.” How much worse off are you when you return to the sins for which you have already asked God for forgiveness through the Holy blood of Jesus?

18. Luke 11:28 – “But he said, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!’ Hearing the word is not enough. Bible study is very important but not enough. We must be both hearers and doers of the word.

19. Luke 11:29 – “When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, ‘This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.’” God is not obliged to prove Himself to wicked men, and even if He did, they would still reject Him. Asking for a sign reveals a hardened heart. When Jesus sent His disciples out two-by-two, He told them not to waste time with the hard hearted but to focus on the receptive.

20. Luke 11:33-36 -- “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore, be careful

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lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

- The light has no fellowship with the darkness, they are opposite in purpose. Likewise, we can have no fellowship with the ungodly.

- Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) He said, "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.... believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." (John 12:46; 12:36) To his disciples, Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14) With Christ (the Light of Life) within us, we will see the world COMPLETELY differently than those who do not have Christ in their hearts. We will see things the way God does rather than the way man does, completely opposite. As a result, our responses to others and to circumstances will be 180-out from what others would say or do. Our good deeds will "shine before others," bringing glory to God. (Matthew 5:16) However, today's readings give us a warning: "be careful lest the light in you be darkness." The key is to "guard" our

hearts by "having no part" of the darkness. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5) Therefore, in pursuit of unity with God, we strive to have no darkness within us either. Isn't this what God meant when He said, "You shall be holy, for I am holy"? (1 Peter 1:16) Paul said, "Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." (Romans 13:12) Ephesians 5:8 explains that "for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." Then it challenges us to, "walk as children of light." The truth of our light is revealed in our behavior. For example, 1 John 2:9, 10 says, "Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling." The person who is unsaved remains in darkness with no hope of producing light. The Christian has light but can put that light under a basket, preferring darkness, abiding in darkness rather than abiding in Christ. It is our daily endeavor to remove any darkness from our light. Over time, our light gets brighter; as Proverbs describes, "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." (Proverbs 4:18) To love Light is to hate darkness. Have nothing to do with darkness, and let your light shine before others. "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." (Isaiah 2:5)

21. Luke 11:37-51 -- Even more important than what you do is why you do what you do. You can do all the "right" things with the wrong heart. Love must be the motivation, from a genuine heart. Why do you do what you do? Is it selfless or selfish?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 Aug 18: Consider your prayers: what takes priority in your prayer requests and why? Are your prayers focused on what God wants or on what you want? Are your prayers Christ-centered or self-centered? Do you want comfort in life or the joy of fulfilling God's will in your life, regardless the personal cost? Do you want comfort or Christ-like character? Do you want to receive true fellowship with Christ or just tangible blessings from God? In what do you really place your joy, comfort and good fortune or serving Jesus wholeheartedly? Your prayers reveal much about your heart. (Luke 11:2-13)

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 7, Sunday, 5 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Esther+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+5%3B+psalm+89%2C+90>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 5 August 18:

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1. Esther 9:2 – “The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples.” When God’s people are united and committed to God’s purposes, nothing can stop them. When a church is divided or disoriented to its mission, it is weak and ineffective, defenseless against the power of the world.
2. Esther 9:3 – “All the officials of the provinces and the satraps and the governors and the royal agents also helped the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them.” When God’s people are established as leaders in society, even the ungodly will obey them and support them for their own self-interest. Christians should strive to be the leaders in society to bring glory to God and to preserve order, peace, and justice.
3. Esther 9:4 – “For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces, for the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful.” Mordechai did not seek fame or fortune, but his quiet, humble, faithful work behind the scenes eventually brought him power, popularity, and position.
4. Esther 9:5 – “The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them.” The Jews knew how to fight and were prepared to defend themselves. They did not seek a battle but remained ready to win one. Self-defense is more than a right, it is a responsibility.
5. Esther 9:22 – “...as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.” The Jews celebrated what God had done for them by giving to others. We love God when we love others in His Name.
6. Esther 9:27-32 – Regular festivals of worship help generations remember all that God has done for them.
7. Esther 10:3 – “For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.” Mordechai’s goal was for his people, not for himself.
8. Esther 10 -- Throughout the Bible, God places His people in prominent positions of influence without them having to compromise their obedience to God. In fact, it is because they refused to compromise that they were so useable by God.
9. Proverbs 5:12, 23 -- “...and you say, ‘How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!’... He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.” If you aren’t willing to endure the daily pain of discipline, you will suffer the pain of life regret.
10. Psalm 89:1 -- “I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.” We were created to glorify God on earth. We were not created simply for heaven, and eternal life is not something we experience after we die, eternal life is something we experience now, on earth (see John 17:3 and read Jesus’ prayer for us). We were specifically made as both physical and spiritual entities that we could translate God’s spiritual qualities into the physical

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world for His glory. Only sin separates us from our earthly calling. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they conceptually would have remained in this physical world for eternity, walking with God in the here and now. In fact, the ultimate hope for all Christians is a new heaven and the new earth, where everyone will see God as King over all, both a physical realm and a spiritual realm. While we wait for the final fulfillment of redemption and Christ's triumphant return, we are to live out the truth of our redemption on earth on a mission of reconciliation. We have been given the wonderful calling to proclaim Christ and to display his love "that the world may believe!" We are Ambassadors for Christ, "God making his appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:20)." Live boldly and victoriously, rejoicing in all circumstances, not rejoicing because of the circumstances but because of the grace of God! The more you appreciate the love and faithfulness of Jesus, the more you will be compelled to sing out His praises uncontrollably. If singing the praises of Jesus is not your natural reaction, pray for a deeper revelation of Him. In the meantime, sing anyway and see if that doesn't help increase your joy.

11. Psalm 89:1-13 -- Nature reveals the glory of God.

12. Psalm 89:14 – "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you." Righteousness, justice, love, and faithfulness go together. You can't have one without the others.

13. Psalm 89:15-16 – "Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted."

- God brings joy and blessing to those who obey Him.

- Acclaiming God and walking with God are a learned thing. Those who have learned it are known for their joyfulness.

14. Psalm 89:38-51 – Circumstances may cause you to question whether God will be true to His promises, and God gives you the freedom to talk to Him about your doubts.

15. Psalm 90:4 – "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night." God is not bound by time, space, and distance, though we are. The Creator is not controlled or limited by His creation like we are. We cannot comprehend what that means to our concepts of "science," but our greatest wisdom is foolishness to Him.

16. Psalm 90:10 – "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away." Most people will live 70-80 years, not much time in the grand scheme of things. What will you do with it?

17. Psalm 90:12 – "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." Make the most of the days you have left to serve God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 August 18: Number your days today – Consider deeply how limited your time on earth is and recommit yourself to serving God wholeheartedly in the days you have left. Start with today and seek to unconditionally love God and others in a tangible way. (Psalm 90:12)

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 6, Saturday, 4 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Esther+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+4%3B+psalm+88>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 4 August 18:

1. Esther 7:2, 7 -- "And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, 'What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled'.... And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden." Drinking leads to rash and emotional decision-making. Remember, drinking led the king to dishonor his wife queen Vashti at the beginning of this book, which ruined his marriage and led to a national crisis. In Proverbs 31, King Lemuel is warned by his wise mother, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted." Christians must never allow substances, emotions, or anything else control their decisions.
2. Esther 7:4 -- "If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent." All governments are unjust to some degree; yet the Bible commands us to obey government unless the commands of government go against the demands of Christian conscience. We should expect to incur abuses under government, but there is a limit to how much should be considered acceptable. In Esther's situation, lives were on the line.
3. Esther 7:5 -- "Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?'" Governments often don't realize the destructive consequences of their policies.
4. Esther 7:10 -- "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." God arranged circumstances such that Haman received the death he had planned for Mordecai. God will treat you in accordance with how you treat others. This way of God is revealed throughout the Bible.
5. Esther 8:9 -- "And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews..." Esther worked within the system to save his people. There is no point complaining about what you cannot change. Work within the current situation on the things you can change.
6. Esther 8:11 -- "The king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods." God's people were protected by a law that established their right to self-defense. How much do Christians in America care about the 1st and 2nd Amendments of the Constitution?
7. Esther 8:16 -- "The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor." Overnight, God can turn the greatest tragedy into the greatest joy.
8. Proverbs 4:7 -- "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." The first step to becoming wise is desiring and choosing to become wise. Then, you must resolve to maintain the disciplines required to walk the path of wisdom one day at a time. Disciplines are painful but rewarding. Disciplines are painful but not nearly as painful as failure and regret. Do you care enough about wisdom to make the daily sacrifices and efforts required to get wisdom? Wisdom comes from God, but God gives it to those who want it enough to work for it. Wisdom is developed one day at a time over a lifetime. There are no shortcuts.

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9. Proverbs 4:19 – “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” The ungodly cannot even see the error of their ways. The Holy Spirit shows you the truth of yourself from God's perspective, something indiscernible by human abilities.

10. Proverbs 4:23 – “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Guard your heart by guarding your thoughts and daily actions. What you think and what you do shapes your character. To have a Christ-like character, you must develop the mind of Christ and walk in obedience. When you start to entertain ungodly thoughts, go to the Lord in prayer.

11. Proverbs 4:24-27 – “Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.” -- It is absolutely vital that you guard your heart. Part of this critical effort involves watching what you say, watching what you look at (like TV, the internet, various medias, and the activities of other people), and not allowing yourself to participate in sinful behavior.

12. Psalm 88 -- “I cry out day and night before you.... I am a man who has no strength.... You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.... You have caused my companions to shun me.... I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.... But I, O Lord, cry to you.”

- God may have to tear down your self-confidence so that your confidence, your hope, will be in Him alone. We are easily deceived by the world, the flesh (our self-centered, selfish desires and pride), and the devil. We easily lose perspective on who God really is and who we really are (or aren't). With our sin glasses on, God becoming smaller (the opposite of glorified), while we see ourselves as becoming bigger. We try to 'lord' over our own lives, and we try to build our own kingdoms. The focus of our lives becomes ourselves, and we tend to see God as working for us rather than the other way around. In pursuit of our earthly goals and ambitions, we place our trust in our own understanding and strength, and we take comfort in the social, familial, financial, and emotional 'strongholds' that we build up for ourselves rather than in God alone. We become like a pilot who thinks '(s)he can fly rather than the airplane itself, the pilot who begins to take the airplane for granted, until the engines stop running; then then all the pilot's thoughts are, once again, on the plane. As He did with so many others we read about in the Bible, God may have to tear your idols down in order to bring you back to a right relationship with Him. The psalmist cried out day and night to the Lord when his personal strength was gone and when no one else remained to comfort him. The psalmist recognized that God had "caused" these things to happen. Of course, there are many reasons why "bad things" happen to Christians, but nothing happens that The Almighty did not allow. And in all things, whether they appear good or bad to us, God is working to bring us closer to Him. (Romans 8:28) During trials we must always reexamine our perspective and draw ever-closer to God, not further away.

- In the desert, Satan tried to tempt Jesus to make Himself bigger and the Father smaller, to pursue His personal power and His own kingdom on earth; but Jesus remained solely focused on advancing the Kingdom of God. Jesus did nothing that was not directed by the Father: "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." (John 5:19) Likewise, Jesus commanded His disciples to follow Him and only Him: "Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36) Jesus built no personal 'strongholds' on earth: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Luke 9:58) Jesus cried out day and night to the

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Lord, well before the cross, because His life WAS the Father. To us Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) Jesus gave us the example: "Do NOTHING from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:2-8) Our daily cross carrying involves dying each day of self and claiming the "mind" of Christ which is already "ours in Christ Jesus." Our mission makes us servants to God and others, making us the very least among them. Yes, this is a daily process that involves daily, continual repentance, claiming the promise of 1 John 1:9 – "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous [just] to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness." Each day, in grace, God calls us to grow into the image of Christ – "Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity." (2 Peter 3:18) We get NO glory, and our reward is Christ. Don't let the world, the flesh, and the devil deceive you into wandering away from the Shepherd.

- God wants you to understand sometimes life will seem overwhelming, and sometimes you might feel like He has abandoned you, though He hasn't. You are not the first of God's people to feel defeated at times. But why? Knowing the God is love, and that the God who is love is all powerful and desires only the very best for us, we must see our crises differently. In our crises, God is always seeking to do a few things at once: reveal the truth of Him to us in a greater way, reveal the truth of ourselves to us in a greater way, reveal the truth of this world to us in a greater way, and reveal Himself to others through us in a greater way. In your crises, God is reconciling you to Him, sanctifying you, and glorifying Himself. Trust Him through the process. We will all go through crises, and we will all die a physical death (unless Christ returns in our day). How important is it to have the right perspective on suffering and death?

- This Psalm has been described as the most sorrowful Psalm in the Bible, one that doesn't seem to end on a positive note. Many believe this psalm reveals a person suffering the consequences of a terrible sin, having isolated themselves from God and others, now pleading for mercy and grace from God. The key to handling any challenge in life, including our own failures, is to draw closer to God (not further away), and trusting to bring all things together for good (Romans 8:28)

13. Psalm 88:14 -- "O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?"

- Again, the entire 88th Psalm describes utter despair and sorrow from beginning to end. Can you relate to this Psalm? Have you ever been in deep despair (v 3-5), felt forsaken by God (v 6-7), lost your friends (v 8), felt trapped or helpless (v 8), felt as if you were dying without remedy (v 9-12), felt God had turned His back on you (v 13-14), felt that bad things always happen and nothing ever changes (v 15-17), felt like every day you wake up in darkness (v 18)? If so, Psalm 88 is for you. God put this Psalm in the Bible so you could know that God understands the full range of human emotions, and that in this broken world we will at times feel this way. The promises of the Redeemer come to people who live in a world where such things take place – no matter how you feel, God has not abandoned you and knows exactly what you are going through. God invites you to be honest about what you are feeling and to cry out to Him in faith -- Psalm 88 reminds us that during desperate times, we must run to God and not from Him. The Psalmist has poured out his emotions before the Lord, in all honesty, holding back nothing. Do you

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honestly confess your fears, doubts, struggles, and failures to the Lord in deep prayer? What is particularly interesting about Psalm 88 is that the title says that it is a song of the Sons of Korah who were the doorkeepers of the tabernacle. The Korahites would lead the Israelites in procession to the tent of worship and sacrifice. Why in the world would they want to sing such a depressing song on the way to worship? Because this was a reminder to the people that God invites us to bring our darkest laments to Him and to fellowship with the family of God – “Come to me as you are, with all your doubt, fear, pain and discouragement. Hold before me your shattered hopes and dreams, and find redemption and rest when it seems there is none to be found. Don’t hesitate because your heart is weak, and your mind is confused. Don’t hesitate because you have questioned my goodness and love. Come as you are because my sacrifice is for you, just as you are (Tim S. Lane, Paul David Tripp).” Not only does God call you rush to His loving arms in your despair, He also calls you to surround yourself with other loving Christians who can minister to your needs. Who are the Christians are in your life that can give you support when you need it? Remember, you were saved into a family; God never intended for you to be alone. The "It's just you and me Jesus" mentality is contrary to the Great Commandment of loving both God and others.

- Romans 8:28 -- And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 August 18: Whatever you are going through, draw closer to God and simply trust Him. "Trust and obey, For there's no other way, To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey."

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 5, Friday, 3 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=esther+5%2C+6%3B+prov+3%3B+luke+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 3 August 18:

1. Esther 5:11 "Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials." A person can have all the appearances of success while being a failure in God's eyes and while heading to calamity.
2. Esther 5:12 – “Then Haman said, ‘Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king.’” Haman interpreted circumstances from a selfish, self-centered perspective.
3. Esther 5:13 – “Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.” Haman could not be content. Pride and Jealousy consumed Haman and ruined his appreciation of everything else. What is needlessly robbing you of your joy? Don’t let one negative thing consume you. Focus on how much God has blessed you. Remain joyfully obedient, one day at a time, and watch God work.
4. Esther 6:1 – “On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.” At just the right time, the king had a sleepless night, read the chronicles, and remembered Mordecai – God’s hand or coincidence? God orchestrates events to accomplish His will on His timing. He works in ways we can’t in order to reveal

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Himself. How has God arranged circumstances in your life to work in amazing ways? Your encounters with God make you a witness to others.

5. Esther 6:3-11 – Haman’s pride led to his humiliation. Ask God to help you control your pride.

6. Esther 6:13 – “And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, ‘If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.’” God protected His people, and no one could stand against them. Even Zeresh could see God at work preserving His people. Where do you see God at work?

7. Proverbs 3:1-5 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” It is logical that mere men cannot possibly understand what the Creator is doing. However, it takes faith to believe that He will guide you in love and faithfulness if you obey Him. Faith will require you to do what doesn't make sense from your very limited human perspective.

8. Proverbs 3:3 – “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck;” Love and faithfulness go together. If you truly love, you will be faithful. A lack of fidelity demonstrates a lack of love. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” Many say they love God, but live out a different truth.

9. Proverbs 3:7 – “Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.” How much you respect God is revealed by how you respond to evil. The more you love God, the more you hate sin.

10. Proverbs 3:8 – “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.” How we handle our resources is a test of faith. It takes faith to give. Fear and pride drive materialism. It also takes faith to rest. Both the tithe and the Sabbath demonstrate our trust in God rather than in our own productivity and accomplishments.

11. Proverbs 3:26 – “...for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.” If your confidence is in anything but the LORD, your peace and joy will always be uncertain and unstable. If your confidence is in the LORD, you will be like Paul, content in any situation.

12. Proverbs 3:27, 28 -- “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it’—when you have it with you.”

- See a need; meet a need in the Name of Jesus. Your generosity reveals your faith.

- Christians have a tendency to measure their faith, the faith of others, and the condition of their church based on ministry programs, activities, and events. They also tend to view missionary work as something that is only done in very distant lands. Many Christians feel guilty because they are not more active in church activities. However, if the Christian will be faithful with what/who God has placed in front of them (which is no coincidence), that Christian will no longer feel a ministry or missionary void. In fact, that Christian will feel that what God has asked them to do is impossible, because it is impossible without God’s miraculous power. Jesus both communicated this frontlines ministry and modeled it for us – He was focused on people rather than programatics. He focused on the day at hand, not worrying about past or future. He made the most of the opportunity. He stopped whatever He was doing, what He had planned to respond to where He saw God working in someone’s life, much to the dismay of His

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disciples. Others thought He was wasting His time with nobodies when, in their minds, He should have been doing 'big' things. To them, He too often wasted time, energy, and resources on things that would never 'pay off.' However, Jesus saw EVERY person from God's perspective, and eternal perspective, and, though He is the Son of God, He became the servant of the lowly, those ignored by everyone else, even the religious. God has 'salted' you into a particular location at a particular time to be His ambassador to specific people, those you will encounter today. These people (not some group somewhere else) are your mission, your top priority, whether you would choose them or not. How you choose to interact with them depends on your perspective on your calling and reveals your faith. Don't look somewhere else for service. The little things you do for others today may not score you any points in your congregation, but they will bring glory to God. And how many well-known, major ministries were started because one person decided to help another person, and then another, and then another.... Walk slowly through the crowd today. See where God is working in lives around you, join Him, and watch God work.

- The content and quality of our character is tested, revealed, and shaped by the small decisions we make each day. Each day we are presented with countless choices and decisions, most we make while hardly considering them. However, every little decision we make affects both our environment (to include others) and our hearts, both with which God is greatly concerned. In fact, the seemingly unobservable or unnoticed decisions we make as well as the ones we make spontaneously may in fact be the most important as they tend to be the most 'honest' ones. If we can be faithful with the little things, we will be ready for the big things, but our character is built on little things. There seems to be a continuous cycle of character development – how we 'see' the world, what we believe to be true about life, affects the way we think; what we think affects what we decide to say (affirm about life) and do; what we do over time becomes habit; and our habits shape our character which in turn shapes what we 'see' and really believe is true. The cycle continues towards greater goodness or badness, but it is never stagnant. Each day, in our decisions, we are building our character while also impacting the world around us. With each decision, the truth of us is revealed. As Proverbs says, "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright," (Proverbs 20:11) Genuine humility is essential for proper introspection to assess why we do what we do with the little, revealing decisions we make every day. If, without even thinking about it, we pass by an opportunity to give or to support someone in need, what are we revealing about our hearts? How often, in an instant, do we snap at someone and then say, "I'm not really an angry person, I was just caught off guard or overwhelmed by the heat of the moment."? The Bible would caution us to see the revealed truth of the condition of our hearts. C.S Lewis described it this way:

"We begin to notice, besides our particular sinful acts, our sinfulness; begin to be alarmed not only about what we do, but about what we are. This may sound rather difficult, so I will try to make it clear from my own case. When I come to my evening prayers and try to reckon up the sins of the day, nine times out of ten the most obvious one is some sin against charity; I have sulked or snapped or sneered or snubbed or stormed. And the excuse that immediately springs to my mind is that the provocation was so sudden and unexpected: I was caught off my guard, I had not time to collect myself. Now that may be an extenuating circumstance as regards those particular acts: they would obviously be worse if they had been deliberate and premeditated. On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding. In the

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same way the suddenness of the provocation does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am. The rats are always there in the cellar, but if you go in shouting and noisily, they will have taken cover before you switch on the light.”

- The Bible calls us to build our character one day at a time, by humbly making the most of every opportunity. In that process, the guarding of our hearts, the Bible tells us to simultaneously and continuously address all aspects of the character development cycle – what we think, what we say, what we do, and our habits. This will require at times doing and saying what we really don’t want to do and say while acknowledging our internal inconsistency with the mind and heart of Jesus while praying for God to heal our hearts that we would truly desire to do His will. At first, obedience may be a chore, but without the labor, there is no harvest in the heart. Conversely, we must not be prideful farmers who believe that it is our toil that ultimately produces fruit. Life comes from Jesus; apart from Jesus, our labors can produce nothing at all. Character is not built in a day but rather a lifetime, on day at a time. Today’s Psalms say, “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12) Each day is another once in a lifetime opportunity to grow in the Lord. Make the most of today by endeavoring to be faithful in the little things. If it is in your power to do good, do good.

13. Luke 10:2 -- "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Only the Holy Spirit knows who the Father is drawing to the Son. Ask God to show you whom to communicate the Gospel.

14. Luke 10:3 -- "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." God knows that He is leading you into persecution in order to use you to communicate the Gospel to sinful people who are naturally hurtful. Are you willing to be hurt by the people God wants you to reach? Are you willing to show unloving people the love of Christ, regardless of what happens to you through the process? Are you willing to suffer and say, “Forgive them Father; they know not what they do”?

15. Luke 10:7 – “And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.” On God’s mission you must be satisfied with the resources provided, not being tempted to move where it is more comfortable. You must also be humble enough to receive gifts from others.

16. Luke 10:9 – “Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” Ministry and evangelism always go together. Don’t do one without the other.

17. Luke 10:10 – “But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say....” Don’t waste time trying to work where the Holy Spirit isn’t already working.

18. Luke 10:16 -- “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” How people respond to Christ's Ambassadors reveals what is in their spirits and whether or not God is drawing them.

19. Luke 10:20 – “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” What matters is not the gifts you receive from God but rather your relationship with God.

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20. Luke 10:21 – “In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.’” God destroys ego.

21. Luke 10:22 – “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” God takes the initiative in salvation, and salvation comes only through Jesus.

22. Luke 10:29 -- “But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”

- People complicate God's word and place conditions upon it when they want to accommodate their sin. Many will pervert the Gospel of grace in order to justify their disobedience. Self-justification seeks to avoid God's clear word and command.

- The owner of a high-intensity workout facility once stated, “Most people who join don't last very long.... I can always tell right away which people won't last – they are the ones who ask a lot of questions about the workouts.... The ones who stay never do that; they just workout.” Apparently, the dabblers in fitness who did more questioning than exercising were revealing to the instructor their half-hearted desire to commit to the challenge, hoping to find in their questioning a reason why the physical training, which had been proven effective, was somehow not quite right for them. People do the same thing with God's word. The vast majority of what is written in the Bible is not at all hard to understand – it is quite clear. However, if we are clinging to ‘self’ it is impossible to fully accept. So, we seek to justify our self-centeredness by ‘adding’ to God's word. We look for caveats, loop-holes, or special conditions that will limit the fullness of God's word and provide a buffer from the requirement for total obedience. We become ‘lawyers’ defending our half-hearted followership. “Love my neighbor? Well, technically Who is my neighbor?” “Forgive those who trespass against me? Well, what if they have really trespassed against me terribly and haven't changed?” “Give to the needy? What if they don't deserve it or won't change after I give them?” “Sex is only for marriage between a man and woman in a life-long marriage? But what if two people really love each other and do not fall into this narrow condition? Surely they should not be denied sex!” “Proclaim the gospel to all creation? Isn't just being a good person enough, and doesn't my pastor do all the preaching?” “Deny self, pick up my cross, and follow? Doesn't God want me to be successful in the things that I want to do and that fulfill me and my desires?” Could it be the Jesus meant EXACTLY what he said without any special caveats and conditions? How different would your life be if you did not play the lawyer with those challenging words?

-- Proverbs 25:26 -- Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

-- Ezekiel 34:18 -- Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?

-- Ezekiel 34:19 -- And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

23. Luke 10:37 – “He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise.’” Christians administer mercy. Mercy doesn't show favoritism or place conditions upon grace.

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24. Luke 10:39-42 – “And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.’”

- When our sacrifices and services are driven by self-righteousness, we tend to seek credit for our efforts, compare ourselves to others, resent others for their apparent lack of contribution, and get discouraged when we don’t seem to get the reward and praise we deserve. Self-righteousness and comparison rob us of our joy and distracts us from our relationship with God.

- Jesus warns us not to let work and business get in the way of our relationship with Him. We must guard the time we spend at the LORD's feet listening to Him. Hearing Jesus' words is the most basic Christian activity.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Aug 18: Look to see where God is moving in the hearts of people around you and tell them about Jesus. If they are not interested, simply try again with someone else. Proclaim the Gospel without fear, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. Don't waste your time trying to build where God hasn't laid the foundation. (Luke 10)

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 4, Thursday, 2 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=esther+3%2C+4%3B+prov+2%3B+luke+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 2 August 18:

1. Esther 3:2 -- “But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage.” Mordecai wasn’t looking for trouble but refused to compromise his fidelity to God, even if it put him at odds with powerful officials. God orchestrated circumstances that placed Mordecai at a decision point of faith.

2. Esther 3:5 -- “Haman was filled with fury.” Haman hated the Jews, not because they believed in God but because they refused to treat him the way he wanted to be treated.

3. Esther 3:6 -- “But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.” Mordecai’s refusal to compromise threatened the comfort and security of all of God’s people, much as did Moses’ fidelity to God. Are you willing to be faithful to Jesus even when other Christians don’t like it, even if it might cause trouble for people you care about?

4. Esther 3:8 -- “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king’s laws, so that it is not to the king’s profit to tolerate them.” God’s people obeyed the laws of the land unless they conflicted with the laws of God. Mordecai and the other Jews refused to treat people as idols and were hated because of it, though they all, like Mordecai, proved faithful in other regards. Obeying God rather than government would threaten their lives. Christians are called to be the conscience of society. Christians are most faithful and loving when they stand up against sin which draws people further away from God and His blessings.

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5. Esther 3:10 – “So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews.” The king was poorly advised and influenced by people with selfish motives who only desired personal gain, despite their claims of concern for the welfare of the kingdom. Today too, politics is driven by special interest groups who seek personal benefit at the expense of others outside of their group. Also, leaders today make decisions in the name of the collective good (according to popular opinion), often in ways that promote injustice.

6. Esther 4:5 – “Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was.” Esther, living in comfort and luxury in the king’s palace, was unaware of what was happening to her people and untouched by the crisis impacting them. There is a lesson here for all of us.

7. Esther 4:13 -- “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.” Christians are being persecuted across the planet for their faith. We should not think that we will remain unscathed ourselves.

8. Esther 4:14 – “For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Everyone will decide whether or not they are willing to put it all on the line for God and whether or not they will be used by God to fulfill His purposes. Those who remain irrelevant through compromise and indecision will simply miss out on what God is going to do anyway and suffer the consequences of being outside of God’s will.

9. Esther 4:14 -- “Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Mordecai helped Esther see God’s purpose for her life and helped her understand how God places His people in specific places, and specific times, in intentional relationships with other people, to accomplish His purposes. He also helped her understand that she had to choose to be faithful to the opportunity God had given her to join Him in His work.

10. Esther 4:16 – “I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” Esther was at a crossroads in her life, a decision-point on whether to trust God or not. She chose to remain faithful to God regardless the personal cost, and, in so doing, saved her people. What would God do with you if you put it all on the line for Him?

11. Proverbs 2:3-5 – “...if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” Acquiring the knowledge of God requires great diligence and consistent perseverance. God does not honor the half-hearted searcher. How you search for God reveals how much you value Him.

12. Proverbs 2:6 – “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Knowledge is given by God through His word.

13. Proverbs 2:10 – “...for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.” Knowledge must move from your mind (head knowledge) to your heart (character), to your feet, hands, and mouth.

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14. Proverbs 2:11, 12 – “...discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil.” When your obedient to God, you will avoid needless pain and suffering that most other people go through. Most trouble in life is self-induced. God’s word will help you avoid much self-induced trouble if you obey it.

15. Luke 9:1, 2 – “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” Luke begins with a pre-cursor to the Great Commission. Jesus, under His authority, tells His Apostles to go and do what He had modelled for them, with the power of the Spirit. Jesus gave them both power and authority to do two things together – proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal, not to do just one of those things. Some Christians focus on one or the other. Evangelism should involve ministry, and ministry should involve evangelism. Ministry and evangelism should go hand in hand.

16. Luke 9:3-6 – The disciples offered the Gospel to those who were willing to receive them and did not waste valuable time, energy, and effort with the hard-hearted, those who simply would not listen. Those who were not willing to receive the disciples freely were not blessed by them and did not receive the truth from them. Jesus did not expect the disciples to convince the unreceptive but rather to move on. There were plenty of other people ready to be healed and to receive God’s word.

17. Luke 9:10-17 -- When we commit our lives to God’s service, He will place us in situations that are impossible for us to handle with our human abilities. He will force us to rely on miracles so that He can reveal Himself. If we only do what we know we can do, we don’t require faith, aren’t walking in faith, miss out on what God would have shown us, and only show others what we can do rather than the power of God.

18. Luke 9:18 -- “Who do the crowds say that I am?” Faith defies public opinion.

19. Luke 9:23-25 -- “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”

- Jesus meant it when He said we must deny ourselves and take up our crosses in order to follow Him. Easy to understand but hard to do. It cannot be done without the power of the Holy Spirit.

- It starts with denying self (selflessness). That alone is worth meditating on all day today and with great self-examination. Denying self is not the same as self-denial (such as restricting your diet (denying yourself food) in order to lose weight for self-centered reasons). Denying yourself is truly surrendering all ambition and motivation to God and to others. How much does self-centeredness influence even how we read and interpret the Bible? The battle against self (the flesh) is our greatest battle. Jesus said that with salvation comes the death of self, and if we don’t die of self, we will “forfeit” ourselves – hard words to hear. We see throughout Luke 9 how the disciples stumble over “self,” fighting over which of them would be the greatest (9:46), getting jealous of other preachers (9:49), and letting anger disorient them (9:54). For their self-centeredness, Jesus rebuked them and reminded them, “For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.” (9:55, 48) How many of us are working diligently to become the least?

- Taking up the cross is a daily process that is not just about suffering as church tradition would often suggest – it is about claiming our identity in Christ, replacing self with Christ. It is about, having died,

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now living (not our own lives) in Christ pursuing his goals, his desires, his interests. Paul said it like this: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) Step one is death; step two is LIFE! Your mission now is “Ambassador” and “Priest,” and we live this new life one day at a time – if today, our minds are focused on what we need, and our words often include personal pronouns like (“I” and “me”); if we are bothered by worry, fear, anger, bitterness, jealousy, greed, ambition, doubt, or passions, we are missing the mark (sin). If we are “in” Christ, abiding in Christ, living through the power of the Holy Spirit, nothing can come against us. If we are attempting to live by our own personal power, we will be very ineffective just as the disciples were in Luke 9 today when they could not heal though Jesus had given them the power (see Luke 9:1 and then Luke 9:40). Of course, taking up our cross will involve forgiving those who persecute us, returning only good for bad. But our suffering is not just for the sake of glorifying God to others, it is also to draw us closer to Him.

- Following Jesus – this is where the rubber meets the road. Jesus first commanded the disciples, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19) The Bibles says they “rose and followed him.” (Matthew 9:9) Those who recognize who Christ really is and their total dependence on Him (like the vine is dependent on the branch) follow Him. (Matthew 9:27) This is something that the personally ambitious cannot do (Matthew 19:21) – you cannot live your life and follow Jesus at the same time; it is an all-or-nothing proposition. We must follow without any hesitation, wholeheartedly (Luke 9:59) Those who do follow Jesus will reign with him in the Kingdom. (Matthew 19:28) When we are not following Jesus, but rather going our own way, we are walking in darkness. (John 8:12) Christians follow no one but Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:4)

20. Luke 9:40 – “I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” In Luke 9:1, Jesus gave his disciples the power to cast out demons, but by Luke 9:40, they are found to be unable to do what Jesus empowered them to do. Why? Jesus explained that what rendered His people powerless and ineffective was not a lack of empowerment by the Holy Spirit or a lack of authority from God, but simply a lack of faith. Jesus says that they lacked the faith to do what God had already enabled them to do. How about you? Are you trusting God to live powerfully?

21. Luke 9:46-50 – “An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.” Jealousy is unfitting of a Christian. If you have truly denied self, there will be no jealousy. Jealousy caused divisions among God’s people and detracts from ministry and evangelism. Jealousy and envy are what inspired the religious leaders to seek the death of The Savior – that’s how serious jealousy is.

22. Luke 9:57-62 – “And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’” Jesus modeled “deny self” for all to see, again, leaving no doubt that He meant His words to be taken literally rather than figuratively or metaphorically.

23. Luke 9:62 -- “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” You are either going to follow Jesus or not. You cannot half follow Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 August 18: Put it all on the line for Jesus today.

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 3, Wednesday, 1 August 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=esther+1%2C+2%3B+prov+1%3B+luke+8>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 1 August 18:

Note: Check out this video summary on Esther: <https://youtu.be/JydNSlufRII>

1. Esther 1:1 – “Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces....” God let a weak king rule most of the known world.
2. Esther 1:10-11 – “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded... the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at.” After seven days of drinking, king Xerxes let alcohol and his ego entice him to treat his wife poorly and in a humiliating way. Some scholars believe the king’s command was actually for the queen to wear ‘only’ her crown.
3. Esther 1:12 – “But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.” The king ruled most of the known world but could not maintain peace within his own home. The king and queen were not united. The first place to lead and to love is within the home. The king demonstrated his weakness at this foundational level. How many people want to be leaders of big things but have already demonstrated poor leadership within their own homes?
4. Esther 1:13 – “Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times....” The king could not or would not handle his own family problems and deferred to others.
5. Esther 1:18 – “This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen’s behavior will say the same to all the king’s officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.” Discipline is not just for the lawbreaker but for the whole community, incentivizing standards of behavior.
6. Esther 1:19-22 – “...all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike.” The king’s plan was to empower the men of the kingdom at the expense of the women. God gives different responsibilities to men and women but demands that everyone be treated fairly and valued equally.
7. Esther 2:1-4 -- After a failed relationship, king Xerxes pursued another relationship based upon physical attraction.
8. Esther 2:5 – “Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai....” God was working His plan, unbeknownst to anyone, by placing one of His faithful servants at the right place at the right time. What plans is God working with your life? Are you ready for the moment?
9. Esther 2:7 – “He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.” Family takes care of family.
10. Esther 2:22, 23 – “And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.”

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- Mordecai remained loyal to his captor king and saved his life; however, he did not seek the credit Esther gave him. Mordecai was not motivated by careerism or prestige but rather by faithfulness to God's ways.

- God also orchestrated circumstances to prepare His people for future influence. Mordecai's faithfulness to the ungodly king as well as Esther's continued obedience to Mordecai were also used by God for His purposes. God calls us to be obedient and to trust that He is in control.

11. Esther 2 -- God intricately arranged circumstances for His purposes, though no one could see it. Keep your eyes open to see what God is doing, what others don't notice.

12. Proverbs 1:3 – "...to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity...." Wisdom and discipline go hand-in-hand.

13. Proverbs 1:7 – "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Fools despise wisdom and discipline.

14. Proverbs 1:24-32 – "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." There is a point of no return, a point where consequences are inevitable, when it is too late to expect mercy rather than justice.

15. Luke 8:3 -- "Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."

- These women used their wealth and prominence to resource Jesus' ministry. How are you using your wealth and position to support the Great Commission? Jesus' ministry was funded by the wife of the manager of Herod's household. Joanna quietly played a critical role in the spread of the gospel. Indirectly, Herod was resourcing Jesus, secular resources transferred to the Kingdom through godly people. (see more below) God calls some people to serve Him by providing resources and influence. How do you serve God's kingdom people? How do you bring L. I. F. E. to the church – labor, influence, finances, or Expertise.

- This easily missed verse has always fascinated me – through a woman, Jesus' ministry was partly (likely largely) funded by the estate of Herod Antipas, the king of Galilee, executor of John the Baptist and coconspirator against Jesus himself. Little is known about Joanna other than she was the wife of the man who managed Herod's estate; that she had been healed by Jesus; that her name means "Yahweh has been gracious"; that she accompanied Jesus and the Twelve, and that she was also one of the women who discovered the empty tomb of Jesus on the first Easter morning. From my studies, I only see her directly mentioned twice in the Bible, once here, and once in Luke 24 at the Resurrection. So, why does the Bible take time to mention her in Luke 8 and to point out that she (along with the other women) provided for the needs of the disciples? I think that this statement would be shocking to a Jew in those days. "How could Jesus surround himself with these unacceptable women and accept their 'blood money' in order to take care of his personal needs?" To me, the takeaway is best explained in 1 Corinthians 1: "For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who

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became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" It is God that makes someone righteous, nothing about themselves; and inanimate objects, such as money, are neither good nor evil and have no power in themselves. Paul traveled to Rome in a pagan ship with the figurehead of two gods, Castor and Pollux. Did that matter to Paul? Of course not – these carvings, though feared and honored by some, were absolutely meaningless to Paul who knew personally the One, True God. (See Acts 28) This Alexandrian ship dedicated to foreign gods was nothing more than transportation to Paul to fulfill God's purpose just as, to Paul, meat sacrificed to idols was nothing more than food. Paul was considered by most, particularly the religious, to be an outcast and a criminal; yet while in chains he relentlessly proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ "with all boldness and without hindrance" because his righteous, worth, purpose, power, and position was defined by God, not by men. Though ignoble, Jesus Christ has made you noble, a priest, his personal ambassador. Are you bold in that position?

16. Luke 8:8 -- "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Only those who really want to know the truth will learn and accept the truth.

17. Luke 8:10 -- "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'" Unbelievers can't understand God's word because of their rebellious hearts and lack of Holy Spirit counsel.

18. Luke 8:13 -- "And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away." Satan opposes God's word.

19. Luke 8:15 -- "As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience." True followers of Jesus heed His word, grow in Christ-likeness, and bring others closer to Jesus.

20. Luke 8:16 -- "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light." What good is hidden faith?

21. Luke 8:18 -- "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

- Healthy Christians grow in Christ-likeness and influence others.

- How a person hears God's word is critical. A careless approach to God's word yields no fruit.

- If you are not growing your dying.

22. Luke 8:21 -- "But he answered them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.'" The family of God obeys God. God's family is based on spiritual unity, not blood relation.

23. Luke 8:25 -- "He said to them, 'Where is your faith?'" Faith requires that you trust Jesus over your own perceptions, experience, and knowledge.

- Faith often requires you to do what doesn't seem to make any sense simply because God commanded you to do it.

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- Understanding who Jesus is changes your perspective on everything.

24. Luke 8:28 -- "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." The demons acknowledged and feared Jesus, but they refused to follow Him. God is not interested in believers but rather disciples.

25. Luke 8:35 -- "Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid." Salvation brought total change to a tortured man.

26. Luke 8:38-39 -- "The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him."

- Salvation is not simply so that we can enjoy Jesus in isolation. We are called to share the Gospel with others.

- The man freed from Legion probably became the first missionary to Gentiles. Jesus did not want him to just enjoy his relationship with Him but to share it with others.

27. Luke 8:41 -- "And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house...." Jesus ministered to both demon-possessed Gentiles and leaders among the Jews.

28. Luke 8:43 -- "And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone." Money does not solve problems, God does.

29. Luke 8:48-50 -- "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." Faith is required for you to fully realize the blessings of Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 1 August 18: Exercise your faith by obeying Jesus and sharing Jesus with others regardless of how much it goes against 'common sense' and 'sound judgment'. (Luke 8)

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 2, Tuesday, 31 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=nehemiah+11%2C+12%3B+prov+31%3B+luke+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 31 July 18:

1. Nehemiah 11:1, 2 -- "And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem."

- The Biblical method for selecting equally interested parties for a requirement or an opportunity was to cast lots in order to ensure a fair, unbiased decisions and to avoid potential strife.

- God's work requires people who are willing to make life-changing sacrifices. Those who are willing deserve special support from those who are not willing.

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- Many gave up their homestead to serve God elsewhere.

2. Nehemiah 11:8-14 -- God's people approach God's work in a well-planned and very organized fashion, each person having clearly understood responsibilities.

3. Nehemiah 11:22 – “The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over the work of the house of God.” Singing was a responsibility assigned to specific people -- it was as important and as well managed as other responsibilities.

4. Nehemiah 11:22, 23, 27, 31 – Singers played such a critical role in church and society that they were under the king's orders. Music with instruments has always been an important part of worship.

5. Nehemiah 12:27-47 – “And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.... Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks.... And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.”

- The security of the nation rested not in their defenses but in their faith and fidelity to God. Worship was seen as vital to national defense. A people truly united in faith in God are mighty.

- Worship was carefully organized and carried out to plan.

- Revival brings obedience, unity, and joy among God's people.

- “God had made them rejoice with great joy.” Worship, prayer, and Bible study are true interactions or dialogues with God – He is intimately involved and responsive. Through these spiritual activities, God enlightens, brings peace and joy, and glorifies Himself before both God's people and a watching world.

- “...the women and children also rejoiced.” Worship is intended by God to be a family endeavor that unites a family and brings joy to a family. Worship is also intended to be an organizational endeavor and a national endeavor where the people give great thanks and proclaim, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

6. Proverbs 31:2 – “What are you doing, my son? What are you doing, son of my womb? What are you doing, son of my vows?” God intends parents to model integrity and fidelity for their children.

7. Proverbs 31:8, 9 – “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” God expects us to speak up when we see evil.

8. Proverbs 31:10, 11 – “An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.” Character earns the trust and confidence of others.

9. Proverbs 31:30 – “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” The quality of your life will be determined by your Christ-like character, not your charm or looks.

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10. Luke 7:2, 3 – “Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.” Christians stand out for their compassion for others, which is active and tangible. The centurion, a powerful person, went out of his way to take care of a servant. Prayer is our first, most important step, but we must also take action, which is a demonstration of faith.

12. Luke 7:4, 5 – “He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.” The centurion was a great model of Christian professionalism. He worked diligently in his profession to serve as an instrument of common grace to all people while also specifically serving God’s people and the church. For a Christian, there is no secular job. All work is done with God and for God.

13. Luke 7:7, 8 – “But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” The centurion, a person of authority and power, recognized Jesus’s superior authority and humbled himself before Jesus. The centurion understood authority. When Jesus gave us the Great Commission, He reminded us that we are making disciples under His authority and through His power. How does that truth impact how you live your life?

14. Luke 7:9 – “When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’” Faith has no racial or social limits. Few would have thought that a Roman, gentile, soldier would receive such a commendation from Jesus, ahead of the Jewish religious leaders.

15. Luke 7:13 – “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’” Jesus has compassion and desires to bring comfort to those who are suffering. Jesus, who loves you unconditionally, loves you compassionately, understands what you are going through and is there to comfort you. The shortest verse in the New Testament is found in John 11:35 as Jesus observed Mary’s sorrow over the death of her brother Lazarus -- “Jesus wept.” And “the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” Life in this broken world is painful, but you are not alone – God is with you and will never leave you or forsake you. The Bible says, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).” For those who love God, even the worst of life will be brought to good through Jesus.

16. Luke 7:20 – “And when the men had come to him, they said, ‘John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’” Jesus said that there was “no one greater than John,” yet in prison, John doubted. Take heart in the fact that God understands the limits of your faith and does not abandon you in your doubts. When you face doubt, go to the Lord and ask Him to strengthen your faith. Trust Him to reveal Himself more fully in your life over time. He will never leave you or forsake you, and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

17. Luke 7:22-24 – “And he answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.’ When John’s messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?’” Our faith is validated by actions, not arguments, and we witness to what we have seen and experienced personally from God, not just what

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we have read about Him. In a court of law, witnesses testify to their first-hand experience; anything else is hearsay. Your testimony is more than doctrine; it is your story of your genuine encounter and relationship with Christ. As you step out in what little faith you have, you experience the power of God in your life more fully, your faith grows, and you have the confidence to step out even further. The more you truly experience Jesus, the more excited you are to tell others. Sharing your personal testimony is no longer awkward.

18. Luke 7:24-28 – “Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.’” John the Baptist was no people pleaser, and it cost him his life. John was no politician or careerist who proclaimed only what was most popular; he did not conform to popular opinion or statistical morality (what the majority said was right). He did not make a living off of telling people what they wanted to hear. John spoke the truth to please God, regardless the opinion of others or the personal cost. He rejected the trappings of the world. His lifestyle revealed the truth of the man and earned Jesus’ highest praise – “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John.” Jesus gave John the Baptist His greatest endorsement because John refused to compromise at any cost. Jesus also condemned the rich, prosperous leaders of society who compromised themselves to get there.

19. Luke 7:29 – “When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John....” John prepared people to receive God's Word, Jesus.

20. Luke 7:30 -- “...but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves.”

- Jesus was obedient to God in all things, even when it seemed to defy all reason, such as when He, the Son of God, submitted to the Baptism of John. Of Jesus, the Bible says, “Though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8) The Bible says that we are to “have this mind among [ourselves], which is [ours] in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) In the mind of Christ, we are to “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3) Let that sink in today – nothing out of selfishness or pride, counting ourselves as least among others in complete humility! This is something the Pharisees would not do – in their pride and selfishness, they “rejected the purpose of God for themselves.” Our problem is not that the Bible isn’t clear about what God wants us to do; our problem is that we don’t want to do it. So, we muddy the waters in an attempt to justify our disobedience. God’s plan for us does not fit our plan for ourselves, so we look for a second opinion, someone who can find a creative way of making God’s word say something it doesn’t – “Did God really say...?” “Jesus was obedient to the point of death. Philippians 2:3 tells us that God’s plan for us is for us to die of self, emptying ourselves to be filled by the Holy Spirit, living not by selfish ambition but rather by the Holy Spirit, walking joyfully in obedience and love regardless the personal cost. Will you do that, or will you play the role of a follower of Christ? Jesus called the Pharisees “hypocrites” which meant “stage actors.” They acted religious but in truth “rejected the purpose of God for themselves.”

21. Luke 7:33-35 – “For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton

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and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.” Sinners have countless justifications for refusing to accept Christ. People also find all sorts of reason to criticize those who proclaim truth, and they use personal attacks to distract from the message of the messenger, but the truth will vindicate the messenger in time. People who cannot stand to hear the truth have no argument against the truth, so they can only attack the messenger.

22. Luke 7:36-38 – “And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.” This woman completely and publicly humbled herself at the feet of Jesus, anointing Him with very expensive ointment – a truly shocking display. When you are in love with the person of Christ and in His presence, nothing else matters.

23. Luke 7:47 – “But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” Love of Christ comes from truly knowing Him and appreciating His sacrificial love for you. The more you appreciate the forgiveness you have received, the more you will love God and others. If you have trouble loving someone, you have yet to fully grasp the love you have received through Jesus.

24. Luke 7:48-50 – “And he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this, who even forgives sins?’ And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’” Jesus provides forgiveness, salvation, and peace you can never receive from society. He gives a peace like no other. He gives freedom like no other. The world cannot take away from you what God has given you. If you have been freed from judgment through Jesus, you are truly free, regardless of what others might say.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 31 July 18: Rejoice and have confidence in the forgiveness you have received in Jesus, and love others the way God has loved you. (Luke 7:47-50)

DBRP - WEEK 31, Day 1, Monday, 30 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=nehemiah+9%2C+10%3B+prov+30%3B+luke+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 30 July 18:

1. Nehemiah 9:1-5 -- God’s word inspired repentance which inspired God’s people to separate from the world’s influence and to praise God publicly and collectively. Confession and repentance lead God’s people to adjust their lives to remove sin and to truly worship.
2. Nehemiah 9:6-8 -- “You are the Lord, you alone.... You are the Lord, the God....” True repentance causes you to acknowledge the holiness, righteousness and sovereignty of God. Repentance enables you to see life’s events in the right context and changes your understanding of everything.
3. Nehemiah 9:6-35 -- God has revealed His character in very real ways throughout history; He has always remained faithful and remains faithful today.
4. Nehemiah 9:38 -- “Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.” Revival requires a definitive commitment to follow and obey God and to pursue an ever-increasing love relationship with Him.

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5. Nehemiah 9 – God is always faithful though His people are not. God does not leave for forsake His people, though they leave and forsake Him.

6. Nehemiah 10:28, 29 – “The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes.” A renewed love relationship with God always includes life change and separation from old sinful ways. Repentance includes a promise to remain holy. There is a recommitment to obey God’s word, without excuses and without omitting parts of God’s word. True love is revealed in obedience, not empty ritual.

7. Nehemiah 10:31-36 -- Commitment to God changes a person’s outlook on financial management to one based on stewardship to God in pursuit of His desires, purpose, and instructions. Commitment to God includes a financial commitment.

8. Nehemiah 10:36 – “...also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks....” Commitment to God includes committing children to God.

9. Nehemiah 10:39 – “For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary are, as well as the priests who minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God.” Committed Christians take their responsibility to church very seriously.

10. Proverbs 30:1-3 – “I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.” Walking on your own path rather than with Jesus only wears you out.

11. Proverbs 30:4 – “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!” Jesus is the Name of the Son – He ascended to Heaven, He has gathered the wind, wrapped the waters, and established the ends of the earth. Follow Him.

12. Proverbs 30:5, 6 – It is foolish, prideful and fatal to think you can add to God’s word. “Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Most cults add to God’s word.

13. Proverbs 30:7-9 – “Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.”

- The bookends of sin are fear and pride.

- Contentment is critical for a Christian. Paul learned to be content in any situation, and we need to do the same. Be satisfied with what God has given you, and trust Him enough to give to others in need.

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14. Proverbs 30:19 – “...the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.” People who are driven by their passions or emotions are unpredictable.

15. Proverbs 30:20 – “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” The world takes sexual sin very lightly, but God takes it very seriously.

16. Proverbs 30:24-28 – Successful people learn to find opportunity in any environment or circumstance while unsuccessful people only see obstacles and barriers. Don’t focus on what you don’t have or can’t do. Focus on what you do have and can do.

17. Proverbs 30:24-38 -- Wisdom is more powerful than strength.

18. Luke 6:1 -- “On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads grain, rubbing them in their hands.”

- Take some time this morning to meditate upon Luke 5 and 6. In Luke 5, we see Jesus working very hard, travelling, calling His disciples, ministering to the needs of many, and healing in miraculous ways. Chapter 5 ends with the Pharisees challenging Jesus for ministering to “sinners” while failing to fast like they did. Then, we turn to chapter 6 where Jesus and the disciples, having fully invested themselves in ministering to the needs of others are so hungry that they are plucking grain in the fields just to get something at all to eat. You are pretty hungry when you are rubbing grain together in your hands to eat kernels. Yet the Pharisees, in their comfortable, prideful self-righteousness, challenge Jesus and the disciples for not obeying the law -- “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” Jesus described his actions by comparing them to David’s actions when David was starving. Consider the difference between religion and true religion, between self-righteousness and love, between legalism and grace, between pride and humility, between belief and discipleship. Consider the life Jesus modelled for the church, a life that truly gave all in faith and love. Jesus didn’t have a mega-church. Notice also how Jesus responded to arrogant critics while famished – unemotionally with the word of God. How do you act when you are really uncomfortable and treated unfairly?

- Side note: Jesus had neither a weight problem nor debt. Obeying God wholeheartedly is a great way to avoid gluttony and materialism.

19. Luke 6:1-11 -- The Law can only be understood within the context of God’s will, revealed through the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit and genuine relationship with God, the “experts” of the Law saw Jesus’ actions as sin.

20. Luke 6:6-11 -- Jesus’ obedient, Spirit-filled ministry caused church leaders to hate Him.

21. Luke 6:12 – “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.” Jesus modeled prayer for us. When was the last time you prayed all night?

22. Luke 6:16 – “...and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” Judas was originally hand-picked by Jesus, chosen by God. Yet, he became a traitor.

23. Luke 6:20-23 – “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they

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exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

- Jesus’ approach to conquering the world is to change hearts, turning them to true love for God and others.

- Jesus is described in this chapter as poor, hungry (remember the grain?), hated, insulted, and rejected. It appears that He intended for His words on radical giving and total sacrifice to be taken literally, yet the modern church wants to make this metaphorical or philosophical.

24. Luke 6:24-26 – “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.”

- The Pharisees who criticized Jesus’ disciples for plucking and eating grain in the grain fields were rich, full, and did not have the heart to give as Jesus commanded or to follow Jesus in faith and love. However, they viewed themselves as more religious and righteous than anyone else.

- Jesus says that true Christianity is uncomfortable, painful, and humiliating, not because of your foolishness, but rather because of your loving sacrifice to God and to others around you.

25. Luke 6:27-35 – “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.”

- Everyone loves someone but what separates true Christians is their love for their enemies and those who are truly hard to love. Only a godly love truly loves the victimizer.

- Everyone lends when they think they will be repaid or get something out of the deal. Christians lend freely expecting nothing in return. This doesn’t make any sense in the world’s economy.

26. Luke 6:35, 36 – “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” Jesus demands radical, totally selfless love from those who would follow Him; He expects you to treat others the way He has treated you. This is true worship.

27. Luke 6:36 – “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” What motivates us to mercy is the example of God’s mercy bestowed upon us. Our gratitude and true faith are revealed in our mercy, particularly when mercy is personally costly and risky. What is truly costly is truly valuable, a gift worth giving.

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28. Luke 6:37-38 -- “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

- Perhaps the most misrepresented verse in the Bible – “Judge not....” The popular use of Jesus’ words is to suggest that Christians have no business telling others what is right or wrong. The other popular interpretation is that you can only point out another person’s sins when you are perfect, and since you are not, keep your mouth shut. Unfortunately, most Christians spend little time in the Bible; so, when they are confronted with this inappropriate interpretation of Jesus’ words, they accept it. However, God calls his people to “judge” throughout the Bible and, at times, to rebuke and to correct others. Didn’t John the Baptist lose his head for calling out Herod’s adultery? Have we forgotten Both John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ “Brood of vipers” and “whitewashed tombs” comments or Jesus whipping the moneychangers out of the temple? In Luke, following the topic verse for these comments, Jesus goes on to talk about judging others’ character by the fruit of their lives. 1 Corinthians 6 is all about “judging”. However, there is a right and wrong way to reveal the truth of sin to others. First, it must be with the right motives – coming from a heart of genuine love for the sinner with a desire to help and not to hurt. As the pastors says, if your words generate more heat than light, remain silent. Second, it must come from God’s word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit – we do not judge from our opinion. Third, it must come from a position of humility rather than self-righteousness – we are but starving beggars telling other beggars where to find bread. Fourth, it must be done graciously, compassionately, and gently. Don’t be a jerk for Jesus. As Jesus points out today, we are never to “condemn” in our judgment. We are not the Judge who delivers the sentence, we are but jurors, peer sinners who merely point out what God’s word says. Our judgment should be in accordance with James 3:17 -- “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” We must warn people of sin but in love, with compassion, mercy, and gentleness, and graciousness. “Silence is consent.” To remain silent before sin, to ignore it, or condone it is truly unloving, cowardly, and negligent in our mission as Ambassador to Christ who begins His message with the word. “Repent.”

29. Luke 6:38 – “...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” How does God measure His blessings to you according to Jesus?

30. Luke 6:40 – “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” Everyone has a teacher, whether they admit it or not. Who is your teacher, really? Is it a pastor, a celebrity, a family member, or a philosopher? You will always be limited by the limits of your teachers. Make your teacher and guide the Holy Spirit as you follow Jesus.

31. Luke 6:41-42 – “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.” The Fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5 is all about what is in our heart and character. Only from a position character can we teach others about character. Making disciples (the Great Commission) involves first being a faithful follower of Christ. To be a leader, you have to be going the right way so others can follow. In today’s readings, Jesus modeled the radical selfless sacrifice to which He calls us.

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32. Luke 6:43-46 -- “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” How do your actions reveal what is really in your heart?

33. “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” You cannot call Jesus, LORD unless you really believe His and treat Him as LORD by following Him. What you really believe to be true, what you really honor, and what you really love will be revealed by your actions.

34. Luke 6:46 -- “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” Do not claim to be a Christian and call Jesus “Lord” if you don’t seek to obey Him as the KING of Kings. If you take the sin God abhors lightly, you need to check your heart and the truth of your faith.

35. Luke 6:47-49 – “Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.” What you truly value most and place at the center of your life will determine everything else you do. If Jesus isn’t at the center of your life and the foundation of your life, your life is meaningless and destined for destruction.

36. Luke 6:48 – “And when a flood arose....” Everyone goes through the floods or storms of life, but those whose life is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ will not be shaken while those whose foundations are something else will be destroyed. Lay your foundation on the Rock before the storm hits.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 July 18: Make your Savior your LORD too by obeying Jesus in every way. His greatest commandment was love. Love Him by loving others unconditionally. Take up your cross by forgiving and giving to those who don’t deserve it from you at all. Make it your challenge today to respond to every negative action by others with positivity, grace, and mercy. Share in the suffering of Jesus by accepting the hurt that hurting people do in order to reveal to them the type of love you have received from Jesus. Make this a part of your life testimony. Of course, as Jesus said, to be able to do this, you my “Deny self” and be willing to follow Him to that “cross.” In that, you will truly fellowship with Jesus, truly worship Him, and truly honor Him. (Luke 6:40-48)

DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 7, Sunday, 29 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=neh+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+29%3B+psalm+86%2C+87>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 29 July 18:

1. Nehemiah 7:2 – “I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.” The first prerequisite for choosing a leader should be fidelity to God.

2. Nehemiah 7:1-4 – For any organization or program to be successful, it must have a clear plan to develop D.O.T.M.L.P.F: Doctrine (the beliefs, and rules which guide the organization); organization (how

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the organization will structured to accomplish the mission); training (how the organization will prepare everyone for the mission); materiel (what resources the organization will require to do the mission); leadership (who will be appointed to guide the organization); people (who will run the organization and participate); facilities (what infrastructure does the organization require). Leave any of these elements out of the plan or fail to develop any of these elements equally, and the organization will fail to do what God intended, whether it be a church, a business, or a family. According to God's will, Nehemiah accounted for all of these elements.

3. Nehemiah 7:7-60 – “The number of the men of the people of Israel: the sons of.... 2,172.... 372.... 652.... [etc].” Again, accountability of every single person is critical to God's plan and way of doing things. Every single person is important to God and plays an essential role within the body of believers. God expects His people to know everyone within the family of believers and disciple everyone intentionally. Note also in today's verses that God organized His people by families. The family is the most important institution on earth; the family is the school house for character development and is the building block of society. Godly community is a collection of godly people that were raised in godly families. The most important leadership roles in the church are father, mother, brother, and sister. Does your church account for every person within the church? If you didn't show up for church today, would someone call you or, better yet, come see you to check on you? Does your church prioritize development of the family? Do you account for everyone in your personal extended family? Will you pray for everyone in your family today?

4. Nehemiah 7:64 – “These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.” We live in a very entitled generation. Everyone thinks they should be able to do whatever they want, whenever they want. However, the authority to appoint people to positions, roles, and responsibilities rests with God. If God did not assign the person to the position, then that person is and illegitimate leader. God places restrictions on leadership. For example, God's word says that a deacon cannot be divorced. That restriction doesn't mean that person is any less loved by God or that there isn't another place in the church for that person to serve; he just can't be a deacon. Still, in our all-accepting culture, many churches reject this instruction and appoint divorced deacons anyway; God will not honor that disobedience.

5. Nehemiah 8:1-8 – “And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.... They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” Nehemiah developed and implemented a discipleship program to ensure everyone understood the word of God. The success of the nation depended upon everyone following God's word in unity. Unfortunately, most churches today are very careless about both accountability and systematic discipleship.

6. Nehemiah 8:9 -- “‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.” Don't be consumed in guilt about the past, simply rejoice in God's forgiveness and move forward in repentance. Recommit to fidelity and be renewed in the grace of God. For example, over half of the church in America today is impacted by divorce. God strictly forbids divorce except for in matters of infidelity, where remarriage is not permitted. Many have disobeyed that

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clear instruction. What to do? Repent, except forgiveness along with the consequences, and move forward in humble, submissive, joyful obedience.

7. Nehemiah 8:13 – “On the second day the heads of fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.” God’s plan for the church places the first level of leadership with parents. Parents raise their families to be faithful to God, and parents of faithful families join together with their families in congregations to obey God together as a community of believers.

8. Nehemiah 8:14 – “And they found it written in the Law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month.” God wanted His people to camp out every seventh month in order to remember God’s provision in the desert, to sustain their survival skills, to facilitate focused worship and fellowship, and to remind them that they could live on very little if necessary.

9. Nehemiah 8:17 – “And there was very great rejoicing.” Community camping, fellowship, and worship brought great rejoicing.

10. Proverbs 29:6 – “An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.” Obedience to God leads to joy.

11. Proverbs 29:7 – “A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.” The righteous care about the poor.

12. Proverbs 29:10 – “Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.” Good people will never be at peace with bad people. There will be no earthly peace until Christ returns.

13. Proverbs 29:13 – “The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.” God as Creator gives equal worth to the rich and the poor.

14. Proverbs 29:15, 17 – “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.... Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.” External discipline is required where there is not internal discipline.

15. Proverbs 29:18 – “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” The law helps preserve order and fight the consequences of human nature.

16. Proverbs 29:19 – “By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond.” The law is powerless without self-control which is a fruit of the spirit.

17. Proverbs 29:26 – “Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.” God is the only source of justice.

18. Psalm 86:3-5 -- “Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. Bring joy to your servant, for to you O Lord, I lift up my soul. You are a forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.” Today’s readings from Nehemiah and Psalms show us a pattern of repentance in the lives of God’s people and the joy that comes from living by grace. God was at work in the hearts of His people to draw them to Him and to His word. In fact in the Book of Nehemiah, we see that God’s people were willing to listen “attentively” to the Book of the Law for hours. Likewise, we see in Psalm 86:11 David’s eagerness to learn God’s “way” from God’s word. Convicted by God’s word, the people were driven to godly

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sorrow. This was not “worldly sorrow” which is self-centered and produces tears of self-pity having experienced the consequences of sin. This was godly sorrow that recognized that God’s love had been treated lightly and that behind their disobedience was a problem with their hearts. There was no excuse making or blame-shifting, only honest self-examination that produced tears of true humility. In fact, so great was their sorrow that the people had to be calmed down. The people had to be reminded of God’s mercy and grace that David speaks of in Psalm 86 – “I will praise you O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me for the depths of the grave.... You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant.” Recognizing his “poor and needy” state before the Lord, David trusts in the Lord (Psalm 86:2) to forgive him, to give him strength (86:16) and to build in him an “undivided heart” as David continues to “walk in [God’s] truth” (Psalm 86:11). In continual repentance, David rejoices in God’s love. When the Levites explained the nature of God’s love to the people, “Then all the people went away... to celebrate with great joy because they now understood the words that had been made known to them (Nehemiah 8:12).”

19. Psalm 86:7 – “In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.” The more you pray to God and see His faithfulness in response, the more confident you become in prayer and in God’s protection.

20. Psalm 86:11 – “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.” Knowing the word of God is essential, but it is not sufficient – you also need the power of the Holy Spirit to teach you to walk in the word and to walk in unity with Jesus. Disobedience to God’s word grieves the Holy Spirit, quenches the Holy Spirit in your life, and causes you to get out of step with the Holy Spirit. In disobedience, you could have the whole Bible memorized and still be powerless and joyless. Don’t let continued sin rob you of the blessings God intends for you.

- John 14:26 -- But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

- John 20:22 -- And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 2:38 -- And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 5:32 -- And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” [who obey Him]

- Acts 7:51 -- “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.

- Ephesians 4:30 -- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- Galatians 5:25 -- If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:19 -- Do not quench the Spirit.

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21. Psalm 86:12-13 – “I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.” You should be thankful in all circumstances because you know that nothing can separate you from the love of Christ and that He works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 July 18: Do not wallow in guilt and dwell on the past. Learn from your previous sins, accept God’s forgiveness, and move forward. Do not continue in the sin God hates and for which Jesus died to release you from. Joyfully accept God’s discipline for sin, and don’t get hung up with regret over the consequences of sin. Allow God to restore you in the way He sees fit. Trust Him through the circumstances, that He will use even the negative things for your good and, more importantly, for His glory. (Nehemiah 8:9)

DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 6, Saturday, 28 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=neh+5%2C+6%3B+prov+28%3B+psalm+85>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 28 July 18:

1. Nehemiah 5:5, 7, 8 -- “We are powerless because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.... You are exacting interest, each from his brother.... We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!”

- Today’s readings have an important message to the church about financial debt, about which I am tempted to write pages; but I won’t. Bottom line: wealth is a form of power, but financial debt has rendered the people powerless. Recognizing that I stand in a very small minority, I don’t believe God desires His Kingdom people to be in debt to the world, and I don’t believe that God intends for His people to charge interest on what they lend to each other. The Bible clearly points out that the borrower is the slave to the lender, and God’s people must not sell themselves into slavery to the world as we are slaves to Christ and Christ alone. Nehemiah comments that the Jews had been working hard to “buy back” their Jewish brothers from the hands of the Gentiles. However, even some Jews were taking advantage of other Jews by charging interest on debt, and Nehemiah harshly rebukes these moneylenders (even 1% interest was too much). It is also important to note that those trapped in debt were even more vulnerable during times of financial crisis. Because they had no savings or contingency fund, they had to go into deeper debt to pay expenses such as taxes – their hole only got deeper. Interestingly, one of the Hebrew words used for debt has its origins in the Hebrew word for snakebite – debt is a poison that kills you slowly. Today, Christians are in heavy debt to ungodly institutions while reportedly only about 2-4% of the church tithes. The vast majority of Christians who say that they are “homeowners” actually only “own” debts to financial institutions who really own their homes. Additionally, some denominations spend more money to pay off building debt than they do to support missionaries. Again, that building debt is being paid to ungodly institutions. The Church body is working hard to make the world rich; is this what God intended? What would happen if Christians put the same amount of money they currently pay to debt interest into the work of the Church? Just one example: If you take out a five-year loan on a new car (something Christians do all the time), you basically pay for that car twice, except half of the money goes into the pockets of moneylenders instead of towards

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another car. Instead, why not buy two cars and donate one to a missionary team? Wouldn't that choice more effectively support the Great Commission? I think so.

- I believe that we are to be free from debt to ungodly institutions and that we have a responsibility to get other Christians out of slavery "as far as we are able." In that, I believe Christians should lend to other Christians without ANY interest, and that we should use our resources to help other Christians remain financially free before we pursue independent luxuries. Nehemiah lived far below his means that he might ease the financial burdens of others; he did this "because of the fear of God." (Nehemiah 5:15) When that young couple in your church struggling to make ends meet needs a new muffler on their car, will they go to the church for financial help or will they put the expense on their credit card owned by ungodly institutions? When people criticize others for making bad financial decisions, are those people willing to take the time to teach, coach, and mentor them into better financial decisions? Does your church now the financial debt of the body? Does your church have a plan to get out of debt (both the institution and the people within the institution)? Tithing is much easier without debt. The tithe is another instrument intended for the church to use to keep people out of debt, a storehouse for needs. Christians are called to tithe into the storehouse but ALSO give gifts and offerings beyond the tithe to address genuine needs of others. Today, when most Christians have financial needs, they go to worldly banks rather than the church and other Christians – this is a serious problem that is disempowering the church and empowering the world.

2. Nehemiah 5:9 – "So I said, 'The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?' Taking advantage of others and refusing to give to those in need is not only ungodly but also defames God before unbelievers.

3. Nehemiah 5:10 – "Let us abandon this exacting of interest." Once again, God does not want His people gaining wealth by lending with interest to people in need. Nehemiah demanded that there be NO interest on debt. Christians should give to other Christians freely, exacting no interest at all. The OT direction was that on every seventh year, all debt was erased, a testimony to God's grace. There is no reason why we shouldn't retain that practice today. God wants His people to gain wealth through productivity, not by feeding off of the productivity of others through interest on debt. Also, God does not want His people to be enslaved by debt to others.

4. Nehemiah 5:14-19 – Nehemiah did not accept any special treatment and did the work of all the people. Additionally, he led by example in generosity. This is what leadership looks like.

5. Nehemiah 5:15 – "The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God." Nehemiah made sure that he did not profit from his position of leadership because that is ungodly. Is that what leaders do today?

6. Nehemiah 5:19 – "Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people." Nehemiah found his riches in his relationship with God.

7. Nehemiah 6:1-9 – People will use all sorts of schemes to thwart your work for God. Stay focused on what God wants you to do, and have no fear.

8. Nehemiah 6:6 – "In it was written, 'It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you

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wish to become their king.’” Rumors started as insecure people assumed the worst motives of God’s people.

9. Nehemiah 6:9 – “For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, ‘Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.’ But now, O God, strengthen my hands.” The ungodly will always threaten and attack God’s people.

10. Nehemiah 6:12 – “And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.” Not everyone who claims to know God’s will actually does, and many claim to speak for God in order to deceive you (or to lie to themselves). It is critical that you know how to distinguish between God’s word and false prophecy. Anybody who says, “Go told me....” when God really didn’t or who uses God’s written word out of context is a false prophet. Fortunately, Jesus taught us how to identify the false prophet -- “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20) What is the fruit? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control....” (Galatians 5:22, 23) Not every dynamic preacher is a true disciple.

11. Nehemiah 6:16 – “And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.” God works through the faithful to reveal Himself to a watching world.

12. Nehemiah 6:17-19 -- There remained disunity within the church despite God’s activity. Jesus had Judas. It seems we will always have someone in our group subverting progress. Jesus didn’t kick Judas out, and it appears that Nehemiah did not directly resist those working against him. Nehemiah simply stayed focused on accomplishing God’s will. Don’t worry too much or get distracted by those who resist the truth or what God would have you do. Stay focused and let your persistence overcome the resistance.

13. Proverbs 28:1 – “...the righteous are bold as a lion.” Are you as bold as a lion?

14. Proverbs 28:2, 7, 11, 15 – The word “understanding” is used four times in Proverbs 28. Understanding involves submission to God and His word. Knowledge and understanding are not the same thing. You might know what the Bible says, but you won’t understand it until you apply it. Those who disobey God lack understanding.

15. Proverbs 28:5 – “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.” God is the source of all justice. The further away someone is from God, the further away they are from justice. Pure justice comes only from God. Justice cannot be administered by the ungodly. Many people will claim to be on the side of justice when, in fact, they are only pursuing self-centered agendas. God sets the standard for justice, not people. God’s standard is not the same as social morality (the standard of society) which shifts like the sand and favors popular opinion. The majority is usually wrong. Those who would administer justice must submit to God’s just word.

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16. Proverbs 28:7 – “The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.” Gluttony is taken very seriously in the Bible. This lack of self-control is a spiritual issue, revealing a heart condition that always transfers into other areas of life too.

17. Proverbs 28:8 – “Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.” Greed won't work.

18. Proverbs 28:9 – “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” Behavior affects prayer.

19. Proverbs 28:13 – “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Facing the pain of confession helps us overcome the power of sin and guilt in our lives and also invites others to do the same. Confession is the first practical step in genuine humility; it destroys the pride which causes you to cover up your sin and allow it to continue. Confession is a public acknowledgment that you rely on God's grace rather than your own “goodness.” Confession opens the door for the true honesty required to address the problem at hand. Confession frees you from the struggle of trying to pretend to be something you really aren't. Confession is the first step on the path of becoming who you really want to be. Confession is very hard because pride doesn't want us to admit our failures, particularly to others. However, where you are prideful is where you are seeking give credit and honor to yourself rather than to God. God will not share credit with anyone.

20. Proverbs 28:14 – “Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” Those who do not honor God as God are hard-hearted.

21. Proverbs 28:18 – “Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall.” The consequences of sin are often instantaneous and catastrophic.

22. Proverbs 28:19 – “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.” A dream isn't a plan, and a plan isn't getting things done. You must have a real plan for getting things done, and you must be willing to make the daily sacrifices required to actually execute the plan. Nothing worth doing is easy. Many know what to do but simply aren't willing to do it. Some are willing to work hard but do not take the time to plan their work, so much effort is directed in the wrong places. A good plan gives you focus and direction. Hard work gives you results in your focus areas. God honors prayer, and God will work miraculously in your life to do what you can't do (if what you are doing is aligned with His will), but God will not honor your lack of discipline with miracles.

23. Proverbs 28:25 – “A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched.” Greed is the opposite of trusting in the LORD. You hoard what you don't trust God to replenish. Greed is fear, not faith.

24. Proverbs 28:26 – “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” How foolish is it for someone who has lived less than a century on some spot of the planet, less than a speck in the universe, think that they can figure life out without God, the Creator of all.

25. Proverbs 28:27 -- “Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.” Do you believe Proverbs 28:27 is true?

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26. Psalm 85:4 – “Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!” Repentance is continuous. A humble, repentant spirit mourns over sin, continually asks for forgiveness, accepts continual forgiveness, and doesn’t wallow in guilt and regret but rather demonstrates love for Christ and appreciation for grace by wholeheartedly resolving to sin no more.

27. Psalm 85:8 – “Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints, but let them not turn back to folly.” After receiving forgiveness from God, don’t keep doing the things for which you asked for forgiveness. Honor God with your behavior. Worship God with your behavior. Love God with your behavior.

28. Psalm 85:10 – “Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.” Love and faithfulness go together. If you love God, be faithful to Him. Living righteously gives you peace.

29. Psalm 85:8-13 -- "I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps."

- God’s first word to us is the same word Jesus said when He first met the disciples after His resurrection: “Peace.” (Psalm 85:8) Peace comes through grace and then through obedience to God. Accept peace from God and then live at peace with God. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit by continuing to dishonor the One who saved you and freed you from your sin, and don’t continue to destroy your own peace and joy by continuing in sin. Hebrews 12:1 encourages you to, “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And... run with perseverance the race marked out for [you].” Life is challenging enough without the needless burdens of sin. Jesus said, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” God wants you to have the fullness of joy that comes from complete surrender to Jesus and obedience.

- The psalmist speaks of the requirement of God’s people to obey God in order to appreciate the fullness of his blessings on earth. This reminds me of what Jesus said: “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:10-11) I know I want nothing but the very best for my children, but when they don’t listen to my instruction and/or don’t make the effort to do what is right, they suffer needlessly and often cause each other to suffer. I can also look at my own life and see that most of my problems have been self-induced – they never had to happen. Of course no one is perfect, and we all make mistakes, which is why these Psalms begin by expressing his gratitude for God’s mercy and grace. But as we grow up in the Lord, we must continue the endeavor to grow in faithfulness. As the Bible reiterates in many places including this Psalm, love and faithfulness go together.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 July 18: What sins are you continuing commit though you know it is wrong? Where do you lack self-control? Remember, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (see Gal 5). Pray that God will strengthen you to put real change into your repentance, and strive with all of your might to desist. Meditate upon what it means to be unfaithful in your behavior before the Almighty, Holy God who paid for your sins with His One and Only Son, Jesus. (Psalm 85:8)

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DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 5, Friday, 27 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Neh+3%2C+4%3B+pro+27%3B+Luke+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 27 July 18:

1. Nehemiah 3:1-32 -- Nehemiah had the work carefully managed so each person knew his or her responsibility. A common commitment to God's task unified a people who otherwise tended to be separated by religious, cultural, family, historical, and professional differences. The Bible gives by-name credit for the work that everyone did.

2. Nehemiah 3:9, 12, 14-19 -- The officials joined in with everyone else to do the backbreaking labor.

3. Nehemiah 4:1 -- "Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews." Opponents to God's work reacted in anger because they feared they would lose their power and authority. Some people will feel threatened by your accomplishments and ridicule or resist you. Don't chase the poisonous snakes that bite you. Or, as the old country saying goes, "Don't wrestle with a pig in the mud because you both get dirty and the pig likes it." Stay focused on what God has called you to do, and move around the obstacles.

4. Nehemiah 4:1-3 -- "...and he jeered at the Jews." Mocking and sarcasm are ways people express their fear and insecurity.

5. Nehemiah 4:4-5 -- "Hear, O our God, for we are despised...." Do not rail back at enemies but rather turn it over to God in prayer for Him to handle.

6. Nehemiah 4:4-23 -- Dedication to God and hard work, empowered by the Holy Spirit, brings amazing results.

7. Nehemiah 4:5 -- "Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders." Enemies arouse God's anger. If you are committed to serving God and fulfilling His will, then your enemies are, in fact, God's enemies. No one can thwart God's will. You have nothing to worry about if you are doing what God has told you to do.

8. Nehemiah 4:6 -- "The people had a mind to work." My father often said, "People do what they really want to do." Most of the time, when we say, "I can't," what we really mean is "I don't really want to." We have all heard the saying, "Where there is the will there is the way," but how much truer is this saying when your will is aligned with God's will? In Nehemiah we see the Jews accomplish the seemingly impossible despite being mocked, threatened, and severely resource constrained. They let nothing stand in their way and worked tirelessly day and night to accomplish their task -- no excuses. Conversely, in Proverbs we read about the sluggard who is nothing but excuses -- "The sluggard says, 'There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets (Proverbs 26:13)!'" It is vital for the Christian to have a "mind to work," but it foremost essential that we have "the mind of Christ" and that we endeavor only where God would have us (1 Corinthians 2:16). Jesus said that He did "nothing" apart from the Father's leading (John 5:19). Apart for God's leading, our best efforts will be misplaced and counterproductive -- "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8, 9)." Interestingly, if you do a word search for the word "diligent" in the Bible, the word is mostly applied to "inquiring" of the Lord, "listening to the voice" of the Lord, "searching God's word,

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and then obeying His commands. Our diligence must be in growing closer to Christ each day. In our readings today, we see a great example given by Jesus: He was swarmed by crowds on needy people (Lepers, paralytics, etc) who were desperately seeking His ministry. What would we do in that situation? I know that I would be very tempted to wear myself out attempting to minister to everyone's needs, relying on my own talents, intellect, and skills – "But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray (Luke 5:16)." Far more important than doing things right is doing the right things, and only God knows what is right. "Diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes (Exodus 15:26)."

9. Nehemiah 4:6-8, 11-12, 15 -- Success among God's people only brings the world's increased anger.

10. Nehemiah 4:10-12 – "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing...." Barriers to work, threats from enemies, and the doubts of others can bring us to doubt. However, focus on God relieves fear. (Neh 4:14)

11. Nehemiah 4:20 – "In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." God is on your side when you are on God's side. Anything you do outside of God's will is ultimately meaningless. When you are serving God, you are fulfilling your life's purpose and will experience great joy. If you are not experiencing great joy, check yourself and evaluate whether or not you are doing what you should be doing.

12. Proverbs 27:1 – "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Make the most of each day, one day at a time. Success being faithful with each day. We cannot do anything about the past and cannot control the future. Today is where we make a difference.

13. Proverbs 27:5 – "Better is open rebuke than hidden love." Love sometimes demands uncomfortable rebukes. To remain silent in the face of sin in order to avoid needed conflict is unloving.

14. Proverbs 27:6 – "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." Friends tell you the painful truth. True love speaks the truth in love.

15. Proverbs 27:7 – "One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet." People compromise when they are not satisfied with what they already have. God may keep you a bit hungry so you don't take what you have for granted and grow complacent. I have seen that an easy life can ruin a person.

16. Proverbs 27:8 – "Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home." Compromise as a result of discontentment is destructive.

17. Proverbs 27:13 – "Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for an adulteress." Love often involves protecting someone from themselves. Where people lack self-control and discipline, they need protection from others who are stronger. Leaders have the strength to lead self so they can then lead others.

18. Proverbs 27:14 – "Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing." All messages must be communicated with consideration and timing. We are not just responsible for what we say, we are also responsible for how, when, and why we say it.

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19. Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Friends should strengthen one another and support one another in pursuit of godliness.

20. Proverbs 27:18 – “Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored.” You should seek to improve your boss and protect him/her from their own bad decisions.

21. Proverbs 27:19 – “As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.” What is in your heart is who you really are, not what others say about you or even what you say about yourself.

22. Proverbs 27:23-27 – “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations? When the grass is gone and the new growth appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field. There will be enough goats’ milk for your food,

for the food of your household and maintenance for your girls.” Churches do not spend enough time providing discipling in the Biblical principles of economics. These are very important verses that teach the importance of creating industry rather than simply making money, raising geese that lay golden eggs rather than simply trying to collect golden eggs. Invest in the ability to produce wealth for the long-term rather than just acquiring wealth in the near-term. Have a plan for the future and build upon it daily. The Biblical retirement plan is not storing up riches in barns (which Jesus condemned) but rather creating production capacity that will continue to produce after your primary working years.

23. Luke 5:4-7 – “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” When you are seeking to walk in obedience to God, obeying His word though it may seem to make no sense, He will reveal Himself to you by doing what you couldn’t. Putting down the nets was hard work, but God used that commitment to provide miraculous results. God honors obedience with god-sized results, but the hard work isn’t the cause of the results, God is. We show our commitment, and God shows His power. Ultimately, God is not merely trying to provide for our earthly needs, He is seeking to draw us closer to Him.

24. Luke 5:8 – “But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’” Experiencing the presence of God causes us to repent and to fear the LORD.

25. Luke 5:15 – “But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.” Jesus did not seek the crowds; they sought Him. Jesus didn’t beg for followers; He merely revealed the truth and let those who would accept the truth follow.

26. Luke 5:20 – “And when he saw their faith, he said, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’” Jesus brings healing and forgiveness to those who pursue Him.

27. Luke 5:17-24 -- Doubters do not seek forgiveness.

28. Luke 5:28 – “And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.” Following Jesus involves surrendering all to Him.

29. Luke 5:33-6:9 -- Religion, with its rites and rules, is easier to follow than following Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 July 18: Today, have a plan and work hard for God’s glory. Don’t let anything distract you from your God-centered plan. Do the very best you can and watch God reveal Himself to you and to others by doing what you can’t. (See today’s readings)

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DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 4, Thursday, 26 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Neh+1%2C+2%3B+pro+26%3B+Luke+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 26 July 18:

1. Nehemiah 1:4 – “As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Nehemiah’s focus was on God’s people and God’s plan. Nehemiah lived in prosperity but wept bitterly over the plight of other believers. Do you have this sort of heart for distant believers?

2. Nehemiah 1:6 – “I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned.” Nehemiah took personal responsibility for the current situation rather than blaming others such as political leaders. Nehemiah’s plea for help from God included confession of sin, repentance, and a request for God’s forgiveness, both for himself and for the nation.

3. Nehemiah 1:7 – “We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.” Sin is measured by God’s word, not by popular opinion or current standards of morality.

4. Nehemiah 1:8, 9 -- “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.” Like Ezra, Nehemiah was heavily convicted by the state of God’s people who were in “great trouble and shame,” because they “acted very corruptly against [God] and [had] not kept the commandments” of God. They had denied their own holiness and their “wall” was “broken down” – a physical manifestation of their spiritual condition. Rather than standing as a “priestly kingdom” among the kingdoms of the earth, God’s people remained “scatter[ed]... among the peoples.” Like Ezra, Nehemiah was driven to lamentation, personal repentance, fasting, prayer, and career changing action. Like Ezra, Nehemiah knew it was time for action, not primarily because of the physical threat to God’s people (which was very real), but because he saw that God’s people had been enslaved by their sin and their compromise with the world (Ezra 9:9; see Jeremiah 13:17;). Their problem was, above all else, a spiritual problem. In our New Testament readings today, Jesus proclaims, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me.... to proclaim liberty to the captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” Our hope is in Christ and Christ alone. In today’s readings, Jesus says to Satan, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” Colossians 2:8-10 warns, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.” It is time to rebuild a wall of holiness and to faithfully serve Christ as KING.

5. Nehemiah 1:11; 2:2, 3 – “Now I was cupbearer to the king.... And the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.’ Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, ‘Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?’”

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- Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer, a trusted confidant and advisor to the king. Nehemiah's position was one of great responsibility, power, and honor in the Persian Empire. Nehemiah couldn't ask for a more successful, prosperous, rewarding life. However, when Nehemiah heard that God's people in Judah were in great distress he "sat down and wept and mourned for days, and... continued fasting..., confessing the sins of the people." His heart was so stirred that, though he tried to conceal his emotions, the king could see he was sad and questioned him. With a bold request to the king, Nehemiah put his life on the line to help his people. He put his career on hold and personally led the effort to help the people in Jerusalem. I can't help but notice the stark contrast between Nehemiah's response to the plight of God's people and the American churches response to Christian persecution around the globe. Last year, Fox News reported, "over 900,000 Christians have been martyred in the last 10 years." However, the church in America, the most blessed of God's people on the planet, remain largely silent on the issue.

6. Nehemiah 2:4 – "Then the king said to me, 'What are you requesting?' So I prayed to the God of heaven." Nehemiah prayed before answering the king. Do you seek answers before answering?

7. Nehemiah 2:8 – "And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me." Nehemiah knew that it was God that moved the heart of the king, not Nehemiah's words.

8. Nehemiah 2:16 – "And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work." Nehemiah knew he was protected by God but still used wisdom to keep security. He was careful not to let the word get out about his plans until he was ready.

9. Proverbs 26:9 – "Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." People often use God's word inappropriately to justify their foolish thinking, decisions, and behavior.

10. Proverbs 26:11 – "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." Do not continually repeat your sins of the past.

11. Proverbs 26:14 – "As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed." A lazy and undisciplined person's actions are very predictable.

12. Luke 4:1 – "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness." Jesus, our example, was led by the Spirit, not merely by perceptions, intellect, or emotions. Only the Spirit knows the complete picture.

13. Luke 4:2 – "...he was hungry." You are vulnerable to temptation when you are physically weak.

14. Luke 4:3 – "If you are the Son of God...." Satan wants you to doubt your status with God.

15. Luke 4:3 -- Temptation occurred person to person. A personal evil one exists, Satan.

16. Luke 4:5-7 – "... it will all be yours." Temptations targets personal desires you might have for personal accomplishments rather than accomplishments for the Kingdom. Satan looks for any selfishness or self-centeredness in you, wants you to make something a priority in your life other than God, and wants you to pursue your own goals.

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17. Luke 4:9-12 – “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.... And Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Satan wants you question God’s protection and control in your life or presume upon Him support for your selfish desires. God does not support your goals but empowers you to serve His purposes. Many people are tempted to view God as their genie in a bottle.

18. Luke 4:18 -- “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed....” The Spirit leads you to help the lost and the needy.

19. Luke 4:26-27 – “Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” Sidon and Syria were foreign nations. God worked there, to the dismay of those in Israel. What can we learn from these verses?

20. Luke 4:31-41 -- Jesus' mission involved attacking demons, diseases, and doctrinal ignorance.

21. Luke 4:34 -- “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” The demons know who Jesus is, but they refuse to follow Him. James said, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19) Many self-proclaimed Christians don’t even have demon-like respect for Jesus, unable to shudder. Believing in Jesus is not enough; you have to believe in Him enough to obey Him and follow him.

22. Luke 4:42-5:16 -- Jesus had to choose between prayer, healing, preaching, and moving on. How do you decide between these things?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 July 18: Today, commit to being not just a believer in Jesus but a disciple of Jesus, a follower who obeys at all costs.

DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 3, Wednesday, 25 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezra+9%2C+10%3B+pro+25%3B+Luke+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 25 July 18:

1. Ezra 9:2 -- “The holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands.” We cannot partner with unbelievers. Holiness is a requirement.

2. Ezra 9:2 – “And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.” Israel’s worst sinners were the political and religious leaders. Israel’s leaders were leaders in sin.

3. Ezra 9:3 -- “I... sat appalled.” What is appalling today is what no longer appalls us. Ezra was shocked, appalled, and greatly distressed by sin. Are you?

4. Ezra 9:4 -- “All who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness... gathered around.” In an age of unfaithfulness, the faithful will unite.

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5. Ezra 9:5 – “And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God.” Our response to sin should be humiliation, shame, confession, mourning, fasting, and prayer.

6. Ezra 9:6 -- “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you....” What makes today’s generation blush?

7. Ezra 9:7 -- “From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.”

- Ezra, “appalled” at the “faithlessness” of God’s people fell to his knees in earnest prayer, trembling in shame, guilt, and humility before the Lord. God’s people were called to be a holy kingdom among the kingdoms, “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6).” God commanded His people to “take possession” of the land, to subdue it and control it for God’s glory. God expected His holy people to be a “city on a hill,” a light among the nations. However, rather than conquerors, they had become slaves to the world. They had been “given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame.” Both figuratively and literally, God’s people had “inter-married” with the ungodly around them – the bride of Christ had committed adultery. God had given the “remnant” an opportunity for “reviving,” and opportunity to rebuild the “church.” However, immediately, God’s remnant began compromising its holiness for the sake of friendship with world. Today, the Church is largely guilty of the same sin, that of syncretism. We have too often compromised the Kingdom for the sake of the American dream. It is time for us to “separate [ourselves] from the peoples of the land.”

-- Matthew 6:24 -- No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

-- Luke 11:23 -- Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

-- Revelation 3:16 -- So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

8. Ezra 9:9 – “For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love.” Even in your punishment, God shows you love, mercy, and grace.

9. Ezra 9:10-12 – “For we have forsaken your commandments....” Ezra knew exactly what commandments God’s people had disobeyed because He knew God’s word.

10. Ezra 9:13 – “And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved...” If God were ‘fair’ and gave you what you deserved, you would have died eternally long ago. Never complain that God isn’t fair, and don’t take His mercy and grace for granted. Be always thankful for what you have received.

11. Ezra 10:1 – “While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly.” Can you imagine a great number of people in America gathering together and weeping bitterly in repentance for the Nation’s sins? When was the last time you wept bitterly over your sins and the sins of your people?

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12. Ezra 10:8 – “...and that if anyone did not come within three days, by order of the officials and the elders all his property should be forfeited, and he himself banned from the congregation of the exiles.” Those who were not willing to submit to church discipline were removed from the congregation.

13. Ezra 10:10-12 – “And Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have broken faith....’” Again, Ezra knew the specific commandments of God the people had broken. (see Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4)

14. Ezra 10:11 – “Now then make confession to the Lord, the God of your fathers and do his will.” Sin requires confession, repentance, restitution, and changed behavior.

15. Ezra 10:13, 14 – “But the people are many, and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot stand in the open. Nor is this a task for one day or for two, for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. Let our officials stand for the whole assembly. Let all in our cities who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every city, until the fierce wrath of our God over this matter is turned away from us.” God’s discipline includes mercy. We couldn’t stand the punishment we deserve.

16. Ezra 10:14 -- The people were so serious about repentance and renewal that those who did not show up to the assembly were punished.

17. Ezra 10:17 -- “By the first day of the first month they had come to the end of all the men who had married foreign women.” Returning to fidelity to God came with great personal sacrifice and pain. The impact was likely felt for generations.

18. Ezra 10:18 – “Now there were found some of the sons of the priests who had married foreign women: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib....” Sin was recorded by name and dealt with publicly. Those who were willing to acknowledge and correct their sin were restored.

19. Ezra 10:44 – “All these had married foreign women, and some of the women had even borne children.” Sin has terrible consequences on the next generation.

20. Proverbs 25:3 – “As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.” There is no way for us to truly know the character, motives, and intent of a leader. Only God knows. We can only judge the deeds of a person, whether they are just and righteous or not. Be very careful not to assume the motives of anyone.

21. Proverbs 25:4 – “Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel....” Remove sin from your life that you may be usable by God for special matters.

22. Proverbs 25:6 – “Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great....” Don’t be a self-promoter.

23. Proverbs 25:8, 9 – “...do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame? Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another’s secret....” Handle conflict quietly, at the lowest possible level.

24. Proverbs 25:15, 16 – “With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.” Be patient;

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don't come on too strong. Even a good idea can be rejected if it forced upon someone too quickly without gentle persuasion.

25. Proverbs 25:21, 22 – “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” God expects your love for your enemies to be tangible; if it doesn't cost you something, it probably isn't worth very much.

26. Proverbs 25:26 – “Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.” Accept as much sin in your life as you would accept feces in your drinking water. Don't pollute yourself with compromise.

27. Proverbs 25:28 – “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” Again, Proverbs reminds us that self-control through the power of the Holy Spirit is critical to our security in life.

28. Luke 3:2 – “During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.” The word of God came to John rather than the High Priest.

29. Luke 3:5 – “...and the crooked shall become straight.” When God takes control of your life, He straightens everything out, usually not overnight.

30. Luke 3:8 – “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.” Religious talk is cheap; God expects obedience and honors and uses the faithful. John embodied that truth, a simple but faithful man mightily used by God.

31. Luke 3:8, 9 -- “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.... Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

- A saving faith is a fruitful faith. Genuine repentance is revealed in transformation. John the Baptist's words are not hard to understand but hard for people to accept. Jesus said it this way, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15) Is this hard to understand? Christians are fruitful. Jesus said you can judge a person by their fruit – “You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matthew 7) Concerning being a lady, Margaret Thatcher said, “If you have to tell people you are, you aren't.” Similarly, genuine Christianity is self-evident, revealed in word and deed.

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32. Compare Luke 3:9 with John 15.

33. Luke 3:10-14 – Our “fruit” is measured in how we treat others.

34. Luke 3:16 – “John answered them all, saying, ‘I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’” Real Christians and leaders never point to themselves but always point to Jesus.

35. Luke 3:18 – “So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.” Preach the Good News with many exhortations.

36. Luke 3:18 -- “With many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.” The Good News was proclaimed with exhortations.

37. Luke 3:20 – “[Herod] locked up John in prison.” John challenged Herod’s sin and was imprisoned for it. We also are called to challenge sin and be ready to suffer for it.

38. Luke 3:21 – “Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened...” Prayer opens the heavens. Jesus exemplified prayer for us.

39. Luke 3:23-37 -- Jesus’ genealogy included many very imperfect people. It is not physical birth and family that matters but spiritual birth and family.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 July 18: Today, study God’s word, pray, obey, proclaim, and trust. (See today’s readings).

DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 2, Tuesday, 24 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eza+7%2C+8%3B+pro+24%3B+Luke+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 24 July 18:

1. Ezra 7:6 -- “The king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.” God can change the hearts of your potential adversaries.

2. Ezra 7:6 -- “He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given.” God gave you the Bible. Does that fact impact how you prioritize daily Bible study?

3. Ezra 7:9, 10 -- “The good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”

- In today’s readings the lives of Ezra, Simeon, Joseph, Anna, and Jesus reveal important characteristics of God’s servants of which we should seek to emulate: First, they diligently and humbly studied God’s word, lived by it, and taught it to others (Ezra 7:9, 10; Luke 2:46-52). Second, they were committed to fervent prayer (Luke 2:37, 38). Third, they were obedient to God’s word but were also submissive to earthly authorities – even Jesus submitted to the authority of his earthly parents while simultaneously teaching them (Luke 2:4, 2:51). Fourth, they had earned reputations as “righteous”, “insightful”, “wise”, and “devout” people (Ezra 8:16, 18, 21; Luke 2: 25, 52). Fifth, they were guided by the Spirit, seeking to fulfill God’s purposes rather than their own, and trusting on God’s provision rather than that of men (Ezra 8:22; Luke 2:25-27). These were lives surrendered to God and used mightily for God’s purposes

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and to God's glory. Are you ready to be a living sacrifice? Are you ready to assume your role as a priest like Ezra?

-- Romans 12:1 -- I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

-- 1 Peter 2:4, 5 -- As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

-- 1 Peter 2:9 -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

-- Revelation 1:5, 6 -- From Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Ezra was known throughout the land, even by the king, as a faithful man of God. For what are you most known? As Ezra stepped out in faith to follow God's direction for his life, God worked where Ezra had no power in order to accomplish His purposes and bring glory to Himself – he changed the heart of the king to allow the Temple to be built and to supply the financial needs. When serving God, do you do only what you know you have the power to do, or do you trust that God will provide? Though Ezra accepted support from the king, he refused to depend on human institutions because he knew he could depend on God. (v. 8:22) He recognized that dependence on government would compromise his witness to a watching world. Do you at times look for human solutions rather than trusting in God? You may not consider yourself a temple builder, but you are. You are the Temple as is the Church collective. (1 Cor 3:17, 1 Cor 6:19, Eph 2:21). Are we building day by day to bring the greatest glory to God? What can we learn from Ezra?

- "Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." Teachers must be, both, studiers and doers. Many want to teach so they study diligently, driven mostly by pride as their knowledge puffs them up. Real teachers are doers who model what is right based upon a deep understanding of God's word. Notice that Jesus taught by word and example.

4. Ezra 7:14 – "For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand...." Ezra used God's word to evaluate the situation and the condition of His people.

5. Ezra 7:16 – "...with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem." Even the king of Persia expected Jews in exile to want to give money to maintain worship in the temple in Jerusalem.

6. Ezra 7:24 -- "We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on anyone of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God." The church had a tax-exempt status.

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7. Ezra 7:25 -- "...appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God." Judges were to judge based on God's laws, not personal opinion or popular opinion.

8. Ezra 7:27 -- "Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem." God controls the hearts of kings. God will make national leadership respond if His people are faithful to God. God uses ungodly leaders to punish His unfaithful people. The most influential people in politics are God's people, based not upon what they do in the voting booths but rather what they do before God daily and publicly.

9. Ezra 7:28 -- "I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me." Courage comes from God. Knowing God is your God should give you complete courage.

10. Ezra 8:18 -- "And by the good hand of our God on us, they brought us a man of discretion." Are you equipped with the godly character and competence required for you to be usable by God for important jobs within His Kingdom?

11. Ezra 8:21 -- "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods." Ezra called a fast to show dedication to and dependence on God as they traveled, acknowledging that safety and protection would come from God alone and not through human capabilities. On what do you base your security?

12. Ezra 8:22 -- "For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, 'The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.'" Ezra trusted God to protect him and to punish his enemies. Ezra considered it a great embarrassment for God's people to trust in the government.

13. Ezra 8:23 -- "So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty." God heard Ezra's prayer.

14. Ezra 8:24, 25 -- "Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their kinsmen with them. And I weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, the offering for the house of our God that the king and his counselors and his lords and all Israel there present had offered." Ezra appointed leaders but also held them accountable and set controls to ensure they carried out responsibility. (Ezra 8:25-34)

15. Ezra 8:31 -- "Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem." The hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way. God did what Ezra had trusted Him to do.

16. Ezra 8:35, 36 -- "At that time those who had come from captivity, the returned exiles, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel...." Ezra began his work in prayer, executed his work in faith, and completed his work in worship. This is a good model for us.

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17. Proverbs 24:10 – “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” You must develop strength before you need it. During hard times, you use the strength you had already developed. When the hard times come, it is often too late to build the strength you need.

18. Proverbs 24:11, 12 – “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Behold, we did not know this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” If you remain silent, concealing your knowledge of ‘The Way, The Truth, and The Life, Jesus while those you know continue to walk in darkness, you will be held accountable by God.

19. Proverbs 24:19 – “Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked...” Let God worry about the wicked while you focus on being faithful to Him, regardless of apparent outcomes. God knows what is going on and will judge the hearts of all people.

20. Proverbs 24:29 -- Do not say, ‘I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.’” Do not chase after the poisonous snakes the bite you – the poison will just travel to your heart. Let God deal with those who offend you. Just continue to follow Jesus.

21. Proverbs 24:32 – “Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction.” God wants you to compare the actions of others to God’s word, consider the consequences of their actions, and learn from their actions, both good and bad.

22. Luke 2:4, 5 – “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.” With his betrothed being very pregnant, Joseph could have made excuses for not obeying an ungodly government, but being a man of God, he obeyed anyway. (See Romans 13) Joseph did not make excuses for not obeying the law of the land.

23. Luke 2:9 – “And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.” God didn’t first reveal His Son to the religious leaders or to those that society would have expected but rather to seemingly insignificant shepherds in a field. Who receives the true revelation of God today?

24. Luke 2:11 – “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Jesus is the Savior, Messiah, and LORD; He has been for eternity.

25. Luke 2:15 – “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’” The shepherds were guided, not by sight or human intellect but by the Holy Spirit.

26. Luke 2:16 – “And they went with haste....” When God speaks and reveals truth to you, you don’t waste time in response. Delayed obedience is sin.

27. Luke 2:17 – “And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.” When people experience the reality of God, they are compelled to tell others – it is not difficult or awkward for them.

28. Luke 2:19 – “But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.” Even Mary could not understand the birth of Jesus completely.

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29. Luke 2:20 – “And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” Again, when you respond to God’s word, and He proves faithful, you cannot help but praise God and glorify Him.

30. Luke 2:21-24 -- God made sure Jesus complied with all Jewish laws and so was a faithful Jew in every way. God takes obedience very seriously, in every regard, and expects His people to do the same. Only sinners attempt to distinguish between big sins and little sins.

31. Luke 2:22, 23 – “...according to what is said in the Law of the Lord.” Joseph was obedient to both the laws of the land and, more importantly, to God’s laws. How about you?

32. Luke 2:25 – “Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Simeon was known to be “righteous, devout” and filled with the Holy Spirit. Are you? Simeon was usable by God for an important assignment. Are you?

33. Luke 2:27 – “And he came in the Spirit into the temple....” Are you led by the Spirit? Do you go to church in the Spirit?

34. Luke 2:34 – “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel. “The Good News is only good news to those who accept salvation through Jesus.

35. Luke 2:36 – “And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin....” The Bible is full of prophets and prophetesses. Again, most are not in established religious positions.

36. Luke 2:51 – “And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.” The Son of God submitted in obedience to imperfect human parents out of obedience to the Father, and example for everyone. God calls us to obedience.

37. Luke 2:52 – “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

- This verse has always fascinated me. It reminds me of Proverbs 3:3, 4: “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.” A Christian should model love and faithfulness, something the world desperately desires, something the Bible says is very hard to find, something that even kings long for – “Love and faithfulness keep a king safe.” (Proverbs 20:28) The Christian proclaims, through both word and deed, that true love and faithfulness come from the Lord and flow through His people. It is with God that “Love and faithfulness meet together.” (Psalm 85:10) David proclaimed, “I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.” (Psalm 40:10). If we are growing in favor with God, our behavior will gain the favor of those around us – we will be very easy to like. As Ambassadors of Christ and proclaimers of the Gospel, Christians must be very diligent to make sure that their behavior does not stand in the way of the message. The prophet Samuel stood before the whole Assembly asking if there was anyone he had ever wronged. (1 Samuel 12:3) On trial for his faith, Paul proudly proclaimed the Gospel while adamantly denying any wrongdoing: “So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.” (Acts 24:16) We are reminded that with love, a clear conscience is required – “love... comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1 Timothy 1:5) We see in today’s readings that Joseph and Mary also took great

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“pains” to honor both God and man – Jesus was born while Joseph and Mary were traveling to fulfill Caesar’s decree. As was exemplified by Jesus, the perfectly lovable Christian will still be rejected by men, but because of the Gospel, not because of their behavior. This reveals the righteousness of God’s final judgment of those who reject Love. Peter summed it up well: “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.... Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” (see 1 Peter 2, 3). Like Jesus, let’s “increase in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

- God favored the heart of Jesus, and men favored the words and deeds of Jesus. People see the outward you, but God sees the inward you. Both should glorify God. Our mission (the Great Commandment) is all about relationships. Whether we like it or not, we are called to be people persons. We must learn to build loving relationships with others as an act of worship to God. Strained relationships with others is a signal of a heart problem and a relationship problem with God. God says that if you cannot love the person you can see, you cannot love Him who is unseen.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 July 18: Today, focus on humbly and diligently obeying and respecting all authority as an act of worship to Jesus, trusting Him for your protection and using your obedience as an opportunity to glorify God. (see Philippians 2:1-8, Ephesians 5:21, and Romans 13)

DBRP - WEEK 30, Day 1, Monday, 23 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eza+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+23%3B+luke+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 23 July 18:

1. Ezra 5:2 – “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.” Zerubbabel defied the king’s edict to renew work on the temple.
2. Ezra 5:2 -- Prophets work too.
3. Ezra 5:8 – “Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands.” God’s people worked with great diligence in order to make rapid progress. How hard are you working to advance the Kingdom?

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4. Ezra 5:11 – “And this was their reply to us: ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.’” God’s people used challenges against them as opportunities to witness, and they did not back down. Their justification and defense always started with the authority of God over man.

5. Ezra 6:8 – “Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River.” God worked through ungodly people to resource the building of His temple, using governmental, secular treasuries; furthermore, God worked through the ungodly government to force His enemies to support the project directly, much to their dismay. What can God do to counter your enemies if you commit to His purposes?

6. Ezra 6:9 – “And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail....” Not only did the Governor’s plot against God’s people fail, he ended up having to personally support God’s work with significant resources. Who saw something like that coming?

7. Ezra 6:22 – “The Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.” God turns hearts.

8. Proverbs 23:1-3 – “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.” Rulers make many promises, but there is usually a catch, a hidden agenda, a power play. Politicians get elected on promises. Be wary of deceptive food.

9. Proverbs 23:13, 14 – “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” Parents who don’t discipline their children create adults with deep character issues. “Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.” (Proverbs 19:18)

10. Proverbs 23:17-18 – “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Many Christians compromise their fidelity to God because they want what the world seems to have, and they often realize far too late the price of compromise.

11. Proverbs 23:22-25 – “Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.... The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.” The most important institution in the Bible is the family. The foundation of society is the family. The family is the school house for character development. The most important leadership position is parent. The measure of the leader is the character of his/her children. Children need the leadership of both a godly man and a godly woman, working together to develop the whole person developing in the child. When a society loses respect for God’s plan for the family, the society is doomed.

Note: Here is a video overview of The Book of Luke, chapters 1-9: https://youtu.be/XIb_dClxr0

12. Luke 1:2 – “...those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses....” The Gospel rests on eyewitness accounts and is historically true.

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13. Luke 1:3-4 – “...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” Luke wrote to a Gentile who needed historical assurance.

14. Luke 1:5 – “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.” Bible events are related to political and historical events.

15. Luke 1:5-10 -- Men chose Zechariah by lot, but God had already chosen Zechariah because of his faithfulness to God.

16. Luke 1:6, 7 – “And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.” Righteousness is revealed in obedience that is not motivated by personal reward but rather by love. Though obedient, Elizabeth was not blessed with a child, but she was obedient nonetheless.

17. Luke 1:11 – “And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” God meets us in prayer.

18. Luke 1:12 – “And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.” Our first response to holiness is overwhelming reverence. When was the last time you felt that?

19. Luke 1:15 – “...for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.” God’s servants are empowered by the Holy Spirit for the work they have been given.

20. Luke 1:16, 17 – “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” The Spirit of God reconciles people to Himself and people to each other in the love of Christ. The Spirit promotes unity. Disunity is a mark of separation from God. Some seek unity around something other than Christ -- a cause, an organization, a set of values, etc. However, this is in defiance of God’s first and greatest commandment and is doomed to fail. John was on a mission of reconciliation like we are now. How are you doing? Who have you brought back to God?

21. Luke 1:17 – “...and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” GOD HEALS FAMILIES!

22. Luke 1:18-20 – “And Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.’ And the angel answered him, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.’” What does it take for you to believe God and obey Him? Some ask for a sign, but evidence is not the problem; our hearts are the problem.

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23. Luke 1:20 – “And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” God doesn’t want you proclaiming what you don’t really believe.

24. Luke 1:23 – “And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.” Though stricken with muteness by God and in the midst of a life-changing event, Zechariah finished his duty.

25. Luke 1:25 -- “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.” Elizabeth patiently and faithfully waited on the Lord and was rewarded beyond everyone’s expectations.

26. Luke 1:28 – “And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ God chooses people.” Angels and prophets only deliver the message.

27. Luke 1:32-33 – “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” God gave Jesus the Kingdom.

28. Luke 1:34-37 -- God does the impossible to bring glory to Himself and not to us.

29. Luke 1:38 – “Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’” Mary was usable by God because her life was wholly surrendered to God.

30. Luke 1:45 – “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” Blessings come when we trust God, regardless of circumstances, to fulfill His word. Blessings come from believing not in what we want but rather what God has said. It isn’t “Name it and claim it.” Joy comes from unity to God as we become one with Him and what He is doing for His glory. There is no room for self here.

31. Luke 1:46-47 – “And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.’”

- The activity of God in our lives drives us to uncontrollable praise. Praise is the spontaneous response of a grateful child of God in His presence. The person who knows God and experiences Him intimately sings to the Lord with deepest praise! Mary was overwhelmed by the Lord’s goodness to her. In response she sang one of the most beautiful and profound songs of praise found in Scripture. Trying to stop the praise of a thankful heart would be like trying to arrest the flow of a mighty waterfall! God created us to praise Him; praise will be our activity when we are gathered around His throne in heaven.

- You should never have difficulty thinking of reasons why God deserves your praise. You should enjoy the times you have to praise your Lord, both privately and publicly in worship. If your life is not filled with praise, it may be that you have lost your appreciation for God’s merciful activity in your life. Never forget what God has saved you from. Never take for granted what it means to have the assurance of eternity with God. Do not disregard the spiritual kinship you enjoy with other believers. Take time often to recount the blessings He has poured out upon you and your family. As you contemplate the boundless love and mercy God has shown you, you will want to sing His praises as Mary did. Spontaneous praise is authentic praise. It does not have to be manipulated or orchestrated. It is a real and personal expression of a grateful heart and wonder-filled life that has encountered holy God! (Blackaby)

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32. Luke 1:48 – “...for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed....” God uses people society ignores.
33. Luke 1:50 – “And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.” Not everyone receives God’s mercy, only those who fear Him.
34. Luke 1:51-55 -- God reverses human fortunes.
35. Luke 1:60-61 -- God’s ways often go against human customs.
36. Luke 1:69-73 -- Salvation has always been God’s plan.
37. Luke 1:74-75 – “...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” Salvation always leads to service.
38. Luke 1:77 – “...to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins....” People need to know that forgiveness and salvation are needed and available.
39. Luke 1:79 – “...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” As Ambassadors for Christ, we are called guide others to the way of peace, to Jesus.
40. Luke 1:80 – “And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.” God measures maturity in spiritual strength. Some grow physically but remain spiritual infants.
41. Luke 1:80 – “And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.” Jesus spent much time in isolation preparing for God’s work.
- "Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 July 18: Simplify your life and maximize your joy and peace by obeying God completely and by trusting Him with your current situation and your future. Focus not on yourself but rather on guiding others to the peace of Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 7, Sunday, 22 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=ezra+3%2C+4%3B%3B+pro+22%3B+psa+83%2C+84>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 22 July 18:

1. Ezra 3:6 – “From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.” Life’s challenges did not stop the people from putting worship first and being faithful with worship.
2. Ezra 3:8 – “Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord.” The entire community joined to rebuild the temple. What role are you playing in the building up of God’s people?

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3. Ezra 3:8 -- “Now in the second year... Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning.” Change in large organizations takes much time. After the first year, you may feel like you are just getting started.

4. Ezra 3:11-13 – “And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.” New beginnings can be bitter sweet as you reflect upon what was lost while rejoicing in what you now have. Rebuilding may bring mixed emotions – perhaps your joy in Jesus is still hindered by guilt and regret concerning past mistakes and subsequent consequences. God wants you to learn from the past but to look forward and to trust Him with the future; and you must trust Him to take care of what is out of your hands to fix from the past. You can’t plow a field or drive a car looking backwards. Your present joy must replace your past sorrow. The Bible uses the word “rejoice” 220 times in the English Standard Version. The prefix “re-” is Latin for “again” or for “again and again.” So, rejoice can mean “joy again,” to return to joy again and again. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4) This is a Biblical command that had to be repeated for a reason – we sometimes have a hard time doing it. Sometimes we must force ourselves to return to joy, to posture our minds for joy, to drive out all negativity. Take action – pray for joy; recite memorized Scripture verses on joy; sing hymns of joy, recollect all the ways God has blessed you; seek strength from other Christians, get busy serving others, etc. When you are feeling down, return to the joy you have in Jesus, despite apparent circumstances. Trust that God is exercising Romans 8:28 in your life and drawing you closer to Him every day.

5. Ezra 3:12 -- “And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.” The most important part of any building is the foundation; the most important part of any organization is the foundation; the most important part of your life is the foundation. If the foundation of your life isn’t Jesus Christ, what you build is irrelevant. It will all come crumbling down. Build your house upon the Rock of Jesus!

6. Ezra 4:1-5 – “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers’ houses and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here.’” The enemies of God were a “new church” with a very short, modern history. God’s people were careful to avoid syncretism, keeping worship holy before the Lord.

7. Ezra 4:2, 3 -- “Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do.... You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God.” We are called, appointed, and empowered by God to love Him, serve Him, obey Him, and glorify Him on this earth. We are a separate Kingdom under Christ living amongst other earthly kingdoms, engaging them, ministering to them, but not partnering with them. The gods of the kingdoms of darkness are not our gods, and we can have nothing to do with other “paths to heaven.” We are called to be Ambassadors of Christ to the other kingdoms, faithful to an uncompromised message. We serve as messengers, proclaiming the need for repentance and salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Under the LORD-ship of Christ, we have no partnership with those of the

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dark kingdoms who are at enmity with God. We make no appeal to the rebellious attitudes of mankind. Many will call us to live in peace through compromise and will blame us for a lack of peace when we refuse to respect their false beliefs or compromise to them. The Bible says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18) However, the context of this verse reveals that this is not a 'peace' in compromise, but rather a willingness to suffer gracefully in the tribulation Jesus said we would experience as sheep before wolves. Our message is there is no peace but through Jesus. We are called to be peacemakers who call people to the Prince of Peace, not peace lovers who avoid conflict at all costs.

8. Ezra 4:4-6 – "Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." Again, when God's people refuse to compromise, they will be attacked psychologically, politically, legally, economically, and physically. Are you prepared to resist while you continue to advance the Kingdom of God on earth? In Ezra, the enemies of God's people attempted to use the government and the law to stop their progress, and they also attempted to slander God's people. In the face of opposition, God's people began to become discouraged and afraid. This went on for many years. We must be willing to persevere, enduring trials and tribulations for the long-haul, perhaps for generations. Don't worry too much about progress, rather focus on fidelity.

9. Ezra 4:7-16 – In order to remain faithful to God and His work, God's people refused to partner with the local community and risk compromise. As a result, they were labeled and rebellious and dangerous; interestingly, those who opposed God's people claimed to share their faith at first (v2), but later proclaimed their allegiance to the king over Israel's God. God's people are often labelled as enemies of the state. "They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city." (Ezra 4:12)

10. Ezra 4:14 – "Now because we eat the salt of the palace and it is not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonor, therefore we send and inform the king...." The enemies of God, considering themselves religious, claimed that they were doing their duty to the kings but never mentioned any concern for the God of Israel.

11. Ezra 4:23, 24 – "Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read... they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." Using the government and legal processes, the enemies of God's people were able to stop all work on the Temple for 15 years, 535 to 520 B.C. From our perspective, that is a long time to get stuck in political red tape with continual threats of violence. How many do you think abandoned all hope during that period? Would you remain faithful to God's calling though seeming defeated? Legal challenges against God's people are nothing new. They are certainly no reason to compromise or to quit. How is your endurance and perseverance?

12. Ezra 4:23-24 – "Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." Israel had to struggle with obeying Persia's king while obeying God first.

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13. Proverbs 22:3 – “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” Inevitable consequences are not hard to predict or see coming if you are willing to listen to wisdom.

14. Proverbs 22:15 – “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” Punishment provides incentive where you lack self-discipline. This is for your own good and the good of those who would be victimized by your selfishness.

15. Proverbs 22:17-21 -- “Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. That your trust may be in the Lord, I have made them known to you today, even to you. Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?” The Bible says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for from it flow the springs of life (Proverbs 4:23).” Today’s Proverbs remind us that in order to guard your heart, you must “incline your ear” to God’s word, and you must also “apply” it to your heart, storing it up within your heart. You must live by God’s word, decide from God’s word, respond to life’s challenges with God’s word, and respond to others solely from God’s word. Today’s Proverbs say that it is “pleasant” to keep God’s word “within you.” Jesus said that living in Him and in His word was the key to life, love, and joy -- “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” Today’s Proverbs also say that remaining in God’s word will build your “trust... in the Lord,” which will give you more and more confidence to walk in faith, rely upon God’s provision, and live in peace. The peace of God will guard both your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus (see Philippians verse below). How important is God’s word in your life? Is time in God’s word and time in prayer your top priority today?

- Philippians 4:4-7 -- Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

16. Proverbs 22:21 – “...to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?” The Bible is provided to show you what is “right and true,” but it is also provided so you can share with others what is right and true.

17. Psalm 83:3 – “They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones.” This verse was demonstrated in Ezra 4 and is being demonstrated against the church today in many ways.

18. Psalm 84:1, 2 – “How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.”

- How important is it to you to be close to God today in His church with His people? If you don’t feel like going to church this morning, check your heart, and go anyway. Be where God intends you to be, and pray that God will use the experience to convict your heart.

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- Psalm 84 proclaims an intense passion for the Lord, a total reliance on the Lord, and a complete surrender to the Lord. I love Psalm 84:10 – “For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” The Psalmist is genuine, and if we had the advantage of knowing the Psalmist personally, that genuine love would, no doubt, be evident in all he did. As it says in today’s Proverbs, “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” (Proverbs 20:11) If you knew the Psalmist, you might seek to learn from him how he acquired such a deep and enviable love for God. However, a close examination of the Bible will give you some very important insights into just that: Psalm 84 is identified as “A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.”

-- Korah was the grandson of Kohath, one among the 250 who challenged the rights of Moses and Aaron to the priesthood as recorded in Numbers 16. You may recall from Numbers 16 that God wrathfully opened the earth and consumed Korah and all associated with Korah, his household and possessions. (Numbers 16:28-35) However, we learned in Numbers 26 that the sons of Korah did not die; God spared them in His mercy. God purified the house of Korah. Seven generations later, the prophet Samuel arose from the line of Korah (1 Chronicles 6:31-38; 1 Chronicles 38; 1 Samuel 1:1, 20). The Korahites became doorkeepers and custodians for the tabernacle. (1 Chronicles 9:19-21, 1 Chronicles 2) Some became expert warriors and joined King David in various military exploits. (1 Chronicles 12:6) Pertaining to the Psalms, the Korahites became David’s music ministry leaders in the Tabernacle and Temple. There are many Psalms attributed to the sons of Korah (About 25). All mirror the heart for the Lord that is revealed today in Psalm 84. For example, you may have been touched by Psalm 42:1 -- “As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.” – another praise from the Sons of Korah. Perhaps the most revealing verses from the Sons of Korah are found in Psalm 46:1-3: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.” The heart of the Korahites so beautifully revealed in the Psalms is a heart of genuine gratitude, praise, and worship that comes from true salvation.

-- The Korahites were descendants of men who “despised” God, an infamous group who brought a level of wrath from God the likes of which the people had never seen before (“something new”). (Numbers 16:28-35) The ignoble beginnings of the Korahites were, of course, known by all and recorded for eternity in the Bible. But more importantly, what was also evident to all and recorded in the Bible for eternity is what God did in the Korahite family with the Sons of Korah. As Paul Harvey use to say, “Now you know... the rest of the story.” God’s justice combined with His mercy and love transformed the Korahites, and this is their very public testimony that brings great glory to God. The Sons of Korah loved much because they had been forgiven much. They could not help but proclaim their love in both word and deed. Perhaps you have a similar testimony. Your story of salvation brings glory to God when you proclaim it publicly. Your story is your witness of the Truth of God. Proclaim it with passion today!

- Is Jesus your ultimate desire and your joy? Is he your strength? Do you trust him implicitly? Do you desire a heart that is more desiring of God, more loving of God, and more obedient to God? Perhaps, like me, you can relate to the man who said to Jesus, “I believe; help my unbelief (Mark 9:24)!” I am struck by the fact that it is God that softens our hearts and gives us a heart that seeks Him (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26), while at the same time, God’s greatest command to us is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mark 12:30).” In fact, the Bible warns us to “be very careful, therefore,

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to love the Lord your God (Joshua 23:11).” God gives us the ability to love Him and to love others, and God also gives us the responsibility to do both. But if I have the desire to love, do I need a command to love? No. In perfect love, there is no need for commands, and obedience is inevitable. As John said, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).” But in my imperfection, God’s commands guide me in my pursuit of love – they are a lamp unto my feet as I seek to walk with God. Paul reminds us that we have to “fight the good fight” and “pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22).” I am thankful that God has enabled and equipped us to grow in our love for Him and others.

- Jeremiah 29:13 -- You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

19. Psalm 84:3, 4 – “Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah” We can be at home without a home when we are in the presence of God.

20. Psalm 84:10 -- “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” What is your life’s ambition? How do you define life success? Does your joy depend on anything other than merely being in God’s presence? Would you rather be a nobody with Jesus or have everything this world can offer? What is your ultimate goal in life? What does the Bible say your goal should be?

21. Psalm 84:11, 12 – “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor.

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!” What guarantees joy, prosperity, and security in life?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 July 17: Meditate today upon this verse from today’s readings: “My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.” (Psalm 84:2) Pray the Holy Spirit will continue to increase your knowledge and love for Jesus as well as your obedience to Him, and pray that your love for Jesus would unite you with His people as Jesus prayed for in John 17.

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 6, Saturday, 21 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=eza+1%2C+2%3B%3B+pro+21%3B+psa+82>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 21 July 18:

1. Ezra 1:1 – “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia....” God can stir the hearts of unbelieving leaders to accomplish His purposes and to fulfill His word which God always fulfills. A foreign king ruled, but God still controlled.

- Today, Psalm 82 reminds us of four important things: God is in charge (82:1); God is a God of justice and cares about right and wrong (82:2); God expects His people to be preservers of justice, in part, to protect those without understanding who walk in darkness (82:3-5); if those with understanding do not live justly and demand just behavior from those without understanding, everyone will suffer (82:6, 7).

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These truths are further revealed in our readings from Ezra: God is in charge and worked through a foreign king to restore his people just as He said He would. God's people had not been conquered and placed into captivity because Nebuchadnezzar was powerful enough to thwart the plan of God; on the contrary, God used Nebuchadnezzar to punish His people who had failed to live by justice, to preserve justice, to glorify God, and to serve as a light among the nations. The burden of responsibility is not on the godless who walk in darkness but rather on God's people who have been given the truth along with the responsibility to protect the ignorant with the truth. Today, many Christians look at the world and lament over the darkness without recognizing that what they see is in fact an indictment on God's people who have failed in their calling to be holy, salt, and light, to subdue the earth as the primary influence on earth. We complain about increased immorality and corruption within our society and blame the godless, those who live in and are trapped in darkness; however, it is those who have the light and hide it that are to blame. We forget that the vast majority of Jesus' rebukes and calls to repentance were directed at God's people rather than to the pagans. We forget that the "lost sheep" to which he referred were believers who had gone astray, not unbelievers. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16) The hope for our nation is individual and collective repentance of Christians followed by revival within a church that glorifies God and brings light into the darkness.

- To the above point, the way God restored His people in the book of Ezra is informative: Note that the 'everyday' people are listed first, and every head is counted. (Ezra 2:3-35) God uses every person within the church to play a critical role. Professional singers and a whole host of staff personnel were called out and prepared to orchestrate God's worship services. All these people played such an important role in God's plan for His people that they are mentioned in the Bible. God's plan to rebuild included faithful political leaders (Ezra 2:2), faithful priests (Ezra 2:2), faithful professional singers (Ezra 2:2), faithful security personnel (Ezra 2:42), and faithful managers and workers (Ezra 2:42).

- Did you also notice that, in accordance with God's plan, one of the first people mentioned in the returning party was Zerubbabel, a descendant of that great political leader, David? (Ezra 2:2; see Hag 1:1; Zech 4:6-10) Proclaimers of truth and defenders of justice cannot isolate themselves from the reality of politics and government. Do you want to serve your country? Serve your church. What role are you playing in the body? If God counted every head within your church as he did in Ezra, where would He place you? There are no "innocent bystanders" in God's Kingdom, a Kingdom of priests.

- To help us understand how the Father works in our lives and how we are to trust in Him for our every need, Jesus uses examples from the animal kingdom: At one point, Jesus asks us to consider the birds and how God takes care of their every need (Matthew 6:26, 10:29), not letting anything happen to them outside of His will -- "Are you not of more value than they?" However, most often Jesus compares us to helpless sheep -- "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16)."

-- "Sheep are gentle, submissive, and literally defenseless animals. Christians are like sheep, the world is also like a wolf pack. Wolves are predators. They are ravenous and dangerous. They run in packs and work together to gang up on their prey. Sheep are helpless before wolves. So, it is with Christians in the

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world. In one sense, believers will always be at a disadvantage because we don't play by the same rules. The virtues that our King calls us to cultivate are meekness, gentleness, self-control, kindness, and other sheep-like qualities that no self-respecting wolf would ever desire. Given the disparity that exists between sheep and wolves, why would people who are compared to the former ever associate with those compared to the latter? Jesus told His disciples that He intentionally sent them to be involved in the lives of unconverted people. He sends His sheep on a mission to wolves. Specifically, we are sent to call wolves to become sheep. Though on the surface this seems like an utterly foolish mission, in reality, it is God's way to accomplish His saving work in the world and to display His wisdom and power in the process. When sheep conquer wolves it is obvious that something supernatural has happened. Our Lord wants His followers to see themselves as inherently helpless as He sends them into the world of unbelievers to preach the Gospel of His kingdom. Such self-awareness will cause us to trust not in our own resources but in Christ (Tom Ascol).” Sheep are helpless without the shepherd, but wolves are no match for a good shepherd. In John 10 Jesus reveals himself as the Good Shepherd. With the Lord as your Shepherd you shall not want (Psalm 23).

2. Ezra 1:2 -- “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.’” Cyrus recognized that his power came from the LORD. What a shock it must have been to the world when the king of Persia proclaimed his dependence on God and proclaimed his commitment to the rebuilding of the Temple. Who could have imagined such a thing? Notice that, similar to the account in Exodus, people also showered the expeditionary Jews with valuable gifts in order to support their mission financially. God is in control and calls us to trust in Him with all our hearts, leaning not on our own understanding. What God is calling us to do is impossible for us to do on our own strength so that God can reveal His power to us and through us. As we step out in faith, we will see God work in miraculous ways through circumstances and in the hearts of others. God encourages us to have the faith to be faithful under seemingly impossible circumstances.

3. Ezra 1:3-4 – “Whoever is among you of all his people... let him go up to Jerusalem... and rebuild the house of the Lord.... And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” God wanted some to do the building and some to resource the building. Everyone can add L.I.F.E. to the church – labor, influence, finances, and experience. How are you contributing to your local church?

4. Ezra 1:5 – “Then rose up... everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.” Only those with a true heart for God's work will do God's work. The Spirit-filled believer is the one who drops everything to respond to God's word when the remainder of the 'religious' wont. The Afghans have an old proverb, “Talk doesn't make the flowers grow.” Following God's word required major life adjustments and a willingness to get your hands dirty. (Ezra 1:3-5; 2:1)

5. Ezra 1:7 – “Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods.” God can always restore what was lost in ways we could never imagine. No one could have imagined that Cyrus would restore the temple treasures. It is worth repeating, God moves hearts as God pleases.

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6. Ezra 2:2 -- Joshua, the high priest, was the religious leader of the return from exile. You never know what God might be preparing for you to do, but it will likely not be what you planned. (see Hag 1:1; Zech 3) God required and prepared a large number of priests to serve His people. (Ezra 2:36-39)

7. Ezra 2:64-67 -- "The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers. Their horses were 736, their mules were 245, 67 their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720." God's congregants kept full accountability of their people and property. Does your church? Ezra records the travelers down to the individual. Does your church keep track of every individual and care for them equally? Will they know who does and doesn't show up for church on Sunday? This sort of accountability is not easy; it must be intentional.

8. Proverbs 21:3 -- "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." If you want to show God how much you love Him, do what He says.

9. Proverbs 21:11 -- "When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge." Better to be a person who will follow God's word than to be a person who requires God's discipline.

10. Proverbs 21:15 -- "When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers." Justice protects a people from themselves.

11. Proverbs 21:17 -- "Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." Wealth comes from daily sacrifice and frugality. Why would God bless you with great wealth if you only intend on using it for yourself?

12. Proverbs 21:25, 26 -- "The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back." The righteous are known for both hard work and generosity.

13. Proverbs 21:27 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." God hates unrepentant worship.

14. Proverbs 21:30 -- "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord." If your plans are God's plans, your plans are guaranteed to succeed.

15. Proverbs 21:31 -- "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord." God is in complete control. Your fate rests solely in His hands and His alone. The only power you have is what God gives you, and the outcome to any situation rests with God and God alone. Replace fear with love, faith, prayer, study, and obedience.

16. Psalm 82:1-4 -- "Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." God calls us to be rescuers and defenders of justice, to protect the defenseless.

17. Psalm 82:5 -- "They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken." When a nation's leaders turn from God and no longer have true knowledge or understanding, everything falls apart as if subject to a massive earthquake which comes suddenly and destroys at the foundations of the institutions.

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18. Psalm 82 – God holds leaders accountable for justice and mercy, something that can only be administered by leaders that go to Him and the source of all justice and mercy. In final judgment, God will punish the ungodly and establish justice and mercy personally, once and for all. Jesus will reign on the new earth with His faithful servants.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 July 18: Today, consider how well you have kept account of all the Christians God has placed in your life in close relationship. Are you staying in touch with them? Are you praying for them? Are they growing in the Lord, closer to Jesus? Are they serving their church? How can you continue to partner with them for continued service to God? Also, consider how well you know everyone in your church and how well they know you. Who would you notice missing if they weren't there on Sunday? Who would notice you missing? Who are you discipling, and who is discipling you. God calls us to serve Him as a community of close believers, as close together as stones of a temple, and as closely knit as parts of the human body. Don't try to serve God independently – He won't honor that. (Ezra 2:64-67)

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 5, Friday, 20 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+35%2C+36%3B+prov+20%3B+2+thes+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 20 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 35:2 -- "He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the Lord." God's priests need encouragement too. Who is encouraging you in the service of the Lord? Who are you encouraging?
2. 2 Chronicles 35:20-22 -- "I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you. Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him." Be careful not to get in God's way by deciding for yourself, without the leading of the Holy Spirit, what you are going to do for God. You don't want to find yourself unintentionally opposing God by pursuing seemingly noble causes that aren't what God really desires or intends. Just because you think it is a good idea, doesn't mean God really wants you to do it.
3. 2 Chronicles 35:21 -- "Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you." God uses people you would least expect to accomplish His purposes.
4. 2 Chronicles 36:12 -- "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord." You must take a humble approach to God's word and obey. Each day, you should pour into the word of God, let the Holy Spirit convict you, and respond in repentance and renewal.
5. 2 Chronicles 36:13 -- "He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the Lord, the God of Israel." God expects you to keep your promises, oaths and commitments.
6. 2 Chronicles 36:14 -- "All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the Lord that he had made holy in Jerusalem." God's people have a long and terrible history of, at times, being more influenced by the world around them than an influence on the world. In this chapter, the government leadership led the nation adrift, and the church followed. The church should serve as the conscience of

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the nation, exposing darkness and preserving order (salt and light) in accordance with the Laws of God. This is warning to churches found throughout the Bible.

7. 2 Chronicles 36:14 – “All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the Lord that he had made holy in Jerusalem.” Your sin leads others to sin.

8. 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16 -- “The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy.” God’s people are called to proclaim His message to the nation. If God’s word is ignored and despised, there may come a national crisis without remedy. Pray for corporate repentance and revival among God’s people and a new Great Awakening.

9. 2 Chronicles 36:16-17 – “But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy. Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand.” If you disobey the God who loves you, He may choose those who don’t love you to punish you.

10. 2 Chronicles 36:17 -- If God has chosen evil leaders to punish a people, the political efforts of the people to remove the evil leaders are futile. Repentance is the answer.

11. 2 Chronicles 36:19 – “And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.” God’s punishment against a nation affects the believers too.

12. 2 Chronicles 36:23 -- “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.’” When God’s people prove unfaithful, God can use unbelievers to punish them and to complete the work He intended to be accomplished. Several times, we see God using unbelievers to do what the church should have done for His glory. Be strong and courageous and do the work of a disciple and an ambassador!

13. Proverbs 20:3 – “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.” Quarreling is an activity of fools.

14. Proverbs 20:4 – “The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.” You don’t get something for nothing, and you are investing in twenty years from now right now – what will you have to show later for what you do today, not just in resources but in character and sanctification?

15. Proverbs 20:6 – “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” There is nothing more valuable than a faithful person. Fidelity is a requirement to be loving.

16. Proverbs 20:7 – “The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!” Righteousness has a positive effect on the next generation. Your integrity affects your children more than you know.

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17. Proverbs 20:9 -- "Who can say, 'I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin'?" All have sinned, and no one can make their heart pure. Only Jesus can fix our impurity.

18. Proverbs 20:11 -- "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright." How you act reveals the truth of your faith and your character. No one can truly know another person's heart, but actions reveal much.

19. Proverbs 20:12 -- "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both." How foolish is it to trust your own perceptions rather than God who created and controls everything and sees all that you cannot see or understand?

20. Proverbs 20:16 -- "Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for foreigners." God wants the wise to protect the foolish from their own actions. We all need someone in our lives who will be strong when we are weak and who will protect us from ourselves when we need it.

21. Proverbs 20:22 -- "Do not say, 'I will repay evil'; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you." Never try to get even with those who offend you. Only God sees the whole picture to include motives, intent, mitigating circumstances, etc. Only God can respond justly, and God can respond far better than you can.

22. Proverbs 20:30 -- "Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts." If you lack self-control or self-discipline in an area of your life, God, your Loving Father, will apply external discipline. Ouch!

23. 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2 -- "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith." Paul's prayers requests were first about accomplishing the Great Commission and then personal security. The focus of your life and the focus of your prayers should be that God uses you to spread His word. Seek first the Kingdom.

24. 2 Thessalonians 3:3 -- "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ." None of us are perfected in love; pray that God sanctifies you day by day into purer love. Love grows the closer you get to the source of love, Jesus. Know Him!

25. 2 Thessalonians 3:4 -- "And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command." Paul expected God's people to obey God.

26. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 -- "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

- The Lord directs our hearts to love, and we don't grow in love unless we follow the Lord's direction. As we grow in love, we grow in steadfastness, a word with synonyms such as commitment, loyalty, and faithfulness – persistent, unwavering obedience. So, the Lord tells us how to love, and the more we follow his instructions, the more self-discipline turns into genuine desire -- we want to love and obey Him from a heart of genuine love, love is no longer hard. This is what John meant when he said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3) At first, when our love is immature, obedience is difficult – we don't really want to do what we should, but we force ourselves; but as we struggle in obedience, our heart changes, and it becomes

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easier because we want to obey more and more. Don't we see this pattern play out with children? In so many ways, my children now desire things I once had to force upon them. Don't you see this pattern in your own spiritual walk? Aren't there many things you truly desire to do now that you once had to force yourself to do?

- Today, Paul reminds us of the importance of the Bible for our daily growth and development, but he also reminds us that Christians play an important role in developing one another. Paul's emphasis in today's readings is on "tough love," holding fellow believers accountable for their actions. Specifically, he says twice to "Keep away from [Christians] who... [do] not live according to the teaching." (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14) Why ostracize a fellow Christian? Paul says, "in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." (2 Thessalonians 3:14) Holding others accountable is hard and takes moral courage; however, it protects them, you, and others from further consequences of sin. And the hope is that discipline will be replaced by desire. Being firm is not the same as being unloving, though it is often portrayed that way. But iron sharpens iron through friction. Conversely, rebukes MUST ALWAYS come from a heart of love and the motive of reconciliation.

- Perhaps the pendulum has swung in American churches from poorly administered church discipline to no discipline at all. Much of today's "grace" movement suggests that we should not talk about obedience but only love. The idea is until we truly love, we cannot obey anyway, and talk about obedience just makes people feel guilty, angry and defeated. This is a false linear approach to growth – first you believe, then you love, then you obey. Actually, maturing in love is not purely linear. Most people believe and love enough to obey a little, and in their somewhat reluctant obedience, they grow in faith and love as their relationship with Jesus grows. Information becomes transformation through practical application, coached by the Holy Spirit (often using other Christians in the process). And don't all good coaches make you run laps you don't really want to run so that you can be ready to win the game you really want to win? Jesus said it this way, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority." (John 7:17)

- Obedience to God's word is a path to ever-increasing love and heart/mind transformation. We are called to encourage one another in obedience and to rebuke one another, using God's word as our standard and God's love as our guide. This is why Paul said to Timothy, "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:1-16)

- Finally, much of the current "grace" movement suggests that a church emphasis on obedience is the same as "legalism" and always comes from self-righteous, judgmental hearts. Legalism uses obedience as a path to salvation rather than a path to sanctification. Obedience doesn't make God love us, it helps us love Him and others. Yes, in our sin, we are very tempted to approach others from a self-righteous perspective, but growing in humility is part of the sanctification process too. We must not only learn to

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search our hearts (empowered by the Holy Spirit) for deep-rooted pride, we must also learn to deal with those around us who are also struggling with pride, recognizing that some of their rebukes might be true, regardless of their motives. Haven't we been reading about how God uses imperfect messengers for His purposes in our lives? Your only judge is God. He will test you in an imperfect church, family, and community. Show grace, mercy, and love to the prideful and arrogant, and see if they aren't revealing pride that remains in you.

27. 2 Thessalonians 3:6 -- "Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us." God expects you to work hard in love and to surround yourself with like-minded fellow workers.

28. 2 Thessalonians 3:11, 12 -- "For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living." Rather than worrying and talking about what others should be doing but aren't, do what should be done yourself. Talk is cheap. Get behind the plow.

29. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 -- "As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good." God's work is hard work that at times can seem overwhelming. Don't grow weary! Keep moving forward!

30. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 -- Doing good and preaching the Good News can be wearisome because people resist the truth, and even other believers will work against you. Again, don't grow weary.

31. 2 Thessalonians 3:15 -- "Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." You have an obligation to hold others accountable and to warn them, as painful as that may be. Do it in love.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 July 18: Today, prayerfully ask God to show you the truth behind your motives, why you do the things you do. If you are motivated by anything other than love (fear, pride, greed, duty, etc.), ask God to further purify you in love, and seek to eliminate self-centeredness from your actions. (2 Thessalonians 3:3; Proverbs 15:11)

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 4, Thursday, 19 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+33%2C+34%3B+prov+19%3B+2+thes+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 19 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:1 -- "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem."

- Though Manasseh was one of the vilest kings to reign in Jerusalem, God allowed him to reign for fifty-five years for His purposes. Faith requires perseverance.

- A young orphan is in danger of being influenced by the wrong people outside of family. We have metaphorical spiritual orphans within the church, not being properly disciplined by more mature Christians.

2. 2 Chronicles 33:2, 3 -- "And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made

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Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.” When you sin, you repeat the destructive behavior of so many others before you who have already demonstrated the foolishness of disobedience. Wise people do not repeat historic folly. The Bible is provided, in part, so you can heed the lessons of those who have gone before you. “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4) “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

3. 2 Chronicles 33:9 -- “Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.” You will either lead people closer to Christ or further away. Who are you influencing, and how does your impact advance the Gospel which is your life’s mission?

4. 2 Chronicles 33:10 -- “The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention.” People today have more access to God’s word than any other time in human history, and God speaks today through His word and the Holy Spirit. God’s word is clear; the question is will we pay attention? Faith without obedience is dead.

5. 2 Chronicles 33:11-13 -- “Therefore the Lord brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.... Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.”

- Manasseh was a terribly evil king who led the whole kingdom away from God and even murdered his own children (v6) as an act of worship to idols, yet God was willing to accept his humble prayer and to forgive him. God forgives the truly repentant. But it took great suffering for Manasseh to finally turn to God. Pride is a very powerful thing. Where does pride still reign in your life? What will it take for God to humble you? Better to have self-discipline than to require God’s external discipline to get your attention.

6. 2 Chronicles 33:17 -- “Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.” Do not leave a door open for sin to enter. Compromise usually leads to greater compromise. Remove completely from your life those things that would tempt you to sin.

7. 2 Chronicles 33:19 -- “And his prayer, and how God was moved by his entreaty, and all his sin and his faithlessness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the Chronicles of the Seers.” How Jesus saved you from your sin, made you a new creation, and changed the course of your whole life is your testimony. If you are a disciple of Jesus, you no longer have to be ashamed by your past, but you can now proclaim the truth of the Gospel. Witnesses testify to what they have personally experienced; anything else is simply hearsay. You are a witness if Jesus has made you a new creation. Share your testimony with thanksgiving and joy.

8. 2 Chronicles 33:21-24 -- “Amon... reigned two years in Jerusalem. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, as Manasseh his father had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that Manasseh his father had made, and served them. And he did not humble himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred guilt more and more. And his servants conspired

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against him and put him to death in his house.” Amon’s story is the opposite of his father Manasseh, both started out in severe sin, but Manasseh humbled himself before the Lord, and Amon didn’t. The door is open to everyone, but every person makes their own choice.

9. 2 Chronicles 34:1-17 – Revival involves a return to obedience, and when God brings revival, he also calls the revived to mission.

10. 2 Chronicles 34:2 -- “[Josiah] did what was right in the eyes of the Lord... and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” Let this be said at your funeral.

11. 2 Chronicles 34:3 -- “For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images.” Discipleship involves constant, diligent seeking and purging.

12. 2 Chronicles 34:9-13 -- You should be working diligently in your church on a strategy to spread the Gospel to your community and beyond.

13. 2 Chronicles 34:18, 19 -- “Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read from it before the king. And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes.” Discipleship and sanctification involve discovery of God’s word, diligent study of God’s word, being continually humbled by the Holy Spirit through God’s written word, and obeying God’s word, one day at a time.

14. 2 Chronicles 34:19 -- “And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes.” Right relationship with God starts with repentance. This is not what most churches preach today. God uses His Bible as His primary instrument for repentance, revival, and sanctification.

15. 2 Chronicles 34:21 -- “Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book.” God expects you to follow His word which reflects His character and His perfect will.

16. 2 Chronicles 34:22 -- “So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect.” The Spirit of God is not a respecter of position. In this case, the high priest knew that Huldah, who kept the wardrobe, would know God’s word through the Holy Spirit.

17. 2 Chronicles 34:27, 28 -- “Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord. Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants.” Even through corporate punishment, God will honor your humble obedience. But you will likely stand out in the crowd as faithful before the Lord when everyone else isn’t. You will be set apart.

18. 2 Chronicles 34:31 -- “And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart

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and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.” The truly repentant respond to God’s grace with obedience.

19. 2 Chronicles 34:32, 33 – “Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and made all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.” Forcing obedience brings stability but doesn’t change hearts. External controls are no substitute for self-control. As soon as the external controls are gone, self-destruction is likely. Self-discipline is a fruit of the Spirit.

20. Proverbs 19:2 – “Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.” It is not enough to want to be a good person. You must also plan for good works. “...but those who plan peace have joy. (Proverbs 12:20)

21. Proverbs 19:3 – “When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.” Don’t blame God for your bad choices.

22. Proverbs 19:3, 11, 19: “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.... A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.” How you control your temper reveals your faith, wisdom, and relationship with God.

23. Proverbs 19:13, 14 – “A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife’s quarreling is a continual dripping of rain. House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.” Family stability is critical to life success. Families are not built with money, education, or opportunity. They are built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

24. Proverbs 19:21 -- “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” How has God arranged circumstances to reveal Himself and His truth to you? How has He changed your world view and your approach to life?

25. Proverbs 19:22 – “What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar.” Ultimately, your character is what counts, not your capabilities.

26. Proverbs 19:24 – “The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.” Opportunity awaits those who will take it.

27. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 – “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way....” False end times teachings have always troubled the church.

28. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 -- “...the man of lawlessness is revealed...” Who is the antichrist? Is he alive right now? When will he be revealed? There has always been much debate on the matter, but the Bible clearly reveals that the spirit of ‘antichrist’ is alive and well. This we can understand. There have been many ‘antichrists,’ and we are surrounded by antichrists today. Jesus explains that if a person isn’t “with him” in total, that person is against Him, anti-Him, antichrist. If a person doesn’t “gather” with Jesus, that person “scatters” as an enemy to Jesus. The only person who uses the actual word “antichrist” in the Bible is John, and he says, “many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour....

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Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.... and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.... For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (1 John 1, 2, 4) Anyone who denies (in any way) the complete Gospel is “antichrist.” Note, that in today’s readings, the word “antichrist” is not used but rather “the man of lawlessness.” We should not miss the point that the primary trait of the one who opposes the will of God is “lawlessness,” along with rebellion, disobedience, and pride. Contrarily, the one who is truly “pro-Christ” is identified by obedience, inspired by genuine love. Jesus said this, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.... Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Luke 6:46-49; Matthew 7:21-23) You see that Jesus also uses the word “lawlessness” to describe “religious” people who claim to be followers of Jesus but who do not actually follow Him in obedience to His word. “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.... Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (Galatians 6:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24) Worship God in “truth.”

29. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 – Even God’s breath is strong enough to destroy Satan’s opposition.

30. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 – “...because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” God’s judgment comes when you refuse to love the truth. The Bible says that God IS love and IS Truth. Our first command is to love God. This is life eternal.

31. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-16 -- Love binds one who witnesses with those who respond.

32. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 – “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.” Stand firm!

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 July 18: Share your personal testimony with someone today. (2 Chron 33:19)

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 3, Wednesday, 18 July 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+31%2C+32%3B+prov+18%3B+2+thes+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 18 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 31:1 -- "Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all." Worship should lead you into a desire for purity and holiness before the Lord.

2. 2 Chronicles 31:2-4 -- "And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, each according to his service.... The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings... And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the Lord." God expects everyone within the church to play a specific role in worship and ministry under the direction of a church leader. Leaders must lead by example in every way. Hezekiah first gave from His own possessions before asking others to give.

3. 2 Chronicles 31:4 -- "And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the Lord." The priests were fully supported so that they could completely dedicate themselves to the Law of the LORD. The church was supported by the tithe.

4. 2 Chronicles 31:10, 14-19 -- Financial obedience ensures the church has needed resources for worship, ministry, evangelism, and fellowship and also enables church leaders to focus on leadership rather than fund raising.

5. 2 Chronicles 31:20 -- "Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God." Good leaders must be good managers and stewards. Not every manager is a good leader, but every good leader is a good manager. Leadership starts with self-leadership. You must be able to effectively manage your own time, money, and resources before you are ready to lead others and manage more.

6. 2 Chronicles 31:21 -- "And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered." Faith in God and wholehearted dedication enables you to finish the work God appointed you to do.

7. 2 Chronicles 32:1-3 -- "After these things and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him." Hezekiah's faithfulness did not remove problems from his life, did not eliminate the need to plan, and did not remove the need to trust and obey God. In fact, in his faithfulness, problems only seemed to get far worse for Hezekiah. What do you do when your faithfulness doesn't seem to be "working"?

8. 2 Chronicles 32:11-15 -- "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'On what are you trusting, that you endure the siege in Jerusalem? Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by

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famine and by thirst, when he tells you, The Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria? Has not this same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices? Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to deliver their lands out of my hand? Who among all the gods of those nations that my fathers devoted to destruction was able to deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? Now, therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand!”

- Faith calls you to trust God’s ways rather than human ways.

- The world is blinded by its own apparent successes. The world will point to its great achievements to lure you away from faith in God and make you trust substitutes for God.

- The world wants you to believe that all religions are equal, equally powerless. The world’s attacks against Christianity will grow, teaching that our faith is an illusion. Only those who truly know Jesus (know Him personally, not just facts about Him) will survive such attacks.

9. 2 Chronicles 32:18 – “And they shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city.” The mockers of Christianity speak the language of the people. They are often very knowledgeable of what is written in the Bible (though they don’t have Holy Spirit enlightenment) and can quote the Bible better than many true believers. They often seek to relate on a personal level in order to lure people away from Jesus. They are also usually very passionate about the lies they personally believe. They can be very persuasive to those who are not strongly united with Christ.

10. 2 Chronicles 32:20 – “Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven.” Prayer is not our last resort; it is our primary weapon.

11. 2 Chronicles 32:21 -- “And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria.” God accomplishes His purposes in ways that the world can’t understand or perceive to be from God.

12. 2 Chronicles 32:22 -- “So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side.” Either you will turn to the world for your provision and security or you will turn to God. You cannot turn to both. God provides through worldly means; for example, God feeds you through everyday farmers and markets, but never lose sight that it is God that is providing.

13. 2 Chronicles 32:25 -- “But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore, wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem.” You are always in danger of responding to God’s blessings with foolish pride, taking credit rather than giving credit to God and trusting in your own strength. God does not share the glory. Hezekiah was very successful in the LORD, until pride became his downfall.

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14. 2 Chronicles 32:27 – “Hezekiah... made for himself treasuries for silver.” Pride turned into self-centeredness and materialism.

15. 2 Chronicles 32:31 – “God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.” Remember your days in school? During tests, the teacher was silent. How do you respond when your faith is tested and there appears to be no response from God? Remember in John 11 how when Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed away two more days so that Mary and Martha would receive an even greater revelation of Him than they had seen previously (Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life)? Perhaps the silence you are feeling is God building your faith and preparing you for far greater things than you ever anticipated. God may also be revealing to you the limits of your own faith. In your doubt, what is God revealing to you about what you truly believe? In your doubt, draw nearer to God, not further away.

16. Proverbs 18:1 – “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” It is a destructive sin to ‘go it alone.’ You were made to commune with both God and God’s people. Isolation is a symptom of selfishness, self-centeredness, and pride. God has made us specifically for relationships.

17. Proverbs 18:2 – “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.” What you think is true is irrelevant compared to what really is true. A wise person continually tests their perceptions and beliefs against God’s word and truth. Unbelievers judge God’s word from their perceptions. Believers judge their perceptions from God’s word.

18. Proverbs 18:3, 5-6, 8, 19, 21, 23 -- Your words have great power to help or to hurt people. Jesus said that we will be held accountable for every careless word we speak. We are Christ’s’ Ambassadors. We should only speak His words. We do not have the right or authority to do anything else.

19. Proverbs 18:9 – “Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.” Unprofessionalism causes incredible grief to many. How many times have you suffered because someone didn’t do their job or didn’t do it well? God wants us to bring credit to His name by doing all things with excellence, striving to be as consistent, reliable, timely, and effective as He is.

20. Proverbs 18:10-11 – “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination.” Trust and reliance on human strength, or self-reliance, is deceptive idolatry. Again, God works through people, but idolatry sees mankind, or other substitutes for God, as the source of strength and places faith created things rather than the Creator. God will not tolerate things to distract people from Him.

21. Proverbs 18:14 – “A man’s spirit will endure sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?” Spiritual health and strength are infinitely more important than physical health and strength.

22. Proverbs 18 – Notice from Proverbs 18 the emphasis God places on how well we listen to Him and on what we say to others as His ambassadors. You cannot share with others what you don’t know. How important is diligent Bible study to Christians who have been commissioned by God to speak on His behalf as priests to the world?

23. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 -- "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing." Love is

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the measure of genuine faith -- when faith grows, love grows. How much we love others reveals how much we really love Jesus. When we genuinely love others, we want nothing more than to see them grow closer to Jesus, and when we see it, we are compelled to give thanks to God.

24. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5 – "Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering...."

- Faith and love grow with steadfastness and endurance through hardships. The process of discipleship and sanctification is hard and not for the halfhearted.

- Your life is intended to be a testimony to the glory of God, and every day you stand before the world as a witness to God's grace, His mercy, and also His justice. As you live more and more by genuine faith in God and as your life continues to be transformed by God's love which is revealed in the love you show for others, you stand as proof of the Good News of the Gospel. When the world persecutes you because of the truth, you stand as evidence of God's righteous judgment. "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20) The light of your life should serve as a beacon to draw others to Jesus Christ. Those who reject God do so despite your witness and the witness of so many others who have proclaimed the Gospel both in word and deed. Our call is to be "worthy" witnesses to God's glory, that the light which exposes darkness and reveals truth would not be dimmed. We are not called to be good people alone; we are called to proclaim the Gospel with our good deeds serving as proof of the power of God in our own lives. We don't proclaim morality; we proclaim Jesus. When people think of you, do they commend you for your goodness or do they automatically think about Jesus Christ to whom you persistently give ALL the glory? "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

25. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12 – The message of God which is proclaimed through His Ambassadors on earth (us) is that Christ will return and that there will be a Judgement. When was the last time you heard this preached with power?

26. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 -- "...since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." Not obeying the Gospel brings judgment. God will judge people based upon their true faith in Jesus, revealed in how they treated others and whether or not they believed enough to obey. Faith without works (obedience) is dead.

27. 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10 – "They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." Eternal life is unity with God through Jesus (John 17:3) Eternal damnation is separation from God. God will bring glory to Himself by responding to the faithful in a positive way and to the unfaithful in a negative way. End times brings glory to God.

28. 2 Thessalonians 1:10 -- "...when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." Not everyone

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will marvel when Christ returns, only the believers. God uses the testimony of others to call believers. We testify to the truth, and the Holy Spirit convicts hearts with our testimony.

29. 2 Thessalonians 1:11 -- "To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power." Not everyone demonstrates worthiness. Worthiness requires both the power of the Holy Spirit AND resolve, resulting in consistent works of faith.

30. 2 Thessalonians 1:12 -- "...so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Is the name Jesus Christ glorified in you? Do those around you automatically associate your name and life with Jesus Christ? Does your life reflect the image of Jesus?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 18 July 18: Today, consider how you respond to God's discipline and what God has taught you through his discipline. Recommit to living day-by-day in obedience, learning through positive instruction rather than negative discipline. When disciplined, give thanks, learn, grow, and move forward with joy having been guided by the firm hand of God to a better place in life.

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 2, Tuesday, 17 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+29%2C+30%3B+PRO+17%3B+1+Thes+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 17 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 29:3 -- "In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them." Worship was top priority for Hezekiah. He first directed his resources towards the house of God.

2. 2 Chronicles 29:5 -- "Carry out the filth from the Holy Place." You are the holy place. Remove from yourself what displeases God.

- 1 Corinthians 6:19 -- Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

- Matthew 15:11 -- "...it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."

3. 2 Chronicles 29:6 -- "For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God." Repentance and sanctification often involve no longer doing what your family taught you growing up.

4. 2 Chronicles 29:11 -- "My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him and to be his ministers and make offerings to him." We must not take our responsibility to God lightly. We stand in the presence of God Almighty, and He has commanded us. To be complacent is cosmic treason against the KING of kings.

5. 2 Chronicles 29:11 -- "My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him and to be his ministers and make offerings to him." Don't be negligent in your worship and service to the LORD. Be holy and bold.

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6. 2 Chronicles 29:36 – “And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had provided for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.” God will work in your life in ways only He can work, bringing glory to Himself while increasing your faith in Him. He will do the impossible through you so you and others will know it was Him and not you.

7. 2 Chronicles 30:9 -- “For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.” Now is the time to repent.

8. 2 Chronicles 30:10-12 -- “So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the Lord.” The word of God is divisive, separating the wheat from the chaff, the sheep from the goats, but is always accomplishes its purpose. Preach the truth, and let the Spirit do the sifting. Our hearts should always hope for reconciliation, truly wanting none to perish. Never give up hope for anyone – we have no idea what the Lord might do in their lives.

9. 2 Chronicles 30:18, 19 -- “‘May the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary’s rules of cleanness.’ And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.” God knows your heart. If you are truly seeking God from your heart with all of your ability, God will honor that.

10. 2 Chronicles 30:19, 20 -- “‘May the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary’s rules of cleanness.’ And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.” Sound doctrine, yes! But, grace, mercy, and love over doctrine.

11. 2 Chronicles 30:23-27 – There is one Spirit and one Truth. By definition, the closer we all get to the truth, the closer to get to each other (basic spiritual geometry). The Spirit is naturally unifying. Where there is disunity, there is distance from the Spirit. Unity in Spirit brings great joy to everyone.

12. Proverbs 17:3 – “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.” How could the LORD test your heart? Where do you have idols? If tested, would you pass the test?

13. Proverbs 17:4 – “An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.” Who you choose to listen to reveals the condition of your heart.

14. Proverbs 17:7 – “Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.” Don’t cheapen the grace you have received and dishonor God through disobedience.

15. Proverbs 17:9 – “Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.” Your mission is reconciliation. Everything you say and do should unite.

16. Proverbs 17:10 – “A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.” Is the conviction of God’s word empowered by the Holy Spirit enough to bring you to obedience, or do you need to learn the hard way?

17. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 -- “While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not

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escape.” Humanism is ‘enlightening’ the ungodly into extinction. As in the time of Noah, few, including the religious, will see the looming destruction.

18. Compare the instruction of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18 with Proverbs 12.

19. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 -- “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” Do you know how to admonish patiently?

20. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 -- “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.” Rejoice, pray, and give thanks continuously in order to fulfill God’s will for your life and remain empowered by the Spirit. How often have you disobeyed this command?

21. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 -- “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” This is a hard one. However, Paul is calling us to see life from God’s perspective and from the realization that God, the Almighty, who IS Love has saved us through His Son, Jesus Christ; and is now working “all things... together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) There are many reasons why a loving God allows bad things to happen. However, the key is keeping perspective on the God who allowed the suffering to occur rather than trying to understand the mind of God, which is an impossibility -- “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” (Romans 11:34) We can never truly understand what “God was thinking” when He let bad things happen to us, but today’s readings tell us that we can ALWAYS rejoice in our circumstances because God is only dealing with us from a position of Love perfected. A parental memory that is burned in my mind is that of taking my infants to get their inoculations. I will never forget the looks of pain and confusion they would give me as they received injections from a stranger while I watched willingly. Though they could not speak, their heart-breaking question was obvious: “Why, Daddy?” Of course, there was no way to explain to them what they could not possibly understand. However, the conclusion of the event was always the same: With tears in their eyes, they reached with all their ability back into my (or Mom’s) loving arms. They helped me understand what it means to trust as a child. Paul tells us today that perspective is everything, but he also tells us not to go through trials alone. We all need the encouragement and support of other Christians -- “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11) In fact, the Bible tells us that one of the many reasons God allows us to suffer, in part, so we can be a better minister to others who are suffering. (2 Corinthians 1:4) Another key to enduring our own hardships is by focusing on ministering to the needs of others rather than focusing on our own pain.

- Job 2:10 -- “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

- Isaiah 45:7 -- I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

- Lamentations 3:37-39 -- Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth? Why should any living mortal, or any man, Offer complaint in view of his sins?...

- Jeremiah 32:42 -- "This is what the LORD says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them.

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22. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 -- "May your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Pursue blamelessness within your heart. This is a life-long endeavor that requires all of your effort.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 July 18: Today test yourself against 1 Thes 5. (See notes above).

DBRP - WEEK 29, Day 1, Monday, 16 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+27%2C+28%3B+PRO+16%3B+1+Thes+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 16 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 27:2 – "And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that his father Uzziah had done, except he did not enter the temple of the Lord. But the people still followed corrupt practices." Success involves having an influence over those around us for God's glory, not just living a private faith without impact.

2. 2 Chronicles 27:6 -- "So Jotham became mighty, because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God." Is your life ordered around Jesus? Have you built your house on the firm foundation, the solid rock of Jesus? Is Jesus the Cornerstone of your life? Jotham stuck out among the list of kings because he chose to order his life before the Lord his God. Will you be remembered that way?

3. 2 Chronicles 28:2 -- "...but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel." Following anyone other than Jesus will lead you to sin and destruction. You cannot walk with the ungodly and walk with Jesus at the same time; they are going in opposite directions. The world, which is in rebellion to God, pursues substitutes for god while your aim in life is Jesus Himself. Conversely, you should be growing closer each day to those who are seeking greater unity with Jesus, like ships headed to the same destination.

4. 2 Chronicles 28:9-11 -- "But a prophet of the Lord was there, whose name was Oded, and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, 'Behold, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven.... Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God? Now hear me, and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you.'" God's people have always been called to serve as the conscience of government and to convict others of sin, call people to repentance, and warn of God's looming judgment of sin.

5. 2 Chronicles 28:20 -- "So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him." Turning to the world for strength rather than God will only hurt you, not help you.

6. 2 Chronicles 28:22-25 -- When you do not repent, you seek deeper into sin.

7. 2 Chronicles 28:23 -- "For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, 'Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.' But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel." What seems to work for the world will not work for us. We operate within the spiritual realm with spiritual goals and objectives.

8. Proverbs 16:2 -- "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, the Lord weighs the spirit." What matters is not what you think about yourself but what God thinks of you.

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9. Proverbs 16:6 – “By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.” Sacrificial deeds done with the wrong motives don’t mean anything or fix anything. Love and faithfulness are what matters. Sacrifices don’t make up for disobedience or a lack of genuine love. God doesn’t want your sacrifices, He wants your love and faithfulness.

10. Proverbs 16:8 – “Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.” The righteous may be poor, and the unrighteous may be rich on earth, but riches are not the same as reward. All that people think money can offer them -- security, joy, peace, validation, etc. -- are really in the hands of God and come through relationship with Jesus Christ. When you have Jesus, nothing else really matters all that much. When you don’t have Jesus, all the wealth in the world can’t fill the void in your life.

11. Proverbs 16:20 – “Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.” Read, study, and meditate upon God’s word; then, trust and obey, day-by-day.

12. Proverbs 16:25 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” Take it to the bank: man’s way is the wrong way. If you are following anything or anybody other than Jesus Christ and His commandments, you are heading the wrong direction. God says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa 55:8, 9) God commands you, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5) Solomon, the wisest king that ever lived, couldn’t get it right. What makes anyone else think they can apart from the lead of Jesus. Follow Jesus and only Jesus. Jesus didn’t say, “I will show you the way,” He said, “I am The Way.” His way is one of obedience. Jesus obeyed every word of the Father. Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. You have been provided with God’s Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. You have been given all authority by Jesus to be His Ambassador on this earth. What more do you need? Stop chasing the world’s sinful fantasies.

13. Proverbs 16:32 – “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” A person with self-control is a powerful person. If you cannot control your temper, you cannot control anything else for very long. You are unfit for God’s work and need to pray that God will grant you the last fruit of the Spirit – self-control (see Gal 5).

14. Proverbs 16:33 – “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” Nothing is left to chance.

15.1 Thessalonians 4:1 -- “...you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.” God expects you to strive more and more to walk with Jesus. Sanctification is a life-long process.

16. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 -- “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”

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- Sanctification is God's will for your life. What does God want you to do with your life? Become closer and more like Jesus every day, more holy. God has called you to purity and holiness – strive daily for it. Holiness requires self-control. Self-control is key to sanctification, and sexual sin is not only a sign of a lack of self-control and sanctification, it defies the Great Commandment of loving God and others. It is absolutely unthinkable that a Christian would engage in any form of sexual immorality considering that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and sexual immorality would be an utter desecration of God's temple, the abomination of desolation! "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)

17. 1 Thessalonians 4:8 -- "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit."

- God has called you to holiness instead of impurity. In urging us to "live in order to please God" and to "do this more and more," Paul reminds us that the Bible's instructions are given to us "by the authority of the Lord Jesus." We are called by God to live "holy" lives, and we have been empowered by God through the Holy Spirit to live holy lives. When we sin, we cannot use the old excuse, "The Devil made me do it." God has given us the power to obey, but we choose not to when, even for a brief moment, something has become more important to us than God. Paul wants us to face the fact that when we sin, we are deliberately denying the Lordship of God and His authority over our lives! He also warns that God will hold us accountable (1 Thessalonians 4:6), though we remain in His love and grace. Furthermore, Paul points out that sin and disobedience have nothing to do with love, and it is impossible to grow in love without growing in holiness and obedience. Sin is not only an offense to God, it also always hurts others (1 Thessalonians 4:6). Sin hurts, destroys, kills. True love absolutely requires obedience to the God who is Love, and our ability to love others is dependent on our love for God.

18. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 -- "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.... But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one."

- God wants you to strive to grow in love daily, and to live an inoffensive and unencumbered life, not being dependent upon the sinful world which would influence you to compromise your purity and holiness. God calls us to live quiet lives, working hard to be self-sufficient and to love others. Often people will ask, "What does God want me to do with my life?" However, their focus is usually on profession, and they are usually really asking, "How can I be successful in life (by the world's standards)?" However, Thessalonians' answer to the question focuses on character rather than competence – "live a holy life." Thessalonians seems to minimize "professional" success (though we are called to be excellent in all things) – "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands." Who you are matters far more than what you do. Find something to do, and do it to the glory of God, not to your own glory. "This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes. Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all

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mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 7:29; 12:13, 14)."

19. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 -- "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." God does not want you to get wrapped up in the worries of the world or to grieve about things like the world does. Be at peace in the hope which has been given you through the promise of Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 July 18: Today, pursue sanctification as your life goal. Walk today side-by-side with Jesus, seeking to know Him more fully, seeking to grow closer to Him through every experience. Don't just do good, know Him more and more. Don't follow anyone else, only Him. Partner with those who have the same goal for life as you -- to know Jesus more and more. (See today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 7, Sunday, 15 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+15%3B+psalm+80%2C+81>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 15 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 25:2 -- "And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not with a whole heart." Obedience that doesn't come from a whole heart is disobedience. The First Commandment is, "You shall have no other gods before me," and The Greatest Commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Apparent obedience that is not really inspired by genuine reverence and love for the Almighty is artificial and short-lived. This is why Jesus said things like, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27, 28) In this example, hidden lust reveals a heart that doesn't revere and love God enough to care about what He cares about, to desire what He desires. That is where sin starts, in the heart. Jesus was tempted in the desert, externally by Satan, not internally from His heart – He remained without sin. External temptations don't cause us to sin; our hearts cause us to sin. "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." (Matthew 15:11)

2. 2 Chronicles 25:7, 8 -- "But a man of God came to him and said, 'O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites. But go, act, be strong for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down.'" Once again, the Bible warns about partnering with ungodly people and putting your trust in worldly powers rather than in God. Amaziah had already hired the Israelites but then listened to God's word and sent them home, losing his investment but ultimately winning the battle. However, the Israelite warriors plundered Judah's cities on the way home, killing thousands. Amaziah and his people still suffered consequences for not obeying God in the first place. Working with the ungodly doesn't 'work' for God. What consequences do God's people face today in compromise with the world? It is tempting to partner with unbelievers rather than relying on God. It takes courage to resist pressures to compromise holiness and join with the world; it takes faith to rely on God.

3. 2 Chronicles 25:14-16 -- A true prophet is compelled to speak the truth against sin, regardless the audience and regardless the consequences.

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4. 2 Chronicles 25:15 -- "Therefore the Lord was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet." God sends His messengers to warn sinners to repent. We are Christ's Ambassadors, proclaiming to others, whether they want to hear it or not, His message of repentance and forgiveness.

5. 2 Chronicles 25:16 -- "But as he was speaking, the king said to him, 'Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?' So, the prophet stopped, but said, 'I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel.'" Those who follow sin unrepentantly will often respond violently to God's word.

6. 2 Chronicles 25:16 -- "But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction." One of the most repeated themes throughout the Bible is that pride comes before the fall. Uzziah was blessed by God but soon began to take credit for God's work, trust in his own power, and pursue his own desires rather than God's will. So many others in the Bible did something along these lines with devastating consequences. Be very careful that you don't grow prideful in your successes. Give all glory and credit to God. Never lift yourself up before others.

7. 2 Chronicles 26:5 -- "He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper." Uzziah followed wise godly counsel and was blessed. Do you have wise Christian counsellors in your life who lead you in pursuit of God's will?

8. 2 Chronicles 26:16 -- "But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense." Success can be dangerous.

9. 2 Chronicles 26:18 -- "...and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God.'" It is not the position of government to control worship.

10. Proverbs 15:1 -- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Why stir up anger?

11. Proverbs 15:3 -- "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Nothing escapes God's attention, and He is in complete control. He will not be mocked.

12. Proverbs 15:8 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." We cannot expect to live in disobedience and have God give us what we want. God does not spoil His children. His greatest gift to you is Himself, and desires, first and foremost for nothing, including your sin, to stand as a barrier in your relationship with Him. He has already given you His Holy Spirit and complete access, but in sin, you can quench the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, and get out of step with the Spirit. He will deal with your walk before your wants.

13. Proverbs 15:10 -- "There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die." How is this verse revealed in what you have been reading in Chronicles? How have you seen this revealed in life?

14. Proverbs 15:11 -- "Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of man!" People judge what you do, but God sees deep within you to judge why you do it -- He

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knows the truth of your motives and heart. Many people do 'good' deeds for the wrong reasons: fear, pride, greed, duty (legalism), rather than love. God desires gifts offered in love. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the true motives behind your actions and purify your love. Jesus said, the first step to following Him is to "deny yourself." Ask the Holy Spirit to help you remove self from the equation – the hardest step.

15. Proverbs 15:15-17 – "All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it." Motivated by anything other than love for God and others, you can build for yourself a kingdom on earth, but it would be full of trouble and affliction, and it will be burned up in judgment. The Bible says that God's gifts have no trouble added to them – "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." (Proverbs 10:22)

16. Proverbs 15:16 – "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it." Trust God to provide you with everything you need if you remain in obedience to Him. Whatever you gain in disobedience is only a curse.

17. Proverbs 15:19 – "The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway." An attitude of laziness sees everything as a pain and accomplishes very little. An attitude of diligence is very freeing and sees much progress in life.

18. Proverbs 15:26 – "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure." Words are only pure when they come from a truly gracious heart. God knows the heart, and the kindest words are an abomination (a very strong word) to Him when they come from the wrong heart. You can say all the right things and be completely wrong. Again, God knows your thoughts. Thoughts that prioritize something as higher or more important than God are idolatry and an abomination.

19. Proverbs 15:28, 29 – "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." The quality of our relationships with both God and man is determined by the condition of our hearts. Check your heart.

20. Proverbs 15:29 – "The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." Acceptable prayers are God-centered rather than self-centered.

21. Proverbs 15:31-33 – "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor." Again, you must approach God's word humbly and accept its correction in your life, every day.

22. Psalm 81: 9, 10 -- "There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am the Lord your God." The modern Christian risks breezing by verses such as this one too quickly: "I'm a Christian; of course I don't worship other gods." However, the danger of idolatry is just as alive and well today for the Christian it was for the Jew in ancient Israel, only we have made idolatry more subtle and sophisticated. Our greatest idol is ourselves. Whenever we presume to place ourselves, our desires, our goals, our passions, our "needs" ahead of God's will and commands, we introduce the "strangest god" of all into the equation, ourselves. We are a far worse idol than a carved image or any

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other created form – the inanimate object or god of imagination has a big thing over us: it has never sinned against God! Uzzah died when he dared to touch the ark of the covenant in order to keep the holy ark from falling on the ground, presuming that his hand was cleaner than the dirt. How easy it is for us to forget from where we came. How easy it is for us to let pride rob God of His due glory, honor and praise and for us to lose sight of the wonderfulness of the grace He has poured out upon us through His One and Only Son Jesus Christ – “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us” (if you travel east on a globe, you never get to west). (Psalm 103:12) Even when we think about God, we tend to consider Him from our own perspective – “How does God relate to me?”. The fullness of joy is the removal of “me” so that there is only Him – “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2) “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20)

- Colossians 3:5 -- Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

- 1 Samuel 15:23 -- For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.”

- Galatians 5:24 -- And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

- Galatians 6:14 -- But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

23. Psalm 81:11-16 -- “But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Compare these verses to Romans 1. A person doesn't realize what they have been “given over” in their disobedience. It is a terrible thing to be turned over by God. Trust and obey! Surrender totally to Jesus, and walk with Him, not the world. Look to God to supply your every need, not idols. Proclaim His praises to everyone!

24. Psalm 80:19 – “Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!” Turn to the Lord for restoration every day.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 July 18: “Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.” (Psalm 81:1, 2) This Sunday, ‘go to church’ all day long (and from this day forward), wherever you are and through whatever you are doing. Proclaim Jesus to everyone everywhere.

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 6, Saturday, 14 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+14%3B+psalm+79>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 14 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 23:1-11 -- God's faithful people need to come together to plan how to promote revival.

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2. 2 Chronicles 23:3 – “And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And Jehoiada said to them, ‘Behold, the king’s son! Let him reign, as the Lord spoke concerning the sons of David.’ God keeps His word. No one can thwart His plans.

3. 2 Chronicles 23:9, 10 -- “And Jehoiada the priest gave to the captains the spears and the large and small shields that had been King David’s, which were in the house of God. And he set all the people as a guard for the king, every man with his weapon in his hand.”

- We see throughout the Bible the expectation and responsibility for men to be ready, able, and willing to fight to defend themselves and others when necessary and within God’s standards. We see throughout the Bible that fighting, in itself, is not evil just as commerce in itself is not evil; it is the motive and the means that must be considered carefully. In 2 Chronicles, we see that Jehoiada the priest leads the fight with weapons from the Temple against the corrupt illegitimate, ruling authorities. In Luke 22, Jesus warns his disciples to buy swords to defend themselves if they don’t have any – “The disciples said, ‘See, Lord, here are two swords.’ ‘That’s enough!’ he replied (Luke 22:38).” Self-defense is a responsibility and right that cannot be delegated or abrogated.

4. 2 Chronicles 23:16 – “And Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the Lord’s people.” Covenant is made in a community of faithful believers.

5. 2 Chronicles 23:17 – “Then all the people went to the house of Baal and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.” Obedience means forsaking all ties with substitutes for God. To follow Jesus, you must completely eliminate those things that have been distractions and that have tempted you to sin. Is it time for you to clean house?

6. 2 Chronicles 23:18 – “And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the Lord under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the Lord, to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David.” A faithful, powerful church has faithful ministers God chooses for the congregation in order to do what God commands.

7. 2 Chronicles 24:1, 2 – “Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Zibiah of Beersheba. And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.” A seven-year-old leader guided by wise, godly counselors is far better than the most experienced secular politician. Often more important than the leader are the counsellors and advisors to the leader, those who are the real decision-makers. Particularly at seven years old, Joash was simply a figure head, and Jehoaida was the real power broker who lead the nation in a godly way. Likewise, our political leaders today will be guided by others behind the scenes, and knowing who they are and what they believe is of vital importance. Who gives you advice and counsel? Your counsellor and advisor should be very close to Jesus, but your eyes need to always remain on Jesus. Bad counsel and advice can be devastating in your life.

8. 2 Chronicles 24:17, 18 -- “Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. And they abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.” The Bible further makes the point to you -- “Bad company ruins good morals.” (1 Corinthians 15:33) When Jehoaida’s counsel was replaced with the counsel of the princes, Joash turned

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from God and led the entire nation astray. Do not let anyone lead you astray simply because (s)he likes you, has a great personality, and is very kind to you. If your friends, relatives, and coworkers are not following Jesus as their top priority, they are adrift and will desire you to go with them to someplace other than where God wants you to go.

9. 2 Chron 24:17,18 -- Political ambitions ruin integrity and obedience to God.

10. 2 Chronicles 24:19 -- “Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention.” Church and State – The church is called to be the conscience of government and society whether they desire to listen or not. If the church remains silent in order to remain comfortable or agreeable, destruction is inevitable.

11. 2 Chronicles 24:20 -- “Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah.”

- Romans 13:14 -- But put on the Lord Jesus Christ....

- 1 Corinthians 15:33 - For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality....

- Galatians 3:27 -- For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ....

- Ephesians 4:24 -- and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness....

- Ephesians 6:11 -- Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil....

- Colossians 3:9-14 -- ...put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.... Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.....

- 1 Pet 3:3, 4 -- Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious....

- Are you dressed for success? You cannot fulfill your purpose in life without first putting on Jesus and being wrapped filled with the Holy Spirit.

12. 2 Chronicles 24:20 -- “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.’” You cannot prosper while continuing to disobey God in any area of your life. Yes, you will continue to sin, but you must have, as your heart's desire, the intent not to sin, and you must pursue holiness with all of your might.

13. 2 Chronicles 24:20 -- When political leaders stray from justice and righteousness, a faithful prophet is required to proclaim the truth.

14. 2 Chronicles 24:21 -- “But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord.” A successful prophet is one who is faithful to God's

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word, regardless of what people think. God might very well allow you to suffer and die for Him. Spoiler alert: we all die anyway. Dying for God is an honor, but truly living for God, in Christ, dead to self, is an even greater honor. Martin Luther King said, "A man who does not have something for which he is willing to die is not fit to live."

15. 2 Chronicles 24:24 -- "Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the Lord delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash." God Himself destroys wicked people and wicked nations, and He may use other wicked people to do it.

16. Proverbs 14:2 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him." Our actions reveal how we really feel about God in our hearts. When we sin, we prefer something more than God. Though we find ways to justify our sin and make light of it, the Bible calls it spiritual adultery and idolatry. We will make excuses for our sin by blaming something other than ourselves -- circumstances, chemistry, upbringing, external instigators, etc. However, how we respond to our circumstances is our choice, and that choice reveals what is truly in our hearts. For example, rude, disrespectful people don't make you angry, they reveal the anger that is already in your heart. So, the question is "Why is there anger in your heart?" As it has been said, "The heart of man's problem is the problem with man's heart." We should pay very close attention to Amaziah's story in our readings today. The Bible says, "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart (2 Chronicles 25:2)." Amaziah was a "church-goer" who followed the rules but not out of genuine love for the Lord. He believed in God, and knew that God's rules "worked," to generally bring prosperity to a person's life, but in his heart, his king and lord was himself. Rather than "seek[ing] first the Kingdom of God," he desired to build his own kingdom on earth. The truth of his heart was eventually revealed, not in crisis, but rather in success. He became proud and began to worship idols (merely a tangible representation of his adulterous heart). Eventually, his heart had become so hard, he refused to listen any longer to God's word ("I don't have time to read the Bible"), and he was destroyed. "The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways (Proverbs 14:14)."

17. Proverbs 14:4 -- "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox." True strength is revealed not in what you have but rather in what you can reproduce.

18. Proverbs 14:7 -- "Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge." Don't waste your time seeking wisdom from those who do not know the Source of Wisdom, Jesus Christ.

19. Proverbs 14:10 -- "The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy." You don't really know what is going on in the lives of others. Be patient with them and serve as a constant source of healing by always pointing to Jesus.

20. Proverbs 14:14 -- "The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways." Contrary to the beliefs of many in the "Grace" movement, believers do experience consequences and discipline for disobedience. God gives salvation through grace and disciplines us for our sanctification.

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21. Proverbs 14:25 – “A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.” A truthful witness proclaims Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Proclaiming any other ‘truth’ is to be a false witness and a liar.

22. Proverbs 14:29 – “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.” Those slow to anger truly understand the forgiveness that they have received through Jesus and the truth of the Gospel. Understanding the Truth changes how you respond to others as love compels you to forgive.

23. Psalms 79:9 – “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name’s sake!” God will always deal with you in a way that brings glory to Him.

24. Psalm 79:10 – “Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes!” It is sometimes hard to understand why wickedness continues and why God allows the innocent to suffer. We must remember that God has a plan and will remain faithful to Romans 8:28. Continue to trust and obey.

25. Psalm 79:13 – “But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.” In the midst of suffering, continue to give thanks to God and to praise Him to all.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 July 18: Endeavor from this day forward to get dressed in Jesus before you step off, and don't be caught improperly dressed or even naked in public -- “Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah.” (2 Chronicles 24:20) “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ” ... (Rom 13:14) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.... (1 Cor 15:33) “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” ... (Gal 3:27) “and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” ... (Eph 4:24) “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” ... (Eph 6:11) “...put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.... Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony....” (Col 3:9-14) “Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious....” (1 Pet 3:3, 4) Are you dressed for success? You cannot fulfill your purpose in life without first putting on Jesus and being wrapped filled with the Holy Spirit.

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 5, Friday, 13 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+13%3B+1+thes+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 13 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 21:6 -- “And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” There is a reason why God forbids marriage with unbelievers. People who are close to you will have a positive or

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negative influence on your life. You must be very careful not to establish covenant-type relationships with those who will only tempt you to be unfaithful to God. Those close to you must be ready to walk with you in a mutually supportive relationship as you both of you follow Jesus together.

2. 2 Chronicles 21:11 -- "Moreover, he made high places in the hill country of Judah and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom and made Judah go astray." The Bible describes spiritual unfaithfulness as whoredom.

3 2 Chronicles 21:12, 13 -- "Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father, 'Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel and have enticed Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom, as the house of Ahab led Israel into whoredom, and also you have killed your brothers, of your father's house, who were better than you.' God may allow sinners to have earthly victory over the faithful, but God will ultimately hold everyone accountable, and our reward is eternal.

4. 2 Chronicles 21:13 -- People are tempted to hurt those who are better than them.

5. 2 Chronicles 21:12-15 -- "Because you... have... enticed Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom, as the house of Ahab led Israel into whoredom, and also you have killed your brothers, of your father's house, who were better than you, behold, the Lord will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out because of the disease, day by day."

Jehoram's greatest offense was leading people astray from God; this was worse in God's eyes than Jehoram killing his brothers. Jehoram's spiritual infidelity caused everyone around him to sin and to suffer tremendously before Jehoram himself died a painful death. How striking is it that Jehoshaphat had so little influence on Jehoram?

6. 2 Chronicles 21:15, 16 -- "...and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels.... And the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabians who are near the Ethiopians." God punishes with sickness, enemies, and negative circumstances. Those who reject God will not attribute these things to God's discipline.

7. 2 Chronicles 21:20 -- "And he departed with no one's regret." Jehoram was influential, but in the end, no one respected him or cared about him. He had a miserable and painful life because He walked away from the faith of his father to serve other gods.

8. 2 Chronicles 21:1-6 -- "Jehoshaphat king of Israel.... gave [his sons] great gifts of silver, gold, and valuable possessions, together with fortified cities in Judah, but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram [who] reigned in his place.... And [Jehoram] did what was evil in the sight of the Lord."

- 2 Chronicles 22:2, 3 -- "Ahaziah.... also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly."

- No person, regardless their position in life has a greater responsibility, ministry, or position than that of parent. There is no greater test of genuine leadership than that of parent, a position that costs greatly but comes with little glory. It is easy to get caught up in earthly pursuits and worldly measures of success and lose sight of our first priority in leadership. Even service to the church can be out of balance, robbing the family of essential leadership. The first measure of genuine leadership is within the household and

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family. (1 Timothy 3) In the Old Testament, God built His kingdom by starting with one man, one wife, one family. God's charge to parents was very clear: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.... You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:5-9) In fact, God has revealed the purpose of his first institution of marriage: "Godly offspring." (Malachi 2:15) Of course, children too have free will, and the story of the "prodigal son" reminds us that faithful parenting is not an inoculation for our children against rebellion and sin. Nonetheless, our responsibility is clear.

9. 2 Chronicles 22:3 -- "He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly." Again, the Bible warns about the influence of close relationships – a person will either help or hinder another person's walk with Jesus. Don't be led astray by those closest to you, and don't lead others astray. Good relationships are first and foremost about growing together in Christ. Everything else is secondary. If your friends or family members don't share with you your goal of Jesus, you cannot be yoked together.

10. 2 Chronicles 22:9 -- "He searched for Ahaziah, and he was captured while hiding in Samaria, and he was brought to Jehu and put to death. They buried him, for they said, 'He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart.'" Jehoshaphat was respected for generations because of his fidelity to God. How will you be remembered?

11. 2 Chronicles 22:10 – "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah." There is no limit to what the godless will do.

12. 2 Chronicles 22:11 -- "But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death." Jehoshabeath's brave action at the critical place and time was used by God to sustain the lineage of the royal family of Judah. If you will be faithful with the moment, God can use you to do amazing things.

13. Proverbs 13:7-11 – God's word has much to say about the dangers and deception of riches.

14. Proverbs 13:8 – "The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, but a poor man hears no threat." It can be freeing to have nothing left to lose.

15. Proverbs 13:10 – "By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom." Arguments are fueled by selfish pride.

16. Proverbs 13:13 – "Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded." There are consequences for disobeying God's word, always.

17. Proverbs 13:18 – "Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored." God's discipline is intended to teach you valuable lessons for life. Don't ignore it.

18. Proverbs 13:20 – "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." Wisdom is a journey. Walk with the wise and become wise.

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19. Proverbs 13:25 – “The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.” The wise know how to be content in any situation. The wicked are never satisfied.

20. 1 Thessalonians 3:10 – “...as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?” Prayer should be earnest and continuous.

21. 1 Thessalonians 3:12 -- “...and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” God is love, only God is pure Fidelity, and only God is blameless and holy. He Created all wisdom and goodness. He is the Creator and Source of all love and goodness. You cannot create love and wisdom – you can only receive it from the Creator and transfer it. To grow in love, faithfulness, purity, and holiness, you must grow closer to Jesus – there is no other way, and all of your earthly relationships depend on your relationship to God. Willpower, self-motivation, positive mental attitude, personal power, and knowledge cannot get you there – you must depend solely on Jesus and be guided by the Holy Spirit which is not natural but supernatural.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 July 18: Today, make a list of those friendships you have made with others where Jesus is your mutual goal. Focus on those few relationships and be as “iron sharpens iron” with those few people. Grow with them in Christ day-by-day. Seek more friendships like those – they will likely be very few. Then you brightly radiate the Truth to others. (see today’s readings)

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 4, Thursday, 12 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+12%3B+1+thes+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 12 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 19:2 -- “But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, ‘Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the Lord.’” God will hold His people accountable if they partner with the ungodly. We are not to become entangled in the world's affairs or partner with unbelievers, even under the justification of building relationships of influence. Some mistakenly believe that refusing to partner with the world is the same as isolating oneself from the world. You can have relationship and can influence without syncretism.

2. 2 Corinthians 19:6 – “...and said to the judges, ‘Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the Lord. He is with you in giving judgment.’” As Ambassadors for Christ and as priests, we can no longer represent anyone else's interest other than Jesus Christ's, and His position on a matter will almost always differ from world opinion.

3. 2 Chronicles 19:7 -- “Now then, let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the Lord our God, or partiality or taking bribes.” You are God’s representatives on earth, and He holds you to a very high standard in all that you do. He will not tolerate Christians misrepresenting Him. Yes, he responds to us in grace, but He, nonetheless, expects you to honor Him with your words and deeds before the world.

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4. 2 Cor 19:10 -- "...then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt." We are guilty if we don't warn the sinner.

5. 2 Chronicles 20:9 -- "If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save." When crisis comes, God expects His people to turn to Him and to trust in Him.

6. 2 Chronicles 20:12 -- "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." No one knows what to do without God's guidance. We are totally dependent on God for direction, understanding, and wisdom. Human wisdom is an illusion.

7. 2 Chronicles 20:14 -- "And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel." The Spirit enables us to know God's word and will. No one can understand without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

8. 2 Chronicles 20:17 -- "You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf." If you are walking with the Lord, you will not need to worry about defending yourself. Hold to the truth, and watch God work.

9. 2 Chronicles 20:21 -- "... he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, 'Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.'" Faith causes you to give thanks in the face of seemingly impossible odds.

10. 2 Chronicles 20:35-37 -- "Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, 'Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made.' And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish." Again, God does not want His people to partner with the world and will hold His people accountable if they do.

11. Proverbs 12 – This chapter compares the attributes of the righteous person with the attributes of the foolish person. Read this chapter and see which attributes apply to you. Do you love discipline (v1)? Do you see God's favor in your life (v2)? Are you firmly grounded and strong (v3)? Are you in iron-sharpens-iron, honorable relationships (v4)? Are your thoughts pure, holy, and wise; and do you give sound counsel (v5)? Do your words rescue and heal people rather than destroy them and hurt them (vs6, 18)? Are you commended for your good sense (v8)? Do you live well within your means, without concern about impressing others (v9)? Are equally kind to the lowliest people (v 10)? Are you hard working (vs11, 24, 27)? Do you focus on doing the best you can rather than worrying about what everyone else is doing and rather than becoming envious or jealous (vs12, 14)? Are you always truthful, even in the smallest ways (vs13, 17, 18, 22)? Do you humbly listen to the advice of others? (v15)? Do you hold your emotions and ignore insults (v16)? Do you plan to make peace with all others rather than adding friction (v20)? Do you speak the truth only when it is helpful and brings peace and reconciliation (v 23)? Do you always comfort others in distress (v25)? Do your words and guidance always lead people to a better place and closer to Jesus (vs26, 28)

12. Proverbs 12:1 -- How you respond to discipline is critical.

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13. Proverbs 12:18, 25 -- "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.... Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad."

- You may have heard someone described as "a people person." However, much like a Marine has to be fighter, Christians have to be people persons – it is who we are, part of our identity. God has given us our mission, and it is a people mission – "this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19) Our primary weapons system in our spiritual battle is God's word which is the sword of truth (God's word; God Sword; GODSWORD) (Ephesians 6:17) However, God's word cuts to heal, to bring peace, hope, joy, and love. We testify to the truth in all situations, because only the truth brings reconciliation. As today's Proverbs say, "Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy. No ill befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." (Proverbs 12:17-22) Christians cannot tolerate lies and flattery which promotes continued deceit and pain. However, administer truth with gracefulness, gentleness, patience, kindness, mercy, politeness, hopefulness, peacefulness, compassion, and love, always with the motive to bring others closer to God, not farther away. Our "weapon" of God's word is not used against people but rather against spiritual forces. In the Marine Corps, there is no such thing as an "accidental discharge" of a weapon, only a "negligent discharge," because as professionals, we understand that there is no excuse for carelessness with our weapons. Likewise, there is no excuse for a Christian to have a "negligent discharge" of the mouth. As Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak." (Matthew 12:36) Likely, these are hard words for all of us, but we must listen carefully to our Master. Paul charged Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) Do you administer the truth (and only the truth) in such a way that brings healing and gladness?

14. Proverbs 12:24, 27 -- The Bible continuously repeats God's expectation for us to work hard and avoid laziness.

15. 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6 -- "For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ." We will be held accountable for how faithfully delivered the message, not for how it was received. Communicate to please God, not men.

16. 1 Thessalonians 2:4 -- "We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." Preach the Gospel in love and obedience to God; don't worry so much about how people respond. The Holy Spirit will use the word of God to convict hearts, not your clever packaging of God's word. You will never be able to convince or please those who are not convicted by the Holy Spirit to respond. Success for you is faithfulness to God, not how others respond to God – that is between them and God.

17. 1 Thessalonians 2:4 -- "So we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts."

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- Paul repeats a theme we have been reading all year: What matters more than words or deeds is the heart or motivation behind those words or deeds. People can even preach Jesus for the wrong reasons which usually results in preaching in the wrong way too. Concerning those false prophets, Jesus said, "You will recognize them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16) Today, Paul describes the attributes of Christ-centered preaching: The Gospel is presented boldly, without flattery, not to please men or the crowd but rather to please God; it will cause conflict and result in suffering for the proclaimer. (1 Thessalonians 2:2-4) There are no hidden agendas, no personal interests, no desires for personal gain, no uncontrolled emotions, no personal opinions, no crafty arguments, no clever attention getters, no fog machines or light shows, no careless Scriptural interpretation, just the Gospel in its pure form. (1 Thessalonians 2:3-6) The Gospel message is not sugar-coated (hence the conflict and suffering), it starts with the word "repent," calls sin, sin, and ends with only one way for salvation: Jesus Christ. However, painful truth is not delivered callously or caustically but rather with love, compassion, gentleness, and affection as a loving mother would display to her infant. (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8) Rebukes and corrections are always seasoned with encouragement, support, and modelled example. (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12) The person who proclaims Jesus from a genuine heart is ready to work day and night for the sake of the Kingdom, seeking nothing in return, and will display impeccable character and conduct. (1 Thessalonians 2:9, 10) When a truly godly person presents the word of God, it is evident that what is being heard is not "the word of men" but actually "the word of God." (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Nevertheless, the holy person will not be accepted by all. The faithful Christian is ready to be driven out and even killed that the lost might be saved. (1 Thessalonians 2:15) Even the faithful Christian can get caught up in human emotions and passions and can find themselves proclaiming Truth for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way. We must, above all else, guard our hearts and constantly examine our motives. One way to do that is to compare our emotions, words, and deeds to the attributes of love and to the fruits of the spirit (provided below; good memory verses). If we find ourselves drifting away from love and the Spirit in defense of the Gospel, we have identified a heart issue and are being deceived by the Evil One.

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 -- Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

- Galatians 5:22, 23 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

18. 1 Thessalonians 2:8 -- "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves." To share the Gospel, you must be ready to humbly serve those who treat you sinfully. You take up your cross when others mistreat you because of your testimony. When you behave badly and in return are treated badly, there is no reward in that.

19. 1 Thessalonians 2:9 -- "We worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." Work diligently to be a burden to no one so that nothing would distract from the message of Jesus.

20. 1 Thessalonians 2:12 -- "We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory." Proclaiming the truth includes both exhortation and encouragement, challenging people in a positive way to turn to God.

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21. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 -- "...when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." The word of God is powerfully at work in you – does that excite you?

22. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 -- "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God." We don't proclaim man-made philosophies, good advice, self-help strategies, or current morality; we proclaim Jesus. Our words are not our own. Speak only God's word into every situation.

23. 1 Thessalonians 2:14 -- "For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews." If you are faithful to God's word, don't be surprised if you are persecuted by other 'Christians' who have established a comfortable compromise with the world. Your words will threaten their comfortable, compromised position.

24. 1 Thessalonians 2:20 -- "For you are our glory and joy." Your success in life is measured by the disciples you make. This is the Great Commission Jesus gave you. No other measures of success matter.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 July 18: Recommit your life to the sole mission of fulfilling the Great Commission – "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (1 Thessalonians 2)

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 3, Wednesday, 11 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+11%3B+1+thes+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 11 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 17:3 -- "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel." Jehoshaphat did not compromise like everyone else did. Therefore, God honored Him. The Israelites worshiped God, but not wholeheartedly. Many in churches today try to serve God and also substitutes for God. Will you be like Jehoshaphat?

2. 2 Chronicles 17:6 -- "His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord." It takes courage to follow the ways of God, mostly moral courage to stand out against popular opinion and social morality.

3. 2 Chronicles 17:7, 9 -- "In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nathaniel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.... And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the Lord with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people." Jehoshaphat had a plan to make disciples of all the people. Jehoshaphat's national security strategy was to ensure the entire nation was educated in the Book of the Law.

4. 2 Chronicles 17:10 -- "And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat." Because of Jehoshaphat's faithfulness, God made his enemies live at peace with them.

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5. 2 Chronicles 17:11 -- "Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents." The Bible says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Jehoshaphat trust God at His word, and God proved Himself faithful.

6. 2 Chronicles 18:1 -- "Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab." Jehoshaphat makes a big mistake: The Bible says that His people are not to be unequally yoked and partner with the world. Jehoshaphat gets himself entangled in ungodly affairs for sake of friendship. You cannot befriend the ungodly and remain faithful to God.

7. 2 Chronicles 18:5 -- "The king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, 'Shall we go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?' And they said, 'Go up, for God will give it into the hand of the king.'" The church has always been tempted to compromise God's word to please government. Here all but one prophet had become false prophets. Where do you stand when the majority of God's people agree with sinful policy?

8. 2 Chronicles 18:6 -- But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here another prophet of the LORD of whom we may inquire?" Ahab surrounded himself with religious leaders who said what he wanted to hear. All agreed and claimed to speak on behalf of God. Perhaps the most unattended church in your community is really the most successful in the eyes of God.

9. 2 Chronicles 18:13 -- "But Micaiah said, 'As the Lord lives, what my God says, that I will speak.'" Micaiah was hated and ostracized because he refused to speak anything but the word of God. Are you a Micaiah? Are you willing to boldly proclaim what no one, including other church goers, want to hear?

10. 2 Chronicles 18:26 -- "Thus says the king, 'Put this fellow in prison and feed him with meager rations of bread and water until I return in peace.'"

- God did not keep Micaiah from prison but did vindicate him in the end.

- Your measure of success is not how people respond to your message but rather how faithful you are as Christ's Ambassador.

11. 2 Chronicles 18:29 -- "And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes.' And the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle." Man can do nothing to thwart God's plan.

12. 2 Chronicles 18:33 -- "But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate." God's activity seems random to those who do not have Holy Spirit vision. Nothing is random with God. God uses all circumstances to accomplish His will.

13. Proverbs 11:1 -- "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight." We don't take dishonesty as seriously as God does. "Abomination" is a very strong word.

14. Proverbs 11:2 -- "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom." It takes humility to turn to God. Many people are stuck in pride though.

15. Proverbs 11:4 -- "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." Riches won't help you stand before God. Compare Proverbs 11:4 with Matthew 16:26 -- "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"

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16. Proverbs 11:9 – “With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.” Advice from the ungodly will only destroy you. Seek the counsel of someone close to Jesus. (see also vs. 11 and 14)

17. Proverbs 11:16 – “A gracious woman gets honor, and violent men get riches.” Wealth is empty without respect.

18. Proverbs 11:20 – “Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those of blameless ways are his delight.” Behavior reflects the heart.

19. Proverbs 11:24-26 – “One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.” Again, you can expect God to treat you how you treat others. (see also v. 31)

20. Proverbs 11:28 – “Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.” Riches are not security. Fidelity to God is.

21. 1 Thessalonians 1: 4-7 -- “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.... you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

- John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, and Paul both began their preaching with the following word: “Repent.” (see. Matthew 3:12; Matthew 4:17; Acts 2:38; Acts 26:20). They all also spoke of the need to “perform deeds [or “bear fruit”] in keeping with repentance.” Of course, this message was not received by the “scoffers.” Proverbs talk about these scoffers, warning us not to “correct” or “reprove” a scoffer but rather to save our reproof for wise people (scoffers are not wise) who will accept it. So, what does it mean to be a scoffer? This is not a word we use much today. Other Bible versions use the words “scorner” or “mockers.” We know from other passages that scoffers “delight in their scoffing” and are compared to fools who “hate knowledge.” (Proverbs 1:22) A scoffer won’t listen to a rebuke, and “seeks wisdom in vain,” and refuses to “go to the wise.” (Proverbs 13:1, Proverbs 14:6; Proverbs

15:12) The Bible says that the scoffer is the root cause of “strife... quarrelling... and abuse,” and they have the power to “set a city aflame.” (Proverbs 22:10; Proverbs 29:8) “Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride,” a person motivated by “their own ungodly passions.” (Proverbs 21:24; Jude 1:18) “The scoffer is an abomination to mankind.... Condemnation is ready for scoffers.” (Proverbs 24:9; Proverbs 19:29) So, the Bible warns us about preaching to scoffers, but how do you know if you are dealing with a scoffer? Paul reminds us today that it is God who convicts a person’s heart, not us. If God is working on someone’s heart, they will respond to the Gospel with humility, and repentance. If God has not “chosen” them, they will not respond and will take great offense to those words “repent,” “confess,” and especially “Jesus Christ.” Interestingly, Paul, though very religious, was a leader among the scoffers.” He not only took offense to the Gospel, he persecuted the scoffers with great enthusiasm. It wasn’t until Jesus “chose” him that everything changed and that he listened to God’s people – “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.” (John 15:16) I do not understand how this works, but I can relate with it from my own salvation experience. However, I don’t think we can

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perfectly discern who God is working on, so I actually think the Bible is warning us that we just need to be as discerning as possible and to be prepared to take a beating for sake of the Gospel of Jesus. At one point, Jesus tells the disciples that, "if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake of the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town" (Matthew 10:14) However, we are also told to proclaim the Gospel to the "the whole creation." (Mark 16:15) The Bible is full of martyrs (persecuted witnesses), and I believe that God does use people like Stephen to convict the hearts of people like Saul (Paul). Sometimes we will preach "in season," and sometimes "out of season." (2 Timothy 4:2) I think we should seek to be led by the Holy Spirit in this, trusting not on our own understanding, and focusing our very limited time on where we believe the Father is already working -- "My Father is working until now, and I am working.... Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will." (John 5:17-21)

22. 1 Thessalonians 1:5 -- "...because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." A person cannot receive God's word without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

23. 1 Thessalonians 1:6 -- "You received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit." Those who have truly received God's word will joyfully work to exemplify the character of Christ in their actions.

24. 1 Thessalonians 1:8 -- "Your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything." Actions speak louder than words. We are called to verbally proclaim Jesus to everyone, but our behavior will validate our words and reveal the truth of the power of Jesus in the lives of sinners. Your faith will be evident to others by the way you live. Ralph Waldo Emerson - "What you do, speaks so loudly, I cannot hear what you say."

25. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 -- "...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." Wrath is coming. This is a critical part of our message.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 11 July 18: Today, consider what people voluntarily say about you and how they describe you. Have you developed a reputation within your community of being like Jesus? Resolve today to imitate Christ more and more, glorifying Him through not just your words but also your deeds. Proclaim Christ whenever you have the opportunity, but let your behavior speak about you. (1 Thessalonians 1:7, 8)

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 2, Tuesday, 10 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+10%3B+col+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 10 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 15:1 -- "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded," Go out with the Spirit of God as your guide.

2. 2 Chronicles 15:2 -- "The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."

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- The LORD is with you while you are with Him. Do not forsake Him. God will not support your unfaithfulness and sin. If you want to make your own choices apart from Him, He will let you, and He will let you suffer the consequences of those choices.

3. 2 Chronicles 15:3, 4 – “For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, but when in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them.” Don’t turn to God only in distress.

4. 2 Chronicles 15:3-6 – “In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. They were broken in pieces. Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress.” When a person or a nation turns from God, there is lawlessness and inevitable suffering.

5. 2 Chronicles 15:7 – “But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.” The true definition of courage is faith in the LORD, one day at a time.

6. 2 Chronicles 15:8 – “As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the Lord.” One of the key steps of courage is removing wickedness and compromise from your midst and truly worshipping God with your every deed.

7. 2 Chronicles 15:9-15 -- A true Christian leader leads those around him/her to repentance, worship, and obedience.

8. 2 Chronicles 15:16 -- “Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.” Sometimes people have to choose fidelity to God over fidelity to family. Sometimes Christians have to reject the ungodly teachings and examples of their parents. Though the Bible commands us to respect our parents as well as the authority of government, God comes first.

9. 2 Chronicles 15:16 – A true Christian leader may even lead seniors to repentance, worship, and obedience.

10. 2 Chronicles 15:17 -- “Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days.” Few people are described in the Bible as wholehearted. Do you serve God with a true heart? In repentance, be very careful to make your repentance complete and total.

11. 2 Chronicles 16:2-6 – “Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king’s house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria....” Don’t rob God to appease men. Financial debt to ungodly institutions takes resources from Kingdom and gives them to the kingdoms of men.

12. 2 Chronicles 16:7-9 -- “Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you....” You have no idea what you are giving up when you compromise your fidelity to God. God wants so much more from you that you cannot see with your own wisdom.

13. 2 Chronicles 16:9 -- “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from

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now on you will have wars.” When you turn to substitutes for God to solve your problems, you will always suffer greatly. Trust in the Lord, not your own understanding, with all of your heart, and He will take care of you.

14. 2 Chronicles 16:10 -- “Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time.” People tend to blame the God’s messengers for the truth, but the messengers are accountable to God for delivery of the message. God’s messengers are often persecuted by the rebellious for delivering God’s message. Jesus warned that His disciples would be persecuted by those who reject Him.

15. 2 Chronicles 16:12 -- “Yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians.” Asa did not finish well. Don’t lose the race on the final lap. Resolve to make your last day your best day.

16. Proverbs 10 – The word “lips” is used five times in this chapter, the word “mouth” is used six times, and the word “tongue” is used twice – what comes out of your mouth reveals your character and the condition of your heart. Words can build up or destroy. Pay close attention to what is coming out of your mouth and what your words say about your heart.

17. Proverbs 10:5 – “He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.” Prepare for hard times during easy times.

18. Proverbs 10:23 – “Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.” Sinners joke about the sin that God abhors.

19. Colossians 4:1 – “Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”

- God expects you to treat others the way you want to be treated by Him (See Proverbs 11:24-26).

- The way we treat others reveals what we really believe about God and how much we truly value our salvation. Jesus said that love comes most from those who feel most forgiven. (Luke 7:47) Jesus also said that grace received demands grace given – “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14, 15) When we truly understand the magnitude of the mercy, grace, and love we have received from God at the tremendous price of His Son, it becomes inconceivable for us to offer anything but the same to others. If we are demanding to receive justice from others, we have lost sight of our own guiltiness that was covered over with the blood of the Savior. When we treat others poorly, it is a clear sign that Jesus is not big enough (glorified) in our lives. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he actually responded with, not one commandment but two: “He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40) Why two? Because they are inseparable – the second proves the first, and the second depends on the first. Your love for God is revealed most clearly through your relationships.

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20. Colossians 4:2-4 – “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.” Prayer must be consistent and thankful. The focus of prayer is the Great Commission.

21. Colossians 4:3 – “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison.” Is your main hope today that you might have the opportunity to share Jesus with others, and are you willing to suffer to do it?

22. Colossians 4:5, 6 – “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

- It takes wisdom to know how to share the Gospel with outsiders, and the opportunities are fleeting. You must be prepared for the opportunity and present God’s word with grace.

- You are running out of time to appeal to the lost. Do you have an intense sense of urgency? How will that reveal itself today in your priorities?

23. Colossians 4:7 – “Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.” Our friends should be faithful ministers and fellow servants. To whom do you give your priority time?

24. Colossians 4:8 – “I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts...” Friends encourage one another on the journey of service to Christ.

25. Colossians 4:10-17 -- Friends in Christ work hard for one another and share the burden of hardships. We are united in one purpose: to fulfill God’s mission which He intends to fulfill not through many independent agents but rather through a body of believers who are one.

26. Colossians 4:12 – “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers.” Epaphras continually “struggled” in prayer for other Christians. For whom do you pray that hard for?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 July 18: Struggle in prayer today for whomever God puts on your heart. Pray hard for them. Pray all day for them. Struggle. (Colossians 4:12)

DBRP - WEEK 28, Day 1, Monday, 9 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+chron+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+9%3B+col+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 9 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 13:6 -- Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord....” To rebel against God's chosen workers is to rebel against God.

2. 2 Chronicles 13:8 -- “And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made you for gods.” No number is sufficient to defeat God's plan.

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3. 2 Chronicles 13:9 – “Have you not driven out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are not gods.” God chooses His leaders; they are not chosen by powerful men.

4. 2 Chronicles 13:11 – “They offer to the Lord every morning and every evening burnt offerings and incense of sweet spices, set out the showbread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand that its lamps may burn every evening. For we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but you have forsaken him.” God's true disciples are revealed by how they prioritize and emphasize worship.

5. 2 Chronicles 13:18 -- “The men of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers.” With God on your side, nothing and nobody can defeat you. Nothing on earth can thwart God's plan for your life if you are willing to trust Him and obey Him. The faithful rely on God through seemingly impossible circumstances and are rewarded by God.

6. 2 Chronicles 13:20 – “Jeroboam did not recover his power in the days of Abijah. And the Lord struck him down, and he died.” God knows those who oppose Him and will judge them in His ways and His timing.

7. 2 Chronicles 13:20 -- God blesses your faith.

8. 2 Chronicles 13:22 – “The rest of the acts of Abijah, his ways and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.” God's account of your life will focus on your relationship with Him and your fidelity to Him, not so much on your accomplishments.

9. 2 Chronicles 14:1-5 – “Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim and commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment.” True leaders lead others to obey and seek the LORD.

10. 2 Chronicles 14:3-5 -- Faith leads away from substitutes for God and toward obedience to God.

11. 2 Chronicles 14:6 – “He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the Lord gave him peace.” Only the LORD can give you rest and peace.

12. 2 Chronicles 14:11-15 – “And Asa cried to the Lord his God, ‘O Lord, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.’ So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians....” God provides when His obedient people cry for help.

13. 2 Chronicles 14:18 -- “And Asa cried to the Lord his God, ‘O Lord, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.’” Again, when you are doing God's will and people oppose you, they are attempting to oppose God and have no chance. No one can thwart God's plan. Faith is not only trusting God, it is walking in the will of God and watching God work through His power to accomplish what you couldn't in your power.

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14. Proverbs 9:6 – “Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” Jesus said that leaving the way of the world to follow Him would bring the fullness of joy in life. Are you still shortchanging your life in compromise with the world?

15. Proverbs 9:12 – “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” You are responsible for your own actions and their inevitable outcomes. Don’t blame someone else.

16. Proverbs 9:13 – “The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing.” Foolish people are loud and lustful.

17. Proverbs 9:17 -- “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” Don’t be deceived – there are no shortcuts in life, and you don’t get something for nothing. There is no way around obeying God and following Jesus to get to where you need to go.

18. Colossians 3:1 – “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” While everyone else is seeking worldly security and comfort, Christians are seeking to grow closer and closer to Jesus as their only priority.

19. Colossians 3:5 – “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Idolatry is desiring what you shouldn’t, seeking fulfillment outside of God and His provision.

20. Colossians 3:5-15 – “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.... put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another.... Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.... forgiving each other.... put on love.... And be thankful.”

- Here is a practical test to see how well you are guarding your heart and growing in Christ. Which attributes are most apparent in your life? How consistent are you in those attributes? Have you “put to death” and “put away” the negative attributes, and have you “put on” the positive ones? Are you clothed in Christ?

- The more real God is in our lives, the less we care about the things that cause lust, hurt, and hate. God makes the pursuits of men meaningless. If we still desire what the world desires, we simply do not know God well enough.

21. Colossians 3:11 – “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” Christians should never acknowledge, in positive or negative way, and man-made social stratifications such as race, ethnicity, or economic status, that have historically divided people. We must rise above this perspective to the perspective of God who only sees saved and unsaved.

22. Colossians 3:13 – “As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Christians should be the perfect example of forgiveness as their whole hope for eternal life depends on undeserved complete forgiveness. God forgave you freely, even while you continued to sin. You have no choice but to forgive unconditionally. God expects us to forgive others in the same way He forgave us, taking the pain upon ourselves in selfless sacrifice for those who hurt us, responding only in perfect love, offering grace rather than demanding our rights, responding as a complete slave though we are mighty children of God.

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23. Colossians 3:15 – “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.” We should be known for peacefulness, unity, and thankfulness.

24. Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” We must learn the art of admonishing others in a positive, encouraging way.

25. Colossians 3:16, 17 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” We must never forget that our sole mission in life is to preach and to teach God’s word, to make not just believers in Jesus but obedient disciples or followers of Jesus. We are not here to just be good people who spread good, moral ideas; we are here to be Ambassadors for Christ. We don’t point to morality, we point to the person of Jesus.

26. Colossians 3:17 – “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” We should publicly proclaim Jesus Christ in all that we do.

27. Colossians 3:18-21 – “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Households are schoolhouses for character development and spiritual growth. This is we learn how to love God by loving and serving others. How we treat our family is a primary act of worship and demonstrates how much we really love God. Parents teach their kids about God and how to love God by how they demonstrate love in the house.

28. Colossians 3:22 – “Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”

- God always looks beyond actions to judge the heart behind those actions. God wants you to do what is right with a sincere heart, motivated solely by love for Him and for others, not motivated by fear, pride, greed, or even duty – only love.

- We are to serve those in authority over us as if they were God. We must treat those subordinate to us as Jesus would, as a servant.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 July 18: Use Colossians 3:5-15 today to see how well you are guarding your heart and growing in Christ. Be careful though not to assess yourself based solely upon what you say and do, rather look at the genuineness of your heart. Test your motivations to expose what isn’t love. (Colossians 3)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 7, Sunday, 8 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+11%2C+12%3B+PRO+8%3B+psalm+77%2C+78>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 8 July 18:

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1. 2 Chronicles 11:1-4 -- Since God's thoughts are far removed from our thoughts, He will, if we are listening, tell us to do many things that are contrary to our will and to our wisdom. We must be careful to heed the word of God and not be tempted to merely do what seems right to us.

2. 2 Chronicles 11:4 -- "Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your relatives. Return every man to his home, for this thing is from me.' So they listened to the word of the LORD and returned and did not go against Jeroboam." God desires peace in families not strife.

3. 2 Chronicles 11:14, 15 -- "Jeroboam and his sons cast them [the Levites] out from serving as priests of the LORD, and he appointed his own priests for the high places."

- Ungodly leaders will seek to shut up or eliminate godly priests and preachers and replace them with preachers who will proclaim what they want to hear.

- Notice that when a nation rejects God it will no longer tolerate sound doctrine; it is replaced with religion that is acceptable to the unfaithful, religion the seeks to legitimize sin. These are hard times for the faithful. Paul had this to say to Timothy: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:2-5) Conversely, when a nation accepts the teachings of God, the people of God are treated well and the nation is strengthened. Regardless the choice of a nation, regardless the cost, God's people must remain faithful to the KING.

4. 2 Chronicles 11:16 -- "And those who had set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came...." You may have to leave everything behind and lose everything to remain faithful to the LORD, to go where He wants you to go, and to do what He wants you to do. You shouldn't be surprised when many 'religious' around you refuse to make that sort of committed sacrifice. Most choose comfort over fidelity and justify it through clever lies, often religious lies. (2 Chronicles 11:13-17)

5. 2 Chronicles 11:16, 17 -- "And those who had set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came... to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their fathers. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon." Godly people strengthen a nation. Nations are blessed through the influence of godly people.

6. 2 Chronicles 12:1 -- "When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." When the faithful were forced to leave Israel, Israel went into great depravity.

7. 2 Chronicles 12:2 -- "In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem." Again, God uses ungodly nations to punish his unfaithful people.

8. 2 Chronicles 12:7-8 -- "When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: 'They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance.... Nevertheless, they shall be servants to him, that they may know my service and the

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service of the kingdoms of the countries.” God responds to genuine repentance but may not completely remove the consequences of your sin. It is hard for us to see how God is using pain to chisel away the unwanted sinfulness in our hearts to reveal the masterpiece He is creating us to be. Beautiful rose bushes must be pruned, pure silver must be put through the fire, and our hearts must be refined through adversity. Romans 8:28 reminds us that, in Jesus, there are no bad circumstances, only good.

9. 2 Chronicles 12:14 -- "And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD."

- You must set your heart to seek The Lord or you will inevitably do evil. If the earnest desire of your heart is not the LORD, perfect unity to Jesus, you will fail to accomplish your life's purpose.

- In one generation after Solomon, the kingdom was forever divided. Chronicles records that "Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of their fathers. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam son of Solomon three years, walking in the ways of David and Solomon during this time." (2 Chron 11:16,17) However, by the 5th year of Rehoboam's reign, "he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD." (2 Chronicles 12:1) Rehoboam's goal was not to establish a kingdom for God but rather a kingdom for himself (11:1), and "he did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the LORD." Today's readings from Psalms point out that God had commanded fathers throughout the generations to impress upon their children the vitality of fidelity to the Lord that "they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." (Psa 78:7). 1 Kings 2 records that David charged Solomon to "be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses." However, 1 Kings 11 records that "The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, [and] Solomon did not keep the Lord's command." Tragically, the Bible does not record a charge from Solomon to Rehoboam to set his heart on seeking the Lord and to remain faithful.

10. Proverbs 8:1 – "Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice?" Wisdom is obvious to those willing to open their eyes.

11. Proverbs 8:13 – "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." Do you hate evil, pride, arrogance and perverted speech? You don't really love God if you don't hate evil.

12. Proverbs 8:22 -- "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old." God is the source of all wisdom, and all of His Creation functions are based upon His wisdom, the closer you draw to God, the more in synch you become with universal truth and the more effective your whole life becomes. You cannot get true wisdom apart from Jesus who is the "Word", or "Logos" or "Eternal Logic" (see John 1)

13. Proverbs 8:35 – "For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord." Jesus said, "I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life; no one comes to the Father but through me. You must decide for yourself whether He was a liar, lunatic or The Lord.

14. Psalm 77:11 -- "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old." In times of trouble and doubt, it is good to remember what God has done for His people and for you in life;

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count your many blessings. When you begin to doubt God's faithfulness, remember His perfect record of love and faithfulness. God is always good, loving, and faithful.

15. Psalm 78:4 – “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” God expects you to tell your children (or children you know) all that you have seen God do in your lifetime as a witness to His glory.

16. Psalm 78:5-7 -- "Teach... children that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." God expects parents to teach their children to trust and obey God. Jesus said that our mission on earth was to make disciples (not just believers). Your first responsibility of discipleship is within your own family.

17. Psalm 78:7 -- “...so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;” Believers believe Jesus is the Son of God, but disciples don’t just believe, they follow and obey Jesus, dedicating all of their lives to Jesus. Jesus has appointed us to make disciples who obey – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20)

18. Psalm 78:11 – “They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.” Forgetting what God has done leads you to depart from Him.

19. Psalm 78:20 – “He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?” You selfishly depart from God when you selfishly want more than He provides or when you don’t wait patiently and confidently for Him to provide.

20. Psalm 78:34-37 -- "When he killed them, they sought him; they repented and sought God earnestly.... But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues. Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant." Many people obey God only out of fear or hope for reward, but God demands obedience motivated by love. God knows the difference between selfishly motivated worship and unselfish worship and service. Outwardly, they may look the same to other people, but God judges the heart behind the deeds. God is not fooled like people are.

21. Psalm 78:52 – “Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.” God is the Good Shepherd. (see Psalm 23; John 10)

22. Psalm 78:67-68 -- He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves.” God judges once faithful people no longer useful to His mission. Past fidelity does not make up for today’s infidelity. It is today that matters, and it is not how you start that matters by how you finish the race.

23. Psalm 78:72 -- "With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand." Good leaders require both character and competence. They must be both ethical (by God’s definition) and good at what they do. Many leaders are talented, with large personalities, but lack integrity. High competency often overshadows bad character in the eyes of the public, with unfortunate consequences.

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24. Psalm 78 -- God's history of discipline within your family and your church should teach you the futility of sin and rebellion.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 July 18: Today, "set your heart" or resolve to seek The Lord, not just to be a "good person", to pursue the person of Jesus Christ as your life goal. (2 Chronicles 12:15)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 6, Saturday, 7 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+9%2C+10%3B+PRO+7%3B+psalm+76>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 7 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 9:1-4 – "...There was nothing hidden from Solomon that he could not explain to her...." Solomon had everything, and seemed to know everything, but this was not enough in his life to give him peace and security. Character is not riches, fame, reputation, or even knowledge. Character is based upon what is truly in your heart, your relationship with God. God gave Solomon wisdom and riches, but Solomon had to choose to put God first in his life.

2. 2 Chronicles 9:8 -- "Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness." God establishes earthly kings for His purposes. Godly kings execute justice and righteousness due to their relationship with God who is justice and righteousness. God often blesses nations with godly kings and curses nations with ungodly kings. The fate of elections is in God's hands, and God will give to a nation according to His blessings and disciplines. The hope for America is repentance and revival.

3. 2 Chronicles 9 -- People often think that with more resources, opportunities, or intelligence, their life would be better. However, Solomon had everything, nothing was spared him by God, and he would end up destroying the kingdom and ending his life in regret. The secret to life is nothing but relationship with God.

4. 2 Chronicles 10:1-15 -- You need to choose very carefully the people from whom you take advice. If they are not seeking to advise you from their understanding of God's word, they will mislead you.

5. 2 Chronicles 10:8, 14 – "But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.... And the king answered them harshly; and forsaking the counsel of the old men, King Rehoboam spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men." How important is it to listen to wise counsel who will not just tell you what you want to hear or attempt to appeal to your ego and pride? At a critical time for the kingdom of Israel, King Rehoboam chose poor counsel, thereby decimating the kingdom. Where do you seek advice for tough decisions? Psalm 1:1, 2 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." Your primary counsel should be from the Holy Spirit through God's word. Will you delight in God's word and meditate upon it all day and night?

6. 2 Chronicles 10:15 -- "So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by God that the Lord might fulfill his word, which he spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat." The Bible assumes the reader knows what happened in 1 Kings 11. Bible study requires a careful study of the whole Bible. None of it stands alone. Many are in Bible interpretation because they

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only lightly study and take verses out of the context of the entirety of God's word. Hence, the importance of systematic Bible reading programs such as this.

7. 2 Chronicles 10:15 – Again, God leads the hearts of men to accomplish His purposes which can include both blessings or curses depending upon the fidelity of those with whom He is dealing.

8. 2 Chronicles 10:19 – “So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.” God works through the rebellion and changes of government to accomplish His mission.

9. Proverbs 7:6, 7 -- For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense....” Look and see God’s truth being revealed all around you in the lives of others.

10. Proverbs 7:11 – “She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home....” The wicked are loud and lawless, true?

11. Proverbs 7:18 – “She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home.” The wicked pursue pleasure in disobedience to God. They deceive themselves into thinking there are no consequences.

13. Psalm 76:1 – “In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.” Nations are great when God is known by the people and respected by the people as God.

14. Psalm 76:1, 11 – “In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.... Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them; let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared.”

- Asaph’s Psalm explains where God is truly “known” He is truly worshipped, feared, and obeyed. When speaking to the Pharisees who pursued obedience and religion motivated by pride and self-righteousness, Jesus reiterated this truth -- you must not be like the hypocrites [actors]. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.... Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:5, 9, 10) Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionary says that “hallowed” means to “mentally venerate,” and venerate means to revere, adore, esteem, honor or worship. When God is truly hallowed, and honored as KING in the heart, genuine worship and acceptable obedience is the result. Today we read that the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon and said this, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, half the greatness of your wisdom was not told me; you surpass the report that I heard.” (2 Chronicles 9:5, 6) Her experience with Solomon seems like a great example for the Christian life. Hearing about Jesus and believing enough to go to him is the first step – “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:5) However, our faith blossoms when hearing transitions to experiencing. We are not witnesses to what we have heard, nor witnesses to a philosophy or religion. We are witnesses to what we have seen and experienced first-hand; and we are witnesses to who we know personally and genuinely. It is the reality of Christ within us that produces fruit and works which will not be destroyed (see 1 Corinthians 3:12). When the queen of Sheba experienced first-hand the truth of Solomon, then she offered him many gifts with a heart similar to what Asaph describes in today’s Psalm – “let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared.” In response to the queen’s honoring of him, Solomon “gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked.” Consider how Solomon’s response to Sheba compares to the words of Jesus referenced yesterday from

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John 15: "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." Let it be said "In [your heart] God is known; His name is great in [your heart]." John 15:11 -- "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

15. Psalm 76:11-12 -- "Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them; let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared, who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth." The nation who obeys God is the nation God blesses. Again, our only hope for America is repentance and revival.

15. Psalm 76:11, 12 -- When you must choose between your loyalty to God or government, always remain loyal to God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 July 18: Pray for repentance and revival. Repentance and revival must occur in God's church. (See today's notes above)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 5, Friday, 6 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+7%2C+8%3B+PRO+6%3B+col+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 6 July 17:

1. 2 Chronicles 7:1 – "As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple." God responds to prayer.

2. 2 Chronicles 7:14 -- "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." The sins of God's people affect the land as does repentance. God has provided us with the prescription to heal our nation

3. 2 Chronicles 7:22 -- "Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.'" God deals with you in a way that both reveals His character to you but also glorifies Himself before a watching world. God will glorify Himself to the world through your life either through positive example or negative example. God will not be mocked. God punishes even those He has saved through grace. A loving Father disciplines His children. Better for the children though to simply obey.

4. 2 Chronicles 8:11 -- "Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, 'My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the Lord has come are holy.'"

- God's people can't live a double life, attempting to partner with both the unholy and the holy. Solomon's divided loyalties caused a divided family and would lead to a divided nation.

- Solomon married a woman who could not completely share in his worship of the LORD. You cannot be truly "one" in marriage with different levels of fidelity to the One True God. Marriage should be a mutually supportive, interdependent discipleship partnership.

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- This verse causes me to question the things that I allow in my life that are not presentable to the Lord. God's holy people cannot be joined with that which is unholy.

5. Proverbs 6:6-8 -- "Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest."

- A person must have the self-discipline to work hard every day to invest in the future without daily reward and without the direction of others. Successful people don't need external motivators.

- God's blessings in your life depend on your self-discipline.

6. Proverbs 6:20 -- "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching." God's plan is for children to be raised by a godly mother and father.

7. Proverbs 6:30, 31 -- "People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house." We must hold everyone accountable for their sins, even if we can understand the circumstances which led them to sin.

8. Colossians 2:2, 3 -- "...being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

- Our goal is not to live a good life; our goal is to be one with Jesus Christ and to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37) This distinction is critical to the Christian life. Many Christians make "righteousness" their idol, unwittingly replacing Christ for morality. However, apart from Christ, there is nothing at all. Solomon sought wisdom and was the wisest man that had ever lived, but as Solomon learned the hard way, wisdom is not to be our ultimate goal. If we aim in life to be wise or to live good lives, to be good people, we will neither obtain true wisdom or goodness, nor will we obtain the fullness of joy that comes from true union with Jesus Christ. If we rather seek to truly and fully "know" Jesus, to be "knit together" in love with Him, we will "reach all the riches" with "whom is hidden all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge." We are not trying to act like Jesus, we are becoming fully and truly one with Him -- a dead body now alive in Christ; a once empty vessel now filled with the Holy Spirit; not us working but Christ working through us. (Romans 15:18) The Bible says that Noah "walked with God," before the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but notice that Paul says that "those who have received Christ Jesus the Lord," are not to just walk "with" Him but rather to "walk in Him, rooted and built up in him." (Colossians 2:6, 7) In union with Christ, our identity becomes nothing. This relationship has been described as a bottle in the ocean, not just full of water by also surround by vast water, engulfed. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20) Our joy is not in the world and what happens to us; our fulfillment is not in what we achieve, what others think of us, or what we think of ourselves; our joy and fulfillment (filled fully) is Christ. Paul reminds us today, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority." (Colossians 2: 9, 10) You ARE the Temple of God. Doesn't that change everything? Yes, we are called throughout the Bible to be obedient, but not obedient in the pursuit of self-righteousness, obedient in pursuit of oneness; obedient out of love -- "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give

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away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) Love, faithfulness, and obedience are inseparable. We are incapable of any of those of ourselves – God is love, and it is only God in us, consuming us, that produces true goodness. Concerning the good people (even Christians) try to do from their own “righteousness,” Paul says, “These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” (Colossians 2:23) Die of self. Be one with Christ.

-- Philippians 2:5-8 -- Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- Fully knowing God requires uncommon unity among God's people. You cannot fully know God alone. God did not design you that way, and you cannot fulfill God's top command for you of loving others by seeking Him alone. In Genesis, whenever God created on one of the six days, He gave His benediction, “This is good,” until His first malediction when man was alone -- “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” (Genesis 2:18) You were saved into a spiritual family of believers. God wants us to be so close as a body of believers that we can be described as being “knit together in love.”

-- John 17:11, 21-26 -- Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.... just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.... O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

-- John 15 -- 1, 4, 5, 7-17 -- I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

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9. Colossians 2:6 -- "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." You can fully receive Christ without "walk[ing] in Him." How does that truth change your approach to today and every day?

10. Colossians 2:8 -- "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

- The philosophies and traditions of the world are captivating and deceptive; in Christ we have no need of them. The wisdom of man is foolishness in the eyes of God, and, in fact, powerless. Christ is our Head, and the Holy Spirit our Counselor. Those who are of the Kingdom of God should not attempt to live by the principles of the world, though some try to blend God's ways with worldly ways – impossible! In today's OT readings we see that Solomon made this mistake: "Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to the palace he had built for her for he said, 'My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark for the Lord has entered are holy.'" (2 Chronicles 8:11) It was common practice in Solomon's time to marry into the families of neighboring kings in order to promote peace between nations. To most, Solomon's decision would have appeared very wise. However, in so doing, Solomon compromised with the ungodly and attempted to compartmentalize his faith. Too often, God's people attempt to compromise with the world in order to "keep the peace," and to receive some of the apparent benefits of the world. However, this infidelity always leads to sorrow of some sort. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Anything else is a lie and destroys. Paul points out that the philosophies and traditions of the world have "an appearance of wisdom" but they are actually worthless.

-- 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 -- "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'"

11. Colossians 2:13 – "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses...." Your sins of which you have repented are forgiven – rejoice and live accordingly.

12. Colossians 2:23 -- "These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." Religious practices designed to control the flesh cannot do the work of the Spirit and change the heart's desire for sin. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Only through truly knowing Jesus can one overcome the desires of the flesh. The Bible, even in the New Testament, calls us to obedience, purity, and holiness,

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but the pursuit begins and ends with the pursuit of Jesus, seeking Him in truth. Love for Jesus inspires a desire for obedience that rules, regulations, and rituals can't.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 July 18: Today, meditate upon the product of your obedience to God and your disobedience to God. How much of both has been based upon your level of will power and inner personal strength rather than your genuine love for Jesus? Is your obedience truly motivated by genuine love or something else such as self-justification, pride, fear etc? Doesn't your disobedience reveal a heart problem rather than a head problem or physical control problem? Seek a closer relationship to Jesus to deal with your disobedience problem. (Colossians 2)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 4, Thursday, 5 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+5%2C+6%3B+PRO+5%3B+col+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 5 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 6:4-11 -- God fulfills His promises generationally as he expects family to work together for His purposes for many generations. He expects mothers and fathers to build legacy for their children's children's children. How parents plan for many generations today?
2. 2 Chronicles 6:16 -- "Now therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.'" God's tangible promise to Israel was conditional.
3. 2 Chronicles 6:18 -- "But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!" God does not live in a building and is not contained in any way. God didn't need a temple, but the people did, a place to unite in worship, a place of remembrance, ministry, fellowship, and sanctuary.
4. 2 Chronicles 6:24 -- "If your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and they turn again and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house." God uses defeat in battle to punish a sinful nation. Repentance and prayer are what a sinful nation requires.
5. 2 Chronicles 6:26-30 -- "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance." God uses natural conditions and disasters to punish a sinful nation. Repentance and prayer are what a nation requires.
6. 2 Chronicles 6:30 -- "...then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways, for you, you only, know the hearts of the children of mankind...." God hears the prayers of a truly repentant nation. Also, register in your mind, once again, the fact that only God knows the true heart of a person – you cannot know or judge the heart of a person; you can only judge the actions of a person from the standard of God's word. Be very careful not to play the role of God by judging beyond actions. You will encounter people who do the "right" things with the wrong motives, and you will encounter people who do the wrong things out of immaturity but

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who are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit – God is doing things in their lives you cannot perceive. Too often, “mature” Christians pridefully and ungraciously treat immature Christians too harshly as a parent who expects the eight-year-old to act like the twenty-eight-year-old. As a result, they exacerbate and discourage the young one. In so doing, these prideful, puffed-up Christians also reveal the immature condition of their own hearts. All children must be rebuked at times, but in different ways. Jesus harshly rebuked the Pharisees (who claimed to have great knowledge and righteousness), but He was gentle with others whose outward behavior was worse than that of the Pharisees but who lacked understanding and were open to the truth of God. Jesus did not excuse or accept any sin, but handled sinners differently. We are all called to be “salt and light,” but too much light is unbearable, and too much salt is distasteful; wisdom knows how to rightly apply salt and light to others in a way that is edifying.

- Romans 12:3 -- For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

- 1 Corinthians 8:1 -- This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.

- Romans 14:4 -- Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

7. 2 Chronicles 6:34 -- “If your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name....” The greatest weapon in any battle or struggle is prayer. Victory in all situations rests in the hands of the LORD.

8. 2 Chronicles 6:39-36 -- “If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them... yet if they turn their heart... and repent and plead with you... if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart... and pray toward their land, which you gave to their fathers... then hear... and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.” Though all people sin, God is nonetheless angered by sin and will hold all sinners accountable. However, he responds to genuine repentance and forgives. The truly repentant would not think of continuing in known sin.

9. Proverbs 5:8 -- “...do not go near the door of her house.” We must choose to stay very far from all sin. Sin is nothing to take lightly and nothing to play with. I am not sure how it is possible to maintain this principle and watch TV today.

10. Proverb 5:14 -- “I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.” You reap what you sow in life. Eventually, the product of the life you have chosen will be evident to all.

[Note: See this overview of Colossians -- <https://youtu.be/pXTXIDxQsvc>]

11. Colossians 1:1 -- “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother....” You are a follower of Christ because He willed it, and He does not intend for you to go it alone. You were saved into a Spiritual family, into a body, as just one stone of a temple, intended to be united and in perfect position with the other stones of the temple.

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12. Colossians 1:4 -- "We heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints." Love is an act of faith. Faithful Christians are known by their love. Word will get around if you are an effective Christian.

13. Colossians 1:5-6 -- "the word of the truth, the gospel... has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth." The word of God should bear fruit in your heart, driving you to greater and greater love.

14. Colossians 1:9 – "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...." Love comes only from the Holy Spirit; we do not create love, we can only transmit love coming from the Source through us. God is love. Without God, there is no real love. It is only our unity with the Holy Spirit that enables us to Truly love. Only as the vines are connected to the Branch can there be love. Anything that does not draw a person closer to the Way, the Truth, and the Life, is ultimately unloving.

15. Colossians 1:9-12 -- "Be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Wisdom comes from the knowledge of God and is revealed by your behavior. Some of the attributes of a true Christian are endurance, patience, joy, and thankfulness. Is that how others describe you?

16. Colossians 1:10: God expects us to "walk in a manner worthy of Him" as each day we seek to please Him more and more and grow in our true knowledge "of Him", not just "about Him." This is a choice we make. We can only "know Him" more and more if we walk with Him day by day, closer and closer. He leads the way, not us. Do not ask God to bless you along your way. Ask to help you follow His way, The Way, and be blessed.

17. Colossians 1:11-14 – If those closest to you had to describe you in just a few words, would four of them be "patient, joyful, thankful, and forgiving"?

18. Colossians 1:19 – "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." The fullness of God dwelt in Jesus, and He has given us the Holy Spirit which now dwells in us. Have you truly considered what that means for your life?

19. Colossians 1:20 – "...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." Jesus' purpose was to reconcile all things to Him through the sacrificial forgiveness of sins. He has now given us the mission on reconciliation and forgiveness, under His authority, and through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Have you truly considered what that means for your life too?

20. Colossians 1:21-23 -- "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard." Evil deeds are the outward indicator of someone who is alienated from God. Christ's true disciples are above reproach in their obedience to Jesus. In your

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knowledge and power through Him, God expects you to press forward boldly in your faith, relentlessly unwavering, as a minister of the Gospel, rejoicing in sufferings, being a good steward of the word of God that Has been given to you for you to administer to those around you.

21. Colossians 1:25 -- "I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known." Christians are stewards of God's word and the Good News, called to make it fully known to others. Are you a good steward?

22. Colossians 1:28 -- "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." Proclaiming Christ has always included a warning of the need for repentance and discipleship, "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded".

23. Colossians 1:28, 29 -- "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." Struggle beyond your natural energy, with His energy in you, to warn others of the need to repent and to proclaim the Good News of forgiveness and grace through Jesus. Toil, work harder than you think possible because God will make your impossible possible. Don't just make believers, make disciples who will grow to maturity in Jesus.

- Paul's struggle was two part: to proclaim Christ and then to disciple those who would believe that they must grow in their spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. This exemplifies the Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) I have heard some call the second part of this two-fold mission statement, "teaching them to obey," the "Great Omission" because so many churches place such little emphasis on discipleship and obedience. In Colossians today, Paul expresses his continued prayer that "God [would] fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Your sins have already been forgiven, you have been rescued from the darkness, and you have already entered into eternal life. You have already been qualified as a priest and a saint to be a part of the kingdom. Now, to live out your calling requires that you grow daily in your "knowledge of God," wisdom and understanding. This takes effort, endurance and patience. Remember Proverbs 4:7: "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding." Proverbs points out that wisdom starts with the "Fear of the Lord" and is cultivated through prayer, the Word, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one day at a time.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 July 18: Make today's priority to be a good steward of the knowledge of the Good News that has been bestowed upon you and entrusted to you. Focus on disciple-making today, and every day from this day forward. (Col 1)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 3, Wednesday, 4 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+3%2C+4%3B+PRO+4%3B+Phi+4>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 4 July 18:

1. 2 Chronicles 3:1 -- "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father." Mount Moriah's history begins in Genesis 22 when God tests Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son, and when God intervenes and provides the ram, foreshadowing the future, ultimate sacrifice of His Son. Just outside the Temple walls, Jesus would later be crucified. Today, the Islam Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque also sit on Mount Moriah, possibly fulfilling the prophecy of Revelation 11:1-2 -- "I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, 'Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles.'"
2. 2 Chronicles 3:4 – Solomon built God's Temple using the old standards -- things had changed over time. Commentaries suggest that the "old" cubit was a longer cubit (Ezekiel 43:13) which would have meant a bigger building requiring more resources. Solomon did not use lower standards that might have been acceptable to people of the day.
3. 2 Chronicles 4:11-22 – The small parts of God's worship center deserve as much care and quality as the more obvious parts. The Bible says that we, the body of believers, are now God's temple. In your church, does everyone, regardless of their age, talent, position, maturity, or wealth receive the same amount of care and attention?
4. Proverbs 4:1-4 -- God wants children to have wise fathers and mothers who will teach them God's word personally. It is the parent's ultimate responsibility to disciple their children, not a pastor's, a Sunday school teacher's, or a school teacher's.
5. Proverbs 4:4-13 -- "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.... The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly... Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.... Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life." Key to a successful and fulfilling life is remaining in God's word. To have wisdom, you have to get it from God's word. This is a lifelong, disciplined effort.
6. Proverbs 4:14, 15 – "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on." Following God requires turning from evil and will cause you to walk away from the crowd. The Christian life involves choosing a path in life that is 180-out from the path most everyone else is taking. Often you will walk with no one else but God. You cannot follow Jesus and the world. You cannot go two opposite directions at once; if you try to, you will go nowhere.
7. Proverbs 4:16, 17 – "For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence." Ungodly people can't help but cause problems and pain for other people; they can't control themselves.
8. Proverbs 4:18, 19 – "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble." Godly people grow in spiritual maturity little by little for their whole lives. The Christian path

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gets brighter and brighter everyday as you get closer and closer to God, but those who walk the way of the world, further and further from Jesus, walk deeper and deeper into darkness.

9. Proverbs 4:23-27 – “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.” Guarding your heart is critically important, and it requires great effort (vigilance). You guard your heart by choosing carefully what you think about, what you focus on, where you go, what you do, and what you say. Daily decisions, which start with your choice of attitudes and thoughts, slowly shape your character over time. To grow in Christ-like character, seek the mind of Christ.

10. Philippians 4:1 – “Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.” A loving church unites behind God’s truth, desires true companionship with one another, works diligently together, and takes care of one another. They are a community within the community; they are family. Does this describe your church? Question: How many people in your church are going to have children soon? Who is sick? Who is having car trouble? You get the point.

11. Philippians 4:3 -- “Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel.” Women play prominent roles throughout the Bible.

12. Philippians 4:4 – “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” Are you rejoicing today? Would everyone today describe you as joyful?

13. Philippians 4:4-7 -- “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

- Christians should be known for their joy, reasonableness, confidence, wisdom, steadiness, and peacefulness. Are you known by everyone to be very reasonable?

- Whenever I lose sight of the fact that my God is LORD, that He is in complete control of all circumstances, and that He only allows His perfect will to occur in my life, whenever I lose sight of that, I become “anxious” and “unreasonable.” However, when I obey Proverbs and “Trust in the Lord with all [my] heart, and do not lean on [my] own understanding,” and when I surrender my concerns to God, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” guards my heart, mind, and actions. Proverbs reminds us that with love comes faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3). The more my love for God grows, the more faithful I desire to be; and the more faithful I am, the more attuned I become to the love of God, and the more my faith grows, which in turn makes me less anxious and unreasonable. With all this comes great peace that transcends circumstances.

-- Matthew 11:28 -- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

-- James 4:8 -- Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

14. Philippians 4:6, 7 -- Our understanding is so incredibly small. It is absolutely impossible for us to understand God’s perfect will in any situation apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more critical for us today than to be united with the Holy Spirit, to be in tune with the Holy Spirit,

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receptive to the Holy Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit, and in step with the Holy Spirit. We must walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh, not in our own understanding.

15. Philippians 4:8 -- "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." The transformation of our minds includes the choice to think godly thoughts and eliminate negative, ungodly thinking. Christians must practice the discipline of thought control. You must endeavor to only think about what is honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Your attitude will be infectious. In the presence of God, what is there to think about but "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, whatever is excellent or worthy of praise"? When you are with the love of your life, shouldn't every minute be a celebration? Shouldn't your overflowing joy be evident to everyone around you? Shouldn't that in itself be an incredible testimony to the wonderfulness of the One you love? When you awake in the morning to begin another day with Jesus, shouldn't you genuinely feel the uncontrollable urge to say, "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."? (Psalm 118:24) The secret is truly "knowing" Jesus and resting in his "riches of glory." It's time to celebrate!

16. Philippians 4:11-13 -- "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

- What was Paul's "secret" for always being content and cheerful regardless of the situation? How did he maintain an inner peace beyond anyone's understanding, worrying about nothing? Paul's peace reflects the peace displayed by Jesus who rested peacefully in the stern of a small boat in the middle of a great storm while the apostles exclaimed, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" (Luke 8:24) Paul's secret was that he remained in the presence of Jesus, relied not on his own strength but in the strength and understanding of Jesus. Paul trusted not in his environment or abilities but rather in Jesus alone. He kept the faith of a child who does not doubt Daddy's provision and protection. In the arms of the Creator, the Master, the LORD, what circumstances matter? The secret of contentment through any circumstance is trusting that God is not only bigger than all circumstances but will use ALL circumstances to create goodness beyond your imagination. (see Romans 8:28) Through Him, you are already victorious, though you might not always tangibly see it; and you can do ALL things – all things God intends for you to do. If you lack contentment, you lack right perspective on the reality of Jesus. Are you content in all situations because you have placed your complete trust in Jesus?

17. Philippians 4:14-20 -- Christians share in each other's troubles and provide for each other's needs as Christ's servants, empowered for ministry by Him.

18. Philippians 4:19 -- "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Jesus will provide all the inner strength you need if you surrender to Him wholeheartedly, trust Him, and obey Him.

19. Philippians 4:21 -- "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus." Do you greet every Christian in Christ Jesus?

20. Philippians 4:23 -- "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Your peace and joy today depend on your willingness to walk in the confidence of God's grace.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 July 18: Decide today that, through today's political controversy, you will not get wrapped up in the emotions of those with a worldly view. Use this as an opportunity to communicate the truth of Jesus and the will of God. Judge everything in accordance with the word of God, and while everyone is pointing to politicians and political parties as their hope, point to Jesus Christ as the only hope. Do not get entangled in pointless arguments or unworthy conversations, but communicate the Gospel. Do not get anxious or lose your peace. Stand out with your higher viewpoint and message. Seek revival in America as an Ambassador for Jesus and a citizen of the Kingdom of God. (Today's readings)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 2, Tuesday, 3 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+CHRON+1%2C+2%3B+PRO+3%3B+Phi+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 3 July 18:

[Note: Here is an overview of 2 Chronicles -- <https://youtu.be/HR7xaHv3las>]

1. 2 Chronicles 1:1 – “Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.” Solomon was great because the LORD was with Him.

2. 2 Chronicles 1:9 – “O Lord God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth.” God fulfilled His promise to Abraham. (See Gen 12:2, 13:16)

3. 2 Chronicles 1:11, 12 -- "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like." God does not want your motivation to be power and prestige but rather the ability to serve others. God rewards selfless service.

4. Proverbs 3:1 -- "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments." Set your heart to obey God's word.

5. Proverbs 3:3 -- “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.”

- With love goes faithfulness – they are inextricably linked, inseparable, measured from the heart but revealed in action. To the church in Rome Paul wrote, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.” (Romans 1:8). People all over the world were talking about the church in Rome because the love of Christ had dramatically changed their behavior. To the Colossians, Paul wrote, “We always thank God... since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints....” (1 Colossians 1:3, 4) Paul had heard of the Colossians faith which was evident by their love and faithfulness. The Gospel of Grace was bearing fruit in their lives, and the word had gotten out. So, Paul encouraged them to continue in their faithfulness, to “walk in a

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manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Faithfulness reveals maturity in Christ. (Colossians 1:28) Is your fidelity to God being talked about in your community?

6. Proverbs 3:5 -- "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Don't partially trust God or partially obey Him because His word seems to contradict your own understanding or "common sense." Trust God and His word because God is God, and you cannot possibly understand what He has ordained in His omniscient perfection. In no way does your understanding of reality alter reality. The truth is the truth whether you understand it or not. Jesus is the Truth. Trust Him, obey Him, and seek to know Him more and more each day.

7. Proverbs 3:11, 12 – “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” God will discipline you because He loves you. Accept God’s discipline with a teachable, humble, thankful spirit.

8. Proverbs 3:25 – “Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes....” Faith means you won’t be afraid of the unknown. Faith trusts God in all circumstances.

9. Proverbs 3:27 – “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.” Giving is an act of faith; fear prevents giving. Give when you can, and trust that God will take care of you.

10. Proverbs 3:34 -- "Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor." God treats you the way you treat others.

11. Philippians 3:5, 6 – “...circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” Human qualifications do not impress God. You can be blameless in the eyes of the Law and at odds with God.

12. Philippians 3:7-10 -- “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.” (Philippians 3:7-10)

- Religious efforts or personal accomplishments cannot compare with truly knowing Jesus. To know Christ, you must personally walk with Him day by day in obedience to His word. Join Him in His business of selfless love for others and experience His fellowship. There is great fellowship in suffering too. The Marines have a saying – “Adversity unites.” And veterans have a unique bond with those who fought together with them. In life, aren’t you closest with those who you have struggled with? In his tribulations, Paul wrote, “I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to Him in His death.” (Philippians 3:10) Do you know that God uses your hardships to draw you closer to Him?

- There are really only two religions in the world, that which depends on faith in Jesus Christ alone, and that which depends on some sort of human effort or worth for salvation. I have heard people describe

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these two religions as the “do” religion and the “done” religion with the first religion attempting to discover what we must do to get to Heaven and the second relying on what Christ has done that whoever believes in his name would not perish but rather have everlasting life. Paul called those who depend on human effort, accomplishments, and self-righteousness (even if they call themselves Christians) as “dogs” and “evildoers.” To “worship by the Spirit of God” is to put absolutely “no confidence in the flesh,” no hope in our own abilities to obtain righteousness through our efforts. Paul points out that, in human standards, he had every right to brag of his good deeds; however, his (our) very best deeds are nothing but filthy rags before The Holy God. Of ourselves, we have no merit or righteousness (being right with God). Our only hope is to “be found in him” (Jesus). Through faith, we are covered over with the righteousness of Christ. When the Father sees true Christians from the Judgment Seat, he sees us clothed with the righteousness of His Son, this covering provided as a gift of grace and love, a gift that is absolutely impossible to earn. Paul reminds us that Christ has made us His own and encourages us to live out that truth with all of our being – “Only let us hold true to what we have attained.” Don’t “walk as enemies of the cross of Christ,” driven by earthly passions, self-centeredness, and self-righteousness; rather remember that “our citizenship is in heaven [through birth in Christ], and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- Reflect upon the good things you have done in your life. Why did you do them? Did you do them to be a “good” person, to feel good about yourself, to earn respect from others, to make the world a better place, to avoid guilt; or did you do them to “know Christ,” to united with him, to become “like Him” because of your admiration for Him? When Paul was still Saul, a very committed religious man, he did all the “right things” for the wrong reasons which brought him no closer to God than any other sinner and which did nothing to secure his salvation. When Paul, formerly known as Saul, had his eyes open by Christ (both figuratively and literally) he understood that his human “goodness,” his attempts to be personally righteous, were totally unacceptable by God, no matter how proud he had felt or how much praise he had received from others. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Only the True Righteousness of Christ can cover over our sins and save us. When we do the “right things” for the wrong reasons, when we obey the law in pursuit of prideful righteousness, we are actually breaking the law by disobeying the Great Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Even unbelievers can do seemingly good things, but God judges the heart. Our focus is not on the law for the sake of obtaining merited righteousness, our focus is on Jesus Christ, knowing him and becoming one with Him in genuine love. We are walking in a love relationship that is growing every day, and that love is reflected outwardly in all that we do and say. When we walk in love, there is no need for laws to constrain us. We do what we ought because our Greatest Love, Christ, desires it.

-- John 17:3 -- This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

-- 1 John 4:7, 8 -- Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

-- John 14:15, 21 -- If you love me, you will keep my commandments.... Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

-- 1 John 2:3-6 -- And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

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but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

-- 1 John 5:2-5 -- By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

13. Philippians 3:13-16 -- "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained." Every day, you will fail the standard of God's holiness, purity, and righteousness, but sanctification is a life-long process that will not be completed this side of Paradise. Learn from your mistakes and move on, endeavoring with all your might to grow more and more into the likeness of Jesus. Pursue holiness and perfection, and don't accept your imperfections as "just being human." Acknowledge your sins, ask for God's forgiveness, fully receive God's forgiveness, learn from your mistakes, and don't look back. Yesterday is over, make today a ministry masterpiece. Grow closer to Jesus one day at a time. Press forward towards greater unity with Jesus.

14. Philippians 3:17 -- "Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." Surround yourself with people who will encourage you in your pursuit of holiness, people in the you can respect because of their love and faithfulness.

15. Philippians 3:20 -- "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Your allegiance is to God before country or any other loyalty. Are you a faithful citizen of the Kingdom of God? Are you ready to serve your kingdom as a good soldier and to recite your oath -- "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"?

16. "Rejoice in the Lord! It is a safeguard for you. Know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Press on [toward perfection] to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of [you]. Forget what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called [you] heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

- We all have to make a choice concerning who we will live for, ourselves or God. Will our god be our earthly desires or the Lord? Will our minds be set on earthly things or will we seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness? From today's readings, Solomon was given great wisdom from God; however, what did he do with that wisdom given by God? "Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in

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Jerusalem. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue —the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans. What was the command God had given to kings?

-- "The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel. (Deut 17:16-20)

- In his own great wisdom, Solomon forgot God's Law and directly disobeyed the King's commands from His Word. He set his mind on earthly things and built a might kingdom for himself instead of the LORD. This would cost him and his people greatly -- "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 July 17: Make your top priority today and every day truly knowing God, personally, experientially. Don't settle for knowing about Him. Seek a closer, real relationship with Him with all of your heart. Jesus said if you seek Him with all of your heart, you will find Him. Relationship with Jesus starts with being born again and then denying self continually, taking up your cross, and following Him. You grow in relationship with Him as you obey Him more and more. (Philippians 3)

DBRP - WEEK 27, Day 1, Monday, 2 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+27-29%3B+PRO+2%3B+Phi+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 2 July 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 28:3 -- "But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.'" Godly leaders are ready to admit where God has not allowed them to work.

2. 1 Chronicles 28:4, 5 -- "Yet the Lord God of Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king.... he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel." God chooses all kings and political leaders, sometimes to be blessings and sometimes to be curses depending upon what God is doing with the people of that nation. God holds the next political election in His hands. If we desire better leaders, we need to turn to God before politics. National repentance and revival among God's people are crucial.

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3. 1 Chronicles 28:9 -- "...my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you." David's charge to his son should be echoed by every Christian parent to their children.

4. 1 Chronicles 28:10, 20 -- Whatever the LORD has called you to do, "be strong and do it.... Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of... the Lord is finished.

5. 1 Chronicles 29:1, 2 -- "Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the Lord God."

"Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the Lord God. So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able...."

- God uses inexperienced people to do great things through His power rather than their own power.

- We must do all that we can to set our kids up for success.

6. 1 Chron 29:3-6 -- For the LORD's work, David led the way in giving, very publicly, not to gain the praise of men in pride but rather to set the example and to inspire others to give too – it worked. The tithe was given publicly and specifically (10%) – this was expected; free will offerings were also given publicly, voluntarily, above and beyond the tithe; alms or gifts to the poor and needy were given privately, also above and beyond the tithe.

7. 1 Chronicles 29:9 – "Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly." Giving from the heart brings great joy and causes you to rejoice.

8. 1 Chronicles 29:12 -- "Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might." Again, God determines the fate of nations. If we want national security, civil order, and prosperity, we need to go to God. Pray that God will change the hearts of God's people, then that He will change the hearts of the nation, and then that He will change the hearts of the nation's leaders to honor and obey Him. (1 Chronicles 29:18, 19)

9. 1 Chronicles 29:14-16 -- "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are strangers before you and sojourners. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own." Anything you give to God is something He has already given you. Giving is an act of worship and an act of faith, acknowledging that God has graciously given us all we need, and He will replenish in abundance what we give in His Name. As they say, "You cannot out give God."

10. 1 Chronicles 29:17 -- "I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you." God expects us to give from a position of joyful, grateful obedience.

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11. Proverbs 2 -- The preconditions for finding “the knowledge of God” are to treasure God’s commands more than anything else on earth and with a genuine heart to understand them and apply them. If you accept God's word and store it in your heart (v1), and if you apply it diligently and prayerfully as your highest priority (vs3-4), then you will learn to fear the Lord. All wisdom comes from God, and He rewards those who seek Him and His wisdom wholeheartedly. You cannot know right or do right without a love for God and His commands. Your relationship with God is what gives you hope for life on earth. Walk with Him and in His ways.

12. Proverbs 2:6, 7 -- For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity....” Wisdom is learned from God’s word.

13. Proverbs 2:7, 8 – “...he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.” For whom is God a shield?

14. Proverbs 2:9 – “Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path....” A person cannot understand justice and equity apart from God’s word.

15. Proverbs 2:13-17 -- God’s word causes you to separate from those who have forsaken the paths of uprightness.

16. Proverbs 2:20 – “So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous.” God’s word will take you down a different path in life than the way the majority are travelling.

17. Philippians 2:1-2 -- "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." Those who are truly spiritual will have unity in Christ. A Spirit filled person is comforting, loving, affectionate, sympathetic, joyful, and unifying.

18. Philippians 2:3-8 -- "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Moving from selfishness to selflessness is called spiritual growth. Christ-like character is selfless. Empty yourself of personal ambition and become a complete servant to God and those around you; humble yourself and give everything you have to God and others; be an imitator of Christ.

19. Philippians 2:3, 4 -- “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

- “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit,” and look at everyone else as more important than you. Now there is a challenge for today. Paul goes further in this challenge by stating that to follow Christ’s example (which we are called to do), we must “empty” ourselves and become like “servants” to those around us. Have you ever said to someone “Who do you think I am, your servant?” Well if you are a Christian, you are a servant to others. These words are very easy to understand, aren’t they? They sure are hard to obey though, aren’t they? Why is this so hard to do?

20. Philippians 2:5 -- Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus....” Attitudes do not just happen; we choose them. Paul urged believers to have the same attitude that Jesus had. Jesus is the

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Son of God. His place is at the right hand of His Father, ruling the universe. No position could be more glorious or honorable than the right hand of the Heavenly Father. Jesus' relationship with the Father gave Him the right to unsurpassed honor. Jesus chose not to hold on to this right. Nothing, not even His position in heaven, was so precious to Him that He could not give it up if His Father asked Him. His love for His Father compelled Him to make any sacrifice necessary in order to be obedient to Him. When the Father required a spotless sacrifice for the redemption of humanity, Jesus did not cling to His rights, nor did He argue that He should not have to suffer for the sins of rebellious creatures of dust (Isa. 53:7). Rather, He relinquished the glory of His heavenly existence in order to become a condemned man. He was born in a cattle shed; he slept in a feeding trough. His life was spent preparing for the day when He would suffer an excruciating execution. All of this He did willingly. We are tempted to hold tightly to things God has given us. We say, "I would be willing to give up anything God asked of me, but I just don't think He would ask me to give anything up!" The Father asked His Son to make radical adjustments in His life. Can we not expect that He will ask us to sacrifice privileges and comforts as well? If you find yourself resisting every time God seeks to adjust your life to His will, ask the Spirit to give you the same selfless attitude that Jesus demonstrated. (Comments from Henry T. Blackaby)

21. Philippians 2:5-8 -- "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." We are to emulate the example of Jesus who, though perfect and righteous in every way, become nothing for complete sinners who persecuted Him. He did this in obedience to God's will. We too must offer complete grace and mercy to those who wrong us, and we must be willing to suffer persecution in hopes of bringing others to Jesus.

22. Philippians 2:8 -- "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

- Today's OT and NT readings heavily emphasize the importance of humble obedience in a Christian's life, not motivated by "selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility" and in love. (Philippians 2:2, 3) In the OT, David charges the Israelites to "observe and seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, [to] know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind." (1 Chronicles 28:8, 9) Paul says that the "mind" of Christ which we are to take on is one of humble obedience. Paul encourages Christians to "work out" their salvation through continuous obedience, "with fear and trembling". (Philippians 2:12) We are called to obedience "without grumbling or disputing, that [we] may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ [we] may be proud that [we] did not run in vain or labor in vain." (Philippians 2:14-16) Jesus said, "this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) So what does it mean to "know" him? 1 John 4:7, 8 says, "Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.... Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (John 14:15, 21) John adds, "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in

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him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." (1 John 2:3-6) "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:2-5) The mark of genuine love for God is humble obedience without grumbling but rather with thanksgiving and rejoicing.

23. Philippians 2:12 -- "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." If you are a Christian, your salvation is eternally secure through the work of Christ alone. However, we are called to "work out" our salvation by dedicating our life to obeying God for His glory on earth, growing up in Christ-like spiritual maturity as an infant grows over time into adulthood. Knowing Christ more and more in maturity and making Him known to others is the goal -- nothing else on earth matters. Growing in Christ is called sanctification. Salvation is a gift. Sanctification is a process that requires our continually yielding to the Holy Spirit. God chose us for salvation, but we must choose to surrender our lives completely to Him. In salvation, we are new creations, but it is possible for us to be unfruitful Christians, to never grow up, to be of little value to the Kingdom. We must choose to abide in Him as true disciples. Abiding is a command we must choose to obey. In our abiding is where we glorify God, experience true fellowship with God, find life fulfillment, and find complete joy. Evidence of abiding is a divine nature within us and genuine, unconditional love for those around us.

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 -- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- John 15:1-17 -- "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

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- 2 Peter 1:3-9 -- His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

24. Philippians 2:14-16 -- "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain." The Bible doesn't say do 'some' things without grumbling or disputing, it says do 'all things' so that the world will see the difference that is in you, the Spirit of God.

25. Philippians 2:14 -- "Do all things without grumbling or disputing...." Complaining is a sign of spiritual immaturity, is ungodly, and ruins your witness.

26. Philippians 2:15-18 -- In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, hold fast to God's word. Remain joyfully obedient.

27. Philippians 2:17 -- "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all." Are you willing to sacrifice yourself for the work of another believer—to pour out your life sacrificially for the ministry and faith of others? Or do you say, "I am not willing to be poured out right now, and I don't want God to tell me how to serve Him. I want to choose the place of my own sacrifice. And I want to have certain people watching me and saying, 'Well done.'" It is one thing to follow God's way of service if you are regarded as a hero, but quite another thing if the road marked out for you by God requires becoming a "doormat" under other people's feet. God's purpose may be to teach you to say, "I know how to be abased..." (Philippians 4:12). Are you ready to be sacrificed like that? Are you ready to be less than a mere drop in the bucket— to be so totally insignificant that no one remembers you even if they think of those you served? Are you willing to give and be poured out until you are used up and exhausted— not seeking to be ministered to, but to minister? Some saints cannot do menial work while maintaining a saintly attitude, because they feel such service is beneath their dignity. (Comments from Oswald Chambers)

28. Philippians 2:17-18 -- "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me." Paul rejoiced in suffering for the Gospel and expected others to rejoice with him in the knowledge that they were serving the purpose of Jesus wholeheartedly.

29. Philippians 2:20, 21 -- "For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." Timothy stood out within the church as someone to emulate because, while everyone was seeking their own interests, Timothy was solely focused on the welfare of others.

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30. Philippians 2:21 -- You cannot seek your own interests and Jesus' interests at the same time.

31. Philippians 2:22 -- "But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel." Timothy had proven himself by his track record of selfless service. Timothy had earned the right to lead in Christ. How about you?

32. Philippians 2:25 -- "I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need...." Some people know just what to say and do to encourage others who are going through difficult times. Their words give strength to those who are discouraged and comfort to those who are grieving. These people are sensitive to God's voice. They are not self-centered or unaware of the struggles of those around them. They are the ones we immediately seek when we enter a crisis. They are welcome visitors when we are in distress, for their presence sustains us. Scripture testifies of many whom God enabled to encourage others. When Moses was overwhelmed by his work, Jethro went to him and encouraged him. Jethro gave Moses wise counsel that eased his strain (Exod. 18:1-27). When Paul was imprisoned far from those who loved him, Epaphroditus risked his health and safety in order to go to Paul and minister to him (Phil. 2:25-30). Later, Paul urged Timothy to come and visit him, for Paul found strength and encouragement in Timothy (2 Tim. 4:9; Phil. 2:19-20). Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark also. Mark was the kind of friend Paul needed when he was enduring hardship (2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24). Paul also relied on Luke for encouragement. When everyone else was absent or preoccupied, Luke could be found with Paul (2 Tim. 4:11). Paul experienced trials throughout his life, but God sustained him by placing godly friends around him who provided support in practical and sacrificial ways. God wants to develop you into the kind of friend who can strengthen others. The words you share and the things you do can bring comfort and encouragement to your family, your friends, your neighbors, and your coworkers. (Notes from Henry T. Blackaby)

33. Philippians 2:29, 30 -- "So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me." Those who have truly surrendered their life for the Lord's service are those who truly deserve honor.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 2 July 18: Today, endeavor to truly empty yourself and give your life to serving those around you, particularly those who would persecute you. Do this without hope for any reward but merely to show your love for God and to bring Him glory before others. (Philippians 2)

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 7, Sunday, 1 July 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+25%2C+26%3B+PROV+1%3B+PSALM+75>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 1 July 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 25:1 -- "David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals." The music ministry has always been a critical part of worship. 1 Chronicles 25 offers valuable guidance to today's churches on music ministries:

-- Music should be a proclamation of the Gospel and reveal the truth of God clearly and accurately in lyrical form, and/or it should be a prayer in lyrical form. Worship music should offer thanksgiving and

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praise, exalting God – a good acronym to remember the essential elements of prayer and music is ACTS: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Lyrics with accompanying music should be powerful, instructive, and fit for The KING. Many of the Psalms we will read this year were hymns to be sung by the congregation and are great examples for today's music ministries. Historically, worship music has been used to help people remember great spiritual truths. Prisoners of war have recounted that singing hymns from church helped get them through years of captivity. God uses worship music and hymns to speak directly to His people about the realities of what He is doing with them. A great example can be found in Deuteronomy 31 and 32 where God gives Moses a song to teach the people to sing for generations "that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel." (1 Chronicles 25:1-5; Deuteronomy 31:19) The selection of worship music should be led by the Holy Spirit. Having visited many churches, I have heard many songs that were very shallow and actually contrary to God's word. In those cases, the songs were man-centered rather than God-centered.

-- 1 Chronicles 25:6, 7 -- "The number of them along with their brothers, who were trained in singing to the Lord, all who were skillful, was 288. And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike." Those chosen for the music ministry should demonstrate significant skill and talent, but also humility and discipline. Granted, most churches rely on the ministry efforts of volunteers who are not professional musicians. However, those selected for the ministry should do their very best to strive for excellence through diligent practice and rehearsal. It has been said that good preachers, on average, spend an hour preparing for every minute they intend to preach – 45 hours for a 45-minute sermon. There should be a similar commitment by those who intend to lead congregational music. Professional musicians practice for many hours each day. Chopin told one of his students that he would he shut himself up in his room for two weeks before a concert. Another famous pianist said, "If I don't practice for one day, I know it; if I don't practice for two days, my friends know it. If I don't practice for three days, EVERYBODY knows it." Personally, I believe that America's most talented musicians should come from the churches because they perform for the LORD.

-- Finally, some among the skilled musicians are chosen to be teachers and leaders, but this selection is not based on favoritism. I suspect if you have ever been a part of church leadership you have witnessed some drama associated with the music ministry, among those who feel entitled for one reason or another, or with some who have taken a self-centered approach to performing. For many reasons, it is easy for egos to get involved. We must focus on glorifying God and edifying the body rather than lifting up the individual or entertaining the crowd. Among David's 288 skilled musicians, lots were drawn to determine who would teach and lead. These leaders were tasked by higher church leadership, and they performed their duties responsibly.

-- Hopefully your church's music ministry is not focused on showmanship and entertainment but rather on genuine worship, discipleship, and edification of the body. Hopefully the gift that is brought before the LORD is suitable for the KING.

2. 1 Chronicles 25:6 -- "They were all under the direction of their father in the music in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres for the service of the house of God." The father prepared his sons for service in the church and taught them their profession. Parents should be preparing their children to serve the church for the rest of their lives.

3. 1 Chronicles 25:8 -- "And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike." It is not the job you do that matters most, it is for whom you do it and how well and faithfully you perform

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your duties. In first Chronicles, David assigns important tasks to families, and within the families they cast lots to determine who would perform what specific job. There doesn't appear to be any discussion about who preferred what job or who "should" perform what job in the eyes of the people. Whatever job was assigned, the selectee did it with all their might and for the Lord. I believe with that attitude, a person can prosper at any job; perhaps we spend too much time worrying about what job we have and not enough time on doing something, anything to the glory of the Lord. I think it is also worth noting, again, that areas of responsibility were assigned to families, not just individuals, and the father led the children. Perhaps the family business is something else that has been lost in our culture. Here are some other things the Bible says about employment:

- Colossians 3:23, 24 -- Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12 -- But we urge you... to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

- Proverbs 22:29 -- Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

- Ecclesiastes 9:10 -- Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.

- Psalm 37:25 -- I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

[Note: Here is a link to an introduction of Proverbs: <https://youtu.be/AzmYV8GNAIM>]

4. Proverbs 1:7 – "The proverbs of Solomon... To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

- As we prepare to read the book of Proverbs again for the seventh time this year, it is important to take a moment to reflect on the book's purpose. It is intended to help you acquire not only knowledge but also discipline, prudence, and discernment. It is to help you live a life worthy of the gospel you have received. Don't lose sight of the fact that Proverbs are not provided just so that you can avoid pain in life but so you can become closer to and more unified with Jesus each day – that you can "know" Him more fully every day and reveal Him more clearly to others every day. Proverbs are intended to help disciples of Christ accomplish their desire of obeying God in love, as opposed to obtaining the desires of the flesh, and to do "what is right and just and fair." The book points out in the very first paragraph "fear[ing] the Lord" is the beginning and foundation of your journey; and then comes discipleship – practicing the disciplines of the Christian life, under the constant counsel of the Holy Spirit, to grow in wisdom and maturity in faith. This growth process is often referred to as sanctification. Our spiritual growth is a daily effort, motivated by love, not guilt, fear, our pride, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. But the choices we make each day have natural consequences. As the end of today's Proverbs warn, "waywardness kills, and complacency destroys." The family of Obed-Edom, mentioned throughout Chronicles, were leaders among God's people because they were "capable" and "strong." The Bible also points out, for "every

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matter pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king,” David searched the land for people who were “capable.” To make the cut for “Gideon’s Army,” it wasn’t enough to be willing to go, you had to demonstrate discipline at the watering hole – only 300 showed that required discipline. This month I hope we read Proverbs intently to acquire a disciplined and prudent life.

5. Proverbs 1:2 – “To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight....” Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied, with understanding that exceeds personal experience, understanding empowered by the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is the ability to make right decisions. Discipline is the internal strength or self-control (see Galatians 5:23) to carry out those decisions. Success requires both good decision-making (wisdom) and discipline (self-control) to follow through. Both wisdom and self-control are fruits of the Spirit, not the product of intellect. If you struggle with fidelity or consistency, understand it is a spiritual issue.

6. Proverbs 1:4 – “...to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth....” Not everyone is gifted with talent and resources, but everyone has equal access to wisdom from God through the Holy Spirit. Wisdom (or character) not talent will determine your ultimate success.

7. Proverbs 1:5 – “Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance....” Character development is a life-long growth process that must be continually fed by the word of God, prayer, and counsel from fellow committed followers of Christ.

8. Proverbs 1:7 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

- Wisdom is available to all who would receive it from God. Those who are foolish choose to be. Rejecting God is the beginning of their choice. Many who claim to be Christian reject God every time they choose to sin in ways they justify as small and insignificant, but there is no small sin before God because all sin is a personal choice to attempt to dethrone God and enthrone self. To rebel against God, even for a moment, is cosmic treason! Merely believing in Jesus (demon-like belief as described in James 2:19) is not enough.

- Wisdom is naturally divisive. There can be no unity between the wise and the unwise. Jesus said, He came not to unite but to divide. If you are pleasing everyone, you are, by definition, compromising somewhere.

9. Proverbs 1:8 – “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching,” Parents are the teachers in the home which is the schoolhouse for character development.

10. Proverbs 1:10-19 – The ungodly world appears very prosperous. It is very critical that the church does not become entangled with the world. Year after year, the church gives more money to building debt than it does to missionaries. Christians give far more to credit cards and home loans than they do to tithes, freewill offerings, and alms. We desperately need to repent.

11. Proverbs 1:20-23 -- The truth is self-evident, it reveals itself. Wisdom is revealed every day for those who have the eyes to see it. Look in the streets and see the consequences of both wisdom and foolishness. How long will people so obviously destroy themselves. Repentance opens the door for the Spirit of Truth to change a life.

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12. Proverbs 1:23 -- "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you." Wisdom requires repentance, a turning away from old behavior.

13. Proverbs 1:24-26 -- "Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity." The condemned refuse to accept the free gift of salvation through Jesus -- it is a choice they freely make.

14. Proverbs 1:24, 25 -- "Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof..." If you cannot hear God, it is not that He is not speaking but rather that you are not really listening. God stretches out His hand, but you must take it. God is willing to communicate to those who are willing to really listen.

15. Proverbs 1:28 -- "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." There comes a time when prayers for blessings are pointless and prayers for mercy are critical.

16. Proverbs 1:32 -- "For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them." Do not be complacent with God's commands.

17. Psalm 75:4-6 -- "I say to the boastful, 'Do not boast,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horn; or speak with haughty neck.'" For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up...." Only fools proudly ignore God's power and His promise to judge and destroy.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 1 July: Determine what skills God has equipped you with which could benefit your church, and commit to serving your church with your talents and abilities. (1 Chronicles 25:6)

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 6, Saturday, 30 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+23%2C+24%3B+PROV+30%3B+PSALM+74>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 30 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 23:3 -- "And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the Lord, and likewise at evening." God expects His people to worship every day, day and night.

2. 1 Chronicles 23:26 -- "And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service." A changing situation doesn't change God's commands and standards but may require a change to how we fulfill those requirements and standards. In Chronicles, David reorganized, retrained, and reequipped the Levites based on their shift in responsibilities from tabernacle to temple service. He also changed the age requirements for service. Perhaps there were some who resisted this change because, "That's not how we have always done it." There is a difference between deviating from techniques, procedures, and traditions, and deviating from doctrine, principles, and truth. We must never deviate from what God commands, but we will have to change the methods we use to fulfill His commands based on changing circumstances and environments. For example, long ago we illuminated churches with candles, now we light churches with electric lights. Many churches that once played acoustic instruments now play electric instruments. The shift to electronically supported worship is not a

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sin. However, if technology or modern methods become a distraction, one could drift into sin. Times and technologies change; God's word doesn't.

3. 1 Chronicles 23:30 -- "And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the Lord, and likewise at evening." Worship is a daily endeavor.

4. 1 Chronicles 24:5 -- "They divided them by lot, all alike, for there were sacred officers and officers of God among both the sons of Eleazar and the sons of Ithamar." Casting lots removed human bias and any perceptions of favoritism when deciding between parties with conflicting interests. In the case of these verses, some positions were likely considered more important, valuable or prestigious than others, so lots were cast to avoid perceptions of partiality. In pride, people tend to vie for important positions, and people tend to work harder when the spotlight is on them than when they are behind the scenes. Jesus called these people hypocrites which is the Greek word for stage actor. How you perform when no one is watching is who you really are. Throughout the Bible, we see God mightily using those who no one else seems to notice. Jesus himself lived most of his life in the shadow of mighty Herod, unnoticed by most. Of Him Isaiah said, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." (Isaiah 53:2) Jesus told us, "And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:9-12) Pursue the Person of Jesus, not a position. Be faithful with whatever God gives you to do, for His glory, not yours. If your task is to clean the toilet, make that toilet fitting for The KING, and rejoice in such an opportunity.

5. Proverbs 30:1-3 -- "The man declares, I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One." In John 17, Jesus said that life was knowing Him. Life for those who don't know Jesus is wearisome.

6. Proverbs 30:5, 6 -- "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words." The Bible says that it is impossible for any human to fully understand our Creator; to fully understand the will, ways, and works of God; to know the mind of God; or to know what ought to be done day-by-day. So, God has given us His word and the counsel of the Holy Spirit to guide us through life on this earth. Nothing can be added to God's word, and those without the Holy Spirit cannot understand how to rightly apply God's word. It takes faith to trust God's word when you don't understand it. It takes faith to please God.

- Isaiah 55:8, 9 – For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- Proverbs 3:5-8 -- Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

- 1 Corinthians 13:12 -- For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

- John 3:3-13 -- Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit....

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Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man."

- Mathew 22:29 -- But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

7. Proverbs 30:8-9 -- "Feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." Both good and bad circumstances can tempt us to sin. Good times can make us complacent and prideful; bad times can make us desperate, disgruntled, and disobedient.

8. Proverbs 30:12 -- "There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth." Most people have a higher opinion of themselves than they ought.

9. Proverbs 30:20 -- "This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I have done no wrong.'" Sinners have an incredible way of justifying and making light of their sin. Many sin and act as if it never happened, and some hearts have grown so calloused they cannot no longer recognize sin as sin.

10. Psalm 74:1 -- "O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?"

- It can often feel like God has forgotten you or abandoned you -- He hasn't. Wait on the Lord. He knows exactly what is happening to you, is in complete control of your situation, and can only respond to you in perfect love and faithfulness. You cannot possibly understand the good He has in store for you as He takes you through trials and tribulations. What seems bad to us, God is bringing together for good. (Romans 8:28) Be still and know that God is God.

- Psalm 74 is identified as "A Maskil of Asaph" or song of Asaph. Who was Asaph, and to what event does this Psalm refer? When was "everything in the sanctuary" destroyed by "enemies"? Asaph was David's music director and is believed to have written twelve Psalms which collectively make up a larger portion of the entire Bible than several other books in the Bible. Asaph lived from David's reign, through Solomon's to Rehoboam's. So, he offers a VERY unique and important perspective, having basically witnessed the nation of Israel rise to its "Golden Age" under David and then fall to destruction after Solomon turned to idolatry. Asaph watched as the kingdom was torn in two, and he witnessed the Egyptians invade Jerusalem and strip the Temple. Though Asaph appears to have remained faithful in his service to God, he nonetheless personally suffered greatly due to the sins of the leaders and the sins of the nation. No doubt, many of Asaph's family and friends were killed in the foreign invasions about which he writes. Psalm 74 likely reflects Asaph's distress at the invasion of Shishak the king of Egypt. What can we learn today from Asaph's Psalm? First, Asaph clearly recognizes that Israel's national problems are in fact due to God's anger in response to the nation's sins. It wasn't simply because Egypt had grown strong or because Israel's leaders had not been competent enough -- it was because Israel had turned from God, the true source of their strength. How will God judge the sins of our nation? Second, Asaph, though faithful to God, also suffers the consequences of the nation's sins. When a nation turns from God, everyone suffers the consequences. It is important for Christians understand that reality

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as they prepare for the future. Finally, Asaph, though undoubtedly disillusioned by his government, never lost his faith in God or his perspective that “God [is] King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” (Psalm 74:12) In a time of national despair, Asaph understood that a stronger military, a better economy, or more capable elected officials would not save the nation, only the power of God. On what does the future of America depend?

11. Psalm 74:2 – “Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!” God’s congregation is those whose sin debt He has paid through the blood of Jesus Christ and who now follow Him as His disciple.

12. Psalm 74:7 – “They set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground.” God’s enemies will profane His name and seek to destroy the work of His people on earth.

13. Psalm 74:8 – “They said to themselves, ‘We will utterly subdue them;’ they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.” God’s enemies will not be satisfied while there are still those who worship God.

14. Psalm 74:9, 12 – “We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long.... Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” A lack of prophecy is evidence of a weak, dying church. Despite the weak and dying churches, God will still work His plan for salvation across the earth for those He intends to save.

15. Psalm 74:16 – “Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.” God is still in control.

16. Psalm 74:22 – “Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!” Just like sick people vomit, the fools will scoff. Remain true to the LORD in the midst of an epidemic of sin.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 June: Evaluate your self-control today. Test yourself by intentionally resisting that one particular temptation that you struggle with. In your temptation, pray and meditate upon why it is so difficult for you to resist. What does it reveal about your heart and your walk with the Spirit? Get to the root of the temptation. Rather than seeking greater willpower, seek the supernatural power of the Spirit in your life to build your self-control. Seek greater unity with the Spirit.

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 5, Friday, 29 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+21%2C+22%3B+PROV+29%3B+Philip+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 29 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 21:1 -- "Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel." Satan's objective is to come between you and God by getting you to disobey Him and seek your own will.

2. 1 Chronicles 21:3 – “But Joab said, ‘May the Lord add to his people a hundred times as many as they are! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord’s servants? Why then should my lord require

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this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?" Often people close to you can see the error of your ways better than you can.

3. 1 Chronicles 21:8 – "And David said to God, 'I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have acted very foolishly.'" Repentance addresses God, admits sin, accepts the foolishness of personal acts, and asks for forgiveness.

4. 1 Chronicles 21:13 -- "Then David said to Gad, 'I am in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is very great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man.'" Better to be disciplined by God who loves you than to be persecuted by people who can't love you. You can trust God's love when He disciplines you.

5. 1 Chronicles 21:14, 17 – "So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel, and 70,000 men of Israel fell.... And David said to God, 'Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done great evil. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O Lord my God, be against me and against my father's house. But do not let the plague be on your people.'" Your sin may cause many others to suffer.

6. 1 Chronicles 21:15 – "And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, 'It is enough; now stay your hand.' And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." In His mercy, God does not give you the punishment you deserve.

7. 1 Chronicles 22:5 – "For David said, 'Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands. I will therefore make preparation for it.' So David provided materials in great quantity before his death." God's people plan for and invest in an eternal plan and think generationally. It takes faith to put all your energies into a future you cannot see.

8. 1 Chronicles 22:13 -- "Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Fear not; do not be dismayed." Salvation is a gift that cannot be earned through works, but many blessings we receive on earth depend upon obedience and faith. Our actions have consequences.

9. 1 Chronicles 22:19 -- "Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God." We were made to serve God on earth. All of your work should be assigned by God and dedicated to Him. Don't pursue your own work that is dedicated to your own personal kingdom on earth.

10. Proverbs 29:1 – "He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing." God forgives and heals, but there is a point where the sickness of sin becomes terminal.

11. Proverbs 29:4 -- "By justice a king builds up the land, but he who exacts gifts tears it down." Godly leaders are motivated by justice, not influenced by political interest group donations.

12. Proverbs 29:7 -- "A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge." Godly leaders are not influenced by money.

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13. Proverbs 29:9 -- "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet." Don't waste your energy arguing with fools. Proclaim the truth, but don't argue.

14. Proverbs 29:10 -- "Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright." If you stand for truth, you will be targeted.

15. Proverbs 29:11 -- "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back." Have the wisdom to control yourself. Wise leaders show restraint when confronted.

16. Proverbs 29:12 -- "If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked." Ungodly leaders bring ungodly subordinate leaders.

17. Proverbs 29:18 -- "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." A nation that drifts away from God's word will drift into lawlessness. When the church loses its salt and light and fails to do its job as the conscience of the state, national lawlessness prevails and the nation crumbles. The problem with the nation is not unbelievers but rather compromised, unfaithful, unholy, believers.

18. Proverbs 29:19 -- "By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond." When a person or people refuse to listen to the word of God, physical discipline must be applied.

19. Proverbs 29:20 -- "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Godly leaders are careful with their words.

20. Proverbs 29:22 -- "A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression." Godly leaders do not stir up strife.

21. Proverbs 29:26 -- "Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice." Our hope is not in political leaders or in courts but in God alone. Our nation needs revival above elections.

Note: Check out this video overview of Philippians as you prepare to read the book --
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE9qqW1-BkU>

22. Philippians 1:1, 2 -- "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus... Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's letter offers some very important insights into his perspective on our role in Christ: We are called to be servants and saints as Christ's ambassadors on a mission of reconciliation, proclaiming grace and peace on behalf of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all partners in the gospel, sharing in God's grace. Christians have a heart for one another, continually and joyfully praying for one another as we all endeavor to grow more Christ-like each day and struggle to remain faithful to our calling under the great challenges presented by the world, the flesh, and the devil. As Christians ("people of the book"), we know that love must be accompanied by knowledge and insight so we can understand specifically what God's will is in order to pursue purity and holiness and to truly live a life of fidelity, worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Our aim is to courageously and fearlessly proclaim the gospel, and we know that the more courageous we are, the more we inspire others to confidence (iron sharpens iron). We preach God's truth not because we are judgmental "haters" but rather out of love and goodwill. We are not ashamed of the Gospel, and we are not afraid of the world's response to our message, because we have already been crucified with Christ and no longer live, but Christ lives in us. Our suffering for the gospel is fellowship with Christ. Our

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suffering on behalf of Christ is for us a gift from God, and in faith, we stand firm in unity before a sinful world.

23. Philippians 1:6 -- "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." You are a work in progress.

24. Philippians 1:7-11 -- "You are all partakers with me of grace.... For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Living by Grace, we are called to grow day-by-day in ever-increasing love, purity, and righteousness, through the power of Christ in order to bring glory to Him. Grace is not an excuse to continue in sin.

25. Philippians 1:12-14 -- "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." God places you in challenging circumstances and with difficult people so that you can spread the Gospel while God also builds up your godly character. Don't resent the circumstances God has given you. Be thankful.

26. Philippians 1:15-16 -- "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love." There are those who use the word of God for the wrong motives. But Bible doesn't tell us to just speak the truth but rather to "speak the truth in love." God knows everyone's motives and judges the heart. Check your own heart before you challenge others with the word of God; make sure you are not being motivated by fear, pride, anger, envy, or anything other than love.

27. Philippians 1:24, 25 -- "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." In Christ, our only goal for life on earth should be to grow closer to Christ and to bring others closer to Christ. Nothing else really matters. To draw closer to Christ, you must obey Him. If you obey Him, all the issues of life will be resolved.

28. Philippians 1:27-28 -- "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ... standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents." God intends for you to "strive" with other Christians to advance the Gospel with boldness. Striving is no small effort. The Greek word used here is "sunathleō," from where we get the word "athletics." The root word athleō was used of gladiators fighting in the arena. Paul pictured us fighting together, side by side in the arena of this world in a life and death battle to advance the gospel – "and not frightened in anything by your opponents." Are you courageously striving for the Gospel? Who is fighting at your side?

29. Philippians 1:29 -- "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake." Suffering for God is a special trust granted to you by God Himself. You should be honored to suffer for Him.

Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 June 17: God has called you to proclaim the Gospel to the world, to go into the world and make disciples, teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded (Matt 28:19-21), to be an Ambassador for Christ (2 Cor 5:20), proclaiming the mission of reconciliation (2

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Cor 5:19), to dedicate your whole life and all of your energy to spreading the Good News (Philp 1). So, today, evaluate your mission accomplishment so far, and rededicate yourself to total commitment. Don't waste your life chasing after things that don't matter.

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 4, Thursday, 28 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+chron+19%2C+20%3B+prov+28%3B+eph+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 28 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 19:3 -- "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Have not his servants come to you to search and to overthrow and to spy out the land?' So Hanun took David's servants and shaved them and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away...." We can misinterpret others' motives and actions when we view them from a position of fear, doubt, and our own sinful motives, and this may cause us to act sinfully towards them -- needless quarrels start that can be very destructive. Love calls us to give others the benefit of the doubt when acts of kindness are offered. Remember, only God truly knows the heart of another person. Be careful not to assume the worse of others.

- Previous notes (19 May 18) on this story as told in 2 Samuel 10 -- David sends a delegation to king Hanun to console him concerning the recent death of his father. Hanun, the young, inexperienced, poorly advised king of the Ammonites misinterprets David's gesture of kindness, believing it to be a trick, and responds by publicly humiliating and dishonoring David's envoys. The result is a pointless war between the Israelites, Ammonites and Syrians where over 40,000 people needlessly die. It is not at all hard to understand why Hanun acted the way he did: sending spies as envoys is a common tactic, and David's modus operandus included this sort of deception. Remember in 1 Samuel 27, king Achish trusted David while David was secretly massacring villages within his land, leaving "neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath." (1 Samuel 27:11) During the death of a king and the subsequent transition to new leadership, a kingdom is very vulnerable, and Hanun surely felt insecure and defensive. A wiser David would have recognized the sensitivity of the situation and would have dealt with Hanun more carefully; but David, rather than considering Hanun's perspective, assumed that Hanun would see things from his perspective, a big mistake we often make in our relationships. Hanun on the other hand reacted to David's poorly timed gesture rashly, likely due to his insecurity as a new king. Insecurity makes people defensive and often causes them to assume the worst in others. Insecurity can destroy relationships. Hanun did one of the worse things someone can do in a relationship, he belittled, embarrassed, humiliated and dishonored David and his men. He robbed them of their dignity. In this case, neither party had the maturity, self-confidence, or moral courage to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. It continued to escalate into great destruction. The first rule in relationships is to seek first to understand rather than be understood. We must be sensitive to the vulnerabilities and insecurities of others. If we have offended someone, we must quickly seek forgiveness, restitution and reconciliation, even if the other party is not wholly innocent. If we have been offended, we must quickly forgive and seek reconciliation. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18) "Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Corinthians 13:11) Finally, we must NEVER dishonor or humiliate another person, but rather treat all people with dignity and respect.

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2. 1 Chronicles 19:6 – “When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent 1,000 talents of silver to hire chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, from Aram-maacah, and from Zobah.” It is far easier to admit you are wrong and apologize than to try to defend your defenseless position. Demonstrate humility and settle matters quickly before they escalate out of control. “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.” (Proverbs 17:14)

3. 1 Chronicles 19:13 -- “Be strong, and let us use our strength for our people and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him.” Great strength is found in the spirit of a person fighting for God and family. Victory is always in the hands of the LORD. Who would want to fight against Him? If what you are fighting for is not from God, you are fighting in vain.

4. 1 Chronicles 19:15 – “And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, Joab’s brother, and entered the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.” Fear can be very contagious, even among God’s people.

5. Proverbs 28:1 -- “The righteous are bold as a lion.” Faith in your position as Christ's Ambassador makes you naturally bold. A lack of boldness is an indicator of a lack of faith. God wants you to be bold.

6. Proverbs 28:5 -- “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.” God is the source of justice. Those who do not know God cannot administer justice. Secular leaders will lead unjustly. Justice is only administered by those who fear the LORD.

7. Proverbs 28:7 -- “The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.” Gluttony is shameful. Lawlessness and gluttony both reveal a lack of self-control. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5), not the product of intellect or human will.

8. Proverbs 28:8 – “Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.” God does not want His people to get wealthy from charging interest. God wants his people to gain wealth through industriousness, adding value, not by redistributing wealth from the weak to the strong.

9. Proverbs 28:9 -- “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” Sin hinders prayer. God does not honor the prayers of those who reject His law.

- “The late Norman Vincent Peale tells about a time when, as a young boy, he was intrigued by smoking. One day he found a cigar so he went to an alley behind his house and lit it up. He says the cigar did not taste very good, but it made him feel grown-up. That is, until he saw his father enter the alley. Quickly Norman Vincent Peale put the cigar behind his back and tried to act casual. Desperately trying to divert his father’s attention he pointed to a billboard at the corner advertising the circus coming to town. ‘Can we please go the circus when it comes to town?’ he asked. Norman Vincent Peale says his father taught him a lesson he never forgot, ‘Son,’ his father answered quietly but firmly, ‘never make a petition while you’re trying to hide the smoldering evidence of disobedience.’ How can we expect God to answer prayers when we are living in disobedience and unconfessed sin?”

10. Proverbs 28:13 -- “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Open confession is required for repentance and reconciliation. Genuine confession and repentance are critical to your relationship with God. You cannot and will not fix

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what you aren't willing to be honest about, honest first with yourself and then with others. Hiding transgressions from others is an act of fear, pride, and self-centeredness. When you are honest about your sinfulness, you are then in a position to proclaim the grace of Jesus. You will stop lifting yourself up before others and will start lifting up Jesus instead.

11. Proverbs 28:20 – “A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.” Success in life is the product of fidelity to God, not the result of hard work to pursue or own goals and objectives.

12. Proverbs 28:21 -- "To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong." Everyone must be held accountable, but we must consider the circumstances that led someone to sin. Circumstances don't excuse sin but may contribute to it. Justice is giving people what they deserve. Mercy is not giving people what they deserve, and grace is giving people what they don't deserve. God balances perfectly justice, mercy, and grace. We must seek from God the wisdom to do the same.

13. Proverbs 28:25, 26 – “A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched. Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” You will either trust in the LORD or in yourself. What you decide will determine the outcome of your life. Fools always think they have it all figured out, or can figure it out, and don't need God.

14. Ephesians 6:4 – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Parents are also required to treat their children with dignity, patience, gentleness, and grace. Parents cannot abuse their authority.

15. Ephesians 6:5-9 – “Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”

- Yes, we are to treat our bosses like we would treat Jesus, and we must do it with sincerity. Do you sincerely treat your employer like you would Jesus?

- We are called to serve both God and man, not in order to get credit but out of sincere love and to bring glory to God.

- "...knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord." God will treat you the way you treat others.

- Who receives our service should not affect how we serve; how they respond to our service should not affect how we serve. If our service is not appreciated from people it matters little because we are serving the LORD, and He will treat us in the same way we treat others. He is gracious to the gracious, generous to the generous, forgiving to the forgiving, etc. God is in control of all things, not people.

16. Ephesians 6:10, 11 – “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” The devil will scheme against you, and you will not be prepared for his attacks against you without the strength that comes from God.

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17. Ephesians 6:12 -- "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." The sinner is not your real enemy, evil spiritual forces are the enemy. The sinner is your objective.

18. Ephesians 6:14-18 -- Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, the confidence and freedom in salvation from God, the word of God, and prayer protect us day by day. How well equipped are you?

19. Ephesians 6:17 -- "Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," Train with the sword every day so you are ready for the fight when it comes. No one gets really skilled at anything with daily commitment over time. "Forty years ago, in a paper in American Scientist, Herbert Simon and William Chase drew one of the most famous conclusions in the study of expertise: 'There are no instant experts in chess—certainly no instant masters or grandmasters. There appears not to be on record any case (including Bobby Fischer) where a person reached grandmaster level with less than about a decade's intense preoccupation with the game. We would estimate, very roughly, that a master has spent perhaps 10,000 to 50,000 hours staring at chess positions...' " How many hours have you spent studying God's word?

20. Ephesians 6:18 -- "...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...." Effective prayer requires perseverance in prayer.

21. Ephesians 6:20 -- "...for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." You can serve God powerfully in any position or condition.

22. Ephesians 6:22 -- "I have sent him to you for this very purpose.... that he may encourage your hearts." Everyone can use an encouraging word; are you there to provide it to them?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 June: Only speak encouraging words today. (Ephesians 6:22)

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 3, Wednesday, 27 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+17%2C+18%3B+PROV+27%3B+Eph+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 27 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 17:2 -- "And Nathan said to David, 'Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.'" We must be careful not to confuse our thoughts with God's thoughts. Just because we think it makes sense doesn't mean it is what God wants.

2. 1 Chronicles 17:9-14 -- God takes the initiative to show you the work He wants you to do for Him.

3. 1 Chronicles 17:1-3 -- "Now when David lived in his house, David said to Nathan the prophet, 'Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent.' And Nathan said to David, 'Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.' But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan...." Don't presume to speak for God when God hasn't really spoken. Don't get ahead of God on decisions. Again, just because it seems good to you doesn't mean it is what God wants.

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4. 1 Chronicles 18:14 – “So David reigned over all Israel, and he administered justice and equity to all his people.” God wants justice to rule the world order. God is Justice. We are the Ambassadors for Christ on Earth. We are the priests of the earth. We are called to be the predominant influence on Earth in the Name of Jesus that justice, mercy, and grace would increase.

5. Proverbs 27:1 -- "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Make the most of today, and don't put off till tomorrow what God has called you to do right now. Delayed obedience is disobedience. We cannot do anything about yesterday, and tomorrow is no guarantee. Today is what we can influence. So much of life is being faithful to God one day at a time, making the most of every opportunity, and it's all about relationships. Make today a ministry masterpiece!

6. Proverbs 27:2 – “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” Stop talking about yourself.

7. Proverbs 27:4 – “Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?” Jealousy is more powerful than even anger. Jealousy drove the religious leaders of the New Testament to seek the execution of Jesus. Watch out for jealousy.

8. Proverbs 27:5, 6 – “Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” Telling someone only what they want to hear and/or not telling them what they need to hear is unloving and something only an enemy would do.

9. Proverbs 27:8 – “Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home.” A chick that strays from the nest is helpless and likely to die. One who commits adultery has rendered themselves completely vulnerable to destruction.

10. Proverbs 27:9 – “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.” Friends journey through life together in pursuit of a greater loving relationship with God. A true friend earnestly desires to tell you how you can improve your walk with God. A true friend is also eager to listen to godly advice and recommendations. A loving relationship can handle constructive critique without letting pride get in the way. Good relationships require humility and trust from both parties.

11. Proverbs 27:10 – “Do not forsake your friend and your father’s friend, and do not go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.” God expects fellow Christians to unite together in Christ as family and to strengthen and support one another as family.

12. Proverbs 27:11 -- "Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me." Children bring either bring good credit or bad credit upon the family name. What do people think about your Father in Heaven when you say you are a Christian and they see how you act?

13. Proverbs 27:14 – “Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning....” Ministry must take into account the specific needs and attitudes of the person receiving it. You cannot approach different people the same way, and you cannot approach people the same way under different circumstances. Approaching someone with an impersonal, cookie-cutter approach is only perceived as phony and condescending.

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14. Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Again, your friends should be making you a better Christian and vice versa. Friendships are based upon a mutually supportive effort to know Jesus more and more and to make Him known more and more, not a mutually supportive pursuit of simple ‘happiness’ as the world suggests. Most athletes don’t enjoy the pain that comes from pushing the limits of their current physical capacities, but they celebrate the victories that come from the painful effort. Most athletes perform better when they have a good partner – iron sharpens iron. Who is sharpening you day by day? We all need two or three very close Christian friends who will challenge us in Christ.

15. Proverbs 27:18 – “Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored.” If we allow our leaders to fail, we will only suffer for it.

16. Proverbs 27:19 – “As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.” We use mirrors to judge our outward condition and appearance. We use humble, prayerful, Bible-based introspection and self-awareness, empowered by the Holy Spirit to judge our inner condition, our hearts. How important is it for us to learn how to be truly self-aware, receptive to the counsel of the Holy Spirit? Reputation is what others say about you. Character is what God says about you.

17. Proverbs 27:21 -- "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise." Your faith is tested in both good times and bad times. How you respond to both reveals in whom you have placed your trust, in God or in yourself.

18. Proverbs 27:23-27 -- “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever....” God commands us to prepare for “a rainy day” because one thing is certain: it is going to rain one day, and everyone, even Christians will get wet.

19. Ephesians 5:1-2 -- "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

- Wow! Even if you can’t find the time to read all the Bible readings today, take the time to read Ephesians 5 and meditate deeply upon it. Powerful! I believe that one of the major purposes of the Christian life is to tangibly reveal the truths of God to others. We are a manifestation of the Truth. How complacently we live our lives! What is the expectation? Imitate God, and walk in love and total selflessness to the point of death. Our faith must not be just “empty words” but a life of integrity before the Lord, Coram Deo, revealed to those around us. We must have nothing to do with any form of immorality. We are to “walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),” always striving to understand more and more “what is pleasing to the Lord.” To the Christian who continues to walk with the world, the Bible commands: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Repent right now as the Holy Spirit convicts, and don’t waist another second of your life in compromise (there is no such thing as a small compromise) – “[make] the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Surrender to God not to earn your way into Heaven or to get something from God, but simply out of reverence, love and gratitude to Him – “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And how do we show submission to God? We submit ourselves to others (Ephesians 5:21). Where do you start? You start with your closest relationships, particularly the challenging ones – “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.... do good to those who hate you.... lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil....

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Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ.... Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” To walk in love like Jesus is to give yourself up for others. We are called to act like God by loving others unconditionally.

- Living the life of love: Christians like to talk a lot about love (rightfully so), but they don’t like to talk much about obedience. However the two go together: Deut 11:1, Deut 11:13, Jos 22:5, Neh 1:5, Psa 85:10, Psa 119: 88, 167; Pro 3:3, Hos 4:1, Dan 9:4; John 14-24, John 15: 10; Gal 5:22, 1 Pet 1:22, 1 John 2:5, 1 John 5:3. Sometimes we equate love to acceptance of sin, but today’s readings make it clear that “children of the light... have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” As Ephesians 4:15 instructed us yesterday, “Instead, [speak] the truth in love, [so that] we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Proverbs says it this way: Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wound from a friend can be trusted.... Iron sharpens iron.” Today, Paul is being very specific about how Christians should live: “Be imitators of God (of who?)” as “God’s holy people” without even a hint of impurity. Don’t have a faith of mere “empty words.” Live carefully, wisely, prudently, productively, soberly, thankfully, purely, and joyfully. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Submit to one another, not just for their sake, but out of reverence for Christ. This standard of living is something to strive for, without pride, fear, frustration, or comparison:

-- “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Philippians 3:12-21)

20. Ephesians 5:3-8 -- "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them." Perhaps no temporal sin is more condemned in the Bible than sexual sin, which is pure selfishness and strikes at the foundation the most important ordained institution on earth – the family. There is nothing funny about sexual sin, nothing at all. There is no excuse for sexual sin. It is to be abhorred. Do not partner with the sexually immoral. This message is clear throughout the Bible but less and less popular today.

21. Ephesians 5:4 – “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.” Some joking is out of place for believers.

22. Ephesians 5:10 – “...and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.” You can and are supposed to know what pleases God from your personal study and your receptivity to the Holy Spirit. The Bible says,

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“try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord,” much like a football coach says, try to catch the ball. It is within your capability, but it takes practice. At first, you will drop the ball more than you catch it, but with practice, you will improve. Without practice, without a willingness to keep trying persistently, you will never get better.

23. Ephesians 5:11, 12 -- “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.” God calls us to expose sin, much like John the Baptist did when he condemned Herod’s adultery (subsequently being executed). To be silent before sin is to condone it and to be culpable. What are you saying about fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, etc?

24. Ephesians 5:25 – “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her....” Husbands must surrender their lives for their spouses.

25. Ephesians 5:32 -- “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Marriage is designed to be a visible representation to the world of Christ's love for His church. If you are married, your marriage is your primary testimony to the world.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 June: Today, endeavor to "sacrifice" yourself to others and to give yourself up for others as Christ gave Himself up for you. Take up your cross when persecuted by others, with grace, mercy, and love. Forgive the sinners who "know not what they do." Return evil with kindness. While sharing in the sufferings of Jesus, humbly expose sin (in love), preach repentance, and proclaim the Gospel. (Ephesians 5)

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 2, Tuesday, 26 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+15%2C+16%3B+PROV+26%3B+Eph+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 26 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 15:2; Deut 10:8 – “Then David said that no one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, for the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister to him forever.” We must obey God. God’s word reveals what God commands. We must know, through diligent study, God’s word to know God’s commands. Obedience to God’s word enables our success.

2. 1 Chronicles 15:13 -- “Because you did not carry it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule.” Honoring God involves obeying Him as God. You cannot be complacent with God's commands. Only after David truly understood God’s word did David understand why God had disciplined him and caused him to fail. It would have been much better if David had understood and followed God’s word in the first place. (see 1 Chronicles 13:7)

3. 1 Chronicles 15:16, 25 – “David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.... So David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-edom with rejoicing.” God wants worshipful obedience to bring joy to you.

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4. 1 Chronicles 15:22 – “Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, should direct the music, for he understood it.” God assigns ministers based upon the skills He has given them. What God has enabled you to do is for Him, not for you.
5. 1 Chronicles 16:9 -- "Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!" God wants His works in your life to be the primary topic of your conversation with others.
6. 1 Chronicles 16:11 – “Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!” Seeking the LORD is a continuous, wholehearted endeavor.
7. 1 Chronicles 16:12 – “Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered....” Worship should include recounting all the things God has done in your life.
8. 1 Chronicles 16:19 – “When you were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it....” God begins mighty works with the few faithful among the masses.
9. 1 Chronicles 16:20-22 – “...wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, saying, ‘Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!’” God protects you when you have no strength, power or status. Have comfort in knowing the no one can take you outside of God’s will or protection. Whatever happens to you is intended by God for a greater good you cannot imagine.
10. 1 Chronicles 16:23 – “Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!” God expects you to tell everyone about your salvation through Jesus. God wants you involved in His mission to redeem the lost world.
11. 1 Chronicles 16:25-26, 31 – “For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.... Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns!’” God alone has power. God loves you unconditionally and with all power – rejoice in that! The world does not know or accept that “The LORD reigns.” This is even more reason to proclaim that truth.
12. Proverbs 26:11 -- "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." You repeat what you don't repair. Don't keep making the same mistakes over and over again. Surrender to the Holy Spirit, learn and grow.
13. Proverbs 26:12 -- "Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Spiritual growth requires spiritual humility. Don't be prideful in your spirit.
14. Proverbs 26:13 -- "The sluggard says, 'There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!'" People come up with all sorts of excuses for why they 'can't' do what they should do.
15. Proverbs 26:27 -- "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling." Don't get wrapped up in competition with other people, trying to undermine them. When you fight other people, you get hurt too. As the old saying says, "Don't wrestle with a pig in the mud because you both get dirty and the pig likes it."

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16. Ephesians 4:1-3 -- "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Are you walking worthy?

In grace, God expects us to "walk with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

17. Ephesians 4:4-7 -- "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." We must strive for unity at all times because God's character seeks unity and because He brought us to unity with Him through grace, giving us relationship with Him despite our ugliness.

18. Ephesians 4:9-16 -- We must strive for unity with those who are hard to deal with, considering what depths Christ sank and what wounds He suffered to unite us with the Father. No one compares worse to us than we compare to the One who saved us.

19. Ephesians 4:11-14 -- "He equip[ed] the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." You were made to help others get closer to Christ and to grow in the true knowledge of Him.

20. Ephesians 4:15 -- "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." You cannot love without speaking the truth, but you must speak the truth in a way that draws others closer to Christ, not further away. True love speaks the truth in love.

21. Ephesians 4:16 -- "...the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." God's people should be as united and as mutually supportive as a human body, all responding to the desires of the Head, Jesus.

22. Ephesians 4:18 -- "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart."

- A lack of wisdom is a heart problem.

- People are far from God because of the hardness of their hearts, not because God has made Himself inaccessible.

23. Ephesians 4:19, 20 -- "They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!" When people reject God, they turn to impurity. When people turn to Christ, they pursue the purity modelled by Christ.

24. Ephesians 4:26 -- "Be angry and do not sin." Anger is not sinful. Misapplied anger is sinful.

25. Ephesians 4:26-32 -- Un-forgiveness, idleness, and careless talk enable the devil in your life.

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26. Ephesians 4:29 -- "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up." If it isn't helpful, don't say it.

27. Ephesians 4:1-3, 22, 24, 30 -- "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.... put off your old self.... put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

- God has called us to pursue holiness with all our might (every effort). You have been saved by grace, through faith in Christ; now "live a life worthy of the calling you have received." What is that calling?

-- called to be set apart for the gospel of God (Rom 1:1)

-- called to belong to Jesus Christ (Rom 1:6)

-- called to be saints (Rom 1:7)

-- called to be holy (1 Cor 1:2, 2 Tim 1:9, 1 Pet 1:15)

-- called into fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor 1:9)

-- called us to live in peace (1 Cor 7:15, Col 3:15)

-- called to be Christ's slave (1 Cor 7:22)

-- called to be free in Christ (Gal 5:13)

-- called to know hope (Eph 1:18)

-- called to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes 2:14)

-- called to eternal life (2 Tim 6:12)

-- called to follow in the footsteps of Christ (1 Pet 2:21)

-- called to inherit a blessing (1 Pet 3:9)

-- called to eternal glory in Christ (1 Pet 5:10)

- The Bible says that we "are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that [we] may declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Today Paul is urging us to wake up and grow up – to stop living like the world and to be holy because God our Father is holy – to attain "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Don't we realize that we were "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness?" It is time to live up to our calling.

28. Ephesians 4:31-32 -- "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." More attributes to measure yourself against.

29. Ephesians 4:32 – Forgive others the way Christ forgave you.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 June: Right down the Christian attributes mentioned in Ephesians 4, and place them where you can review them regularly. Pray for the spiritual strength to grow in them, and evaluate yourself regularly and prayerfully.

DBRP - WEEK 26, Day 1, Monday, 25 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+chron+13%2C+14%3B+prov+25%3B+Eph+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 25 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 13:1, 2 -- "David consulted with the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with every leader. And David said to all the assembly of Israel, 'If it seems good to you and from the LORD our God....'"

- David focused his time on his leaders, counting on them to transmit his message, to execute his intent, and to give him feedback and counsel from their perspectives. Only a very few interacted with David daily. David had to not only develop leaders he could trust, but he had to develop leaders who knew how to develop trustworthy subordinate leaders. David needed disciple-making leaders who would develop godly disciple-making leaders. A person has limited capacity to truly disciple others, which takes daily effort to teach, coach and mentor in a way that develops godly character. A person can only truly disciple a limited number. Who are you discipling daily?

- Trust is the fabric of any organization. David's trust throughout his ranks of leaders rested on their fidelity to God above all else and their receptivity to God's leading. David relied on the confidence that his leaders, in the absence of specific and direct orders, would hear and obey God. Note what David said to the assembly – "If it seems good to you and from the LORD our God...." David was counting on leaders who would not simply rely on their own judgment but who would prayerfully seek guidance from God and be guided by the leading of the Holy Spirit. David didn't just say, "if it seems good and also lawful;" he said if it is "from" the LORD. Critical to good leadership is being led by the Holy Spirit, above our incredibly limited, easily deceived human perception and intellect. The Holy Spirit is not limited, but we can quench, grieve, and get out of step with the Spirit through our own infidelity and disobedience. If we don't experience clear guidance and intent from the Spirit daily as Jesus did, the issue is with our own lack of receptivity based upon the condition of our hearts. A good decision is not just based upon what we think; it must be "from the LORD."

2. 1 Chronicles 13:3 -- "Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul." David knew that the kingdom's future depended on revelation from God and the power of God. So, does your future. Saul did not seek God's counsel as he should have, and it cost him everything and also caused the needless suffering of countless others. Learn from the lessons of the Old Testament which are provided for you by God.

3. 1 Chronicles 13:10-12 – "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark, and he died there before God. And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah.... And David was afraid of God that day...." What does it take for a person to stop fighting God's will, to stop blaming God for the consequence of sin, and to start revering God and obeying him? The Ark of the Covenant represented God's holiness and sat in the Most Holy Place. After the death of Aaron's two sons when they approached the Lord inappropriately, God gave Moses these instructions: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the

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Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, for God has proclaimed 'Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.'" God had given very specific instructions as to how the ark was to be handled: It was to be carried only by the Levites on foot using long poles that ran through rings on the sides – there were never to be removed. The people were to be shielded from the ark by the "atonement cover" made of pure gold and a curtain. The ark had been forgotten during the reign of Saul, and the people had lost perspective on the holiness of God. As the ark is carelessly moved in an unauthorized fashion, Uzzah dares to touch this holy object and dies – he had subconsciously presumed that his sinful hands were somehow cleaner than the ground where the ark would have fallen. It is interesting to me how David's response begins with anger and then turns to fear. The clearer our perspective of God, the greater we appreciate his holiness in contrast to our sinfulness, the more grateful we become for the grace bestowed upon us. Think of Peter's response to Jesus when he first understood who Jesus was: "he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'" Today's readings in Ephesians point out that "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." However, this statement does not suggest that we should approach God without reverence. Note the next verse: "For this reason I kneel before the Father...." Today, worship has become very casual. Perhaps we have a problem with our perspective of God's holiness, our sinfulness, and the grace which we have received. How differently would we approach our God and live our lives with a clearer perspective.

4. 1 Chronicles 14:10-12 – "And David inquired of God, 'Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?' And the Lord said to him, 'Go up, and I will give them into your hand.' And he went up to Baal-perazim, and David struck them down there. And David said, 'God has broken through my enemies by my hand, like a bursting flood.' Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. And they left their gods there, and David gave command, and they were burned." David inquired of God, knew without question God's reply, was quick to see God's hand in the outcomes, and publicly gave God all the credit while recommitting to obedience. Is that how you function?

5. Proverbs 25:2 – "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out." What motivates your quest for knowledge will largely determine what you discover. Many get the right answers to all the wrong questions. Many seek increased knowledge to validate their own assumptions, turning a blind eye to greater truths. What might we have discovered in science and technology has we not raised up our children within an education system that excludes God from the equation? So much knowledge is a misguided, prideful pursuit among people seeking to free themselves of God's truth. "'Knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:1) "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

6. Proverbs 25:4 – "Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel." Are you diligently seeking to remove the dross of sin from your life that you would be a worthy vessel for the Holy Spirit?

7. Proverbs 25:5 – "Take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness." Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

8. Proverbs 25:6, 7 – "Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, 'Come up here,' than to be put lower in the presence of a noble." Too many people seek ministry and positions of church leadership for which God has not anointed them.

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Too many leaders fail miserably because they are seeking to do what God never intended for them. If you are truly obedient to the responsibilities and opportunities God has placed in front of you, increased responsibility will naturally happen, and you will be truly ready for it.

9. Proverbs 25:15, 16 – “With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.” Patience and self-control are key to positive relationships and to success in general.

10. Proverbs 25:19 – “Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.” The wrong people in your life can make things bad that should be good.

11. Proverbs 25:28 – “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” Those who lack self-control are perpetual victims. Most people in America will die from diseases associated with smoking, a poor diet, a lack of exercise, and too much stress. However, they will really die from a lack of self-control. Self-control comes from the Holy Spirit, not from a better education or positive thinking.

12. Ephesians 3:1 -- "For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles...." There is no greater job than to be a prisoner for Jesus. Are you a prisoner for Christ on behalf of those God has placed in your life for His purposes?

13. Ephesians 3:2, 3 -- "You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation." The grace that we have received is not primarily for us but rather has been given to us to for others. God revealed to us the Gospel, and we are called to be good stewards of the revelation that has been given to us. Your goal in life is to spread the good news to as many people as possible.

14. Ephesians 3:7 – “Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.” Only God can empower a disciple or minister. You were chosen and did not commission yourself.

15. Ephesians 3:8 -- "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." God chooses His servants not because of their righteousness but because of His grace.

16. Ephesians 3:12, 13 – “...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” Faith in Christ gives us boldness before man and special access to God which empowers us and gives us supernatural understanding. Faith enables us to see that all of our circumstances are for God's glory.

17. Ephesians 3:16 – “...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being....” True power comes from the Spirit of God within a true, yielded believer.

18. Ephesians 3:16-19 -- "...according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." The Spirit gives you the power to grow in faith and

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love and to know Christ more and more, being filled fuller each day with Christ. You cannot grow in Christ without the power of the Spirit.

19. Ephesians 3:17 – “...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love....” Real love only comes through a Christ-filled heart.

20. Ephesians 3:19 – “...and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Godliness is not achieved through knowledge and intellect but rather through Spirit-enabled love that is impossible to understand. The fullness of God comes through love.

21. Ephesians 3:20, 21 -- "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." God is doing things in you and for you that you cannot possibly understand. God will do far more than you can possibly imagine, far beyond your prayers, and not through your power but through His power working through you. Could you imagine a parent limiting his actions directed toward a three-year-old to only what the child asked for or to only what that child could imagine? Of course, a three-year-old cannot possibly comprehend what he really needs in life or how much the parent is ready to do for his benefit. Far more so, it is impossible for us to comprehend the love and power of the Father directed towards us. My kids have to trust me when they don't understand my actions towards them, and even more so, we have to trust in God and walk in faith. God is at work within you. Rejoice and walk boldly day by day. Trust in Him.

“Cross” Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 June 18: Pray for spiritual strength and to be filled more fully with the love and knowledge of Jesus. (Ephesians 3:16-20)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 7, Sunday, 24 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+11%2C+12%3B+PROV+24%3B+PSALM+73>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 24 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 11:3 – “And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel.” The Israelites elected the king God had already chosen. They chose him because he was clearly chosen by God. A nation that chooses to honor God above all else will elect godly leaders and receive the natural blessings that come from god-honoring choices. A nation that does not honor God as God will receive the consequences of the ungodly leaders they raise up.

2. 1 Chronicles 11:6 -- “‘Whoever strikes the Jebusites first shall be chief and commander.’ And Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief.” David made the common mistake of choosing a leader simply because of his competency and ability to get things done rather than his character, loyalty, and trustworthiness. Joab was a mighty warrior but he was also deceitful, ruthless, and self-serving.

3. 1 Chronicles 11:9 -- "And David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him." Your success depends on God's presence in your life. He won't walk away from you; be careful not to walk away from Him.

4. 1 Chronicles 11:10 -- "Now these are the chiefs of David's mighty men, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel." Good leaders must be surrounded by mighty men, dedicated to God and skilled at what they do.

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5. 1 Chronicles 11:12 -- "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel." Leaders are to be shepherds of the weak and defenseless, leading them to where they need to go and protecting them. The One Shepherd is Jesus; human leaders must be following Jesus in order to lead others where they need to go. Stray from Jesus, and you are leading others astray.

6. 1 Chronicles 11:17-19 -- "And David said longingly, 'Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!' Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and took it and brought it to David. But David would not drink it. He poured it out to the Lord and said, 'Far be it from me before my God that I should do this. Shall I drink the lifeblood of these men? For at the risk of their lives they brought it.' Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men." Leaders, be careful not to focus inward in your weakness. Be careful what you ask for, your followers will wear themselves out to get it for you. Consider carefully your displayed emotions and every word that comes out of your mouth so that you don't unintentionally mislead your followers. If you remain a faithful ambassador for Christ, not representing your own interests, you will be a good leader.

7. 1 Chronicles 12:16 -- "If you have come to me in friendship to help me, my heart will be joined to you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, although there is no wrong in my hands, then may the God of our fathers see and rebuke you." Oneness with God involves faithfulness to God, obedience. God rebukes disobedience and infidelity. Nearness to God is not about physical distance; it is about spiritual distance; how close you are to Him and His will. Today, many people desire unity, but people cannot have lasting unity unless they are all first united to Jesus. The closer people get to Jesus, the closer they get to each other and their unity is firmly grounded in the rock of Truth, Peace, Justice, and Security.

8. 1 Chronicles 12:38 -- "Likewise, all the rest of Israel were of a single mind." Organizations of any kind generate power through unity of vision, unity of effort, and unity of action. When that focus and unity is dedicated to God's will, that organization is unstoppable. Disunity among God's people causes weakness and failure. Logically, the closer everyone in a group is to Jesus, the closer they are to each other. When there is disunity and dissention, someone, or everyone, is not close enough to Jesus. Check your own proximity.

9. Proverbs 24:1 -- "Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them." Don't partner with the world or get wrapped up in the worries of the world. You can engage the world, and interact with the world (which we are commanded to do) without partnering with the world.

10. Proverbs 24:10 -- "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." Inner strength is something you must develop before you need it. When adversity comes, it reveals the product of your discipleship. On the day of adversity, you will draw upon the internal strength that you have developed over time. If you haven't cultivated strength through daily discipleship, you will fail at the test. God uses adversity to reveal the truth of you.

11. Proverbs 24:11, 12 -- "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" You cannot ignore the destructive sin of those around you -- God expects you to get involved. If allow those around you who God loves continue to destroy themselves in sin, God will hold you accountable.

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12. Proverbs 24:16 – "...for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity." Both the righteous and the wicked stumble and fall, but the righteous get back up stronger than before while the wicked only get weaker.

13. Proverbs 24:25, 26 -- "Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them. Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips." Always speak the truth in love.

14. Proverbs 24:27 -- "Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house." Do the hardest things first.

15. Psalm 73:2-3 -- "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." Comparing yourself to others who are not disciples can lead you astray. Also, if we view life from our own perspective rather than from the perspective of God's word, our outlook can become bitter, hopeless, and, consequently, sinful. This is why Proverbs warns, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) If we forget the power, love, and faithfulness of the God we serve, the storms we face may seem to be the end of us, and we may find ourselves like the disciples crying out to Jesus "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38) Today, the psalmist points out that worldly perspective almost caused him to "stumble" or "slip" into sin. He recollects that as he watched the wicked apparently thrive while he suffered for obeying God he became "brutish and ignorant," as ignorant as an animal that only responds to pain and pleasure rather than to wisdom. (Psalm 73:22) Have you ever felt that way? What was the psalmist's answer for times like this? Go to the sanctuary of God, and align your thinking to God's thinking -- "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.... Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 55:1-13) Jesus said it like this: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.... These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.... Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (Matthew

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11:27-29; John 15:11; John 16:24) Do not stumble or slip, "Enter into the joy of your master." (Matthew 25:21)

16. Psalm 73:5 -- "They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind." Outward appearances of success can be a deceptive. Faithfulness to God is the measure of success.

17. Psalm 73:9 -- "They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth." Prideful people have little real respect for God. The more "successful" they become, the more arrogant they become.

18. Psalm 73:12 -- "This is what the wicked are like — always carefree, they increase in wealth."

- "Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, 'How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?'" (Psalm 73:9-11) The message of the world is very appealing to those who want to build their own kingdom on earth. As countless bestselling self-help books explain, "By unleashing your personal power, you can achieve health, wealth and happiness — nothing is impossible if you set your mind to it. Believe in yourself. Have faith in your abilities. Be all you can be." Solomon, in all his wisdom, fell victim to this self-centered world view (idolatry) and achieved "worldly" success beyond imagination; but eventually, he came to understand that you cannot love and serve both God and the world. You cannot be loyal to two kingdoms which are diametrically opposed to one another. After having achieved it all and done it all (while compromising his fidelity to the Lord), he concluded that it was all "Meaningless, meaningless, meaningless!" Our purpose is to "Glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Anything else is pointless. Often, people will seek to build their earthly kingdom using God and religion as a source of power. "Dear Lord, please bless my kingdom, and I will be a good person and tell the world what you have done for me." However true spirituality and worship is to "offer [ourselves] as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God," living by the motto, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

- 1 John 3:1 -- "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

- Psalm 84:10 -- "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

- James 2:5 -- "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?"

19. Psalm 73:16-17 -- "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." You must see the world through God's perspective; from man's perspective, things don't make sense and seem unfair or pointless.

20. Psalm 73:22 -- "I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you." Without spiritual discernment, you are not much better than an animal, responding only to urges, physical desires, and emotion.

21. Psalm 73:23-26 -- "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the

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strength of my heart and my portion forever." You must walk with God. Though you may not receive much comfort in this world, your reward is in Heaven.

22. Psalm 73:27-28 -- "For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works." Again, nearness to God is measured in faithfulness. It is good to be near God. Make God your refuge and your life's goal.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 June 18: Hold God's hand today and let Him lead you as your perfect, loving Father. (Psalm 73:27-28)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 6, Saturday, 23 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+CHRON+11%2C+12%3B+PROV+23%3B+PSALM+72>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 23 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 9:1 – "And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their breach of faith." Sin limits God's blessings in your life and warrants God's discipline.

2. 1 Chronicles 9:1, 13; Proverbs 23:12, 24:1, 23:19 -- "The people of Judah were taken captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.... Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord.... Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.... Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.... Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path...."

- We should be motivated by faithfulness inspired by love. Love and faithfulness go hand in hand. As Psalm 85:10 says, "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." The Book of Proverbs has this to say: "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart (3:3).... But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness (14:2).... Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil (16:6).... Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love his throne is made secure...." There are unavoidable consequences to unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness dishonors God and causes pain, sorrow, and destruction. It robs you of your joy and hurts the innocent. Unfaithfulness can have an impact that affects generations. Let love and faithfulness never leave you.

3. 1 Chronicles 9:2 – "Now the first to dwell again in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants." Priests should lead the way in dedication and closeness to God. Christians are all called to be "priests." The leader in any room is the one closest to Jesus who is committed to drawing those around him closer to Jesus. Leaders "know the way and show the way." Jesus is, "The Way, The Truth, and The Life." If you are not leading others closer to Jesus, you are leading them astray.

4. 1 Chronicles 9:10 – "Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin...." God knows every one of His servants by name and also recognizes them by their family. God deals with you personally, but He also deals with you through your relationships, particularly through your family. Family is a vital part of God's plan for people. God gives very specific responsibilities to spouses and parents, and He also tells children to honor their fathers and mothers as a path to His blessings. Jesus obeyed His mother as an example to us.

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5. 1 Chronicles 9:13 – “...heads of their fathers’ houses...” God expects fathers to lead their families and to raise up leaders who will keep the faith for generations.

6. 1 Chronicles 19:20 – “And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the chief officer over them in time past; the Lord was with him.” Of Phinehas, the Bible specifically says that the Lord was with him. Is that what people say about you? More importantly, is that what God says about you?

7. 1 Chronicles 9:28 – “Some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they were required to count them when they were brought in and taken out.” Management can be an act of worship, vital to the work of the ministry. Your God-given abilities were provided not that you could build your own kingdom on earth but rather that you could serve the Kingdom of God.

8. 1 Chronicles 9:33 – “Now these, the singers, the heads of fathers’ houses of the Levites, were in the chambers of the temple free from other service, for they were on duty day and night.” Music was considered so vital to worship that the singers had no other responsibilities and were on duty 24/7, 365.

9. 1 Chronicles 10:4 – “Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.” Saul and Judas had this in common -- they both rejected the Lordship of God in their lives and committed suicide in defeat.

10. 1 Chronicles 10:6 – “Thus Saul died; he and his three sons and all his house died together.” 1 Chronicles 9 describes fathers who raised their sons to serve God faithfully, while 1 Chronicles 10 reveals that Saul’s ungodly leadership led to his death and the death of his sons. Rejecting God can have a devastating effect on not only you, but also upon your whole family and others you care about.

11. 1 Chronicles 10:9 – “...the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and to the people.” The world’s “good news” is the defeat of God’s people. Our Good News, is that Christ is King, rules all, and offers salvation to all who are willing to accept it. Note that Saul and the kingdom was defeated not because of the might of the Philistines but, rather, because of the sins of God’s people. The Church can only be defeated in infidelity.

12. 1 Chronicles 10:12 – “...all the valiant men arose...” The valiant continue to resist the sinful world for God’s glory even when it seems like all has been lost. Are you valiant for the Lord today?

13. 1 Chronicles 10:13, 14 – “So Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore, the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”

- Though Saul was chosen by God, His obedience was still required. We too live by grace but must obey God and continually seek His guidance alone. Saul’s downfall started when, he let fear reign in his life rather than God and chose to disobey God. God desires people “after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) who will remain faithful regardless the circumstances. It wasn’t that Saul didn’t know the requirements of God; it wasn’t that Saul lacked the ability to fulfill the requirements of God; rather, Saul lacked the faith to obey God. Saul did what made sense to Saul as if there were no God or as if God had no integrity. This is unacceptable to God as God intends to reveal Himself and His character through His servants.

- With responsibility comes accountability and God holds us accountable for what we have been given as a trust. This does not just apply to kings and kingdoms but to all aspects of responsibility. Proverbs says,

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“The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked; he throws the wicked down to ruin. Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.” (Proverbs 21:12, 13) Here we see the link between wickedness and a failure to steward God’s resources in which we have been entrusted in a way that cares for the needy. Also, the principle of accountability does not just apply to the Old Testament or to those who have not been saved by grace. Jesus said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” (Luke 12:48) Paul explains that we “have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.” (1 Thessalonians 2:4) We are called to spread the Gospel “by the command of God our Savior,” and we are instructed to “guard the good deposit entrusted to [us].” (Titus 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:14) We have been saved by faith and “approved in Christ,” no longer held “accountable.... under the Law,” but we have been “approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel” and to “do good works, which God prepared beforehand.” (Romans 16:10; Romans 3:9; Ephesians 2:10) We are called to be “zealous for good works,” to devote [ourselves] to good works,” “to stir up one another to love and good works,” and to have “a reputation for good works,” which will naturally cause Christians to be “approved by men.” (Titus 2:14; Titus 3:8-14; Hebrews 10:24; 1 Timothy 5:10; Romans 14:18) Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:17) We do good works because “it is God who works in [us], both to will and to work for his good pleasure,” and Paul warned that if we are not rich in good works we are, in fact, denying God. (Philippians 2:13; Titus 1:16) James was perhaps even more to the point: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him...? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.... Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.” (James 2:14, 17; 3:13) The life of good works is a walk in grace that is pure and holy, and the Bible is clear about the implications of walking in impurity while claiming the name of Christ – “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26-31) Jesus said to the church that, by their behavior, they defile His name before men. “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:5) No, repentance is not just for the unsaved who are not under grace but also for God’s people.

14. Proverbs 23:16, 23 – “My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right.... Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” The righteous heart longs to hear the truth.

15. Proverbs 23:17, 18 -- Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” What is the future for you and your family?

16. Proverbs 23:20, 21 – “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.” The Bible

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considers eating too much to be a sin like drinking too much, both demonstrating a destructive lack of self-control (which is a spiritual problem) and idolatry.

17. Proverbs 23 -- God wants to ensure you understand the dangers of inappropriate sexual activity and alcohol abuse.

18. Psalm 72:1-4 -- "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!... May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!" Justice is not defined by men but by God. Men are as just as they are submissive to God. Godly leaders pursue justice and protect the weak.

19. Psalm 72:11 -- "In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound." When the righteous flourish, peace abounds. A truly just ruler has the moral authority to expand his reign on earth.

20. Psalm 72:15 -- "May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all the day!" We should pray for our leaders, particularly our faithful leaders.

21. Psalm 72:17 -- "May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all the day!" God desires that we pray for righteous leaders continually.

22. Psalm 72:18 -- "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things." All good things come from God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 23 June 18: Choose today to lead your family to Christ as your first priority. If you have no family at all, choose today to lead those closest to you to Christ. To lead others to Christ, you must, by definition, be close to Him. (1 Chronicles 9)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 5, Friday, 22 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+Chron+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+22%3B+Eph+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 22 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 7:22 -- "And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him." Family should be a source of comfort during times of mourning, stopping what they were doing to give full support.

2. 1 Chronicles 7:23 -- "And Ephraim went in to his wife, and she conceived and bore a son. And he called his name Beriah, because disaster had befallen his house." Even in hard times, God wants His people to act on hope, investing in the future and continuing to grow a family.

3. 1 Chronicles 7:24 -- "His daughter was Sheerah, who built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and Uzzan-sheerah." It is noteworthy that Sheerah is mentioned in the Bible -- she was obviously a powerful leader, noted for building towns in strategic locations, one of those named after her. Women play prominent roles throughout the Bible.

4. Proverbs 22:1 -- "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold." You must choose character over prosperity. Character may bring you prosperity, but prosperity will not bring you character.

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5. Proverbs 22:6 -- "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Parents play a critical role in God's plan.

6. Proverbs 22:7 -- "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender." God does not want His people to have debt.

7. Proverbs 22:9 -- "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor." Do you have a bountiful eye that brings you blessings?

8. Proverbs 22:15 -- "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him." Do you obey God's word on your own, or does God need to give you some incentive in the form of discipline? Better to listen and obey instantly.

9. Proverbs 22:17-19 -- "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you." Obeying God's word will be pleasant to you. To bring you fullness of joy in life, God has done an amazing thing: He has given you His very word. Memorize it, and let it guide your every move.

10. Proverbs 22:24, 25 -- "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare." Be careful not to let the bad habits of others be a greater influence on you than God's word.

11. Proverbs 22:26-27 -- "Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?" Again, God doesn't want His people to have debt.

12. Proverbs 22:29 -- "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men." God wants you to be excellent in what you do so you will have a greater influence on the world to God's glory.

13. Ephesians 2:1-3 -- "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Ungodly people are led by both passion and intellect. They essentially see themselves as gods to themselves, doing whatever they justify as best. They refuse to submit to God. God's people are led by the Spirit.

14. Ephesians 2:8-10 -- "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

- We were saved by grace – we did nothing to earn it, and we cannot boast in anything of ourselves that deserved God's gift to us as salvation. But we were saved for a purpose – "for good works." Before we were saved "we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Now in salvation, we are a "new creation," and the hostility that once existed between us and God has been "killed." Now, with "access

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in one Spirit to the Father," we are to "walk in" the "good works" which God has "prepared in advance" for us. This is what we are to do in life.

- Ecclesiastes 12:13 -- The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

15. Ephesians 2:10 -- "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." God created you specifically to serve Him. God prepares the good works, not you. Don't just do what you think is good. Do only what God directs.

16. Ephesians 2:11-13 -- "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...."

- You have total peace with God and complete access to Him in Christ. You are a vital part of God's family and have a unique fit (like a stone in a building) in God's Kingdom. You are no longer part of the world and the kingdom of the air (which is no kingdom at all). Alive in Christ by God's grace, we were created to good works which God has prepared for us that we might glorify the Father and the Son before all Creation and experience the fullness of joy in Him. The Bible says that Christians are ALL saints (in Christ), priests (Ex 19:6, Is 61:6, Rom 15:16, 1 Pet 2:5, Rev 1:6, Rev 5:10, Rev 20:6 – what do we expect from a priest?) and Christ's Ambassadors (representatives to a foreign kingdom) on this earth. We no longer behave as the worldly do, "gratifying the cravings of the sinful nature," because we are motivated by love, gratitude, and an understanding, spiritually "seated... with [Christ] in the heavenly realms" (What are you willing to do seated next to Christ?). "Do you really believe what you say you believe is really true?" Today, reflect upon the reality of your position in Christ, and remember your "priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God."

17. Ephesians 2:19 -- "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." You were saved to be a part of a family in Christ. You were not created to be independent or dependent on others but rather interdependent.

18. Ephesians 2:22 -- "...the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." You are to be united to other members of the church as closely and as intentionally as stones of a temple, and Christ provides the means to unity and purpose. There is no daylight between stones of a temple.

Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 June 18: Today, commit to finding your specific place within the family of God and to whom you should be directly attached (the other stones) in order to fulfill your purpose. (Ephesians 2:22)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 4, Thursday, 21 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+Chron+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+21%3B+Ephesians+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 21 June 18:

1. 1 Chronicles 5:1 -- "... he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son." Sin may be forgiven, but the consequences often remain and impact generations. Also, when a person

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commits a crime, he can turn to the Lord and receive forgiveness; however, God's forgiveness does not remove a person's responsibility to make restitution to others. If a person steals property and repents, he still needs to return the property (and make payment for the personal offense). If a murderer repents, he must still face the justice system. The responsibility for restitution remains whether or not victims are aware of the offense. The requirements for restitution also remain whether or not damages were intentional or accidental. Many Christians attempt to use grace as an excuse to avoid the responsibility of restitution, but grace should compel restitution and the desire for reconciliation whenever possible. The Old Testament established specific guidance for restitution, provided below. In the New Testament, Zacchaeus demonstrates restitution as a response to grace in Luke 19.

- Exodus 22:1-14 -- "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. "If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard. "If fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution. "If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor. "If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, an oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn. "If a man borrows anything of his neighbor, and it is injured or dies, the owner not being with it, he shall make full restitution. If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution; if it was hired, it came for its hiring fee.

- Leviticus 6:2-5 -- "If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the Lord by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.

2. 1 Chronicles 5:18-22 -- The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were skilled at warfare, but the Bible says that the reason they prevailed is because they cried out to The LORD and trusted Him. God controls all outcomes.

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3. 1 Chronicles 5:20 – "...the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried out to God in the battle, and he granted their urgent plea because they trusted in him." God helps those who cry to him and have faith that He can and will help them.

4. 1 Chronicles 5:25, 26 -- "But they broke faith with the God of their fathers, and whored after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria...." God turned Pul's heart against the members of the half-tribe of Manasseh because they broke faith with God. Manasseh was mighty only while with God, and powerless when being disciplined by God. Notice also verse 26 says Pul also defeated and exiled the Reubenites and the Gadites, though only Manasseh is called out for breaking faith. It would appear that infidelity started with Manasseh and either spread to other tribes or at least impacted other tribes. Our American tradition is people are free to do whatever they want as long as it doesn't prevent others from doing what they want, but everyone's decisions eventually impact everyone else. Also, we see in these verses that God stirs hearts for His purposes. Have you prayed for God to work in the hearts of those who have troubled you or others you care about?

5. 1 Chronicles 6:32-33 -- Leadership in music is an important ministerial responsibility.

6. 1 Chronicles 6:38, 43, 47 -- Israel's ministers, even after exile, could trace their heritage back to one of the founding fathers of the nation.

7. Proverbs 21:1-- "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." God controls all political leaders for His purposes. Salvation is not in the hands of politicians but with The Lord. If you are worried about the state of the nation, pray for revival.

8. Proverbs 21:3 – "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." It's not about religion, it is about genuine love which produces obedience and faithfulness. Religious activities, charity, and "good deeds" are meaningless without love, faithfulness and obedience.

9. Proverbs 21:13 -- "Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered." God will treat you the way you treat others.

10. Proverbs 21:16 -- "One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead." Destruction usually occurs slowly, one decision at a time. However, some decisions are immediately catastrophic.

11. Proverbs 21:17 – "Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." Successful people have the self-discipline to give up fleeting pleasures now for greatness later. Successful people are willing to make the daily sacrifices that unsuccessful people aren't.

12. Proverbs 21:21 – "Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor." Character development is a lifelong pursuit that yields predictable results over time.

13. Proverbs 21:26 -- "All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back." Ungodly people are always thinking of themselves and are never satisfied. Godly people are always thinking about others and are content.

14. Proverbs 21:27 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." God sees the selfish motives behind "good" deeds.

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15. Proverbs 21:30, 31 -- "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD." God remains in complete control and decides all outcomes. Hope is only in Him, not in human wisdom and power.

16. Ephesians 1:1 -- "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." Paul was an apostle because God willed it.

17. Ephesians 1:2 -- "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

- "Do you really believe what you believe is really real?" The reality of God's grace should give you peace. In perfect love, God, all powerful and all knowing, chose you as an adopted child, before the creation of the world to pour lavishly every spiritual blessing on you in Christ. Why? He chose you because he wanted to. His love is so great for you that he freely gave you the One He loves, Jesus, so you could have complete, total, unconditional, forgiveness of all your sins, past, present, and future. In God's sight, due to this redemption through Christ, you are holy and blameless. You were specifically created by God for the praise of his glory. You have been marked with a seal as God's treasured possession and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit within you knows God as "Daddy," and NOTHING can separate you from the perfect love of Daddy, "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation," not even yourself (Romans 8:38-39). Eternal life doesn't start when you die, eternal life started when you first knew the Father and the Son – the day you were saved and born again (John 17:3). What an amazing thing! Pray that through the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" you may know him better and that "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which [you have been] called." "Do you really believe what you believe is really real?"

18. Ephesians 1:3 -- With Christ comes every spiritual blessing.

19. Ephesians 1:4-6 -- God chose you before Creation for His purposes.

20. Ephesians 1:10 -- Heaven and earth will one day unite

21. Ephesians 1:16-23 -- "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

- A near life or death experience can really change a person's perspective of life, helping that person reconsider what really matters and doesn't matter, what is truly important and what isn't truly important. Depending on the power of that experience, it may cause a person to make some major life changes after recognizing how distracted they had become on the wrong priorities. Well, the potential power of a near life or death experience is insignificant compared to the power of an eternal life experience through Jesus Christ. This does not result in a possibly changed life; this results in a positively completely new life, a person becoming a new Creation in Christ, freed from the penalty and bondage of

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sin, empowered with the Holy Spirit, in personal friendship with Jesus, with and eternal purpose and calling, and with direct access to the Father who treats the saved as His beloved children and empowers us for His purposes on earth. In the beginning of Ephesians, Paul explains that his incessant prayer is that the Ephesians' eyes would be opened so they would TRULY know Jesus (not just about Jesus), TRULY understand the magnitude of the blessings they have received in Christ, and TRULY understand the immeasurable greatest of the power of God in their lives. He wants the Ephesians to fully understand that Christians serve as instruments to KING Jesus who the Father has placed "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet." (Ephesians 1:21, 22) Paul apparently sees that, though saved, the Ephesians haven't fully come to terms with their eternal life, its power, and the significance of their calling. As Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they KNOW you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.... The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:3, 22, 23) The bigger (more glorified) Christ is in our lives, the smaller everything else becomes, temptations, troubles, personal differences, worldly powers, enemies, etc. The bigger Christ is in our lives, the more his love naturally flows from us, creating a unity within the body that cannot be missed by the world around us. The bigger Christ is in our lives, the more boldly, enthusiastically, and faithfully we obey his commandments. I pray that we will all know Christ better each day and realize who we are in Christ, that, in Christ, we have the power to change the world.

22. Ephesians 1:17, 18 -- "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom." True wisdom comes only throughout the Spirit; it is not acquired through human effort or intelligence alone. It is God who opens our hearts to believe in Him and to know Him.

Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 June 18: Pray today for the Spirit of wisdom to add to your wisdom. (Eph 1:17)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 3, Wednesday, 20 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+Chron+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+20%3B+gal+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 20 June 18:

1. Chronicles 3:2, 3 -- The Bible does not give details about the lives of many people like Daniel, Shephatiah, or Ithream. The Bible does not tell us everything, only what we need to know. Everything that is revealed in the Bible is there for a reason. What isn't in the Bible is not there for a reason.
2. 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 -- Prayer is important in every stage in the life of a family, especially at the birth of children and as children enter adulthood and seek to establish their own careers.
3. 2 Chronicles 4:9 -- "Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore him in pain.'" Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. The Bible breaks in the list of lineages to praise Jabez. What was significant about his life was his relationship with God. We only exist to glorify God.
4. 1 Chronicles 4:28-33 -- Land ownership and homestead are an important part of family identity.

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5. Proverbs 20:3 -- "It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling." Avoid strife and quarrels, and remain honorable.

6. Proverbs 20:5 -- "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." It takes great discernment to understand people.

7. Proverbs 20:6 -- "Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?" Your faithfulness is your most valuable asset. The proof of love is faithfulness. The mark of character is faithfulness. Faithfulness is the anticipated response to grace -- "When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose." (Acts 11:23) Faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit, not a natural human endowment -- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...." (Galatians 5:22) The New Testament says that faithfulness is best expressed by those who not only remain obedient to God's word but also teach God's word to others -- "...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2) After all, this is our Great Commission. Faithfulness is a requirement of God's people -- "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2) How God uses us and grows us in life depends on our faithfulness -- "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'" (Luke 19:17) But our infidelity never nullifies God's fidelity -- "What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?" (Romans 3:3) As Ambassadors for Christ, we should never let the infidelity of others affect our fidelity to God or to them.

- Exodus 34:6 -- The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...."

- 2 Samuel 2:6 -- Now may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you.

- Deuteronomy 7:9 -- Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations....

- Psalm 25:10 -- All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

- Psalm 26:3 -- For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.

- Psalm 85:10 -- Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

- Psalm 89:14 -- Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

- Proverbs 3:3 -- Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

- Proverbs 14:22 -- Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness.

- Proverbs 16:6 -- By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.

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- Proverbs 20:28 -- Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.

8. Proverbs 20:11 -- "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright." How you act reveals what you really believe.

9. Proverbs 20:24 -- "A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?" Those who think they have control over their own lives are deceived. God is in control. Security is in God's hands.

10. Proverbs 20:27 -- "The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts." The Spirit will convict you of your sin. How will you respond?

11. Proverbs 20:29 -- "The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair." Strength is fleeting, but wisdom is developed over a lifetime.

12. Proverbs 20:30 -- "Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts." If you will not respond to the conviction of the Spirit, God may have to get your attention the hard way.

13. Galatians 6:1 -- "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." God wants us to work to restore sinners in gentleness.

14. Galatians 6:1-4 -- "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load." Many Christians quote "Bear one another's burdens" out of context, referring to ministering to a person's physical needs, but it is really about responding to offenses or the sins of others. It involves bearing the burden of the offense without responding in personal defense, not countering boastfully but forgiving and "taking up your cross" in the situation, remembering that you too are a mere sinner and not subsequently sinning in your anger by failing to be soft, knowledgeable, gentle, timely, gracious, thoughtful, refreshing, instructional, yet humble.

15. Galatians 6:7 -- "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

- The Principle of the Farm: A man reaps what he sows. You cannot rush a crop. You cannot wake up one morning and say, "I need to grow corn in a week." It takes time, daily discipline, hard work, and perseverance to grow a crop as it does to achieve all the things that matter most in life. Spiritual maturity, wisdom, knowledge, physical fitness, strong relationships, financial security, talents, etc, all take time and daily, consistent discipline (as in disciple) to develop. After the seeds are planted, you have to be willing to water dirt with no apparent results for some time until eventually you start to see a small sprout; but even then, it is hard to tell what you are growing -- you have to keep working. Also, if you love flowers, you have to hate weeds. You must protect what you are growing from that which corrupts -- this too takes effort; it is not a passive defense but an active one. One thing is certain, at harvest time, the product of your labors, good or bad, will be revealed. What are you cultivating? What

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disciplines to you practice consistently well in order to produce a harvest in your life that will glorify and honor God?

- The Chinese have a saying, "The best time to grow a tree was twenty years ago; the second best time to grow a tree is today." Every day is a fresh start. Make the most of every opportunity. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Do not be motivated by pride or fear but rather love. Do not compare yourself with others or judge others compared to you -- keep your eyes affixed on Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit. Seek first the Kingdom, and be joyful in all things, even the trials which are strengthening your character. Also, take the time to help the farmer next to you. Having lived two years in Nebraska, I learned something about the farm culture -- people are not only patient, but they are also very friendly and cooperative, having learned to depend on each other during hard times. We need each other's support.

16. Galatians 6:9-10 -- "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Doing good can be wearisome. Don't give up. People in the church can be some of the hardest people to love and be patient with.

17. Galatians 6:10 -- "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." To whom does God command us to do good?

18. Galatians 6:12 -- "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ." People often make great religious sacrifices and place great demands on others for all the wrong reasons.

19. Galatians 6:14, 17 -- "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.... From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." The reality of the cross should kill worldly pressures in your life. Who can stress you out when Christ has declared you worthy, victorious, righteous, and unconditionally loved?

20. Galatians 6:15 -- "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Religious activity is nothing, a heart for God and others is everything.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 20 June 18: Endeavor to do good to EVERYONE today, particularly to those who clearly don't deserve it -- that is called grace, a reflection of the grace that you have received through Jesus. The grace you give others reveals your level of appreciation for the grace you have received. What could someone possibly do to you that would come close to being comparable to the offenses from which we have all been forgiven by our perfectly Holy God? (Galatians 6:10-17)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 2, Tuesday, 19 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+chron+1%2C+2%3B+prov+19%3B+gal+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 19 June 18:

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1. 1 Chronicles 1:1 – “Adam, Seth, Enosh....” Your family history begins with Adam and creation. Your family includes members of all the tribes and nations of the world. So, God wants you involved in his world mission of redemption. God's purpose for you goes back to His purpose in creation.

2. 1 Chronicles 1:28 – “The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael.” How many lives have been lost throughout history due to strife between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael? The Bible says that Christians are descendants of Abraham, but this is not a blood relationship, but rather a spiritual one – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:28, 29) “...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” (Galatians 3:26) “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:7) “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.” (Romans 9:6-8) Ultimately, what divides the world is not race, ethnicity, genetics, nationality, political philosophy, or culture but faith. Many are seeking some sort of unity under man-made social stratifications, but this is foolish and hopeless. Many have sought unity by marginalizing faith, but this too is foolish and hopeless. There will be no peace between God and man and no peace on earth apart from Jesus.

- Acts 10:36 -- As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all).

- Romans 3:17 -- and the way of peace they have not known.

- Romans 5:1 -- Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Romans 15:13 -- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

- Romans 15:33 -- May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

- Romans 16:20 -- The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

- 2 Corinthians 1:2 -- Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Ephesians 2:14 -- For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

- Colossians 1:20 -- and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- Colossians 3:15 -- And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:3 -- While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

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- 2 Thessalonians 3:16 -- Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

- 1 Timothy 1:2 -- To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Titus 1:4 -- To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

- 2 John 1:3 -- Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

3. 1 Chronicles 1:50; 1 Chronicles 2:3, 4, 1-17, 18 -- The Bible places women in critical roles for His purposes. Women have always played an important role in history. But while the world tends to focus on differences of race, ethnicity, and gender, God focuses on fidelity and unity. Race and gender are not virtues.

4. 1 Chronicles 2:3, 7 -- Your family history includes people God has had to discipline; no one is exempt from God's discipline. And in Jesus, our sinful past is not our identity, nor are we trapped in sin or condemned in sin.

5. 1 Chronicles 2:24-35 -- Foreigners are well integrated into Israel's family. God is focused on the spiritual family, while people are focused on natural, temporary relationships. Christianity should not be concerned with issues of race or national origin, only the issue of faith in Christ.

6. 1 Chronicles 1, 2 -- Genealogies reveal both the vertical and horizontal relationships that have shaped a family's history. Most important is the vertical relationship which defines the horizontal relationships. What has been your family's legacy of love for God? How will you write the next chapter? What legacy will you leave your children's children?

7. Proverbs 19:3 -- "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." Don't blame God or others for the consequences of your own bad decision-making.

8. Proverbs 19:4, 6, 7 -- Are you the sort of friend who is always there for support no matter what?

9. Proverbs 19:17 -- "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." Giving to the poor is a true act of worship acceptable to the LORD.

10. Proverbs 19:22 -- "What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar." Your integrity is most valuable, and it is the foundation for trusting, loving relationships. Relationships require trust which comes from integrity. "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." (Titus 2:7, 8) Interestingly, integrity has two definitions: 1) truthfulness; 2) wholeness. The integrity of wholeness is one of dependable strength. For example, if a chair has integrity, it is put together in such a complete way that you can confidently sit in it, knowing that it will bear up under the pressure of your weight. For a person to have integrity, they must be truthful, but (s)he must also be whole, complete. Without Christ, a person is not whole, not complete, not strong, not reliable, unable to handle the pressure or weight of the burdens of

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life – without Christ, a person lacks essential integrity. Neither can that person be truthful. The strength and value of our integrity is found in Christ.

11. Galatians 5:1 -- "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Grace should compel you to obedience, purity, and holiness. It would be terrible to take for granted the freedom Christ gave us from sin by continuing in the very sin Christ died from which to save us.

12. Galatians 5:6 -- "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love." It is the truth of your heart that matters, not your religious activity.

13. Galatians 5:13-15 -- Your freedom and salvation is for a purpose – love. If you do not love as Christ loved, you are denying your purpose.

14. Galatians 5:16 -- "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Only through the Spirit can you overcome human nature and its sinful desires.

15. Galatians 5:16-18 -- You will either walk in the Spirit or in the flesh.

16. Galatians 5:18 -- "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." Issues of the law are not issues at all for those who are controlled by the Spirit. Obedience is the proof of our genuine love rather than the proof of our personal will power.

17. Galatians 5:19-24 -- "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Your actions over time reveal the truth of your salvation. The proof is in the pudding. Many attempt to obey out of duty, but duty will never be a powerful enough motivator. Only love and genuine spiritual power can overcome selfish sin. What do your actions reveal about your love for Jesus? Is it hard for you to obey Jesus? Why? Is it hard to do what you love?

18. Galatians 5:22-26 -- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

- If you are in the Spirit and crucified with Christ, you have no need for the law because you are controlled by love, a force much, much greater than will power. You will obey the law without even considering it, without need to be reminded of it. Just like you don't need a rule to tell you to eat each day, love will compel you to feast on the Bread of Life. What causes you to do what you do? Is it fear, duty, or love?

- If you want fruit from a tree, you don't focus on trying to make a piece of fruit. You focus on growing a healthy tree. You think about what is required to make a tree healthy – quality soil, sunlight, water, etc. You also realize that fruit doesn't grow tomorrow. As I consider the above list of attributes, I realize that if I step out today saying, "Today I resolve to be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful,

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gentle and self-controlled,” I will surely be disappointed. Not that I shouldn’t make the effort, and I certainly will, but the quality of these attributes is the natural product of the condition of my heart. My focus must be on my heart, and the condition of my heart depends on the quality of my relationship with Jesus Christ. If I am walking in love and surrender to Jesus, my “fruit” will reveal it. If I am “out of step” with the Spirit, my “fruit” will reveal it. How do I walk with Jesus? Humbly obey his commandments out of love. His greatest commandment is love. Jesus said this:

- John 15 -- I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

19. Galatians 5:25, 26 -- "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

- The Spirit is uniting, not dividing. You must keep in step with the Spirit by loving others with the love flowing through you from the Source of Love, Jesus. Love is the command of the Spirit. If you are saved through faith in Jesus, you have as much access to the Spirit as anyone else, but in sin, you may be out of step with the Spirit; you may be quenching and grieving the Spirit; and you may be missing the power of the Spirit in your life. Do not deny the power that is yours in Christ due to infidelity and compromise.

- In the military, we talk about a threat as someone having both the capability and the intent to do harm. Someone who has the capability with no intent to harm is not a threat. Those who have the intent to harm but no capability is not a threat until they have a real capability. Unless we are born again, we have neither the capability nor intent to please God (John 3, 1 Cor 2:14). Apart from Christ, a person is a slave to sin (Romans 6:20) and controlled by human passions. We are dead to sin, and like a dead body, we cannot resuscitate ourselves (Galatians 3:3) In Christ we have been raised from the dead and set free from sin, becoming slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18). God has poured his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, a love only God can provide (Rom 5, Rom 2). We now have the capability to love, but we must also be intent on loving. The only thing that counts is faith “expressed” in love. We must make the effort to “live by the Spirit.” As Paul says in Eph 4 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for

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the day of redemption." As a Christian you have capability to threaten the "forces of evil" (2 Cor 10; Eph 6:12); do you have intent?

-- Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 June 18: Consider what your thoughts, attitudes, words and actions say about the condition of your heart and your love for Jesus. (Galatians 5)

DBRP - WEEK 25, Day 1, Monday, 18 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+23-25%3B+Prov+18%3B+Gal+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 18 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 23:8 -- "He... defiled the high places." To love God is to hate evil and substitutes for God.
 2. 2 Kings 23:8-20 -- "And he sacrificed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem." Revival may put many religious leaders out of work.
 3. 2 Kings 23:13, 14 -- "And the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And he broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with the bones of men." Josiah made a covenant before the Lord, "to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul." His first step was the same as what the Bible commands Christians to do in order to walk with God: "Put away all filthiness." (James 1:21) We cannot experience the fullness of joy and blessings in our relationship with God while we continue to hang onto sins which are detestable to the One we love. Josiah had to dig deep to remove the idolatry around him, all the way back to Solomon's time to remove high places Solomon himself had built around the same time he built the Temple. These high places were by now as much a part of Judah's national identity as anything else, built by their hero, Solomon, the wisest man of their day, the son of David! Yet, they had to go, likely much to the dismay of many. As Christians, fidelity may require that we remove things or change things that have always been there but that do not meet God's standard. Looking at our lives from God's perspective may require massive change. We may have to get rid of sins that have become old companions or that we have even attached to our personal identity -- "That's just who I am." The change may come at a tremendous personal cost. However, our love for God demands it. It takes great faith to change what has always been there. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)
 4. 2 Kings 23:24 -- "Moreover, Josiah put away... the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law... found in the house of the Lord." Perhaps our "household gods" are our televisions, computers, and handheld devices. To "establish" God's word in our hearts and lives, we must purify our lives from those things that dishonor God or that distract us from God's will.
- Hebrews 12:1, 2 -- Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set

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before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

5. 2 Kings 23:25 -- "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him." What will God say about the life you lived when it is over?

6. 2 Kings 23:26 -- "Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger." Josiah sought to bring revival to Judah and to restore the nation, but it was too late. God had already decreed, "I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'There shall my Name be.'" This was predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 31 and by Joshua in Joshua 24 because they were "a perverse generation" with "no sense." Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God." Even Moses, the humblest of men, was not able to obey the Law well enough to enter the Promised Land. The message from the Bible is clear: There is no one who is good, not even one, no one who truly seeks God. We have all sinned and have all fallen short of the Glory of God. We all deserve God's wrath and the penalty of death. Our hope is in the Promise spoken of in our readings in Gal 4 today. Nonetheless, we are to continually pursue holiness, righteousness, and purity as we are continually sanctified by the Holy Spirit that we may draw closer to Jesus daily.

7. 2 Kings 23:26-32 -- Revival must last more than just one generation. One good leader cannot change culture and a people's entire tradition and history.

8. 2 Kings 23:29 -- "King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him." Even the righteous suffer when God judges a people. Josiah died a rather unglamorous death as most of us will. However, he lived honorably, and his reward is eternal.

9. 2 Kings 23:35 -- "...he taxed the land to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh." People are often exploited through taxation.

10. 2 Kings 24:3-4 -- "Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also for the innocent blood that he had shed. For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not pardon." God will hold nations accountable for the shedding of the innocent blood of babies.

11. 2 Kings 24, 25 -- God's judgment can instantly eliminate what took generations to create. In an instant, the pride of a nation can be gone.

12. 2 Kings 25:7 -- "They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon." Godless people are cruel for cruelty's sake. There is no limit to the evil a godless person might do.

13. 2 Kings 25:18 -- God's judgement holds both political and religious leaders accountable.

14. 2 Kings 25:22 -- Through devastating judgement, God leaves a remnant and hope.

15. Proverbs 18:1 -- "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." Again, isolation is an indicator of selfishness or self-centeredness. It is not a trait of the wise.

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16. Proverbs 18:1, 2 – “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.” God intends for us to be in community and to focus on others over ourselves. We are called to reach out and proactively love the unloving. Often times, the hardest place to demonstrate this sort of love is in your family, and the second hardest place may be in the local church. However, God demands that we persistently, pursue 1 Corinthians 13 love as our top priority in both institutions (family and church) as these are God’s school houses for learning to love and our first workplaces to do His will. Concerning family, the Bible says, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8) Concerning the church we read today, “As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:18) Too often, Christians isolate themselves from both family members and the local church do to relationship problems. The Bible warns that this is “against all sound judgement,” selfish, and foolish. Of course, God knows that many family members are selfish, sinful, and destructive and that that church is full of “self-righteous hypocrites.” That is exactly why He intends for you to be with them – “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2) God knows the “hurting people hurt people,” so in a way He has set you up for a beating, but it is in fellowship with Christ that you suffer as you serve as His instrument of grace and mercy. Who knows, in the process of loving the unloving, you might also discover your own flaws – “For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” (Galatians 6:3) The primary reason Christians isolate themselves is because they are, in fact, self-centered, self-righteous, prideful, and unloving; they look at others from a selfish perspective rather than seeing others from God’s perspective. One of the first rules in relationship is to “seek first to understand others before being understood.” Proverbs says, “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding.” Why does that unloving person act the way he does? What happened in their lives to make him so _____? Didn’t Jesus say that it’s the sick who need a doctor? But you have tried for years to have a relationship with that terrible person, and they just won’t change – “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9) If we want to make the world a better place, let’s start with building Christ-like character in ourselves, then let’s focus on our families, followed by the church, then our local communities. If you are trying to serve as Christ’s Ambassador while in alienation to a family member or to your local church family, you are likely unfit for duty.

17. Proverbs 18:4 – “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.” People have much to say, but most of it is not worth hearing.

18. Proverbs 18:13 – “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” If while you are listening to someone you are formulating your response simultaneously, you are not really listening.

19. Galatians 4:1-6 -- Small children must be instructed and punished or rewarded over the most basic things because they lack both understanding and the internal discipline to do what they ought -- without internal discipline, they need external discipline. Conversely, one would hope that an adult has grown in maturity to have internal discipline that does not rely on external discipline to do what is right. Mature Christians who have the power of the Holy Spirit and a genuine love for Jesus are no longer spiritual children and no longer need the law because they have understanding and the discipline of a disciple, not to mention a genuine passion to honor God in obedience. Love does what regulations could never do. When an adult surrenders to immature urges, we might say, “Don’t act like a child!” Likewise, we must lovingly rebuke experienced Christians who act like spiritual infants.

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20. Galatians 4:6 -- The heart of a Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit which is Love. We have perfect love within us but must not quench it, grieve it, or get out of step with it.

21. Galatians 4:9 -- Religion tends to focus on rules and duty. God wants us to focus on love, beyond mere duty. The more we know God, the more we are compelled to love Him and obey Him, not because of the rules, but because His desires are what we desire from the heart. Love makes obedience to rules a given, no longer a consideration because it is inevitable.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 June: Today, with fellow Christians, pray earnestly for revival in the American church. (2 Kings 23-25)

DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 7, Sunday, 17 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+21%2C+22%3B+Prov+17%3B+psalm+71>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 17 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 21 -- Manasseh, Judah's most horrific king was born during Hezekiah's extra fifteen years. He never would have been born had Hezekiah accepted God's initial plan for him.

2. 2 Kings 21:3 -- "For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them." One unfaithful generation can tear down what previous faithful generations have built.

3. 2 Kings 21:8 -- "And I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander anymore out of the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the Law that my servant Moses commanded them." God's blessings are not automatic; they are conditional upon obedience. Don't expect God to bless your compromise.

4. 2 Kings 21:11 -- "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did...." A wayward believer can do more evil than an unbeliever.

5. 2 Kings 21:12 -- "Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle." The God of Grace does not simply ignore sin.

6. 2 Kings 22:1 -- "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left." In American politics there is much debate as to whether a person is equipped for the job (as there should be), but often what is more important is who that person surrounds themselves with for counsel and guidance. As an eight-year-old, Josiah was not equipped for the job, but he was surrounded by godly administrators and counsellors. Note that the first counsellor mentioned in this verse is his mother. Parents are critical to the success of their children. We will see later, that, as an adult, Josiah slips when he does not listen to sound, godly counsel.

7. 2 Kings 22:2 -- What is right in our own eyes is not the same as what is right in God's eyes. We must choose to do what is right in God's eyes.

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8. 2 Kings 22:3 -- "In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the Lord." Josiah prioritized support to God's temple. Political leaders must honor God above all else.

9. 2 Kings 22:7 -- "But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly." It is critical that people of responsibility can be trusted implicitly.

10. 2 Kings 22:8 -- "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." Sin causes God's people to take God's word for granted and to forget it.

11. 2 Kings 22:8, 11, 18-20 -- "'I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.' ... When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.... Thus says the Lord... because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord... and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord. Therefore... you shall be gathered to your grave in peace."

- Revival involves a return to God's word, Spirit-led conviction, and genuine repentance. Josiah wanted to honor God by repairing the temple. However, it wasn't until he humbly read God's word that he was truly convicted of the depth of his sins and the sins of the people against God. Unlike the "scoffer" described in Proverbs, Josiah does not reject the Spirit's rebuke but rather responds with a "penitent heart." Interestingly, when Josiah and his "priest" want to get a deeper understanding of what they read, they know exactly where to go – to "Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe." (2 Kings 22:14) Not much of Huldah is recorded in the Bible, but we know two things: one, in a time when the nation had walked away from God and could no longer hear God's word, Huldah stood out as faithful and godly; second, Huldah was in a relatively prominent position as the wife of the keeper of the king's wardrobe. Notice also that when Josiah wanted to understand God's word, he did not seek out the prophet Jeremiah who preached in the streets. This may be because Huldah was known, accessible, acceptable, and non-threatening. It wasn't the official priest, the appointed religious leader who knew God's true word – it was the woman Huldah who had genuine relationship with God. Huldah, however, did not sugar-coat God's word but rather delivered it straight. Are you the one who stands out in your community as holy and powerfully used by God? When someone needs to understand the deeper meaning of God's word, do they automatically think of you and go to you? Are you fulfilling your role as an Ambassador for Christ and as a priest?

- 2 Corinthians 5:20 -- Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- 1 Peter 2:9 -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

12. 2 Kings 22:11 -- "When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes." God's people must study God's word as a first priority. God's word is the primary instrument used by God to speak to God's people. The Holy Spirit uses God's word to convict the hearts of His people and to show them what they cannot understand through mere intellect. When we don't prioritize daily, diligent Bible study, we will lose the leading of the Holy Spirit and will drift into sin.

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13. 2 Kings 22:12 -- "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." Generations suffer when their ancestors do not obey ALL that is written in God's word. Jesus' answer for world peace was to have his disciples, "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." There is no substitute for obedience.

14. 2 Kings 22:13 -- "Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." Josiah did not take sin against God lightly.

15. 2 Kings 22:14 -- "So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter), and they talked with her." See notes above about Huldah the prophetess who was known to be a person who heard from God though she was not in a religious position.

16. 2 Kings 22:19 -- "Because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord. Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place." There is a big difference between being "sorry" and being repentant. A person can plead for forgiveness from God because they don't want to be punished (sorry), and a person can plead for forgiveness from God because their heart is truly broken for having offended their Lord (repentant). The truly repentant person is concerned about restoring a right relationship with God rather than whether or not they receive punishment. The repentant person is willing to accept discipline for the sake of a renewed relationship. The "sorry" person hopes to avoid the pain of discipline.

17. Proverbs 17:3 -- "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts." The LORD tests the heart in the fire of trials and temptations.

18. Proverbs 17:10 -- "A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool." Will you learn the life lessons from the Bible, or does God have to teach you a lesson the hard way?

19. Proverbs 17:12 -- "Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly." Fools are more dangerous to you than ferocious animals.

20. Proverbs 17:13 -- "If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house." Do not respond to Jesus' sacrifice for you with sinful disobedience to Him.

21. Psalm 71:2 -- "In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me!" Salvation comes through the righteousness of Jesus, not through our own righteousness.

22. Psalm 71:3-5 -- God is the only Rock upon which you can place your hope and trust.

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23. Psalm 71:6 -- "Upon you I have leaned from before my birth." The longer you trust in God, the more you will trust Him in the future. Faith grows when you experience God's fidelity.

24. Psalm 71:8 -- "My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day." Praising God all day strengthens your faith.

25. Psalm 71:15 -- "My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day." The more you recount God's blessings in your life, the more confidence you will have in His continued blessings.

26. Psalm 71:16 -- "With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone." When you remind others of God's righteousness, you also benefit from reminding yourself.

27. Psalm 71:18 -- "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come." A generational ministry gives you healthy purpose in your old age that benefits your health and longevity.

28. Psalm 71:24 -- "And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long." How much do you talk about Jesus each day?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 17 June: Sing God's praises all day today. (Psalm 71:24)

DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 6, Saturday, 16 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+19%2C+20%3B+Prov+16%3B+psalm+70>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 16 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 19:1 -- "As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD." Faced with a seemingly helpless situation, Hezekiah went straight to The Lord. Where do you go?

2. 2 Kings 19:4 -- "Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." Never stop praying.

3. 2 Kings 19:7 -- "Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land." God can change hearts in ways beyond your power or understanding.

4. 2 Kings 19:12, 13 -- "Have the gods of the nations delivered them...?" To the world, Christianity is just another religion, another belief system. The world will challenge your faith by comparing Christianity to false, powerless religions. However, as the Founding Fathers said, Truth is self-evident.

5. 2 Kings 19:14 -- "Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord." Place all of your problems before the LORD. The Maker of Heaven and Earth is in control and loves you unconditionally.

6. 2 Kings 19:19 -- "So now, O Lord our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone." In our lives, God is always working on two things at once, He is working on our hearts, and He is working through our lives to reveal Himself to the world. In

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both efforts, He is bringing glory to Himself. We must never lose perspective that our lives are all about Him and not about us. We were created to bring glory to God and to serve Him. Had Hezekiah defeated Sennacherib through his own military might, Hezekiah would not have had to rely on faith, and the world would not have acknowledged the power of God. In Hezekiah's prayer, Hezekiah seems to understand that the ultimate goal of his salvation is to bring glory to God. However, after God miraculously saves Judah from Sennacherib, Hezekiah seems to lose perspective and becomes self-centered as we will soon read.

7. 2 Kings 19:22 -- "Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel!" When people fight against God's people, they are fighting against God.

8. 2 Kings 19:34 -- "For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake." God's work in your life is ultimately about Him, not you.

9. 2 Kings 19:35-37 -- The power and the beliefs of the most powerful man on the planet are absolutely nothing before God.

10. 2 Kings 20:1-19 -- Blessed by God after great struggle and crisis, it is critical that we don't become complacent, take God for granted, or become self-centered. The Lord tells Hezekiah that it is time to die. While Hezekiah previously trusted God boldly with his life, he apparently didn't trust Him with his death. Hezekiah simply didn't want to die, whether it was God's perfect timing or not. In this case, I believe God allowed Hezekiah to live another 15 years to reveal the condition of Hezekiah's heart and to bring glory to Himself. Instead dying at a highpoint of honorable and faithful service to the Lord, Hezekiah lived on, dooming Judah to captivity and producing Manasseh, one of Judah's worse kings. Manasseh reversed all the good Hezekiah had done in his lifetime. Hezekiah was introduced to us this way: "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him." (2 Kings 18:5) Today we read his last recorded words of complete selfishness: "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?" (2 Kings 20:19) Wow! It is not how you start; it is how you finish. How will our lives end – on a pinnacle of faithfulness?

11. 2 Kings 20:13 -- "And Hezekiah welcomed them, and he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them." Saved from death, Hezekiah became prideful and complacent. Immediately after success, you are very vulnerable. Success should be followed by humility, thankfulness, praise, obedience, and intentional recommitment. Above all else, guard your heart.

12. Proverbs 16:2 -- "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit." It is vital for Christians to understand that their hearts can be very deceptive. We tend to give ourselves more credit than we should. Paul warned, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." (Romans 12:3) You must seek the daily Counsel of the Holy Spirit to be shown what you cannot see within your own heart. And you must remain in a state of humility and repentance, not sorrowfully but joyfully, knowing that you are growing in grace. Continually examine your heart (empowered by the Holy Spirit), considering the real

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motivation behind your actions, particularly your acts of worship. Are you truly motivated by selfless love or by fear, pride, or mere duty? Seek the heart of Jesus, a heart of pure love.

13. Proverbs 16:3 -- "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." Don't ask God to bless what you are doing. Ask God to show you how to be a part of what He is doing that you might join Him in it, grow closer to Him in the effort, and glorify Him. Commit to being a part of what God is doing, and you will be blessed.

14. Proverbs 16:4 -- "The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." God uses the ungodly for His purposes, often to discipline the godly. If you don't like your political leaders, your employers, or other difficult people in your life, your first step might be prayerful repentance. God controls all circumstances and places people in your life to teach you something. Conversely, consider verse 7 -- "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

15. Proverbs 16:8 -- "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice." Don't sell out for instant, fleeting gain that can never satisfy. Don't be like Esau who traded his birthright for a bowl of soup.

16. Proverbs 16:12 -- "It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness." Make no mistake, all sin is an abomination, cosmic treason against the KING of Kings. Don't take any sin lightly.

17. Proverbs 16:13 -- "Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right." God loves it when you speak the truth.

18. Proverbs 16:26 -- "A worker's appetite works for him; his mouth urges him on." God wants you to stay hungry. There is no growth in the comfort zone, and there is no comfort in the growth zone. Rejoice in your challenges.

19. Proverbs 16:32 -- "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." The greatest battle anyone will fight is the battle for self-control (which can only be won through the Holy Spirit). The mightiest person is the one who has overcome self. The greatest miracle on earth is genuine love displayed.

21. Psalm 70 -- Pray.

22. Psalm 70:5 -- "But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!" The only way to approach God is humbly.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 16 June: Consider your prayer life. Is it God-centered or self-centered? Are you praying for God to bless what you are doing or what He is doing through you? Are you praying, "Thy will be done," or "My will be done"?

DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 5, Friday, 15 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+17%2C+18%3B+Prov+15%3B+Gal+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 15 June 18:

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1. 2 Kings 17:7 -- "And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God." In this account, God used the ungodly nation of Assyria to punish Israel for its sins against Him. The Bible reveals that God uses nature, ungodly leaders, ungodly nations, and various circumstances to punish and discipline people. However, most today would reject the notion that world events are used by God to punish and discipline. How has God used life events to discipline you? How is God using world events to punish our nation?

2. 2 Kings 17:8, 9 -- "[They] walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city." When the church or God's people adopt the ways, practices, customs, and rules of the world, the salt loses its saltiness and the light is dimmed, allowing darkness to grow. A compromised church destroys nations more than corrupt political leaders. Compromise starts when God's people seek to build for themselves little kingdoms rather than seeking the Kingdom of God and rather than living by the motto, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If the world is growing darker, it is because the light is growing dimmer. The problem is not "them," it is "us." As the church goes, so goes the nation. Rather than cursing the darkness, turn up the light. Pray for corporate repentance and revival within the church.

3. 2 Kings 17:12 -- "...and they served idols..." Idols are not just little statues representing fake gods. Idols are anything that takes priority in a person's life before God. Few people in America today worship statues, but nonetheless this generation is just as idolatrous as previous generations. 1 Samuel 15:23 and Colossians 3:5 add to our understanding of idolatry -- "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry." (1 Samuel 15:23) "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5) Many Christians are blind to their idolatry which is primarily a worship of self -- putting self above others and above obedience to God's command of selfless love. Jesus said that the first step to truly following Him is denying self, putting God and others above self, regardless the personal cost.

4. 2 Kings 17:13 -- "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments." Obedience that is inspired by genuine love is the proof of holiness and rightness with God. We are saved by grace, but grace is revealed in the heart that genuinely desires and pursues obedience.

5. 2 Kings 17:14, 15 -- "But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God. They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them that they should not do like them." It takes faith and love to obey. It is not usually that we don't know what we are called to do; it is that we don't have the heart to do it. The influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil are more appealing than the influence of God. So, we begin to look and act just like everyone else. How you act reveals what you truly believe and who you are really following.

6. 2 Kings 17:24 -- "And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel." A common practice used throughout history to subjugate a people is to separate them from their land. This is still practiced today, though you might not be paying attention to it. Throughout history, only their faith kept the Jews united as a people in exile. Does your faith keep you united to your family when separated?

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7. 2 Kings 17:26 -- "Therefore he has sent lions among them, and behold, they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." Once again, God uses nature and circumstances to control events in ways that people can't. When you are on God's side, the powers of the universe are working for you because God controls His creation for His purposes.

8. 2 Kings 17:34 -- "To this day they do according to the former manner. They do not fear the Lord, and they do not follow the statutes or the rules or the law or the commandment that the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel." The history between man and God is that God continues to show mercy and grace while man continues to defy God. In the midst of the populations, a few, the remnant remains faithful. This pattern continues to the Book of Revelation where God will finally end rebellion against Him and reward His faithful.

9. 2 Kings 17:41 -- "So these nations feared the Lord and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day." Partial obedience is not obedience but disobedience. Jesus warns, you are either all His or not His at all -- "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Luke 11:23) "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:16) Of the millions who left Egypt into the desert for the Promised Land, only two actually made it, Joshua and Caleb. Why? Because they were wholehearted. Are you wholehearted?

10. 2 Kings 18:5 -- "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him." If you are truly walking with God, very few, if any, will be walking with you. If you find yourself in the crowd, you had better take pause. Are you willing to walk only with Jesus in this world?

- Hezekiah stood alone in his uncompromised faith. The Bible says that he was surrounded by people who claimed faith in God, but they did not "fear the Lord" enough to honor and serve Him faithfully. (2 Kings 17:34-41) They had a half faith which is really no faith at all, unacceptable before the Lord. Consequently, when crisis came, their false faith failed them, and they lived in subjugation. Now Hezekiah's faith is put to the ultimate test as the undefeated mighty king Sennacherib besieges Jerusalem. Consider the situation, Sennacherib has already defeated Israel and has taken possession of Samaria, and he has already defeated and taken all of the fortified cities of Judah. Now Sennacherib has surrounded Jerusalem and is claiming that, in fact, he is acting on behalf of God and that he holds the power of life and death, blessings and curses. (Hezekiah 18:25)

11. 2 Kings 18:6 -- "For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses." Hezekiah did not hold lightly to God and His commands. Obedience is not easy in this world, nor has it ever been easy. Are you willing to cling to Jesus when everyone else is chasing after something else? Are you considered a fanatic in your faith by others?

12. 2 Kings 18:12 -- "They neither listened nor obeyed." First you have to commit to listening day-by-day (Bible study, prayer, receptiveness to the Holy Spirit); then you have to be willing to obey the Holy Spirit. Few really listen. Few faithfully obey. Are you among the few?

13. 2 Kings 18:15 -- "And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king's house." This is where Hezekiah begins to slip. The world (Assyria) demanded

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of Hezekiah what was God's, and Hezekiah gave it to him in order to "keep the peace." At this point, Hezekiah feared man more than he feared God. As usual, this compromise involved money. Look at the church in America today. We pay what we owe to the government and to creditors, but we don't bring God the tithe, nor do we offer additional gifts and alms which God desires. The church will never be the influence it should be in the world as long as God's people honor themselves and others with their resources before they honor God who actually owns it all.

14. 2 Kings 18:20 -- "Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me?" Each day, everyone will make decisions on whether they trust their own intellect and might or God's. Sennacherib was a powerful strategist who conquered everyone around him. It took great faith to believe the unseen God was more powerful than the very visible and powerful ruler Sennacherib who openly taunted the Israelites for their faith and apparent weakness. Do you trust God beyond the apparent realities of the visible world? Was it strategy that brought down the walls of Jericho or the power of God? What will you rely on to tear down the walls in your life?

15. 2 Kings 18:22 -- "But if you say to me, We trust in the Lord our God, is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?" Sennacherib uses a common tactic, used by Satan in the garden and used by the ungodly today to weaken the hearts of God's people -- he tried to make them question their own religion and their religious leaders. He suggested that Hezekiah's faithful acts were really demonstrations of infidelity. He suggested that Hezekiah was merely using religion to control the people. Could you remain strong under such scrutiny? Today, many celebrate sin under the pretense of a greater understanding of religion or a higher revelation. Sennacherib did the same thing -- "Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'" Do you know the truth well enough to combat the lies?

16. 2 Kings 18:25 -- "Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this place without word from the Lord? The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it." God's enemies seek to undermine the resolve of God's people by claiming obedience to God in their disobedience. They claim to know God's will better than God's people and point to their worldly successes as proof.

17. 2 Kings 18:29-35 -- "Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord by saying, 'The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live, and not die. And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?'"

- The king of Assyria promised God's people a comfortable captivity, a bondage with benefits. So does the world today. You will be asked to compromise your faith and obedience to God by the majority around you who claim to be very religious and noble; by those who claim to be on God's side; by those

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who will appeal to common sense and reason. You will be told that God's commands must "evolve" and be re-defined to suit the changing times. You will see many around you surrender to the world and compromise for comfort. Will you have the faith to hold the line and remain obedient to God's commands though apparently surrounded?

-- Psalm 37:39 -- The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.

-- Proverbs 24:10 -- If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

-- 1 Corinthians 16:13 -- Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

-- 1 Peter 3:15 -- But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

-- Hebrews 11:7 -- By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

-- Colossians 2:8 -- See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

- The world believes that all religions are basically equal, just different paths to God. The world teaches that we should respect all religions equally. Those who accept such notions will ultimately come to the conclusion that Christianity is just as powerless as all the other false religions of the world. Do you understand that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father and the only source of true power? When all other beliefs prove false, will you remain unmoved on the Rock of Jesus?

18. 2 Kings 18:36 -- "But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, 'Do not answer him.'" Don't waste your time debating with the ungodly or even acknowledging their false doctrines. If they want to hear the truth, they will listen.

19. Proverbs 15:1-7, 23, 26, 28, 30, 33 -- "A soft answer turns away wrath.... the wise commends knowledge.... A gentle tongue is a tree of life.... The lips of the wise spread knowledge.... To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!... gracious words are pure.... The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer.... good news refreshes the bones.... The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor." Are your answers soft, knowledgeable, gentle, timely, gracious, thoughtful, refreshing, instructional, yet humble?

20. Proverbs 15:14 -- "The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly." Foolish talkers don't seek knowledge. Listen and learn.

21. Proverbs 15:15 -- "All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast." You must choose to be cheerful regardless your circumstances. To the cheerful, every day is a holiday, every march is a parade, and every meal is a feast. To a certain degree, your attitude determines your altitude.

22. Proverbs 15:16 -- "Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it." Unity with God through obedience and love is the key to contentment and cheerfulness.

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23. Galatians 3:24-26 -- "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." The law is the word of God, the manifestation of His character and His will. It is not outside of His will. Jesus said He did not come to abolish the law but rather to fulfill it. The law serves as a curb (to keep you on the right track), a mirror (to reveal your sin to you), and a guide (to show you where to go). The law sets boundaries for those who need boundaries. However, the law in itself cannot change a person's heart. Only Jesus can change a person's heart. When a person has a heart for Jesus, they no longer need the boundaries of the law because they no longer have a heart for sin. Many obey the law because they are scared not to obey. Many obey the law because they take pride in their self-made righteousness. Many obey the law out of a sense of duty. However, God wants us to love Jesus with all of our hearts so that there is no longer a concern about obeying the law -- obedience is the natural product of love. Jesus said that if you obey the Greatest Commandment of Love, the rest of the law will be covered. Likewise, if you disobey the details of the law, you have already disobeyed the law of love. The law cannot save you or change your heart, but if you are disobeying the law you are revealing a problem with your heart that has yet to yield to sanctification. The law does not save, but it still serves as a curb, mirror, and guide where we are not yet perfected in love.

24. Galatians 3:24 -- "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." The Law reveals your sinfulness and disobedience which should lead you to repentance and to Jesus. The Law does not save you, but the Law is used by the Holy Spirit to convict you in the process of sanctification, growing closer to God in pursuit of oneness.

25. Galatians 3:25 -- "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." Once again, when you are motivated by genuine love for Jesus, you no longer need the law to control you because love will compel you to obey from a genuine desire. Love is always more powerful than duty or fear of punishment. Many themes are repeated on purpose.

26. Galatians 3:25, 26 -- "For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe." A person can never achieve righteousness through their own obedience, nor can the law create unconditional love for God in someone's heart. All require mercy, grace, and salvation through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

27. Galatians 3:27 -- "...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Covered in Christ, you are clothed in His righteousness giving you freedom from condemnation and special access to the Father. You are now free and uniquely empowered to follow God in obedience without fear of rejection from Him or separation from His love.

28. Galatians 3:28 -- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Christians, Ambassadors for Christ, have no business discussing the politics of race, ethnicity, nationality, or any other man-made social stratification which commonly divides society and distracts people from the only topic that truly matters, Jesus. The physical, geographic boundaries that divided population groups and produced different races and cultures and that promoted distrust have no impact on the spiritual world. Today, people seek to find their identity and seek to identify others by their outward attributes -- much ungodly pride is involved here. Race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender are not virtues; do not take pride in any of them or show

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favoritism because of any of them. Man-made stratifications of people do not factor into God's economy and are almost always used by people for political purposes. There are two classifications of people in the world, followers of Christ and the unsaved. Your mission is to make disciples of all nations and to seek reconciliation between those who are divided from Jesus and each other.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 June 16: Today, consider why you obey God's commands. Are you obeying out of fear of the consequences of not obeying? Are you obeying out of pride for your own righteousness? Are you obeying to work your way into Heaven? Are you obeying out of a sense of guilt, hoping to make up for past sins? Are you obeying out of a sense of duty, because you know you should? Or, are you obeying out of love, because you have a heart, a passion to please God? When you obey for any reason other than love, you are not really obeying, because the First Commandment and the Greatest Commandment is to have no other God but God and to love Him unconditionally. Pray that God will continue to create in you a pure heart, that you would be wholehearted before Him and obey out of love. None of us love perfectly, but we should strive for ever-increasing Christ-like love, which grows as we grow closer to Him, the Source of Love.

DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 4, Thursday, 14 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+15%2C+16%3B+Prov+14%3B+Gal+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 14 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 15:2, 3 -- "His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done." Again, note that the Bible points to the parents when speaking of the character and competence of leaders. Note, that both the father and mother are mentioned. The foundation of a society is the home, and homes must be led by godly mothers and fathers, both are essential for the balanced character development of future leaders.
2. 2 Kings 15:4 -- "Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places." Azariah was a godly king, yet he let sin to continue in the land unchecked. We cannot stare at sin around us and hope it will go away. If we don't confront sin, it will continue to destroy and only grow.
3. 2 Kings 15:5 -- "And the Lord touched the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death, and he lived in a separate house." In the entire chapter of 2 Kings 15, Azariah was the only king who "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD," yet, God gave him leprosy with apparently no explanation. However, Azariah is also called Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26, and 2 Chronicles 26 explains that, "when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense." Azariah arrogantly defied God's rules for worship and took on upon himself a priestly role. Therefore, God gave him leprosy, essentially a slow death sentence. God takes His holiness very seriously, and God has a much higher standard for those who assume positions of leadership.
4. 2 Kings 15:10, 13, 14 -- "Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him and struck him down.... he reigned one month in Samaria.... Menahem... struck down Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and put him to death and reigned in his place." A theme throughout the Bible is that God treats people the way they treat others.

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5. 2 Kings 15:12 -- "This was the promise of the Lord that he gave to Jehu, 'Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.' And so it came to pass." God always keeps His promises. What promises can you find in the Bible that pertain to you?

6. 2 Kings 15:15 -- "Now the rest of the deeds of Shallum, and the conspiracy that he made, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel." The Bible cannot be fully understood without a diligent study of the whole Bible. 2 Kings 15:15 says, "behold" the rest of the story revealed in the rest of the Bible. Many Bible truths are obvious and easily understood. Many other truths are reserved for those who would diligently study all of God's word. Of course, diligent Bible study is only part of the equation – proper application is also required. Consider the birth of Jesus – very few people understood the significance of His birth at the time, but the wise men of the east and Herod's chief priests and scribes were able to accurately discern from God's word that the Christ was born in Bethlehem. However, the wisemen sought Him to worship him, while the chief priests and scribes sought to kill him – opposite responses to the same truth. Diligently study God's word to know Jesus more and more each day, to love Him more dearly, and to worship Him more genuinely. Study God's word to demonstrate your love for God by loving others more sincerely and effectively.

7. 2 Kings 15:20 -- "Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is, from all the wealthy men, fifty shekels of silver from every man, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land." Taxation is often used to subjugate certain groups of people in order to keep others in power.

8. 2 Kings 15 – God appreciates obedience to Him, not popularly acclaimed accomplishments or "good deeds" respected by people. A person can do many good things with the wrong motivation and wrong heart, receiving credit from people but not from God. Reputation is what others say about you. Character is what God says about you.

9. 2 Kings 16:2, 3 -- "He did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, as his father David had done, but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel." This is a shocking display of double-mindedness and infidelity. Ahaz was a believer who, nonetheless, followed the practices of the world, and the Bible describes the height of his sin to be the equivalent of modern-day abortion.

10. 2 Kings 16:8 -- "Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria." Ahaz robbed the house of the Lord to pay for partnership with the ungodly. Do you give the whole tithe? How much do you give the government and bankers? Compare the average American Christian's financial support to the church and ministry to the amount they pay in financial debt, though they are far from starving.

11. 2 Kings 16:10 -- "When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details." Wow! Ahaz liked the Assyrian alter more than the one God prescribed so he removed God's alter and replaced it with the Assyrian alter. Ahaz then commanded that the daily offerings of worship to the Lord take place on this new altar. 2 Chronicles 28 gives more details of Ahaz's incredible offenses before God as well as the consequences. Ahaz worshipped in a way that was right in his own eyes but wholly offensive to God, and Ahaz dragged others with him down the path of

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destruction. If you had the opportunity to talk with Ahaz, he would have likely told you that he was a godly and very religious person, but he had made himself an enemy of God. How have we defiled holy things and robbed God of his due honor through compromise to the world?

12. 2 Kings 16:10 -- "When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details." Ahaz partnered with the world and blended pagan worship practices with worship to God, which, of course, is wholly unacceptable to God. Unfortunately the priest went along with him, validating his horrific sins. How has the secular world influenced the church and its "worship" today? Syncretism is perhaps the greatest threat to the modern-day church.

13. Proverbs 14:2 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is devious in his ways despises him." Your actions reveal what you really think about God.

14. Proverbs 14:4 -- "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox." What is your ox? Have you invested in the capacity to produce, or have you only invested in products that do not add a capacity to produce more for you? Many people buy cars, but few people by the factories that make the cars. Many people play video games, but few people build and sell video games. What do you produce?

15. Proverbs 14:34 -- "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Revival is the only hope for our nation. It must start with the church; it must start with you.

16. Galatians 2:2 -- "I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain." Paul was led by the Holy Spirit but still sought counsel from other faithful followers of Christ to ensure he was on track.

17. Galatians 2:6 -- "And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me." God does not care about social status or position. God is only interested in faithful servants, regardless their public acclaim.

18. Galatians 2:7-9 -- "...they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised.... and when [they] perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised." Paul was led to serve God in a completely different direction than the rest of the apostles, yet they fully supported him having recognized the Holy Spirit working through him. The church was not divided over Paul's new and different approach? How do you respond to different forms of faithful ministry?

19. Galatians 2:11-14 -- "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'" Paul stood publicly and boldly against hypocrisy, deeds that did not match words, deeds that

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were not in step with the Gospel. The word hypocrite is the Greek word for "stage actor," playing a role. Don't allow yourself or others to pretend to be Christian while in fact not following Jesus in both word and deed. Paul warns that the hypocrite stands condemned.

20. Galatians 2:16 -- "We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." We are saved by faith alone, but not a faith that is alone. We don't obey God to be saved; we obey God because we are saved. It is our hearts desire to honor Him in deed and to reveal Him in deed.

21. Galatians 2:16, 18 -- "...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.... For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor." One of the most misapplied principles in the Bible is grace. Too many use grace as a license to continue in sin. Grace does not abolish the Law, it fulfills the Law, not because of the Law but because of genuine love. If you continue in sin, you are not just disobeying the written Law, you are demonstrating a lack of genuine love. Paul said that the love of Christ compelled him in obedience, not the Law. If you are motivated by love, the Law will be fulfilled naturally.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 June: Resolve today not to be a hypocrite. If you call yourself a Christian, endeavor to truly live like Jesus as an act of love for Jesus.

DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 3, Wednesday, 13 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+13%2C+14%3B+Prov+13%3B+Gal+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 13 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 13:2 -- "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin; he did not depart from them."

- There is a theme that runs throughout the Bible -- it is hard to break free from customs, courtesies, social norms, traditions, and 'common sense' that have been passed down from generations but is contrary to God's word, will, and commands. We all must remain grounded in God's word and willing to challenge sinful norms. God wants you to live a holy life, not a socially acceptable life.

- The Bible continually reminds us how destructive the sins of one person can be on following generations and also continually reminds us the parents bear a burden of responsibility to raise their children to be godly -- "Jeroboam the son of Nebat." (see Malachi 2:15)

2. 2 Kings 13:4 -- "Then Jehoahaz sought the favor of the Lord, and the Lord listened to him." God will respond to genuine repentance.

3. 2 Kings 13:18, 19 -- "And he said, 'Take the arrows,' and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, 'Strike the ground with them.' And he struck three times and stopped. Then the man of God was angry with him and said, 'You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Syria only three times.'" How you respond to little things reveals how you respond to big things. Given a command by Elisha, Jehoash responded with marginal commitment, reflecting how he would lead his people in battle. Had he doubled his efforts before Elisha, he would have demonstrated the type of zeal required to totally

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defeat Syria. What sort of energy and passion do you bring to your chores or to work? How well do you energize others to bring out their very best when they really don't want to? What you do with little things today reveals what you will do with big things tomorrow.

4. 2 Kings 13:10, 11 -- "In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years. He also did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." Later in life, Jeroboam sought the Lord. Unfortunately his son Joash remained on the path of evil. Parents must train their children in righteousness starting at a young age.

5. 2 Kings 13:19 -- "Then the man of God was angry with him and said, 'You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Syria only three times.'" Elisha had a bigger vision for Israel than the king did. Have God-sized expectations as you serve God in your lifetime. Remember, you have the power of God working through you if you are working for God.

6. 2 Kings 14:4 -- "But the high places were not removed." Many people struggle their whole lives with sins they refuse to surrender to God. Surely, you have seen this in others. Do you see it in yourself? God demands that you surrender all to him and pursue purity and holiness. Your sins are not your identity. Don't say, "That's just the way I am." You have the Holy Spirit within you. Be faithful and wholehearted.

7. 2 Kings 14:14 -- "But the high places were not removed." Hopefully you are getting the point by now.... Joash obeyed God except for this one area. Partial obedience is ultimately disobedience. Do you have "high places", things you simply won't let go of and that you let stand in the way of your purity, holiness, and fidelity to God?

8. 2 Kings 14:6 -- "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. But each one shall die for his own sin." Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, but people held accountable for their own actions.

9. 2 Kings 14:8-14 -- Taking pride in what God has allowed you to accomplish often leads to defeat and shame.

10. 2 Kings 14:19; see 14:3 -- God allowed a king who obeyed Him to be assassinated. Our reward is knowing Jesus and being with Him. God's perfect plan for you may include great hardships, even death. However, "for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) No matter what you are going through, God is using it to draw you closer to Him.

11. 2 Kings 14:25 -- Notice that Jonah is mentioned in the account of Jeroboam, without referencing Jonah's eventual work in Nineveh. Jonah had an international mission, doing big things at home and big things abroad.

12. Proverbs 13:5 -- "The righteous hates falsehood." Are you truly righteous? If you love flowers, you have to hate weeds. If you are ok with little lies, you have a heart problem. Be honest with yourself first and consider deeply where you have grown complacent with falsehood, even in little ways.

13. Proverbs 13:7 -- "One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth." You will never fix what you aren't willing to be honest about. Don't pretend to be something you are not, be honest with yourself and with others about your strengths and weaknesses.

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14. Proverbs 13:10 -- "With those who take advice is wisdom." Are you truly wise? Where do you get your advice? The Holy Spirit should be your primary Counsellor, but you must humbly seek and receive His advice.

15. Proverbs 13:11 -- "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." A major and critical life principle in the Bible is that growth in any area requires consistent discipline, day-by-day over time. People always over estimate what they can do in a day and under estimate what they can do in a lifetime. There are no quick fixes to the things that really matter in life. What are you willing to do consistently every day to become who you want to be at the end of your days?

16. Proverbs 13:16 -- "Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly." Fools are always the loudest and most confident. They are proud, not humble.

17. Proverbs 13:20 -- "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." When the Bible repeats itself, it is for the purpose of really making the point. Proverbs 13:20 is a repeated theme found throughout the rest of Proverbs for a reason. Pay attention.

18. Proverbs 13:20 -- "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." Your friends should be in pursuit of godly like you and strengthen you in your journey.

19. Proverbs 13:22 -- "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous." Again, things that matter are built over time. The righteous work diligently today for a result that will last for generations to come.

20. Proverbs 13:23 -- "The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice." God is a God of justice. God hates injustice. Injustice robs people and society of the good that could have been.

21. Proverbs 13:25 -- "The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want." The wicked suffer want in part because they do not maintain the disciplines required to get what they want and in part because when they get what they want, it is never enough. The righteous work hard and learn to be satisfied with what they have.

22. Galatians 1:1 -- "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." Don't miss this important theme in Galatians 1: God calls, commissions, and empowers His servants, not men. Many attempt to serve as an intermediary between God and people. They do not have the authority to do so. You have direct, personal access to God and have as much access to the leading of the Holy Spirit as anyone else. You do not need a degree from an institution or special rights administered to you by another person. All authority belongs to Jesus, and he appoints and equips people directly. Yes, you can learn from more mature Christians, but your Counsellor and Guide is the Holy Spirit. You are an Ambassador for Christ, not because you were chosen by men, but because you were chosen by God. Proclaim what you know about Jesus to others today!

23. Galatians 1:6,7,9 -- "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.... If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed." Another critical theme: Many, sometimes well meaning, people are distorting the Gospel and preaching a false gospel by mixing it with popular

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philosophy. The Good News is Jesus and salvation through Him alone. However, many are preaching hope in other things -- psychology, self-help techniques, positive thinking, bright ideas, "common sense", etc. Many are trying to turn the Bible into a self-help book and mix it with quotes from modern, secular gurus who also offer a hope apart from Jesus. We are Ambassadors of Christ, not today's version of morality or human wisdom. We cannot use various techniques to save ourselves. We need Jesus. The Good News of Jesus is that we can have Jesus and salvation through him alone. Don't mix messages. Preach Jesus only!

24. Galatians 1:7 -- "There is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." Nothing has changed. Understand that many "teachers" of God's word distort the Gospel. You are called to carefully study your Bible to test every spoken word of people. The Holy Spirit is your teacher. Every other Christian is just a student like you, some good students, some bad. Some who are in the class are really not students at all.

25. Galatians 1:10 -- "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." False teachers seek the approval of men. Some of these false teachers convince others that they need their approval to be a disciple or Ambassador. Your authority comes straight from God and God alone. Don't let institutions set up false barriers to your relationship with Jesus, to your growth in Him, and to your witness. Learn from others, but don't be limited by others.

26. Galatians 1:12 -- "For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Institutions or other people do not distribute the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ reveals Himself to faithful followers.

27. Galatians 1:13 -- "For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it." Following the teachings of the most brilliant men in the church, Paul was working diligently and effectively but directly against the will of Jesus.

28. Galatians 1:14 -- "So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers." Church or national traditions, long accepted for generations, can be a very dangerous thing. The word of God alone, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is our guide for life. Test everything against God's word.

29. Galatians 1:15-16 -- "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone." God chooses to reveal His Son to whomever He chooses, and those He chooses, He chooses for an earthly purpose -- to preach the Good News of Jesus to others. Don't wait for some sort of validation from others. Preach now what God has revealed to you and grow in the word over time.

30. Galatians 1:22 -- "And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ." You don't need to be well known or accepted to be used by God powerfully. You don't need the approval of people to serve God today. You just need to yield to the Holy Spirit.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 June: Preach Jesus only today. If you want to give someone advice, point them to Jesus. (Galatians 1:6,7,9)

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DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 2, Tuesday, 12 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+11%2C+12%3B+Prov+12%3B+2+cor+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 12 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 11:1 -- "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family." Selfishness can grow in a person's life to where they are willing to do unthinkable things. When a person is fundamentally motivated by selfishness, though they might appear nice under favorable conditions, you never know what they will be willing to do under unfavorable conditions -- "It's you and me until it's you or me."

2. 2 Kings 11:2 -- "But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom." Unselfish people are willing to take great risks and make great sacrifices for others, placing others over self. While Athaliah was willing to murder for personal gain, Jehosheba was willing to put her own life on the line for a baby. Jehosheba played a critical role in the history of Israel and earned a place of honor in God's eternal word because she was willing to risk her life out of love for another; at the moment of decision, she did what was right, and it made all the difference.

3. 2 Kings 11:4 -- "And he made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD, and he showed them the king's son." Covenant relationships are life commitments that instill powerful trust and confidence, enabling amazing accomplishments. Marriage is intended to be a covenant, not a contract.

4. 2 Kings 11:5 -- "And he commanded them, 'This is the thing that you shall do: one third of you, those who come off duty on the Sabbath and guard the king's house....' Even God-enabled efforts require planning and organization.

5. 2 Kings 11:7, 8 -- "And the two divisions of you, which come on duty in force on the Sabbath and guard the house of the Lord on behalf of the king, shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand." Some had to work on the Sabbath, but they shifted to another day of rest. This was a church service with great security.

6. 2 Kings 11:8 -- "And whoever approaches the ranks is to be put to death." Strict rules surround holy things. Where there is no room for error, there can be no opportunity for complacency or compromise. Today, in our "it's all good" society, we have grown too comfortable around holy things.

7. 2 Kings 11:9 -- "The captains did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded...." Someone has to be in charge, and that person must command the loyalty of others. In this case, warriors submitted to the tactical leadership of a priest.

8. 2 Kings 11:10 -- "And the priest gave to the captains the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the LORD." The church kept weapons and had a plan to fight.

9. 2 Kings 11:12 -- "Then he brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, 'Long live the king!'" This was a revolt against the standing government. But how do you reconcile this act with Romans 13:1, 2 -- "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no

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authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.”? All authority has been given to Jesus. We must obey government until government calls us to disobey the KING of Kings. We serve King Jesus above all else.

10. 2 Kings 11:14 -- "And Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, 'Treason! Treason!'" The most treacherous person in the kingdom accused everyone else of treason. Those who are guilty of treason are quick, with great passion, to call the faithful treasonous.

11. 2 Kings 11:20 -- "So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been put to death with the sword at the king's house." People want justice and rejoice in justice, but they often aren't willing to pay the price of sacrifice to get justice. Everyone benefits from justice, but only a few are willing to fight for justice. Jesus said we are the "Salt and Light" of the world. Salt preserves, and light exposes darkness. We must be the few in society that are willing to expose the darkness and preserve society. Proverbs 29:2 -- When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.

12. 2 Kings 11:21, 12:2 -- "Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign.... And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him." The people who advise the leader are often more important than who the leader is. In American politics there is much debate as to whether a person is equipped for the job (as there should be), but often what is more important is who that person surrounds themselves with for counsel and guidance. As an eight-year-old (2 Kings 22), Josiah was not equipped for the job, but he was surrounded by godly administrators and counsellors. Note that the first counsellor mentioned in 2 Kings 22 is his mother. Parents are critical to the success of their children. We will see later that Josiah slips a bit when he does not listen to sound, godly counsel.

13. 2 Kings 12:3 -- "Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and make offerings on the high places." There can be no compromise with sin. The slightest bit of disobedience to God's commands can have devastating consequences, often not revealed for many years. What are you still hanging on to that detracts from your purity?

14. 2 Kings 12:4, 5 -- "Jehoash said to the priests, 'All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of the Lord, the money for which each man is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and the money that a man's heart prompts him to bring into the house of the Lord, let the priests take, each from his donor, and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered.'" There are different types of giving -- tithes, gifts, and alms. The tithe is 10% given to the church. It is mandatory and given in public. Gifts are given to the church above and beyond the tithe. It is private and given in secret as are alms which are gifts to the poor and needy, again, above and beyond the tithe. The average church giver gives less than 2% of their income. This is wrong. Many believe that the tithe is a part of the Old Law which is no longer required. However, the tithe is not simply part of the Old Law. Abraham gave a tithe before the Law (Gen 14:20), and Jesus endorsed the tithe (Luke 11:42 -- "These you ought to have done"). The tithe is a steady, reliable source of income for the church to use to do its work. Today, our churches are weak in part because God's people don't tithe. Give your tithe as a public commitment and display of worship, and give your gifts and alms in secret. God loves the cheerful giver.

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15. 2 Kings 12:7 -- "Why are you not repairing the house?" With good intentions and good ideas must come a specific plan for execution. As they say, "The devil is in the details." Leaders must set goals and objectives and ensure people actually get things done. Hope is not a method. God calls us to work efficiently and effectively to turn vision into reality. And any good plan accounts for the reality of human nature. People act like people do, and that is a reality that must be accounted for in the plan.

16. 2 Kings 12:13, 14 -- "But there were not made for the house of the Lord basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or of silver, from the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, for that was given to the workmen who were repairing the house of the Lord with it." First things must come first. Before the church buys that new electric drum set, they may want to consider buying Bibles for those who don't have one. Before you consider buying that new large screen TV, you might want to replace your roof. Take care of what matters most first. Do the hard thing first. Proverbs 24:27 -- Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.

17. 2 Kings 12:18 -- "Jehoash king of Judah took... his own sacred gifts...." Jehoash led by example and did exactly what he was asking everyone else to do.

18. Proverbs 12:1 -- "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." Don't resent the Lord's discipline.

19. Proverbs 12:4 -- "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones."

- An ungodly spouse can have a detrimental effect on your health.

- Relationship problems cause health problems.

20. Proverbs 12:9 -- "Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread." Let your accomplishments speak for themselves.

21. Proverbs 12:10 -- "Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel." The righteous treat animals better than the wicked treat people.

22. Proverbs 12:16 -- "The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult." Do you ignore insults or stew over them?

23. Proverbs 12:18 -- "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Do all your words bring healing?

24. Proverbs 12:25 -- "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." Do your words lighten the emotional burdens of others?

25. Proverbs 12:26 -- "One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." Are you leading your neighbors closer to Jesus?

26. 2 Corinthians 13:1 -- "This is the third time I am coming to you." Information is not transformation. People don't just need to hear the truth, they must be coached into truth -- this is discipleship. A leader must be willing to work with people over time, not just throwing truths at them without follow-up.

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27. 2 Corinthians 13:1 -- "Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." You should apply this Biblical principle in your interactions with others.

28. 2 Corinthians 13:2 -- "Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." Don't believe hearsay. More and more in our society, we are guilty until proven innocent. Accusations are accepted as truth. God calls us to a much higher standard.

29. 2 Corinthians 13:4 -- "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God." Don't confuse humility and sacrifice with weakness. The power of God flows through the humble. The most powerful person in any room is the true servant of Jesus.

30. 2 Corinthians 13:5 -- "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" The Bible calls you to be self-aware, always comparing yourself to the standard of Jesus. Faith is revealed in obedience to Jesus. If you are disobedient to Jesus, be honest about it. Where you are not living in selflessness, where you are not taking up your cross in relationships, where you are not truly following the example of Jesus, repent. Your test is certainly not what others around you are doing. Your test is the example Jesus gave you through His life. If your excuse for disobedience is, "Well, I am not Jesus, and I live by grace," you are really missing the point.

- Are you still doing things you wouldn't do if Jesus were in the room next to you, oblivious to the fact that, if you are truly a Christian, He is within you? Are you thinking things as if Jesus doesn't know your thoughts?

31. 2 Corinthians 13:7 -- "But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed." Note that Paul's prayer is that those around him would not do wrong. Also, note that Paul's motive in rebuking others is not to condemn them but rather to draw them closer to Jesus through obedience. His goal is reconciliation. That should be your motive and goal.

32. 2 Corinthians 13:9 -- "Your restoration is what we pray for." Examine your heart: If you are pointing out the sins of others without an earnest desire and intent to reconcile them or restore them in Christ, your heart is wrong and your best move is to keep quiet. If you are going to criticize someone, be willing to invest in them and coach them through the problem or issue.

33. 2 Corinthians 13:9, 10 -- "Your restoration is what we pray for. For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down." Every word that comes out of your mouth, whether positive or negative, will either build people up or tear them down. Sometimes a situation requires an encouraging word, and sometimes a situation requires a rebuke. You must have the wisdom and willingness to provide both as required to build someone up. To be a true reconciler, you must speak the word of God, and you must speak from the right heart. If your heart is not focused on reconciliation, you will misspeak and will be an ineffective ambassador for Christ. True love speaks the truth in love.

34. 2 Corinthians 13:11 -- "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." In his rebuke, Paul

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called people to rejoice through discipline and to always seek peace. Peace is agreement, friendship, unity, and love with God – of one mind with Him. There can be no peace where there is disobedience to Jesus. Those who are of one mind with Jesus will naturally have peace with one another. If you want to promote peace, you must bring people into obedience to Jesus. You cannot just accept sin.

35. 2 Corinthians 13:11 -- "Aim for restoration." Remember, God gave you the mission of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19) Your goal in all relationships or encounters, particularly the challenging ones, should be to lead people closer to Jesus and peace. When you disagree with another person over an issue, don't let the issue become a distraction from your mission; don't lose sight of the goal, which is not winning but rather reconciling. Remember, an ambassador cannot represent themselves. If you lose the disagreement, what have you lost that God can't restore instantly? Have an eternal perspective.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 June: "Your restoration is what we pray for." Your mission on earth is to promote reconciliation -- bringing everyone around you closer to Jesus. Your specific assignment given to you by God is the people God has placed in your life. Perhaps, the one that needs your influence the most is the one who is the hardest to be around due to their behavior resulting from their distance from Jesus. Be ready to suffer their offenses and to live in grace that they might surrender to the grace of Jesus. Deny yourself, take up your cross in relationships, and follow the lead of Jesus to impact those around you. Be faithful today to your calling and mission of reconciliation. Today will only come once in your lifetime.

DBRP - WEEK 24, Day 1, Monday, 11 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+9%2C+10%3B+Prov+11%3B+2+cor+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 11 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 9:1 – "Then Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets...." God used unnamed believers to do very important work. You don't have to be "important" to do important things. God only needs a faithful follower who obeys implicitly.

2. 2 Kings 9:7 – "And you shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord." God never forgets evil deeds done against Him and His people.

3. 2 Kings 9:11 – "Why did this mad fellow come to you?" Notice the reputation God's ministers often have.

4. 2 Kings 9:13-15 -- "Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, 'Jehu is king.'"

- People are often ready for change but just need a bold leader to step up.

- The servants understood what God proclaimed through His prophets was sure to happen. They did not hesitate to respond.

5. 2 Kings 9:22 -- "What peace can there be, so long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?" Peace is found in submission and obedience to God. There can be no real peace apart from Jesus Christ.

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6. 2 Kings 9:23 -- "What peace can there be, so long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?" True peace can only come through right relationship with God. Compromise in obedience to keep the peace with the ungodly can only lead to more turmoil and destruction.

7. 2 Kings 9:26 -- "As surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons—declares the Lord...." God remembers and fulfills His word of judgment.

8. 2 Kings 9:32; 10:4, 7 -- "Who is on my side? Who?" People have a tendency to change loyalties quickly.

9. 2 Kings 10:27 -- "And they demolished the pillar of Baal, and demolished the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day." God's people show no respect for false religions and offer no compromise.

10. 2 Kings 20:30 -- "Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." Generations are blessed by the faithful father.

11. 2 Kings 20:31 -- "But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart." Once again, partial obedience is disobedience and reveals a heart that does not truly honor God as Sovereign LORD. Every sin is an act of cosmic treason, usurping God's authority for selfish reasons.

12. 2 Kings 10:31 -- "But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin." Jehu displayed incredible zeal for the Lord, but sin had become so institutionalized and such a tradition for the people that he could not escape it all. How much and how deeply has sin infested our customs, courtesies, traditions, habits, practices and way of life, even within the church? How much zeal is required to purify ourselves?

13. Proverbs 11:4 -- "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." Prosperity is ultimately meaningless when prosperity is not dedicated to God's purposes and God's glory. All that you do must be selflessly dedicated to God.

14. Proverbs 11:20 -- "Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD, but those of blameless ways are his delight." God judges the heart.

15. Proverbs 11:22 -- "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion." Indiscretion is unattractive.

16. 2 Corinthians 12:6 -- "I refrain from [boasting], so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me." What you have done in the past matters little compared with what you are now. If you are what you should be, you won't have to boast -- what you are will be self-evident. Margaret Thatcher once said, "Being powerful is like being a lady; if you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

17. 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9 -- "Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" Paul continued to pray for what he wanted until he got a clear answer from God. When God did not give Him what he wanted, he accepted it as best.

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18. 2 Corinthians 12:10 -- "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Do you have this sort of contentment and believe that God is giving you what is best for you?

19. 2 Corinthians 12:14 -- "I seek not what is yours but you." Paul wanted nothing from people other than to see them saved. Those who do good deeds for personal gain or recognition should be ashamed.

20. 2 Corinthians 12:14 -- "For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children." Many families have gotten this wrong.

21. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 -- "For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find... quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I come again... I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced." From quarreling to sexual immorality, these are the signs of an ungodly people. Do you see any of these unacceptable behaviors in the Christians you know? Paul admonished fellow Christians for such behavior. Do you?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) - 11 June: Do not boast. Lest your behavior speak for itself. (2 Corinthians 12:6)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 7, Sunday, 10 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+7%2C+8%3B+Prov+10%3B+psalm+68%2C+69>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 10 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 7:1, 2 – "But Elisha said, 'Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.' Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned said to the man of God, 'If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?' But he said, 'You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.'" God can miraculously change circumstances overnight. Most underestimate the power of God. A lack of faith could cause you to miss out on God's blessings.

2. 2 Kings 7:6 -- "For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses." God can melt the resolve of your adversaries in miraculous ways, without you doing anything but waiting in faith.

3. 2 Kings 7:8, 9 – "And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them. Then they said to one another, 'We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household.'"

- The lepers understood that it would be a terrible sin, deserving of great punishment, to withhold the good news of salvation even for one day. Though they were tempted to simply enjoy their new riches, keeping them to themselves, they knew that countless others were doomed without what they had. So, they proclaimed this good news to the people who, at first, doubted. However, more "messengers" confirmed the good news, and soon multitudes rushed to receive previously unimaginable blessings

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from the Lord. What have you done with the Good News? What would happen if all Christians were as convicted as these lepers to share the “Good News”? How faithful have you been in sharing the Good News of Jesus? “We are not doing right.... If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us.”

- A scarcity mentality tempts people to sin. An abundance mentality, one that believes that God will richly provide, promotes forgiveness and cheerful giving.

4. 2 Kings 7:17-20 -- "Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. And the people trampled him in the gate, so that he died, as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. For when the man of God had said to the king, 'Two seahs of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria,' the captain had answered the man of God, 'If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?' And he had said, 'You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.' And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate and he died."

- God keeps His promises.

- Refusing to believe God's word is deadly.

- The misfortunate death of the captain was not 'misfortune' at all but rather the fulfillment of the prophecy, demonstrating the power of God. God's discipline may seem harsh to those who believe that doubting the King and His message is no big deal.

5. 2 Kings 8:1 -- "...the Lord has called for a famine, and it will come upon the land for seven years." Once again, we see that God uses nature for His purposes and is in complete control of all circumstances. We also see how God reveals His plans to His prophets.

6. 2 Kings 8:5, 6 -- "And while he was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. And Gehazi said, 'My lord, O king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life.' And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed an official for her, saying, 'Restore all that was hers, together with all the produce of the fields from the day that she left the land until now.'" God will arrange the timing of circumstances for His purposes and to reveal Himself to His servants. There are no chance encounters. How have you seen this happen in your life?

7. 2 Kings 8:11 -- "And the man of God wept." God's people hate to see others suffer. A real man cries for those who are suffering.

8. 2 Kings 8:12-15 -- Through the power of God, Elisha could see the evil in Hazael that Hazael could not even see in himself. What caused the man of God to weep caused the ambitious man to be excited.

9. 2 Kings 8:18 -- "And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD." An ungodly spouse can be more influential on a person than their godly parents were and can lead a person astray. The Bible warns Christians not to marry unbelievers, not to be unequally yoked, so that the Christian won't get pulled in the wrong direction.

10. 2 Kings 8:18 -- Bad company corrupts good morals.

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11. Proverbs 10:3, 4 – “The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked. A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” The Lord does provide, but, in no small part, by the guidance He provides us through His word. God’s word commands, and God expects, the righteous to work hard. We can’t throw out the ‘grace’ card as an excuse not to do our part and then expect God to miraculously make up for our lack of fidelity.

12. Proverbs 10:5 -- "He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son." Work as hard as you can, while you can, to meet your needs when you can't work later.

13. Proverbs 10:8 – “The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.” Many people are ready to ask God for countless personal blessings without receiving and obeying God’s commandments. They talk much but listen little. When we want what God wants, and live in accordance with what God wants, our prayer life is very fruitful. When we live for self and ask God only for what we want for ourselves, our prayer life is very unfruitful. God does not resource what is not in accordance with His will.

14. Proverbs 10:12 -- "Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs." Just cover over wrongs; don't respond to them in a way that only sustains sin and makes it grow.

15. Proverbs 10:25 -- "When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever." God uses life circumstances to discipline sinful people. Some people can only be controlled by punishment. Those who lack internal discipline require external discipline. Better to listen to and obey God’s word than to receive the LORD’s discipline. (Proverbs 10:13) God also uses life circumstances to strengthen His faithful servants. Everyone goes through the storms of life; they destroy the wicked but only make the righteous stronger.

16. Proverbs 10:28 – “The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.” Joy comes from hope which is trusting God with your future and believing without doubt in His promises, regardless of current circumstances. The wicked expect happiness, and when they don’t get it, their spirits are crushed.

17. Psalm 68:4 – “Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the Lord; exult before him!” The Bible shows us that, throughout history, God has taken His servants through terribly dark times, and the Bible teaches us that, under terrible circumstances, we should turn to the LORD and not lose hope in Him. (Psalm 68) In the midst of trials and persecution, it is our knowledge of God and hope in Him that causes us to sing praises and remain joyful (though perhaps not always 'happy').

18. Psalm 68:6 -- "God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land." All have sinned, but through Jesus, Christians are not isolated prisoners of sin but rather are being led to prosperity. Little lamb, follow your Good Shepherd closely. "You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train." (Psalm 68:18)

19. Psalm 68:19, 20 -- "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation.

- Our God is a God of salvation, and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death.

- We still sin daily, but God "bears us up" as we are being delivered from death.

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20. Psalm 68:35 – "...he is the one who gives power and strength to his people." It is God who empowers you to do His will, so how powerful does that make you? It is only when you attempt to operate outside of His will that you need to be concerned.

21. Psalm 69:29-31 -- "But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves."

- God desires a heart of worship, not just acts of worship.

- God wants you to have faith, joy, and confidence in your salvation through Jesus, not in your deeds, which cannot bring you salvation. "Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you (Acts 13:38)." Our sins are fully, completely, permanently forgiven through God's free gift of grace (giving us what we don't deserve), a gift we cannot earn or improve upon, a gift we cannot lose. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).... Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Romans 5:11).... All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-20)."

- Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Through the blood of Christ, our sins have been covered over and Ephesians 2:13 adds: "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Jesus desires, "that your joy may be complete (John 15:11). If you are a Christian, it is time for you to accept the freedom, joy, and peace that is yours through Jesus Christ and spread the message of reconciliation with boldness.

22. Psalm 69:33 -- "For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners." God does not despise the truly humble and repentant sinner who knows how desperately he needs mercy and grace through Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 June: Today, if you have the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ, which is the way to escape from condemnation and eternal death, and which is the gift of eternal life, do not hoard the riches you have received freely. Do not hesitate another second to tell those who are perishing around you. Do not sin against God and others by failing to proclaim the Good News of Jesus today! (2 Kings 7:9)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 6, Saturday, 9 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+5%2C+6%3B+Prov+9%3B+psalm+67>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 9 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 5:3 -- "She said to her mistress, 'Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'" The captive girl showed compassion for her ruthless captor and sought healing for him. How do you treat those who have mistreated you?

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2. 2 Kings 5:10-12 -- "And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.' But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, 'Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage." Naaman could not humble himself in order to accept God's healing on God's terms. He expected God's prophet to honor him and treat him special. Elisha intentionally did not come out to see Naaman, sending a messenger instead. All Naaman had to do was accept the free gift of healing from God, but he considered it beneath him. The message couldn't have been more clear or simple -- 'Wash, and be clean'. God demands humility. Simple pride stands between many and Jesus.

3. 2 Kings 5:13, 14 -- "But his servants came near and said to him, 'My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?' So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

- Again, God offers the free gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus, but many simply refuse to accept it -- it is just too simplistic for them, not sophisticated enough. How many people out of pride will refuse the simplicity of the Gospel -- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).... For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23)."

- "... 'My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it?' Many Christians make God's word far too complicated. God's commands are not hard to understand, and obedience to what you do understand positions you understand the deeper aspects of God's word. It is important to diligently study God's word, but it is through daily application where understanding occurs and where we experience God. Some use Bible study as a form of procrastination, like constantly searching for the perfect workout but never actually exercising. Some muddy the waters of God's word in an effort to make it say what it really doesn't say so that they can get out of doing the simple thing it says. They turn specific commands into "general principles" or philosophical concepts. Or they over litigate God's word to defend their compromised position -- "Who is my neighbor?" Those who read and simply obey, day by day, are blessed.

-- Ezekiel 34:17-19 -- As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

-- Ecclesiastes 12:11-13 -- The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

4. 2 Kings 5:18 -- "In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when

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I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter.' He said to him, 'Go in peace.'" Naaman the Syrian was the only Leper cured by Elisha (Luke 4:27), not even any Jews were healed. Naaman could have been a powerful witness in Syria, but because he continued to compromise with the wicked practices of his culture for the sake of maintaining his position, the Bible records no other significant events in the life of Naaman -- he was healed and then nothing. He is never mentioned again in the Old Testament. What might have happened in Syria if Naaman had refused to bow down like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel? Perhaps his impact would have transformed Syria like Daniel's impact transformed Babylon. How has compromise hindered our impact on the world around us? The compromising Christian may be saved, but ineffective or irrelevant at a time and place when God seeks faithful witnesses.

5. 2 Kings 5:18, 19 -- "'In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.' He said to him, 'Go in peace.'" Elisha's 'Go in peace' was not an endorsement but rather a dismissal. Having received healing and life, Naaman apparently did not, in turn, commit his life to faithfully serving God without compromise. Elisha did not condemn Naaman, but neither did he commend him or commission him -- Elisha was done with him. Christians often see salvation as having eternal life, but they fail to recognize that eternal life starts now (see John 17) and that we are not just saved for eternity, we are saved to shape history -- to serve God now, on earth, to be priests, ambassadors, salt and light, and to bring glory to God on earth. Like so many others, Naaman apparently viewed his gift of life as something intended for him rather than for God's glory. As with Paul, Grace should compel us to live our lives for Christ alone, to know Him more and more each day and to make Him known more and more each day. Don't render yourself irrelevant through compromise and lack of conviction. Serve God wholeheartedly.

6. 2 Kings 5:20 -- "As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him." Elisha's servant swore an oath in God's name that he would commit a sin out of self-interest. People often pursue selfish ambitions in the name of God. God is not here for us, we are here for Him. His aim is not to bring us glory but that we would glorify Him. It is not about us. The fact that the prophet's servant who witnessed first-hand the power of God could not resist the temptation of selfishness and self-justification should drive us to our knees in prayer.

7. 2 Kings 5:26 -- "Was it a time to accept money...?" Turning to the world for earthly riches rather than remaining faithful to the Lord is a curse. How much of your life is about pursuit of something other than Jesus?

8. 2 Kings 6:17 -- "Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.' So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." We cannot see the reality around us that only God can reveal. It is impossible for us to make sense out of the world strictly from our own perceptions. We must be guided by the Spirit. Only through the Spirit can you see the reality of the situation around you which is far different than what the eyes can see. The invisible is no less real than the visible, in fact it is more real; but people tend to believe only what they see and misinterpret what is actually happening. God's word provides us spiritual guidelines to keep us aligned with the invisible realities of God's will. It takes faith to follow God's word when you can't see the whole picture. God says, "Trust and obey."

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9. 2 Kings 6:22 -- "Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." Elisha taught the king of Israel to show mercy towards his enemies.

10. 2 Kings 6:23 -- "So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel." Hospitality, mercy, and grace had a greater impact on Syria than hostility would have.

11. Proverbs 9:1, 2 -- The product of wisdom is evident to anyone who cares to see.

12. Proverbs 9:17 -- "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." The simple seek personal gain at the expense of others. The simple also seek something for nothing and shortcuts to accomplishment rather than diligent hard work. Everyone is looking for "secrets" to success rather than self-discipline. Successful people are willing to do each day what unsuccessful people aren't.

13. Proverbs 9:10 -- "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." Wisdom that is not founded on God, the Creator of Wisdom, is no wisdom at all.

14. Proverbs 9:13, 14 -- "The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town," Foolish people are loud and proud, bold and audacious.

15. Psalm 67 -- God blesses us primarily to reveal Himself to a watching world, not simply so we can have what we want for our own comfort and security.

16. Psalm 67:2, 3 -- "...that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" Your goal should be that people see God's power in your life and praise God, not you.

17. Psalm 67:7 -- "God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!" Our goal is that our lives would be used by God to turn the whole world to Jesus Christ. Don't let anything about you distract people from Jesus. It is not about you. It is all about Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 June: Today, go out of your way to show sincere kindness to those who treat you poorly. (2 Kings 5:3; 2 Kings 6:22) Regardless your circumstances, walk in contentment, peace, and joy, trusting God with everything. Transmit Grace and Peace to everyone you encounter. (2 Kings 14:10, Proverbs 10:22, Proverbs 10:28, Galatians 1:3, 4) In all that you say and do today, point to Jesus. (Psalm 67)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 5, Friday, 8 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+3%2C+4%3B+Prov+8%3B+2+cor+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 8 June 18:

1. 2 Kings 3:3 -- "Nevertheless, he clung to the sin." Character cannot be compartmentalized. All the good you do in one area of your life will not make up for the bad you continue to do in another area of your life. To claim a virtue as part of your character, you must be consistent in it. How many times does a person have to lie before they are viewed as dishonest? Trust is hard to earn but easily lost.

- Proverbs 25:26 -- Like a trampled spring and a polluted well Is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

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2. 2 Kings 3:4-10 -- Trouble often plagues you because you don't consult the Lord before making decisions.

3. 2 Kings 3:7 -- "I will go. I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." Jehoshaphat partnered with Jehoram. But before the Bible records Jehoshaphat's commitment to Jehoram, it makes this statement about Jehoram: "...he clung to sin... which he made Israel to sin; he did not depart from it." We will see later that by partnering with sinful people, Jehoshaphat compromised himself and got entangled in affairs that were not what God desired for Him and that would only cause him pain. Who do you partner with in business and in life matters?

- 1 Corinthians 15:33 -- Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

4. 2 Kings 3:11-12 -- God makes His word available to you. What you do with it is your choice.

5. 2 Kings 3:13 -- "And Elisha said to the king of Israel, 'What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother.' But the king of Israel said to him, 'No; it is the Lord who has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.'" The king of Israel had no desire to hear from God until disaster was apparently at hand. The king was "religious" but his religion had the "form of godliness but without power (2 Tim 3:5)." In this time of calamity, Jehoshaphat convinced him to seek true counsel from the Lord through his prophet. Only because of the faithfulness of Jehoshaphat was this ungodly king saved.

- As opposed to the king of Israel who was a "church goer" and public figure, Elisha was known by all as a true "prophet of the Lord." He had no interest in the affairs of men and was no respecter of men. The Lord used him in a mighty way to bring glory to Himself.

- In Corinthians Paul warns the church not to be captivated and misled by false prophets who are talented speakers and dynamic leaders but who in fact serve themselves rather than God and who glorify themselves rather than God. Paul was not a dynamic, charismatic leader, but was sold out for the Lord. The Lord used him in a mighty way to bring glory to Himself.

- We will either live for ourselves or live for the Lord. We will build our own kingdom on earth or seek first the Kingdom of God. We will glorify ourselves or glorify God; we will seek to justify ourselves or rely on justification through faith in Jesus Christ. Are you known as a "good person" or as a "prophet of the Lord?"

6. 2 Kings 3:14 -- "And Elisha said, 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you nor see you.'" God's word is available to those who are faithful to Him. (see also 1 Kings 22:43)

7. 2 Kings 3:18 -- "This is a light thing in the sight of the Lord." God does God-sized things.

8. 2 Kings 4:7 -- "She came and told the man of God, and he said, 'Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest.'" God controls nature and all circumstances and can provide for His faithful servants in miraculous ways, though the world will seek "plausible" explanations for these miraculous events.

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9. 2 Kings 4:13 -- "Say now to her, 'See, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be done for you?'" God blessed the wealthy woman's consistent and faithful giving with a gift no money could ever buy her.

10. 2 Kings 4:28 -- Death can renew old doubts.

11. 2 Kings 4:43-44 -- God keeps His promises.

12. Proverbs 8:1-6 -- Wisdom is available to anyone with a humble heart.

13. Proverbs 8:13 -- "The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." To love God is to hate evil, not to accommodate, tolerate, or accept it. The more you love God, the more you hate evil. If you are complacent concerning evil, you care little about God. If you can gaze upon evil (such as on TV) and not be outraged, your heart is not right. If your speech is not gracious and pure, your heart is not right.

14. Proverbs 8:17 -- "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." The Christian life requires diligence, a word with the following synonyms: conscientiousness, assiduousness, assiduity, hard work, application, concentration, effort, care, industriousness, rigor, meticulousness, thoroughness; perseverance, persistence, tenacity, dedication, commitment, tirelessness, indefatigability, doggedness. Do these words describe your daily walk with The Lord?

15. Proverbs 8:17-36 -- The truth is timeless and unchanging. The truth determines totally predictable outcomes in life, whether we believe the truth or not. What we believe to be true determines our behavior. If we truly believe truth, we will live by truth and be blessed. If we don't really believe truth (regardless of what we say), we will live by lies and sin and will suffer natural consequences.

16. Proverbs 8:22-31 -- When you tap into God's wisdom, you become synched-up with all of Creation. You are in harmony with all logic. Things will start to work for you like never before.

17. Proverbs 8:34-36 -- "Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death." Wisdom requires daily attention. If you don't follow God's wisdom closely, you will only hurt yourself as you resist the power of the Creator and the logic behind His Creation and His plan.

18. 2 Cor 11:3 -- "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." Purity and fidelity start with your thought life.

19. 2 Corinthians 11:5, 6 -- "But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those 'super-apostles.' I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this clear to you in every way." Much like many people today, the church in Corinth was being led astray by dynamic, impressive false teachers who were falsely preaching "another Jesus" for their own personal gain. They were "rock star" preachers who were wolves in sheep' clothing. Jesus said that the discerning would recognize false prophets by their fruit, and Paul says the same thing, as humbly as possible, comparing his own fruit to theirs. Paul is a great example of real leadership, a man who has earned the right to lead and, as opposed to false teachers, and has true "knowledge" which can only be obtained from genuine experience on practical application. First, Paul preached the gospel free of charge. How many leaders do you know who lead without reward? Paul gave to others but did not take; his leadership was not

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burdensome. Paul was motivated solely by love, and he did not direct attention to himself but rather to Christ. Paul's leadership was gracious, gentle, patient, and enduring; in fact, Paul at this point questions that perhaps he was too gentle (2 Corinthians 11:21). Paul could match credentials with anyone, but he did not consider credentials or pedigree to be the measure or qualifier of leadership but rather sacrifice and suffering in love for the cause. Paul had put his life on the line countless times for Jesus and often endured without even food or water. All the while in the face of many pressures and temptations, he remained holy and faithful – he did not falter, and his character was unblemished. Despite his shining character, he did not boast in himself but rather boasted in Christ and was quick to point out his own sins, flaws, and weaknesses in order to reveal the Grace of God in his own life. (2 Corinthians 11:28-32) To those who are easily enamored by superficial "leadership," Paul's meekness was seen as weakness, but Paul warns not to be deceived. Consider the popular preachers and leaders today: how many live like Paul? How many "gifted speakers" have been raised up to "super-apostle" status? Take a moment to be introspective. Do you lead like Paul? Have you paid the price to lead? Thousands of years ago, Sun Tzu once remarked that great generals are never honored or noticed because they don't fight great battles – they win quietly, behind the scenes so that the "great battles" are never required, and they don't have egos that demand the recognition that comes from spectacular victories. The irony is that greatness is not glamorous, most will miss it. Case in point, in the time of the reign of the mighty Herod, our Savior was born in a manger. What does the world remember of the mighty Herod?

20. 2 Cor 11:14 -- "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." Satan's servants will present themselves as godly or good people. It takes discernment through the word of God to identify these imposters.

21. 2 Cor 11:24-27 -- "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." What are you willing to endure to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 June: Walk today with a total expectation that God will richly bless you beyond your imagination. Commit everything without doubt, and watch God do miraculous things. (2 kings 4:4-7) Today, examine the purity of your thought life. Journal what you observe about your thoughts. Do your thoughts reflect "steadfast love and faithfulness"? (Proverbs 3:3) If not, pray that God would purify your heart. (2 Cor 11:3)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 4, Thursday, 7 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+kings+1%2C+2%3B+Prov+7%3B+2+cor+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 7 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 1:6 – [And they said to him, "There came a man to meet us, and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the Lord, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to

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which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.”] Idolatry is placing your trust in something other than God or valuing something more than God. God takes that VERY seriously.

2. 2 Kings 1:7 -- "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?" Where do you go for answers?

3. 2 Kings 1:10 -- "Fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty." There are consequences from being led by the ungodly. Bad leaders can lead men counter to God's will and into inevitable demise.

4. 2 Kings 1:13 -- "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight." God shows mercy to those who ask with a genuine heart.

5. 2 Kings 2:2 -- "But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.'" Godly love and devotion towards others are permanent. Godly love is covenantal vice contractual.

6. 2 Kings 2:5 -- "The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know it; keep quiet.'" God reveals His plans to His prophets. God's prophets knew what God was going to do. God has given you His word and the counsel of the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you. What has God revealed to you?

7. 2 Kings 2:11 -- "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Elijah did not die.

8. 2 Kings 2:12 -- "Elisha saw it...." The Holy Spirit enabled Elisha to see within the spiritual realm things that could not be seen in the flesh.

9. 2 Kings 2:15 -- "Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.' And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him." God uses miracles to validate or legitimize His prophets before others.

10. 2 Kings 2:24 -- "He cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys." Holiness demands respect. Disrespecting a true prophet of God is a dangerous thing. Even God's creation is against that offender.

11. Proverbs 7:1-6 -- God's invitation to wisdom is offered to every person.

12. Proverbs 7:22-27 -- Real sex education teaches that love waits for marriage, that sex is for marriage between one man and one woman, and that there are eternal dangers to illicit lust and sex. Most children in America are taught sex education in public institutions that start with the mandated premise that God is not part of the equation. Christians in America have allowed this to happen in general silence.

13. Proverbs 7:27 -- Where does immorality lead?

14. 2 Corinthians 10:1 -- "I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Do you challenge others in meekness, gentleness, and humility?

15. 2 Corinthians 10:2-4 -- Your enemy is not the offensive sinner but rather the evil powers controlling that captive sinner – never forget that.

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16. 2 Corinthians 10:4 -- "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." We are fighting a spiritual battle with Holy Spirit power, not through human abilities. We are fighting an insurgency to conquer the kingdoms around us, one heart at a time. At the commencement of his earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom was at hand, and the Bible calls us a "kingdom of priests" or "priestly kingdom." Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar, "In the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." (Daniel 22:45) Daniel would later proclaim, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations, and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.... Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High." (Daniel 7:13, 14, 27) Note that when Jesus gave the Great Commission, he started with this proclamation: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," and he ends with this: "and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) King Jesus called his subjects to spread throughout the world as Ambassadors of his Kingdom and to advance the Kingdom of God from within the worldly kingdoms. As Micah prophesied, "The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for man or linger for mankind. The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which mauls and mangles as it goes, and no one can rescue. Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed." (Micah 5:7-9) The physical Kingdom will not be fully established on earth until the return of Jesus Christ, but the spiritual kingdom is established, Jesus Christ is King, and you, Christian, are his Ambassador, and priest on earth, preparing others for his return. Is that our focus today? Is your allegiance to the Kingdom of God? Are you fulfilling your role in the Kingdom? Are you focused on advancing the Kingdom? Are you united with fellow subjects on the Kingdom? Do you have unity of effort with the other subjects around you? Will you live intentionally today? Are you preparing yourself to be worthy to reign with the Lord when he returns? How should the reality of who you are in Christ change your outlook today and your approach the world? Jonathans, get your armor bearers and advance boldly! Armor-bearers: find your Jonathans and join in the fight boldly with all of your heart and soul! "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

- 1 Samuel 14:6 – Jonathan said, to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few." "Do all that you have in mind," his armor-bearer said. "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul."

17. 2 Corinthians 10:5 -- Are your thoughts captive to Christ?

18. 2 Corinthians 10:7-10 -- We are not empowered by the strength of our personalities or human abilities but rather by the power and authority of Jesus Christ. This is power far beyond anyone's perceptions or imaginations.

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19. 2 Corinthians 10:12 -- "But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding." How foolish is it for us to judge our own "goodness" based on what we see in others, by comparing ourselves to the "goodness" of other sinners? This is like one mass murderer who has ruthlessly killed ninety-nine people feeling more righteous than the one who has killed one hundred people. This is like two infants arguing over who is the most grown up. We are all sinners, equally unworthy. Our example with which to compare ourselves is Jesus Christ. Fortunately, our salvation does not depend on our righteousness but rather the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. But God calls us to, under grace, pursue righteousness and holiness. It makes no difference what we think of ourselves or what others think of us. All that matters is how God sees us. For those who have been born again, God sees us cloaked in the righteousness of His One and Only Son. Boast in the Lord!

20. 2 Corinthians 10:17, 18 (2 Kings 2:24) -- "'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.' For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends." It is a shameful, idolatrous, and sinful thing for a Christian to ever boast of their own abilities, even when they fake humility by giving God the credit for how good they are. God shares credit with no one, and we are nothing of ourselves. Never boast with personal pronouns -- "I" or "me." All glory goes to God on earth. It's not about you. Do not draw attention to yourself, only to Jesus. Do not praise yourself, only Jesus. Examine yourself every time you say "I" or "me" to be sure you are not boasting. Every time you are tempted, replace those personal pronouns with "Jesus Christ." When you proclaim only Jesus, you lose friends and employment opportunities because you will be seen as a fanatic. However, you will be on a new, much greater path.

21. 2 Corinthians 10:18 -- "For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends." From Henry T. Blackaby: "It is common for us all to seek approval for our actions.... Paul said that he was not striving to obtain the approval of people. Some of his critics thought their criticisms could determine what he did. Yet these same people were praising themselves for their own opinions and behavior. They were seeking the approval of others, and they were receiving it. Jesus said that those who seek to gain the approval of others 'have their own reward' (Matt. 6:2-5). Paul, too, realized that achieving the praise of others is not difficult, but earning God's approval is a far greater accomplishment. The affirmation 'Well done!' that Jesus received from the Father became Paul's goal as well (2 Tim. 2:3-5). Paul knew that self-approval is not hard to attain. Paul himself had once been pleased with his own life, until he came to realize that the righteousness he was so proud of was mere rubbish in the kingdom of God (Phil. 3:8). After his conversion, Paul understood that God's evaluation of his actions was what mattered, not his own opinion of himself. Whose opinion matters most to you? Have you become complacent, enjoying the approval of those around you? Have you become satisfied with your estimation of the way you are living? The commendation that matters most is the one that comes from God. The pleasure that your life gives to God should be your motivation to live righteously."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 7 June: See if you can avoid talking about yourself or taking credit for anything today. Don't use the words "I" or "me" in conversation. Instead talk about Jesus. (2 Corinthians 10:17, 18) Also, focus on being a reconciler today. Remember, God has given you the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:16-31) Don't look at others from a human perspective but rather from a spiritual point of view, understanding that their attitude problems are spiritual problems. Remember, you are engaged in a spiritual battle. The person who offends you is not the enemy but

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rather the objective, someone who is trapped in sin and suffering. Work through the Spirit to lead that person towards Jesus, regardless of how they treat you. Be a reconciler. (2 Cor 10:4)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 3, Wednesday, 6 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+21%2C+22%3B+Prov+6%3B+2+cor+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 6 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 21:4: "And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food." Envy makes you feel resentment, anger or sorrow because God has given someone something He hasn't given you; envy makes you want the other person to lose what they have that you might obtain. Envy is the product of pride and discontentment, both great sins against God. Pride, as opposed to humility, competes to place self above others, the exact opposite of what God commands – "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3) As C. S. Lewis said, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others." Envy occurs when pride is wounded. While the apparent target of envy is the other person, the dissatisfaction is really with self and with God – I am not good enough, and God did not provide. Envy can cause you to forget all that you have for sake of the one thing you don't have. In Ahab's case, he was a king who lacked a vineyard. Envy exposes the idols in your heart. Few emotions are more dangerous than envy – there is no petty envy. Envy destroys and kills. Compare Ahab's story with James 4:1-3 -- "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." If you feel envy in your heart, repent, and pray that God will give you a grateful, thankful heart of abundance that can truly celebrate the blessings received by others.

- Note: The Bible does reveal a positive form of pride – Pride in Christ and in the sanctification of others in Christ (rejoicing rather than haughtiness):

-- Romans 15:17 -- In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.

-- Philippians 2:16 -- ...holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

-- 1 Corinthians 15:31 -- I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!

-- 2 Corinthians 7:4 -- I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.

2. 1 Kings 21:7 -- "And Jezebel his wife said to him, 'Do you now govern Israel?'" Power does not corrupt. Power enables the behavior of those who already have a corrupt heart. Both positive stress (success) and negative stress (failure) magnify what is already in the heart.

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3. 1 Kings 21:9-13 -- Political leaders and others will often use religion as a way to legitimize their sinful behavior – “This is for God...”

4. 1 Kings 21:15, 16 – “And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.”

- Naboth’s land should have gone to his relatives after his death, but Ahab defied God’s laws and, apparently, no one spoke out against his actions in order to demand justice but Elijah. Are you willing to speak out against injustice and sin when no one else will?

- Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard and turned to Jezebel and the murderous ways of the world to get what he could not get through righteous ways, thereby cursing himself and his family – “Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel.” Even after Ahab’s genuine repentance, the consequences of his sin were not removed by God – “...in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”

5. 1 Kings 21:17-19 – “...In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.”

- Ahab king of Israel thought he had gotten away with something, but you cannot hide from God's discipline and judgment. Ahab received condemnation from God for his actions. It is a terrible thing to position yourself against the will of God.

- Sin may begin as envy and greed and then proceed to theft and murder.

6. 1 Kings 21:20 – “Ahab said to Elijah, ‘Have you found me, O my enemy?’ He answered, ‘I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord.’” Elijah was Ahab’s enemy because Ahab had become God’s enemy. Everyone takes a side in the war against good and evil. Those who side with evil usually claim that evil is, in fact, good. However, God sets the standard. A person either obeys God and stands with Him, or they don't. You either act as a servant to evil or to God. James 4:4 has the answer: "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." Do you see how certain themes run throughout the entire Bible?

7. 1 Kings 21:29 – “Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days....” God showed mercy to Ahab because Ahab repented. However, the consequences of Ahab’s actions were not completely removed; his family suffered because of his sin.

8. 1 Kings 22:4 -- “Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, ‘I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.’” Again, Jehoshaphat entangled himself with ungodly Israel which angered God. This is the fatal flaw of the American church that has mistakenly integrated with ungodly institutions.

9. 1 Kings 22:6-8 – “Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, ‘Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?’ And they said, ‘Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.’ But Jehoshaphat asked, ‘Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?’ The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, ‘There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me...’”

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- The king of Israel surrounded himself with religious leaders who claimed to speak for God but only said what he wanted to hear. This is often how people choose what church they go to. Second Timothy 4:3 has this to say: "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

- God's people are called to proclaim truth, whether people want to hear it or not, but fear of man will tempt us to avoid the confrontation that comes when light exposes darkness. Both Elijah and Micaiah suffered greatly for their testimony. Because of their unyielding and bold faithfulness, the king hated them and persecuted them. Today, Elijah and Micaiah would have been called haters, close minded, and judgmental, but note that, in the end, Ahab humbles himself before the Lord. We are commanded to proclaim the truth before power and contrary public opinion. Our love for God AND our love for others is demonstrated through faithful obedience. As Paul says in our readings today, "Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ."

10. 1 Kings 22:14 -- "But Micaiah said, 'As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.'" Is this your criteria for what you say to others?

11. 1 Kings 22:15 -- Micaiah knew the king didn't really want to hear or accept God's word. However, that did not stop him from speaking the truth.

12. 1 Kings 21:27 -- God invites you to repent humbly of your sin and perhaps not bear all the disciplinary punishment.

13. 1 Kings 22:27 -- God's messengers historically face persecution for speaking the truth.

14. 1 Kings 22:28 -- "If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me."

- If you speak on behalf of God, and what you say does not happen, you are deceived and have misrepresented the KING. Essentially, you have become a false prophet. Be very careful about what you say in the Name of God. Be very careful not to put a Christian stamp on your own opinion or teachings emanating from pop psychology.

- Ahab surrounded himself with prophets who told him what he wanted to hear, aggressively rejecting the one true prophet Micaiah who put his life on the line to speak God's truth despite knowing that Ahab would reject the truth (a lesson for us today). Ahab's refusal to listen to God's word, which conflicted with his desires, resulted in Ahab's death. Even Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, who tried hard to honor God, allowed himself to be unduly influenced by the world around him rather than serving God wholeheartedly. We read today that Jehoshaphat engaged in an unsanctioned battle with the ungodly Ahab -- Jehoshaphat had made an "unequally yoked" alliance with Ahab (2 Chronicles 18). How could a noble king like Jehoshaphat ever say to an evil king such as Ahab, "I am as you are, my people as your people. We will be with you in the war."? Then, after Ahab's death, our readings tell us that, "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber." However, 2 Chronicles tells the rest of the story here: "After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, 'Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy

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what you have made.' And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish." (2 Chronicles 20:35-37) Jehoshaphat was a godly king who could have been so much more had he not trusted the wisdom of the world and become entangled in worldly alliances. I believe this is a VERY important lesson for the church today that we are largely missing. We do not have to separate or disengage from the world in order to remain holy; we can engage the world without allying with the world, becoming dependent on the world or mixing message with the world. Too often we believe that to influence the world, we must partner with the world, act like it, appeal to it, rely on it. The result: the church compromises its holiness and its witness. In the '90s, The Clinton Administration reversed US foreign policy with China with his new policy of "constructive engagement" which was based on the notion that if we opened the doors of cooperation and partnership with China, we would so influence them that they would be transformed and become a global champion of free trade and human rights. Clinton said, "And when it comes to advancing human rights and religious freedom, dealing directly and speaking honestly to the Chinese is clearly the best way to make a difference." Today, the reader can decide how well this "constructive engagement" policy has changed China and strengthened the free word's position. The reader can also decide how well the church's partnership with the world has changed the world and strengthened the church's position. Clinton said that there were only two possible approaches to China, "isolation" or "engagement" which was another word for "partnership" and "alliance." Likewise, the church seems to see only two alternatives. Isn't there a third alternative of engagement without compromise?

- Deuteronomy 15:6 -- For the Lord your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.

15. 1 Kings 22:29-37 -- You cannot hide from God and escape the judgment he has revealed.

16. 1 Kings 22:34 -- "But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate." The king's cunning plan could not thwart God's will. What seemed to be a random act was controlled by God to accomplish His purposes. God works daily in miraculous ways that are recognized by His people but viewed by others as mere chance or luck.

17. 1 Kings 22:39 -- Sinners may accomplish much, but it is ultimately meaningless.

18. 1 Kings 22:43 -- "Yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places." Though Jehoshaphat walked in the ways of the LORD, he did not challenge the sinful practices of the people, and this is viewed by God as a major failure by Jehoshaphat.

19. 1 Kings 22:43 -- "He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. Yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places." God expects consistent and complete obedience.

20. 1 Kings 22:45 -- God is interested in a leader's relationship and obedience to Him rather than their famed accomplishments and reputation.

21. 1 Kings 22:48 -- "The ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber." God punished Jehoshaphat for his ungodly entanglements. More will be explained later in the Bible.

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22. Proverbs 6:1-5 -- Avoid debt to others; work hard, save, and invest (Pro 6:6-11); be honest and cooperative in all your dealings with others (Pro 6:12-19); and don't commit adultery! (Pro 6:20-35)

23. Proverbs 6:6-11 -- Self-discipline involves making sacrifices and working hard today for a greater tomorrow.

24. 2 Corinthians 9:6 -- "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Have you ever wondered why some Christians grow so rapidly in their faith while others seem to grow so slowly? The daily disciplines of discipleship will produce an abundant harvest. If you sow sparingly, you will also reap sparingly. Specifically, this verse applies to giving. Those who give to others position themselves to receive abundantly from the Lord.

25. 2 Corinthians 9:7 -- "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." People are motivated to do "good deeds" for many reasons -- guilt, fear, pride, duty, etc. Many do the right things for the wrong reasons, and the Bible calls these deeds "filthy rags," straw that will be burnt in the fire. Charitable deeds that are not motivated by genuine love are valued by people but not by God. Seek a heart that gives out of love.

26. 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7 -- How you view God's gift to you determines how much of a heart you have for giving to others. How you give to others influences how God will bless you on earth.

27. 2 Corinthians 9:7 -- "God loves a cheerful giver." Any questions?

28. 2 Corinthians 9:8 -- "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." Do you have an abundance mentality? God is abundant in His grace. How much grace is God able to make abound to you? "All grace"! The grace God gives you is sufficient under what circumstances? "In all things at all times"! Why does God provide you all grace? So you may abound in every good work. Not that you can abound in everything, just in what He intends for you -- good works. If God called you to do it, nothing can stop you.

29. 2 Corinthians 9:13 -- "...they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ." The quality of our lives will be measured by how much we spread the gospel and how much we cared for the needs of others in the Name of Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 6 June: Pray that God will make you a more cheerful giver. Give to others today as an act of gratitude for what God has given you; give to others the way you want God to give to you. (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 2, Tuesday, 5 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+19%2C+20%3B+Prov+5%3B+2+cor+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 5 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 19:1-3 -- After Elijah had been used as an instrument to display God's mighty power, and after he had killed all the prophets, then he was afraid of Jezebel's threats. She must have been incredibly powerful and ruthless. What does it take for you to lose heart?

2. 1 Kings 19:1-4 -- In a time of total distress, Elijah ran to the Lord and was strengthened by God. Where do you turn during times like this?

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3. 1 Kings 19:4-8 -- God calls us to perform missions that are impossible for us under our own strength. He then provides what we cannot provide for ourselves. He does this to reveal Himself.

4. 1 Kings 19:10 -- "... I only, am left...." When you remain faithful to God while the world rejects God, you will feel alone, but you are not alone. Allow God to unite you with the body of believers.

5. 1 Kings 19:12 -- "And after the fire the sound of a low whisper." You must be ready to hear the whisper of God in the midst of the world's turmoil. You cannot hear the whisper of God unless you are really listening, unless you are willing to go to places of silence for that very purpose. If you are caught up in the noise of the world and expecting God to shout over it to provide you His word for you, you should learn from Elijah. We tend to look for God through great miraculous acts but often miss that He speaks to us through His word in a low whisper. It seems that we are so wrapped up in the daily hustle and bustle of the world, so distracted, and so worried that we are never quiet and still enough to just listen.

6. 1 Kings 19:14 -- "...and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." In his service to the Lord, Elijah had experienced incredible highs and lows, and now he is experiencing intense discouragement. Elijah had just called down fire from heaven, and now he is in fear for his life, feeling isolated and alone. Elijah's focus had shifted from God to God's enemies. Only God could comfort Elijah, and God did. When discouraged, get alone with God.

7. 1 Kings 19:15 -- "You shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria." God places all kings in power for His purposes. If you want a different leader, go to God.

8. 1 Kings 19:17 -- "And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death." God's prophets wielded the sword upon God's command.

9. 1 Kings 19:18 -- "Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." Though you may think no one remains totally committed to obedience to God anymore, you are wrong. God accounts for all His faithful and will take care of them. If you don't see faithful people around you, you might be in the wrong place with the wrong people, you may be operating deep within enemy lines on a special mission from God, or you might not be paying close enough attention.

10. 1 Kings 19:19, 20 -- Elisha was called by God to change his entire life for God, to give up a profitable business to serve God.

11. 1 Kings 19:13, 19-21 -- "Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.... So Elisha... took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant." Without notice, Elijah called Elisha to a new life as a Prophet of God. This was an unexpected, life changing moment. Elisha could not continue to live the life he had been living and follow God's direction too. God's plan for Elisha was far greater than Elisha's plan for Elisha. Elisha was at the moment of decision: do I stay who I am (a decent, hardworking, respected, God fearing man) and build a good life for myself, or do I deny self and follow God wholeheartedly? Do I ask God to bless my life and what I am doing, or do I seek to know God's plan and become a part of what He is already doing for His own glory? Elisha cut all ties with his former life and left himself no "Plan B" or "out option." He was all in. Elisha made his choice -- no

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turning back. His old life was over; he was all in for the Lord. Gal 3:26-27 says: "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." God threw the cloak of Christ on you – now, what will you do?

12. 1 Kings 20:14 – "Then he said, 'Who shall begin the battle?' He answered, 'You'." What a powerful verse! God's plan requires a faithful servant to lead the way. Too often, God's people are all waiting for someone else to step up. Who shall begin the battle? Why not you?

13. 1 Kings 20:22 -- "Come, strengthen yourself, and consider well what you have to do, for in the spring the king of Syria will come up against you." The war is not won in a single battle. Don't grow complacent in your successes; prepare immediately for the next battle.

14. 1 Kings 20:23 -- "But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they." No strategy can overcome the power of God.

15. 1 Kings 20:28 -- "I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD." God gives you victories for His glory, not for your glory. Never make the mistake of trying to share glory with God in your successes.

16. 1 Kings 20:35-43 -- God expects instant, willing, total obedience.

17. 1 Kings 20:42 -- "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.'" Once again, partial obedience to God is disobedience to God, not something God takes lightly. Either God is honored by you as God or not. He cannot be a God in your life and not Sovereign in your life. Casual sin is cosmic treason against The Almighty.

18. Proverbs 5:11-14 -- You will either suffer the pain of discipline now or the pain of regret later.

19. Proverbs 5:22 -- "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin." Do not be trapped by sin.

20. 2 Corinthians 8:2 -- "...for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." Do you respond to tests of affliction with joy and generosity towards others?

21. 2 Corinthians 8:3 -- "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints." Do you beg for the opportunity to give and give beyond your means? Christian giving is radical.

22. 2 Corinthians 8:5 -- "They gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." What we give to others is a reflection of what we have given to God.

23. 2 Corinthians 8:6 -- "...see that you excel in this act of grace also." We only live by God's grace, the undeserved gift of His Son, Jesus. Do you in turn excel in grace towards others? Grace also includes surrendering your rights to others who mistreat you unjustly.

24. 2 Corinthians 8:7 -- "But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you —see that you excel in this act of grace also." We are encouraged to excel in everything, yes, everything; particularly, we are coached to excel in giving. So, how much to

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give? Paul says to use Jesus as our example – “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:7).” How much faith does it take to give like that? The churches in Macedonia, though suffering extreme poverty and affliction, gave generously and joyously, considering it an honor to give grace to others in the name of Jesus Christ. They had no problem giving because they had already given themselves to God and understood that is was all for His glory. Have you ever considered why, though we in America are so well off, we find it so difficult for us to give generously? What does that say about our perspective on God and our appreciation of the grace that has been bestowed upon us through Jesus?

25. 2 Corinthians 8:9 -- "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." Like Jesus, are you willing to become poor that others might be rich?

26. 2 Corinthians 8:18-19 -- "With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will." Paul did not work alone; he was part of a ministry team, comprised of people with different talents and skills and supported by the church. Who is on your ministry team?

27. 2 Corinthians 8:28 -- "...we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man." How we are perceived by others does matter. Go out of your way not to offend while staying within the bounds of God's commands.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 June: Make special effort to connect and unite with fellow believers today. Expand your network of Christian fellowship if possible. Commit to serving God together. Share with each other to see a greater vision of what God is doing where you are. (1 Kings 19:10, 18; 2 Cor 8:18-19)

DBRP - WEEK 23, Day 1, Monday, 4 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+17%2C+18%3B+Prov+4%3B+2+cor+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 4 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 17:4 -- "I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." God can take care of your needs in miraculous ways using all the powers of nature.

2. 1 Kings 17:7 -- "And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land." God will provide for you through hard times but won't necessarily keep you out of hard times.

3. 1 Kings 17:8-10 -- "Then the word of the LORD came to him, 'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' So he arose and went to Zarephath." You have to both hear God's word and obey God's word to experience His miraculous blessings. When you follow God, He arranges circumstances and controls hearts to provide for you in ways that others would not recognize as miraculous.

4. 1 Kings 17:12 -- "And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." If you are willing to give all that you have for God's service, a

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total sacrifice, you will be blessed beyond imagination. It takes faith to give beyond what appears reasonable. God may take you to your breaking point to reveal your character and willingness to obey His law of love.

5. 1 Kings 17:13 -- "But first make me a little cake...." Faith operates without a safety net, where it's an all or nothing proposition. If you always require a back-up plan, you are not operating on total faith.

6. 1 Kings 17:13, 14 -- "Don't be afraid.... For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says...." Today's verses speak to the power of walking in faith and trusting in the Lord to the point of complete surrender, submission, and obedience. Elijah was commanded by God to journey into the wilderness during a great famine and drought – he went. He was then commanded to travel to Sidon with no food or water – he went. Elijah then asked a widow to give him the last food she had for her and her son and to believe that God would supply her needs – she did it. Obadiah put his life on the line to hide the Prophets from Jezebel, and he again put his life on the line by telling Ahab that Elijah was in town. Elijah, as an act of faith and obedience, presented himself to Ahab, though Elijah's faithful witness against society had made him "public enemy number one." In faith Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal publicly on Mount Carmel. These people acted in faith and God proved faithful. Through their faithfulness, they glorified God before a watching world and were, themselves, blessed by the experience. How much different do you suppose the widow's perspective of God was after God miraculously provided food for her and her son and then brought him back to life? It takes faith to obey God, and the Bible says, "without faith it is impossible to please God." In our NT readings today, Paul challenges the church to live by faith and "purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

7. 1 Kings 17:24 -- "And the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.'" Because of her faith, the widow experienced the power of God in an incredible and personal way.

8. 1 Kings 17:24 -- Like He does with all prophets, God gave Elijah great power in order to validate him as a true prophet, not just to take care of Him. God's ultimate aim is always to glorify Himself, not His followers. The true disciple of Jesus does not seek God's power to accomplish his personal goals or to gain the favor of people but only to accomplish God's will and to bring others to Jesus.

9. 1 Kings 18:1 -- "After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, 'Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.'" Elijah did not go anywhere on his own initiative but rather waited on direction from God. Jesus said that He operated the same way. Why do you do what you do? Notice that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, "after many days." Until then, Elijah simply remained faithful to what he had already been told to do, without using God's silence as an excuse to quit endeavoring. Are you willing to obey God's clearly written word without requiring some special revelation?

10. 1 Kings 18:4 -- "Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water." Obadiah not only feared God, he also prepared for famine when no one else had. Therefore, he was able to care for God's prophets. Faithful followers of Christ don't hoard wealth or save for a future of unproductivity, but they do save so that they can provide for themselves and others during lean times or times of trouble. Are you saving up for retirement so you can finally relax? If so, your plan will ruin you.

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11. 1 Kings 18:17, 18 -- "When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?' And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals.'" The unrepentant sinner becomes the enemy of both God and His servants, blaming them for the consequences of sin. Sinners will blame and despise God's messenger. The messenger is an easy target. The word "martyr" is Greek for "witness." Jesus discovered that persecution started within the "church" as his teachings threatened church tradition, church leadership, and the position of compromise the church had established with the State and secular society. Today the church is largely silent in the face of dramatic social deviation. Speak the truth boldly, and discover the Greek word for witness. In the midst of persecution, God's servants must continue to proclaim truth. Are you willing to be hated by the world to proclaim God's message? Christians are not the judge but rather the messenger of the Judge. Never hold back from speaking the truth in love thereby denying your life mission and purpose.

12. 1 Kings 18:21 -- "And Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' And the people did not answer him a word." You must choose between fidelity to God or fidelity to the world. You cannot be faithful to both. If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice. Much like the people of this account, today, the Church remains largely silent in the midst of rapid social decay due to compromise. Following God is an all or nothing proposition. Jesus Himself said that He had no use for the lukewarm Christian. You cannot follow and not follow at the same time. You cannot partially obey and still be obedient. You cannot remain silent before the sins that God abhors and remain in a growing love relationship with Jesus.

13. 1 Kings 18:27 -- "And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.'" Elijah did not show respect for false religions.

14. 1 Kings 18:29 -- "No one answered; no one paid attention." The world is full of passionate people who very sincerely believe lies to be true. No matter how much someone wants to believe a lie, the truth remains the truth. Jesus said he came to "testify to the truth." We have been entrusted with the message of truth which challenges many sincerely held beliefs in the world.

15. 1 Kings 18:37 -- "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God." God answers our prayers as we desire when what we desire is His will be done. Your prayer life is powerful when it is aligned to God's will rather than simply your desires. God's intent is always to bring glory to Himself. All that we desire should be to glorify God.

16. Proverbs 4:1 -- "Hear, O sons, a father's instruction...." Proverbs, chapters 1-4 implore the reader to "listen to, hear, receive, accept, store up, and obey" God's word.

17. Proverbs 4:7 -- "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." To be wise, you must make getting wisdom your goal. Wisdom is often defined as "knowledge rightly applied." You won't be wise by being merely a hearer of God's word; you must be a hearer and a doer.

18. Proverbs 4:11 -- "I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness." Parents must lead their children by example. Teach them what wisdom is and show them what it looks like. Jesus taught and then demonstrated. The Marine Corps has a training adage -- "Educate;

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demonstrate; replicate." The leader, teaches what to do; demonstrates what to do, and then coaches as the student attempts to replicate the teacher's example.

19. Proverbs 4:20-21 -- "My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart." God's word must serve as your daily instruction and must be your focus; you must have a true passion to obey God's word.

20. Proverbs 4:23 -- Our first responsibility is to guard our hearts; everything else we do flows from our hearts.

21. Proverbs 4:24-27 -- Every little thing we do affects our hearts, positively or negatively. Did your heart get better or worse yesterday?

22. Proverbs 4:26 -- "Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure." You must assess yourself continually and think deeply about how well you are obeying your Lord and Savior.

23. 2 Corinthians 7:1 -- "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." Knowledge of Jesus should drive you towards a relentless pursuit of holiness, purity, and obedience. Grace compels us to holiness motivated by love rather than by mere duty towards the Law.

24. 2 Corinthians 7:9 -- "As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us." Being 'sorry' or remorseful is not the same as being repentant. A person can be sorry from a self-centered perspective (sorrow over personally suffering the consequences of sin) while not really having a repentant heart which seeks renewal and restoration with God and those offended. A person can even feel sorrow for having failed or hurt others, without a commitment to seek reconciliation. Judas took his sorrow to a suicidal end, but Peter's repentance led to restoration and a changed life. Repentance is deep remorse over sins committed against God, driving the repentant person to truly hate their sin.

25. 2 Corinthians 7:10 -- "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." Today's philosophy would suggest that all grief is bad – finding happiness is the key to life. However, the Bible points out that there are two types of grief – godly and worldly. Godly grief is in fact vital and draws us to repentance and a deeper relationship with God, while worldly grief is wholly destructive, offering no hope. A key word above is "repentance." Jesus began his earthly ministry by proclaiming: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2)." Good grief leads you to Christ. Bad grief destroys you.

26. 2 Corinthians 7:10 -- Salvation removes regret.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 June: Choose today to cleanse yourself that you may be holy and pure. Be washed with the word of God, and remove those things from your life that are unacceptable to God such as unwholesome entertainment. (2 Cor 7:1, Eph 5:3; 1 Cor 8:12; 1 Cor 6:18; Matt 5:29-30; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Psalm 119:9-11; Romans 12:1-2; Romans 3:23-24; 1 John 1:8-9) The choices you make today will either bring you closer to Jesus or further away. Make your purpose today oneness with Jesus and act accordingly. Don't read your Bible, say your prayers, and then entertain yourself with ungodly things. God will not be mocked in this way.

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 7, Sunday, 3 June 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+15%2C+16%3B+Prov+3%3B+psalm+65%2C+66>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 3 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 15:3 – “And he walked in all the sins that his father did before him.” The Bible continually reminds us of how important parenting is to the development of our future leaders.
2. 1 Kings 15:3 -- “His heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God.” God desires “wholehearted” disciples.
3. 1 Kings 15:13 – “He also removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asherah. And Asa cut down her image and burned it at the brook Kidron.” People aren't helpless victims of their childhood upbringing and experiences. You can overcome the character flaws that were ingrained in you from childhood, and you can reject the sinful practices you were taught. Many people had rough upbringings, but, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they can create a new legacy for future generations.
4. 1 Kings 15:13 -- “He also removed Maacah his mother.” We should allow no other relationship compromise our fidelity to God.
5. 1 Kings 15:14 -- “But the high places were not taken away.” We must be very careful to remove anything from our lives that might cause ourselves or others to sin. Even if we can handle a temptation, we don't want to cause others to stumble. Do you still have ‘high places’ in your life?
6. 1 Kings 15:18. 19 -- “Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house and gave them into the hands of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, ‘Let there be a covenant between me and you [against the king of Israel]....’” Asa's actions should have been unthinkable: not only did he essentially sell out God's people to Damascus, but he use the Temple Treasury to do it -- Wow! At this point, however, the people of Israel and Judah had drifted so far away from God that the "good" leaders are nowhere near God's standards. Asa may have seemed "great" compared to the rest, but he was still leading the people down the path of destruction. The statement made earlier about Abijah is probably the most important statement in our readings today: "his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God." This statement stands in stark contrast with what is said of Joshua and Caleb who "followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly." Partial obedience is disobedience, and partial commitment and compromise leads to destruction and ruin. As a people move farther and farther away from God, the "smaller" God appears in their eyes and the more irrelevant sin becomes in their eyes -- but God's perspective remains unchanged. Rather than placing his trust in God, Asa placed his trust in armies, economies, treaties, alliances, and politics. He did what was "right" from his perspective rather than from God's standard. Aram was building a kingdom upon a foundation of sand rather than the Rock. Our Kingdom is not of this world. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven.
7. 1 Kings 15:23 – “Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, and all that he did, and the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?” Notice that God's word spends much more time on Asa's obedience to God than on his royal achievements as king. Success is fidelity to God. What was the last thing Solomon want to say to the world at the end of his life? “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

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8. 1 Kings 15:30 – “It was for the sins of Jeroboam that he sinned and that he made Israel to sin, and because of the anger to which he provoked the Lord, the God of Israel.” Your sins can have a terrible influence on many people and many generations. We take sin far too lightly.

9. 1 Kings 16:2 -- “Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins.” Sin makes God angry. Leaders are held to a higher standard by God. God calls all Christians to be leaders, “priests.”

10. 1 Kings 16:3 – “I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” The Bible repeats the warning that sin has a devastating impact on family for generations.

11. 1 Kings 16:12, 13 -- “Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols.” Again, we see that God uses ungodly people to punish other ungodly people. God will still hold accountable the ungodly people He used for His purposes.

12. 1 Kings 16:25, 30, 33 -- Sin without repentance gives rise to even greater sin.

13. 1 Kings 16:26 – Again, your sin can cause others to sin.

14. 1 Kings 16:34 -- “He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.” See Joshua 6:26 – “Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, ‘Cursed before the Lord be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.’” God keeps His promises of blessings and curses through the generations. His commands and warnings apply to all, whether they know about them or not, whether they believe in them or not.

15. Proverbs 3:3 – “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.” Love and faithfulness go together. The level of your fidelity reveals the level of your genuine love.

16. Proverbs 3:5 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” We must walk in faith and not in our own understanding.

17. Proverbs 3:7 – “Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.” From the day Satan tempted Adam and Eve with the Apple, human wisdom has been founded on the lie that we can discern right from wrong, good from evil for ourselves. Godly wisdom trusts God, The Author of Truth, with right and wrong, good and evil. To fear the LORD is to turn away from evil, as defined by God’s word. To love God is to obey His word, regardless of our own reasoning. If we entertain sin, our wisdom is foolishness, and our love is flawed.

18. Proverbs 3:6-8 -- Faith is trusting God’s word over your own knowledge, observations, instincts, or feelings.

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19. Proverbs 3:11, 12 – “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” Faith believes that when God punishes His children, it is always from a position of perfect love.

20. Proverbs 3:11, 12 -- Hard times might actually be God’s act of love towards you.

21. Proverbs 3:17 – “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” Wisdom brings pleasantness and peace.

22. Proverbs 3:27, 28 -- Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it’—when you have it with you.” God expects you to meet the needs of others if you have the ability, with no delay. Don’t overthink it. If they need it, and you have it, give it.

23. Proverbs 3:32 – “...the upright are in his confidence.” Are you close enough to God to hear His whisper? God confides in the upright.

24. Psalm 65:4 – “Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!”

- God chose you before you chose Him.

- You are blessed by God when you go to church.

- “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house....” Do you know anyone who is never satisfied with how the church services is run? Criticism reveals more about the critic than it does the critiqued.

25. Psalm 65:5 -- "By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation." Our God is a righteous God who reigns in perfect righteousness. In our gratitude for His mercy and grace, we must not make light of His righteousness. Today we read that Ahab considered it a "light thing" to walk in sin and "did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." (1 Kings 16:33) We must never consider sin to be a "light thing" and in so doing mock, test, and dishonor our God. God will always deal with unrighteousness. Today, David says, "Come and hear, all you who fear God and I will tell what he has done for my soul. I cried to him with my mouth and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me! (Psalm 66:16-20) If you are cherishing sin in your heart, deal with it today through humble repentance.

- Hebrews 10:26-31 -- For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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26. Psalm 65:6-13 -- Consider how God has richly and perfectly provided for mankind. How could we not praise Him?

27. Psalm 66:10-12 -- God will allow you to go through great trials to refine you like silver. Trust Him. Don't resent His discipline.

28. Psalm 65:13-15 -- The more you truly appreciate God, the more you want to worship and obey Him.

29. Psalm 66:18 -- "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Don't let sinful desires hinder your prayers. You cannot choose sin over God and expect to have a meaningful relationship with Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 June: Choose God over self and over sin today. Give it all up to God today in appreciation for what Jesus has done for you. Live in joyful obedience today. (Psalm 66:18)

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 6, Saturday, 2 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+13%2C+14%3B+Prov+2%3B+psalm+64>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 2 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 13:6 -- "And the king said to the man of God, 'Entreat now the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.' And the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him and became as it was before." The king was only concerned about his arm, his physical health and comfort, rather than his relationship with God and God's anger over sin.
2. 1 Kings 13:18-24 -- Do not be deceived by those who claim to be spiritual leaders but who speak contrary to God's word. The consequences for being led astray are deadly.
3. 1 Kings 14:6 -- "I am charged with unbearable news for you." We are called to tell the truth, not what people want to hear.
4. 1 Kings 13:22 -- "Your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers." There are no excuses for disobeying God, and He holds everyone accountable for their behavior.
5. 1 Kings 14:22 -- "Judah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done." Rehoboam the son of Solomon was given by God a tremendous responsibility – to be king of Judah, "the city that the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there." Rehoboam was a terrible king who defiled the land and led to people into the same sort of idolatry and sexual sin practiced by the pagans around them – "They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the Lord drove out before the people of Israel." Under Rehoboam's leadership, the Israelites had lost their light and were now pure darkness. How could the son of Solomon allow this to happen on his watch? The Bible, in 2 Chronicles tells us: "And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord." (2 Chronicles 12:14) This simple statement is worth repeating -- Rehoboam did not "set his heart to seek the Lord." You too have been given a tremendous responsibility that comes with salvation. You are to be "salt and light," an Ambassador for Christ, a priest within a priestly kingdom, a witness; you have been called to go into to the world and make disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all the Jesus commanded, all under the authority of Jesus Christ. Have you "set your heart to seek the Lord?"

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- Deuteronomy 6:5, 6 -- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.
- Deuteronomy 8:17 -- Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'
- Deuteronomy 10:12 -- "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart.
- Deuteronomy 10:16 -- Circumcise... your heart, and be no longer stubborn.
- Deuteronomy 11:16 -- Take care lest your heart be deceived.
- Deuteronomy 11:18 -- "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart.
- Deuteronomy 15:9 -- Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart.
- Deuteronomy 30:10 -- obey the voice of the Lord your God.... turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
- 1 Samuel 12:24 -- Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.
- Psalm 4:4 -- Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
- Psalm 40:8 -- I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."
- Psalm 40:10 -- I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.
- Psalm 86:11 -- Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.
- Psalm 119:7 -- I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.
- Psalm 119:32 -- I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!
- Psalm 119:112 -- I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.
- Proverbs 3:1, 3 -- My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments... Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.
- Proverbs 3:5 -- Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
- Proverbs 4:23 -- Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
- 6. Proverbs 2:1-5 -- To truly know God, your relationship with Him must be your life's pursuit.
- 7. Proverbs 2:4, 5: "...if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God." Your relationship with God and your spiritual development takes hard work. Not everyone has a heart for the effort.

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8. Proverbs 2:6-10 -- "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul." The Lord gives wisdom. It is not something that can be obtained by man apart from God's enabling. You must be born again to "understand righteousness." Wisdom must "come into your heart" (not just your mind), and it must "be pleasant to your soul." Jesus clearly explained to Nicodemus (see John 3) that you must be "born of the Spirit" to have true wisdom, and we cannot give spiritual birth to ourselves, it must come from God. We are "dead to our sins" until we are saved through Christ and come alive with the Spirit within us. And it isn't that we choose to be born, it is that when we were still not alive (powerless), God chose us and chose to pay for our sins. As today's Psalms explain: "When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts (Psalm 65:3, 4)!" Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. No matter how smart you are or become, you can never understand enough within your human abilities to rightly apply knowledge. The Bible says that our thoughts are infinitely removed from God's thoughts. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that reveals to us the mind of God and reveals to us what we don't have the capacity to know otherwise. We then need the conviction of the Holy Spirit to have the self-control (a fruit of the Spirit) to do what we know we should do. You have been chosen by God; now what?

9. Proverbs 2:7, 8 -- "...he is a shield to those who walk in integrity...." God's shield does not protect you if you are not behind it.

10. Proverbs 2:10 -- "...for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul...." True understanding requires knowledge to move from your head to your heart through the Holy Spirit, which is wisdom. With much knowledge of the Bible, and much commitment in the name of God, Paul persecuted Christians, until God impacted his heart and taught him a true understanding of God's word. Knowledge will never be enough. You must have a deep knowledge of God's word, but you must also have the Holy Spirit leading you into true understanding. Information is not transformation.

11. Psalm 64:10 -- "Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him! Let all the upright in heart exult!" Don't worry about your situation. Trust and obey God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 2 June: Today, make sure you don't hide God's love from others or keep it a secret. How unloving would that be? Rather, show your love for God and for others today by sharing Jesus with as many as you can. "I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation." (Psalm 40:10)

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 5, Friday, 1 June 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+11%2C+12%3B+Prov+1%3B+2+cor+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 1 June 18:

1. 1 Kings 11:1-3 -- "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, 'You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love. He had

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700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart." Solomon was granted unsurpassed wisdom by God. However, even in his superior wisdom, he did not "guard his heart" by obeying God's simple, clear commands. His lack of self-control and obedience destroyed him and set the stage for the ultimate destruction of the kingdom of Israel. Our problem is not the gap between ignorance and knowledge but rather the chasm between knowledge and commitment. It isn't that we don't know what God wants; it is that we refuse to do what God wants. It isn't that God hasn't adequately empowered us to obey; it's that in our hearts we really don't want to obey. There is a part of us that doesn't want our Savior to be our Lord and Savior. It takes humility to truly examine our hearts and an attitude of repentance and continual re-submission to walk with God day by day. Daily Bible study gives us course corrections and is used by the Holy Spirit to convict our hearts -- if we are receptive to the Holy Spirit. Do not quench the Spirit by ignoring that conviction. When God convicts you, you stand at a crossroads. What you do next is absolutely vital. Loving God is not an intellectual choice; it is an issue of the heart.

2. 1 Kings 11:14 -- "So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD." 1 Kings 11 is one of the scariest chapters in the Bible: Solomon was the wisest man in the Old Testament. God had blessed him with all that he desired. Yet this wisest man chose to directly disobey God even though God had appeared to him twice! This chapter shows how powerful sin is. All the wisdom in the world, even miraculous encounters with God won't enable a person to obey God within his own power. The power of the Holy Spirit is required as is much grace. Sin is powerful and its consequences severe. Solomon's sin resulted in the division of the tribes of Israel. The wisest king permanently divided the kingdom because he refused to simply obey God.

3. 1 Kings 11:14 -- "And the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon." God punished Solomon by giving success to his enemies. This is a pattern in the Bible. How does God deal with your disobedience?

4. 1 Kings 11:38 -- "And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you." Solomon "did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely." Therefore, God tore the kingdom away from him and gave it to Jeroboam. For Jeroboam, God set the same conditions of obedience. Jeroboam, however, will also sin terribly against the Lord. The sins of these individuals will have a ripple effect on the rest of Israel's history and will cause pain and suffering for generations. Proverbs offers a warning to those who would follow their bad example: "How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will... fools hate knowledge? Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings. But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice

and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you — when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

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5. 1 Kings 11:40 -- "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam." Solomon wasted his energy trying to kill Jeroboam, an adversary sent by God. Solomon should have spent his energy pursuing his relationship with God.

6. 1 Kings 12:1-12 -- "But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him." Rehoboam refused to accept sound, godly counsel, and he ruined his hope for success. Rehoboam had an opportunity to reconcile with his opponents and to restore unity, but instead, ignoring wise counsel, he chose to respond to his opponents pridefully and harshly. In so doing, he lost all hope for peace and prosperity for generations. As Christians, as we read yesterday, we have been given the mission of reconciliation. We must seek reconciliation in all of our relationships.

7. 1 Kings 12:27, 28 -- "'If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.' So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold." Fear drove Jeroboam to turn to idols, and others followed Jeroboam's lead. Fear and pride seem to be the primary motivators for sin. Fear, pride, and rebellion are at the root of church splits and false doctrines.

8. Proverbs 1:4 -- "...to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth...." God's word is not hard to understand. You don't need a seminary degree to be the priest God has called you to be. The simplest faithful person is protected by God's word.

9. Proverbs 1:8, 9 -- "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck." If you were to write a letter intended to pass along to your children, your children's children, and all generations to come essential wisdom for meaningful, prosperous living, what would you write? The Bible says that Solomon was the wisest man who had ever walked the earth, and Proverbs is, at least in part, his letter to his descendants, inspired by God. So, how valuable are the Proverbs to us? And what is the first major point that Solomon wants to leave behind: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7)." Is your pursuit of knowledge grounded in the fear of the Lord, and does your pursuit for knowledge begin with a deep meditation on God's word? It is amazing how much we take the Word of God for granted.

10. Proverbs 1:20 -- "Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice...." Wisdom is not hard to find if you are willing to listen.

11. Proverbs 1:24, 25 -- "Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity...." Sinners simply want to sin more than they want to honor God. We don't take sin seriously enough. Sin is dethroning God in your life for that moment. It is cosmic treason! It is trampling on the blood of Christ. We need to learn to see sin the way God sees it.

12. Proverbs 1:28 -- "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." There comes a time when it is too late to call upon the LORD.

13. 2 Corinthians 6:1 -- "Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain." Will you be working with God today, totally in His service spreading the Gospel?

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14. 2 Corinthians 6:1 -- "We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain." You can receive the grace of God in vain. Grace affords you the opportunity for sanctification. Don't waste the opportunity.

- From Oswald Chambers: "The grace you had yesterday will not be sufficient for today. Grace is the overflowing favor of God, and you can always count on it being available to draw upon as needed. '...in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses' — that is where our patience is tested (2 Corinthians 6:4). Are you failing to rely on the grace of God there? Are you saying to yourself, 'Oh well, I won't count this time'? It is not a question of praying and asking God to help you — it is taking the grace of God now. We tend to make prayer the preparation for our service, yet it is never that in the Bible. Prayer is the practice of drawing on the grace of God. Don't say, 'I will endure this until I can get away and pray.' Pray now — draw on the grace of God in your moment of need. Prayer is the most normal and useful thing; it is not simply a reflex action of your devotion to God. We are very slow to learn to draw on God's grace through prayer. '...in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors...' (2 Corinthians 6:5) — in all these things, display in your life a drawing on the grace of God, which will show evidence to yourself and to others that you are a miracle of His. Draw on His grace now, not later. The primary word in the spiritual vocabulary is now. Let circumstances take you where they will, but keep drawing on the grace of God in whatever condition you may find yourself. One of the greatest proofs that you are drawing on the grace of God is that you can be totally humiliated before others without displaying even the slightest trace of anything but His grace. '...having nothing....' Never hold anything in reserve. Pour yourself out, giving the best that you have, and always be poor. Never be diplomatic and careful with the treasure God gives you. '...and yet possessing all things' — this is poverty triumphant (2 Corinthians 6:10).

15. 2 Corinthians 6:4 -- "...but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger..." Maybe you don't have it so bad after all. Maybe you can handle that difficult, insulting person today with grace.

- From Oswald Chambers: "When you have no vision from God, no enthusiasm left in your life, and no one watching and encouraging you, it requires the grace of Almighty God to take the next step in your devotion to Him, in the reading and studying of His Word, in your family life, or in your duty to Him. It takes much more of the grace of God, and a much greater awareness of drawing upon Him, to take that next step, than it does to preach the gospel. Every Christian must experience the essence of the incarnation by bringing the next step down into flesh-and-blood reality and by working it out with his hands. We lose interest and give up when we have no vision, no encouragement, and no improvement, but only experience our everyday life with its trivial tasks. The thing that really testifies for God and for the people of God in the long run is steady perseverance, even when the work cannot be seen by others. And the only way to live an undefeated life is to live looking to God. Ask God to keep the eyes of your spirit open to the risen Christ, and it will be impossible for drudgery to discourage you. Never allow yourself to think that some tasks are beneath your dignity or too insignificant for you to do, and remind yourself of the example of Christ in John 13:1-17."

16. 2 Corinthians 6:6, 7 -- "...purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left." Are you fully armed for the battle today?

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17. 2 Corinthians 6:6, 7 – We appeal to unbelievers not through clever arguments, great music, dynamic speaking, and great marketing, but rather through “genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God.”

18. 2 Corinthians 6:10 -- "...having nothing, yet possessing everything." If you are a Christian who has nothing in this world, you still have Everything -- Jesus! Nothing plus Jesus is everything. Do you truly believe that?

19. 2 Corinthians 6:12 -- "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections." People believe what they want to believe. You can't change those who are not convicted by the Holy Spirit no matter how hard you try or how clever your arguments. Do your best to proclaim the Gospel from your heart, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

20. 2 Corinthians 6:14 -- "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?" We have largely rejected this guidance out of comfort and expediency. Your close relationships should be with others who intentionally journey with you through life to draw closer to Jesus. If your best friends are unbelievers or "carnal Christians," (as if there could be such a thing) you are not where you should be with God. You are also in great danger of being enticed into additional sin. Learn from the lesson of Solomon.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 June: Confidently speak truth to others today in love, trusting God in the situation. (1 Corinthians 6:6, 7)

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 4, Thursday, 31 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+9%2C+10%3B+Prov+31%3B+2+cor+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 31 May 18:

1. 1 Kings 9:4 -- “If you will walk before me... with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you...” God’s blessings are conditional. Even in a love relationship with God, David and Solomon were subject to blessings or curses based upon their faithfulness and obedience. This conditional "if you obey" statement appears a multitude of times in the Old Testament; however, Solomon, the wisest man that lived, failed to obey, resulting in terrible consequences. Today's readings address Solomon's splendor and the tremendous wealth he acquired (much through his relationship with Pharaoh). In Solomon's pursuit of success, he directly disobeyed God: Deut 17: 16, 17 -- "The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, 'You are not to go back that way again.' He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold." Surely the wisest man on earth was aware of God's commands, yet he disregarded them, exemplifying our sinful nature and our complete reliance of the mercy and grace of God. Despite the beliefs of the secular humanists, no amount of education or economic prosperity can overcome man's condition. Fortunately, as we learn in 2 Corinthians today, God has reconciled His people to himself, through Christ, "not counting people's sins against them," so that, "in him we might become the righteousness of God." God has given us the message and ministry of reconciliation as "Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." And how does Paul say we should live our lives as Christ's Ambassadors? "So we make it our goal to please him.... that those who live should no longer live for

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themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." Today, we will all go on mission with the message of reconciliation at Christ's Ambassadors -- glorify God today.

2. 1 Kings 9:5-8 -- "I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever.... But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you... then I will cut off Israel.... And this house will become a heap of ruins." Once again, throughout the Bible, God gives His people choice and points out there are consequences to choices -- blessings or curses (see Deuteronomy 30:19). Today's NT readings also warn that we will all face final judgment before The Holy God. More on that below:

3. 1 Kings 9:7 -- God can reveal Himself and His truth to others through your relationship with Him either in a positive way or a negative way.

4. 1 Kings 9:11 -- "King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee." This was very bad; the land of Israel was given to Israel by divine decree. Solomon surrendered God's blessings for what he thought was a shrewd business deal. Solomon did not have the right or authority to give parts of the Promised Land to an unbeliever. The men of Israel paid for the land with blood and lives, but Solomon sold it to a foreigner for gold. What about the people who lived in those towns? Solomon turned them over to be ruled by a pagan king. There are many socially accepted and preferred business practices, customs, and traditions that are practiced by Christians as a way of life that are contrary to God's will and commands. Take a close look at all that you do and all that you have taken for granted from the standard of God's word. Don't just do what the rest of the lost "sheeple" (people) are doing. What hard-earned Liberties is our nation giving away in treaties to foreign rulers?

5. 1 Kings 9:20, 21 -- "All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites... whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves, and so they are to this day." Another compromise by Solomon. These people were to be driven out. They were not.

6. Proverbs 31:1 -- "An oracle that his mother taught him..." A wise mother wants nothing more for her son than a wise, godly wife. A wise mother carefully instructs her children on God's plan for marriage.

7. Proverbs 31:6-7 -- "Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more." Various forms of escapism are for the weak and not appropriate for a Christian who faces the responsibilities and opportunities God has set before them with courage and strength.

8. Proverbs 31:1-9 -- Leaders take responsibility and defend the weak.

9. Proverbs 31:11 -- "The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain." A marriage requires trust which comes from good character.

10. Proverbs 31:10-31 -- Mom's biggest concern was that her son marries well.

11. Proverbs 31:13-19 -- People of noble character are hard workers, not people of leisure who live for pleasure.

12. Proverbs 31:20 -- "She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy." People of character give to the needy.

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13. Proverbs 31:23 – “Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.” A loving, godly couple make each other look good.

14. Proverbs 31:30 -- “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” There is no one more beautiful than a woman of godly character.

15. 2 Corinthians 5:6 -- “We walk by faith, not by sight.” God’s ways will defy our perceptions. If we walk by sight, we will miss the power of God in our lives.

16. 2 Corinthians 5:6, 7, 11, 16, 18-20 -- “So we are always of good courage.... we walk by faith, not by sight.... knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.... the love of Christ controls us.... From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.... Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.... entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.... we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.... We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

If you are a Christian, you have been given a life mission, a ministry, and specific marching orders. Your vocation is merely how you resource your mission; what you “do” is not the measure of your life. If you are asking, “What does God want me to do?” here it is: You are to courageously serve as Christ’s Ambassador on a mission of reconciliation.

To accomplish this task, you must first truly “know Him” in a real, saving relationship. Leaders “know the way and show the way.” Jesus is The Way! Be a real leader and lead people to Him because you are following Him so closely.

To accomplish your mission and purpose, you must stop walking by sight and walk by faith, beyond your understanding. The invisible must be more real and relevant to you than what is visible. You must know the “fear of the Lord” which gives you the passion to “persuade” even “implore” others to be “reconciled with God.”

You can no longer regard anyone “according to the flesh.” As Christ’s Ambassador, you have to see others from His perspective, not yours, and you must treat them as He would. When you talk to them, you must not represent yourself or use your own words. You can only represent Christ and use His words. Every encounter you have with every person should be intended to lead them closer to Jesus, not to get something for yourself.

Jesus told us that one of the secrets of success is to live one day at a time. So, it is a good practice to begin each day with a review of your mission and end each day with an assessment of your performance. So, yesterday, who did you implore to be reconciled to God? If your answer is no one, why? Perhaps you lack confidence (courage). Perhaps you don’t feel capable (walking in sight); perhaps you were too busy (worries of the world); perhaps your negative feelings (anger, bitterness, jealousy, prejudice, etc) are getting in the way (flesh, pride). Whatever the reason, today is a new day. Focus on the mission.

Here is a challenge: resolve to reach out to one person each day for Christ. If this has not been your practice, it will be very awkward at first. Isn’t that the case with anything? Did you ride a bike like a pro the first time you got on it? I don’t think anyone ever learned how to ride a bike without getting a bit scratched up. If you are not ready to crash several times, you will never ride your bike. Start riding today. God is holding the back of that bike as you learn, running alongside of you, encouraging you and

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protecting you from too much injury. It takes faith to trust that Daddy is with you as you learn how to ride – isn't it thrilling?

17. 2 Corinthians 5:7 – “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Having you been asking God to reveal Himself to you in a ‘real and powerful way?’ He wants you to walk by faith. Throughout the Bible we have many accounts of God revealing Himself to His people miraculously. Reading quickly through the Bible might give you the impression that this is the norm. However, God rarely revealed Himself miraculously through the Bible but commanded His people to obey Him without need for of ‘signs and wonders.’ In fact, Jesus pointed out that generally it is the weak in faith that need special revelation in order to trust and obey – “Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign.” (Matthew 16:4) “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.” (John 20:29) What does it take for you to trust and obey Jesus? Without special revelation from God, some seek the approval of others for validation. This too is a sign of weakness. Faith is willing to walk faithfully on the hard, sacrificial road though unnoticed and unsung. Still others require some clear indicators of success in order to continue their journey. But they are then no longer walking by faith – it doesn't take faith to do what you know you can do or to do what is obvious. Faith is willing to step out beyond your own abilities to rely on God's abilities, trusting God with the results, regardless of how hopeless things might see from the human perspective. And others, in a world of doubt, proclaim the merits of self-confidence, but God's people are confident in God, not self. “We are becoming obsessed with the moments when God did come and speak with us, and we are insisting that He do it again. But what God wants us to do is to ‘walk by faith.’ How many of us have set ourselves aside as if to say, ‘I cannot do anything else until God appears to me?’ He will never do it. We will have to get up on our own, without any inspiration and without any sudden touch from God. Then comes our surprise and we find ourselves exclaiming, ‘Why, He was there all the time, and I never knew it!’ Never live for those exceptional moments— they are surprises. God will give us His touches of inspiration only when He sees that we are not in danger of being led away by them. We must never consider our moments of inspiration as the standard way of life— our work is our standard.” (Oswald Chambers)

18. 2 Corinthians 5:9 -- “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.” We are not saved just so when we die, we will go to Heaven. We are saved to know, glorify, and serve God on earth. God has given us an earthly mission to fulfill. (Read James 17 to learn how to experience eternal life today)

- From Oswald Chambers: “‘We make it our aim....’ It requires a conscious decision and effort to keep our primary goal constantly in front of us. It means holding ourselves to the highest priority year in and year out; not making our first priority to win souls, or to establish churches, or to have revivals, but seeking only “to be well pleasing to Him.” It is not a lack of spiritual experience that leads to failure, but a lack of working to keep our eyes focused and on the right goal. At least once a week examine yourself before God to see if your life is measuring up to the standard He has for you. Paul was like a musician who gives no thought to audience approval, if he can only catch a look of approval from his Conductor.

Any goal we have that diverts us even to the slightest degree from the central goal of being “approved to God” (2 Timothy 2:15) may result in our rejection from further service for Him. When you discern where the goal leads, you will understand why it is so necessary to keep “looking unto Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2). Paul spoke of the importance of controlling his own body so that it would not take him in the wrong direction. He said, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest...I myself should become

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disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27). I must learn to relate everything to the primary goal, maintaining it without interruption. My worth to God publicly is measured by what I really am in my private life. Is my primary goal in life to please Him and to be acceptable to Him, or is it something less, no matter how lofty it may sound?”

19. 2 Corinthians 5:10 -- “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” We all face judgement. You will either be judged by your righteousness or Jesus’ righteousness credited to you – your choice.

- From Henry T. Blackaby: “There are many motivations in the Christian’s life. One is our awareness that one day we will give an account of our lives to Christ, as He sits in judgment upon humanity. It is much more comforting to believe that Christians will be ushered into heaven with no questions asked about our faithfulness upon earth, but that is not what Scripture says will happen. Paul cautioned that in the final day of judgment every Christian will give an account for his or her actions. This expectation terrified Paul and motivated him to strive to please God in everything he did (2 Cor. 5:9-11). Paul knew that although he might ignore the Spirit’s quiet voice during His life on earth, a time of accounting would come when he would have to explain why he had rejected God’s instructions. Paul never carelessly assumed that, because of all he had done for God’s kingdom, God would overlook his sin. Instead, he understood that to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). God does not force His will upon us. He will ask us to answer for the way we responded to Him. Christians have been pardoned by the sacrifice of Jesus. We are not condemned. But because God is absolutely just, we will be called on to give an account of our actions. The Christian life gives a tremendous freedom, but it also brings a pervasive sense of our accountability to God and to others. We can learn from Paul that accountability is healthy; it gives us a powerful motivation to please God.”

- From Oswald Chambers: “Paul says that we must all, preachers and other people alike, ‘appear before the judgment seat of Christ.’ But if you will learn here and now to live under the scrutiny of Christ’s pure light, your final judgment will bring you only delight in seeing the work God has done in you. Live constantly reminding yourself of the judgment seat of Christ, and walk in the knowledge of the holiness He has given you. Tolerating a wrong attitude toward another person causes you to follow the spirit of the devil, no matter how saintly you are. One carnal judgment of another person only serves the purposes of hell in you. Bring it immediately into the light and confess, ‘Oh, Lord, I have been guilty there.’ If you don’t, your heart will become hardened through and through. One of the penalties of sin is our acceptance of it. It is not only God who punishes for sin, but sin establishes itself in the sinner and takes its toll. No struggling or praying will enable you to stop doing certain things, and the penalty of sin is that you gradually get used to it, until you finally come to the place where you no longer even realize that it is sin. No power, except the power that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit, can change or prevent the inherent consequences of sin. ‘If we walk in the light as He is in the light...’ (1 John 1:7). For many of us, walking in the light means walking according to the standard we have set up for another person. The deadliest attitude of the Pharisees that we exhibit today is not hypocrisy but that which comes from unconsciously living a lie.”

- Paul warns us that we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and Paul encourages us to “make it our aim to please him” and “knowing the fear of the Lord.., persuade others.” However, I think (contrary to some comments above) the “fear” that motivates Paul is not fear of what God will do to us

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on the Day of Judgment, but rather it is sheer awe and gratitude for what God has already done for us through His Son, Jesus. How can Paul face both life and death with such “good courage” knowing judgment awaits? Because, at the Judgment Seat, thanks to Jesus, Paul will be viewed, not by what he did in the flesh, but rather he will be seen as the very “righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).” Paul’s obedience is driven not out of fear of punishment any longer but rather, “the love of Christ [which] controls [him] (2 Corinthians 5:14).” Paul has, through Christ, been reconciled, and now Paul has no choice (compelled by love) but be on the mission of reconciliation (v 18), motivated by love, gratitude, and joy. No longer judged by God for works of the flesh, Paul no longer regards others “according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16).” We, like Paul, have been saved by Grace from God’s judgment and wrath; we have been made righteous (right with God), not by anything we did or will do but by what God did for us and the price Jesus paid on our behalf. With our trespasses no longer held against us, we are now free to approach God with complete confidence, to be united with Him, and to serve Him as He intended, without the burden of guilt, shame, and fear of punishment. With our trespasses no longer held against us by God, we are in no position to hold against others their trespasses against us. Rather, we need to see others the way God sees them and dedicate our lives to reconciling others to God. We are to invest ALL of our passion (“implore”) into proclaiming the Gospel, “on behalf of Christ.” The importance of a task is directly proportional to the importance of the one directing the task. How important to you is a task from God Himself? “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (1 Corinthians 5:20).”

20. 2 Corinthians 5:11 -- “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.” Those who truly love Jesus and others are compelled to share the Gospel with others. If we don’t really know the fear of the LORD, we cannot persuade others. We can only bear witness to what we have heard or read (that is just hearsay), only what we have experienced personally.

21. 2 Corinthians 5:11, 12 -- “But what we are is known to God.... Answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.” Reputation is what others say about you; character is what God knows about you. God knows who you really are. The world boasts about outward appearances; Christians boast about what is in the heart.

22. 2 Corinthians 5:14-16 -- “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.” Jesus’ sacrifice of love for us, dying on the cross for us though we did not deserve it, forces us to see everyone else completely differently and leaves us no choice but to forgive and love all. Be controlled by the love of Christ. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, not the product of willpower, which always fails ultimately.

- From Oswald Chambers: “Paul said that he was overpowered, subdued, and held as in a vise by ‘the love of Christ.’ Very few of us really know what it means to be held in the grip of the love of God. We tend so often to be controlled simply by our own experience. The one thing that gripped and held Paul, to the exclusion of everything else, was the love of God. ‘The love of Christ compels us....’ When you hear that coming from the life of a man or woman it is unmistakable. You will know that the Spirit of God is completely unhindered in that person’s life. When we are born again by the Spirit of God, our testimony is based solely on what God has done for us, and rightly so. But that will change and be removed forever once you ‘receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...’ (Acts 1:8). Only

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then will you begin to realize what Jesus meant when He went on to say, ‘...you shall be witnesses to Me....’ Not witnesses to what Jesus can do— that is basic and understood— but “witnesses to Me....’ We will accept everything that happens as if it were happening to Him, whether we receive praise or blame, persecution or reward. No one is able to take this stand for Jesus Christ who is not totally compelled by the majesty of His power. It is the only thing that matters, and yet it is strange that it’s the last thing we as Christian workers realize. Paul said that he was gripped by the love of God and that is why he acted as he did. People could perceive him as mad or sane— he did not care. There was only one thing he lived for— to persuade people of the coming judgment of God and to tell them of ‘the love of Christ.’ This total surrender to ‘the love of Christ’ is the only thing that will bear fruit in your life. And it will always leave the mark of God’s holiness and His power, never drawing attention to your personal holiness.”

23. 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

- “What understanding do you have of the salvation of your soul? The work of salvation means that in your real life, things are dramatically changed. You no longer look at things in the same way. Your desires are new and the old things have lost their power to attract you. One of the tests for determining if the work of salvation in your life is genuine is— has God changed the things that really matter to you? If you still yearn for the old things, it is absurd to talk about being born from above— you are deceiving yourself. If you are born again, the Spirit of God makes the change very evident in your real life and thought. And when a crisis comes, you are the most amazed person on earth at the wonderful difference there is in you. There is no possibility of imagining that you did it. It is this complete and amazing change that is the very evidence that you are saved. What difference has my salvation and sanctification made? For instance, can I stand in the light of 1 Corinthians 13, or do I squirm and evade the issue? True salvation, worked out in me by the Holy Spirit, frees me completely. And as long as I ‘walk in the light as He is in the light’ (1 John 1:7), God sees nothing to rebuke because His life is working itself into every detailed part of my being, not on the conscious level, but even deeper than my consciousness.” (Oswald Chambers)

- “Our Lord never tolerates our prejudices— He is directly opposed to them and puts them to death. We tend to think that God has some special interest in our particular prejudices, and are very sure that He will never deal with us as He has to deal with others. We even say to ourselves, ‘God has to deal with other people in a very strict way, but of course He knows that my prejudices are all right.’ But we must learn that God accepts nothing of the old life! Instead of being on the side of our prejudices, He is deliberately removing them from us. It is part of our moral education to see our prejudices put to death by His providence, and to watch how He does it. God pays no respect to anything we bring to Him. There is only one thing God wants of us, and that is our unconditional surrender. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit begins to work His new creation in us, and there will come a time when there is nothing remaining of the old life. Our old gloomy outlook disappears, as does our old attitude toward things, and ‘all things are of God’ (2 Corinthians 5:18). How are we going to get a life that has no lust, no self-interest, and is not sensitive to the ridicule of others? How will we have the type of love that ‘is kind...is not provoked, [and] thinks no evil’? (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). The only way is by allowing nothing of the old life to remain, and by having only simple, perfect trust in God— such a trust that we no longer want God’s blessings, but only want God Himself. Have we come to the point where God can withdraw His blessings from us without our trust in Him being affected? Once we truly see God at work, we will never

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be concerned again about the things that happen, because we are actually trusting in our Father in heaven, whom the world cannot see.” (Oswald Chambers)

- From Henry T. Blackaby: “You do not become a Christian by asking Jesus into your heart. You become a Christian when you are born again. Jesus said, ‘Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’ (John 3:3). Saying a prayer or making a public commitment or signing a decision card will not save you. Only being born again will do that. The apostle Paul said that when you are ‘in Christ,’ the old things pass away. In the moment of your salvation, every sin you ever committed is forgiven. Healing for every hurt you have ever suffered is available. Love and acceptance are yours despite every failure you have ever experienced. Your past, no matter how difficult or painful, is completely and thoroughly provided for. Some will seek to diminish the awesome reality of your spiritual rebirth. You will hear them say, ‘Even though you’re now a Christian, you must still undergo years of counseling to overcome the hurts you’ve experienced’ or ‘You may be born again, but you’ll continue to struggle with your sin, and hopefully you will eventually gain victory in areas of your weakness.’ The problem is that we seek changes by our own will rather than by turning our lives over in faith to the One who has given us new life. The profound testimony of Scripture is that the blood of Jesus Christ and the death of the Son of God is sufficient to completely free you from your sin. Satan will seek to convince you that it is not. Whom will you believe?”

24. 2 Corinthians 5:18 – “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” From Henry T. Blackaby: “The world abounds with people whose sin has alienated them from God. Christ’s sacrificial work has restored Christians to a love relationship with the heavenly Father. As Christians, we are appointed as ministers of reconciliation. Once Christ dwells within us, we become His ambassadors, and we entreat others to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). We are God’s messengers of peace, urging others to return to God (Matt. 5:9). Sin breaks our relationship with God; it severs relationships with others as well. Broken relationships are the epidemic of our day. Sin alienates family members, separates friends, divides churches, and destroys marriages. Sin creates mistrust, jealousy, hatred, and greed, all of which devastate relationships. Only Christ has the remedy for the disastrous effect of sin on human relationships. As His ambassadors, we are to take the message of reconciliation to a broken, divided world. We urge reconciliation first with God, and then with each other. How tragic when God’s messengers of peace harbor enmity toward each other. It is a travesty to carry a message of love and yet be filled with hatred. If there is someone whom you refuse to forgive, your message of reconciliation is hypocrisy. The evidence that you are a disciple of Jesus is that you love your fellow Christian (John 13:35). In each of your relationships, make certain that your actions share the love and forgiveness that reflect what you received from God. Then you will not only speak the message of reconciliation, but you will live it as well.”

25. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” From Oswald Chambers:

- “Sin is a fundamental relationship— it is not wrong doing, but wrong being— it is deliberate and determined independence from God. The Christian faith bases everything on the extreme, self-confident nature of sin. Other faiths deal with sins— the Bible alone deals with sin. The first thing Jesus Christ confronted in people was the heredity of sin, and it is because we have ignored this in our presentation of the gospel that the message of the gospel has lost its sting and its explosive power. The revealed truth

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of the Bible is not that Jesus Christ took on Himself our fleshly sins, but that He took on Himself the heredity of sin that no man can even touch. God made His own Son 'to be sin' that He might make the sinner into a saint. It is revealed throughout the Bible that our Lord took on Himself the sin of the world through identification with us, not through sympathy for us. He deliberately took on His own shoulders, and endured in His own body, the complete, cumulative sin of the human race. 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us...' and by so doing He placed salvation for the entire human race solely on the basis of redemption. Jesus Christ reconciled the human race, putting it back to where God designed it to be. And now anyone can experience that reconciliation, being brought into oneness with God, on the basis of what our Lord has done on the cross. A man cannot redeem himself— redemption is the work of God, and is absolutely finished and complete. And its application to individual people is a matter of their own individual action or response to it. A distinction must always be made between the revealed truth of redemption and the actual conscious experience of salvation in a person's life."

- "The modern view of the death of Jesus is that He died for our sins out of sympathy for us. Yet the New Testament view is that He took our sin on Himself not because of sympathy, but because of His identification with us. He was 'made...to be sin....' Our sins are removed because of the death of Jesus, and the only explanation for His death is His obedience to His Father, not His sympathy for us. We are acceptable to God not because we have obeyed, nor because we have promised to give up things, but because of the death of Christ, and for no other reason. We say that Jesus Christ came to reveal the fatherhood and the lovingkindness of God, but the New Testament says that He came to take 'away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29). And the revealing of the fatherhood of God is only to those to whom Jesus has been introduced as Savior. In speaking to the world, Jesus Christ never referred to Himself as One who revealed the Father, but He spoke instead of being a stumbling block (see John 15:22-24). John 14:9, where Jesus said, 'He who has seen Me has seen the Father,' was spoken to His disciples.

That Christ died for me, and therefore I am completely free from penalty, is never taught in the New Testament. What is taught in the New Testament is that 'He died for all' (2 Corinthians 5:15)— not, 'He died my death'— and that through identification with His death I can be freed from sin, and have His very righteousness imparted as a gift to me. The substitution which is taught in the New Testament is twofold— 'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' The teaching is not Christ for me unless I am determined to have Christ formed in me (see Galatians 4:19).

- From Henry T. Blackaby: "This verse should startle us and cause us to tremble. It is not a verse to be read quickly and passed over. As Christians we are grateful to be forgiven of our sins. We are thankful we have been adopted as God's children. Yet we will never comprehend the awesome price that Jesus paid to cleanse us of our sin and to give us His righteousness. How abhorrent was it for the sinless Son of God to have every sin of humanity placed upon Him? What love was required for the Father to watch His only Son bear the excruciating pain of our sin upon the cross? The prophet Isaiah summarized the human condition: 'We are all like an unclean thing; and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags' (Isa. 64:6). Even the high priest, Joshua, in his exalted position among God's people, was clothed in filthy rags before God (Zech. 3:3). The apostle Paul, who labored arduously to be righteous before God, realized that his most strenuous efforts to please God were no more valuable than rubbish (Phil. 3:4-10). The plight of humanity is that nothing we could ever do could satisfy God's desire for righteousness. But the miracle of God's mercy is that God exchanges our 'filthy rags' for "rich robes' of righteousness (Zech. 3:4). In this awesome exchange, God placed the sin of humanity upon His righteous Son. Jesus became

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so identified with our sin that Scripture says God made Him to be sin on our behalf. The holy Son of God could not possibly do more for us than this! Experiencing the Father's wrath upon the sin He carried would have been more painful to endure than any human rejection or physical suffering. Never take the righteousness God has given you for granted. Never take the forgiveness of your sin lightly. It cost God a terrible price in order to forgive you and make you righteous. Walk in a manner worthy of the righteousness He has given you."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 31 May: Give to the poor in a specific and meaningful way – today. Share the message of reconciliation directly, one-on-one, to at least one person today. Be bold and come out of your comfort zone. (1 Corinthians 5:19; Proverbs 28:27) Evaluate your mission accomplishment every waking hour today. Intentionally stop at the top of each hour and ask yourself, "Did I lead the people around me closer to Jesus or not?" This is your life's mission, nothing else. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 3, Wednesday, 30 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+7%2C+8%3B+Prov+30%3B+2+cor+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 30 May 18:

1. 1 Kings 7:1 – "Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house." Solomon built the House of God for seven years, but spent thirteen years building his own house. The message here is clear, but the Bible will restate the point later.

2. 1 Kings 7:2 – "He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon. Its length was a hundred cubits and its breadth fifty cubits and its height thirty cubits, and it was built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars." Solomon built a bigger house for himself than he did for God.

3. 1 Kings 7 -- Solomon used unbelieving idol makers to build God's Temple. Solomon partnered with Hiram in many ways which likely contributed to Israel's syncretism and slide into idolatry. God wants us to do the right things for the right reasons in the right way at the right time. God decides what is right. Be careful not to compromise your integrity in order to produce results. The word integrity means truthfulness but also soundness or wholeness. For example, if a chair has integrity, you can sit on it confidently, but if it doesn't, it will collapse under the pressure of your weight. When we compromise our integrity, we compromise both our fidelity and our soundness. We will eventually collapse under the pressure, despite our early accomplishments. The foundation of your integrity is Jesus who is your firm foundation.

4. 1 Kings 7:8 -- "Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had taken in marriage." Solomon allowed in his own house what was forbidden in God's house – a double standard of holiness. Your character cannot be compartmentalized. You cannot be faithful in one area of your life while you are being unfaithful in another area of your life. You take the same character into every situation.

5. 1 Kings 8:3 -- "And the priests took up the ark." In this regard, Solomon learned from his father's mistakes.

6. 1 Kings 8:9 says there was nothing but two stone tablets in the ark. The jar of manna and Aarons staff mentioned in Hebrews 9:3,4; Exodus 16:33, 34; and Numbers 17:10 are not in the ark. Why not? There

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are many theories. I am uncertain, but I am certain that there is no contradiction between these verses. What do you think?

7. 1 Kings 8:18, 19 – “Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the house....” David’s plans, though well intentioned, were not God’s plans. Just because it sounds right doesn’t mean it is right for you. If you ask God from the right heart, He will show you the correct path.

8. 1 Kings 8:33 – “...your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you....” Solomon, the wisest man on the planet, understood military defeat to be the consequence of sin.

9. 1 Kings 8:35, 37 -- Solomon, the wisest man on the planet, saw natural disasters as the consequence of sin, the consequence of ‘afflicted’ hearts.

10. 1 Kings 8:39 -- “... then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind).” People do what they do for different motives. The outwardly charitable person might not have a truly charitable heart. The offensive person might be troubled beyond your imagination and might actually have a heart more desirous of a right relationship with God than the person who acts noble. Only God knows a person's heart. Don't assume you understand the motives behind other's words or actions. God commands us to judge actions as good or bad but not to presume to understand the heart of another; presuming to know another's standing with God is judgmental, prideful and offensive to God. If we view actions that are not consistent with God's word, we are to speak the truth in love with the intent of reconciling that person to Jesus, not to condemn them or to push them further away from Jesus.

11. 1 Kings 8:47-50 -- “...if they turn their heart... and repent and plead with you..., saying, ‘We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,’ if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart... and pray to you... then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.” Forgiveness involves wholehearted repentance, prayer, and rededication to obedience. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

12. 1 Kings 8:50 – “...grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them God can make your enemies show compassion towards you.” God controls the hearts of men as He desires, something only He can do.

13. 1 Kings 8:53 -- “For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage” The bride of Christ cannot flirt with our date the world.

14. 1 Kings 8:56-58 -- “Not one word has failed of all his good promise.... May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers.” Solomon understood that God does not fail the relationship, we do. God does not walk away from us; we walk away from Him when we incline our hearts towards another and stop following Jesus.

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15. 1 Kings 8:57-61 -- "May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers.... that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day." Obeying Jesus is an all-or-nothing proposition – you are either obeying or you're not. Partial obedience is disobedience. However, we live by grace as we grow in love and obedience, which we cannot do naturally -- we need supernatural power from God and have access to it through the Holy Spirit. We obey Jesus to glorify Him. Our holy, obedient, wholehearted lives should represent Christ before the watching world.

16. Proverbs 30:1-6 -- You can't out-smart the word of God. Just obey. Don't muddy the waters of God's word by mixing in the teachings of man. God's word is pure. We need not add to it. There are many secular 'teachers' out there who can be very convincing. Always test what they are saying by the perfect, unchanging standard of God's word. Too often I see 'Christian' teaching materials that add to God's word and subtly drift from the truth.

17. Proverbs 30:8, 9 – "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."

- God will not give you more than you can handle; if you choose to be unfaithful, it is not because you couldn't have remained faithful.

- God may be withholding from you what you want because He knows you cannot handle it faithfully.

18. Proverbs 30:24-28 -- Wise people succeed by accepting their current situation rather than using it as an excuse, and they learn to work around obstacles and limitations to exploit opportunities.

19. 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2 – "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

- When we lose heart before the world, we are tempted to compromise the word of God to accommodate our compromise and/or theirs. Don't compromise the word of God in an attempt to make it more acceptable or appealing. The reality of Jesus should cause us to not lose heart.

- False teachers always "tamper with God's word." By having thorough personal knowledge of God's word and by walking in God's word, you will not fall victim to them. By living out the simple truth and by holding firm to the Truth, you will be salt and light.

- From Oswald Chambers: "Have you 'renounced the hidden things of shame' in your life— the things that your sense of honor or pride will not allow to come into the light? You can easily hide them. Is there a thought in your heart about anyone that you would not like to be brought into the light? Then renounce it as soon as it comes to mind— renounce everything in its entirety until there is no hidden dishonesty or craftiness about you at all. Envy, jealousy, and strife don't necessarily arise from your old nature of sin, but from the flesh which was used for these kinds of things in the past (see Romans 6:19 and 1 Peter 4:1-3). You must maintain continual watchfulness so that nothing arises in your life that

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would cause you shame. "...not walking in craftiness..." (2 Corinthians 4:2). This means not resorting to something simply to make your own point. This is a terrible trap. You know that God will allow you to work in only one way— the way of truth. Then be careful never to catch people through the other way— the way of deceit. If you act deceitfully, God's blight and ruin will be upon you. What may be craftiness for you, may not be for others— God has called you to a higher standard. Never dull your sense of being your utmost for His highest— your best for His glory. For you, doing certain things would mean craftiness coming into your life for a purpose other than what is the highest and best, and it would dull the motivation that God has given you. Many people have turned back because they are afraid to look at things from God's perspective. The greatest spiritual crisis comes when a person has to move a little farther on in his faith than the beliefs he has already accepted."

20. 2 Corinthians 4:4 – "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." From Henry T. Blackaby: "When you are blinded, you cannot see things as they really are, even though others around you see them clearly. You cannot experience the full reality of all that is around you. You may feel you are experiencing all that there is to life, yet you may be unaware that you are missing what God desires for you. You may even be in danger because of your blindness and not know it. Paul warned that the "god of this age" can blind you to the reality of Jesus Christ. Christ's presence can make a significant difference in your life. However, if Satan convinces you to doubt that Christ can do what He promised, he will have blinded you to the reality of what your life is really like and to what it could become. Others may see what your unbelief causes you to miss, but you will be unaware of it. Your life may be steadily moving toward disaster, but you will be oblivious to it. Christ comes to you as light (John 1:4, 5, 9). He illuminates your sin so that you see its ugliness and destructiveness. He reveals Himself so that you can appreciate the glory of His person and the marvelous riches He brings. His presence lights your path so that you can see impending danger. Don't let the god of this age distort your spiritual vision. Don't be fooled into thinking that everything is as it should be when, in fact, you are missing out on so much that God wants to do in your life. Ask Christ to illuminate your life and let you clearly see your spiritual condition."

- The world, the flesh, and the devil blind people from seeing Christ.

21. 2 Corinthians 4:5 – "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." We proclaim Christ, not ourselves. We deny self and take up the cross of Jesus as we follow Him. As an ambassador for Christ, be very careful to never represent yourself in any situation.

22. 2 Corinthians 4:7 -- "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

- Christians don't claim to be special of themselves but rather give all credit to Jesus. We are special only because we are His children. The Gospel message is all about what He did for us, not what we are capable of doing. Often Christians turn the Gospel message into a plan to achieve the American dream with God's help – "Follow the principles of the Bible and you can be successful in all areas of your life." The Gospel message is that God saved us despite us so that we could know Him. The Bible is not pointing us to principles; it is pointing us to a Person, Jesus! Principles won't necessarily lead you to the goal, which is Jesus. But when we follow Jesus, the principles occur naturally in our lives because His is the Author of the principles.

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- Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs, looking good on the outside but unclean on the inside. We are the opposite, unimpressive on the outside but full of the Holy Spirit on the inside. The power of God does not depend on our outward appearance. We don't need new branding or a better marketing campaign.

- From Henry T. Blackaby: Knowing God and having Him reside within you is a treasure of infinite value. Jesus likened this value to that of a perfect pearl. The collector would readily sell everything he had in order to possess this one matchless pearl (Matt. 13:45-46). Your relationship with God places an immeasurable value on your life. The treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge are available to you through Christ (Col. 2:2-3). His love now fills you. His incomprehensible peace surrounds your heart and mind (Phil. 4:7). When Jesus dwells in your life, everything available to Christ dwells within you (Eph. 3:19). Paul was comparing our lives with the clay pots commonly used in his day. The contents of the earthen vessels, not the containers themselves, were of great value. The jars would become chipped and broken and would deteriorate over time, but nobody thought of the jar—they were interested in its contents. Paul noted that our great possession is that which God has placed within us. When people focus on us, they see a frail, imperfect, and deteriorating vessel. Nothing that comes from our flesh is worthy of praise. Our bodies are aging and losing strength (2 Cor. 4:16). Only as we allow God to fill us and renew our inner self will people see a treasure of immeasurable worth. Don't focus on outward appearances and physical strength, for these deteriorate. Rather, allow the Holy Spirit to convince you of the infinite treasure that is within you because of God's presence.

23. 2 Corinthians 4:10 – "...that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." From Oswald Chambers: "We have to develop godly habits to express what God's grace has done in us. It is not just a question of being saved from hell, but of being saved so that "the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." And it is adversity that makes us exhibit His life in our mortal flesh. Is my life exhibiting the essence of the sweetness of the Son of God, or just the basic irritation of "myself" that I would have apart from Him? The only thing that will enable me to enjoy adversity is the acute sense of eagerness of allowing the life of the Son of God to evidence itself in me. No matter how difficult something may be, I must say, "Lord, I am delighted to obey You in this." Instantly, the Son of God will move to the forefront of my life, and will manifest in my body that which glorifies Him. You must not debate. The moment you obey the light of God, His Son shines through you in that very adversity; but if you debate with God, you grieve His Spirit (see Ephesians 4:30). You must keep yourself in the proper condition to allow the life of the Son of God to be manifested in you, and you cannot keep yourself fit if you give way to self-pity. Our circumstances are the means God uses to exhibit just how wonderfully perfect and extraordinarily pure His Son is. Discovering a new way of manifesting the Son of God should make our heart beat with renewed excitement. It is one thing to choose adversity, and quite another to enter into adversity through the orchestrating of our circumstances by God's sovereignty. And if God puts you into adversity, He is adequately sufficient to "supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). Keep your soul properly conditioned to manifest the life of the Son of God. Never live on your memories of past experiences, but let the Word of God always be living and active in you."

24. 2 Corinthians 4:13 -- "I believed, and so I spoke." If you truly believe in Jesus, you will naturally proclaim Jesus. Be bold and speak what you believe.

25. 2 Corinthians 4:16 -- "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." Renewal is a process, day by day.

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26. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 -- "Do not lose heart.... For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." The secret to endurance and perseverance is having an eternal perspective and spiritual awareness. You must be able to see past apparent circumstances to the larger, more relevant spiritual realities.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 May: Be bold, speak the truth in love, and say what you believe. (2 Corinthians 4:1-5,13) However, give people the benefit of the doubt. Show grace when people do something wrong or offend you. You do not really know the "why" behind their actions or what God might be doing in their lives. Remember, you have been given the ministry of "reconciliation"; how can you lead others closer to Jesus? (1 Kings 8:39; Proverbs 25:8)

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 2, Tuesday, 29 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+5%2C+6%3B+Prov+29%3B+2+cor+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 29 May 18:

1. 1 Kings 5 -- Hiram king of Tyre. David's and then Solomon's relationship with Hiram, as with Solomon's relationship with Egypt, seemed wise according to the world's wisdom and brought initial prosperity to Israel, but this union with the ungodly sowed the seeds of compromise and destruction in Israel. Tyre was an opulent kingdom built on the backs of slaves whose idolatrous religious practices eventually crept into Israel; in fact, Solomon, through Hiram, hires the same craftsmen who crafted pagan idols to work on the Temple of God. In some way, you could compare Solomon's relationship with Tyre with America's relationship with China and other nations who have great wealth, resources, and cheap labor but also terrible ethics.

2. 1 Kings 5:13 -- "King Solomon drafted forced labor out of all Israel, and the draft numbered 30,000 men." According to 1 Kings 9:22, Solomon did not make forced laborers of the children of Israel in his building campaigns. However, 1 Kings 5:13 says Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel. Which one of these reports is correct? Both reports are correct. The reconciliation of these statements is found in the fact that there are different Hebrew words used of two different types of laborers in the building projects of Solomon. According to 1 Kings 5:13 (5:27 in the Hebrew text), Solomon raised up a "labor force" (mas or hammas) from all Israel. In this context, labor force was a group conscripted from the population to participate in the building project. It was apparently composed of both Israelites and non-Israelites. However, in 1 Kings 9:21 the author delineates those people from whom Solomon brought on as "slave labor." The word used here is mas-oved which indicates forced slave labor. Then, in 9:22 the author points out that Solomon did not employ any Israelites as "slaves" (aved). There is no contradiction here, because, although Solomon did draft young men of Israel to labor in the construction of the temple, a practice which brought him great trouble later in his reign, he did not make any Israelite a slave laborer.

3. 1 Kings 5:14-18 -- Solomon's wisdom included superior planning, organizational, leadership, and management skills along with great attention to detail. The foundation of these abilities is self-leadership, personal planning and organization, self-discipline, and personal attention to detail. You cannot lead great endeavors if you cannot first lead self.

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4. 1 Kings 6:11-13 -- "Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, 'Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel.'" God's presence depended on obedience, not on a building or special acts of worship. While Solomon was focused on the work of building the Temple, God was focused only on obedience to Him. God dwells in the temple of His true disciples. Religious activities and gestures are not the same as obedience produced as the natural fruit of love.

5. 1 Kings 6:38 -- Wise Solomon finished what he started according to plan and on schedule. Godly character is timely, complete, and wholly reliable. Always do what you said you were going to do, when you said you were going to do it. Let your "yes" mean yes. The place most people lie is to themselves – they tell themselves they are going to do something (read their Bibles, exercise, call someone, etc) but they don't do it. If you can't trust yourself to follow through on commitments, no one else can trust you.

6. Proverbs 29:1 – "He who is often reproofed, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing." There is a point when it can't be fixed. The Bible gives you this warning that you will not come to the point of no return.

7. Proverbs 29:5 – "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet." If you refuse to tell sinners the truth, you are a party to their destruction, and, yes, God will hold you accountable for your part. (See Ezekiel 3 and 33)

8. Proverbs 29:9 -- "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet." You cannot reason with a fool, so don't waste your time. Speak the truth, if it is not received, move on, but continue in prayer. There is no sense in arguing with a fool. It only brings needless friction.

9. Proverbs 29:18 – "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." From Henry T. Blackaby: "The world operates on vision. God's people live by revelation. The world seeks grand and noble purposes and goals to achieve. People dream up the greatest and most satisfying things in which they can invest their lives. Institutions establish goals and objectives and then organize themselves to achieve them. God's people function in a radically different way. Christians arrange their lives based on the revelation of God, regardless of whether it makes sense to them. God does not ask for our opinion about what is best for our future, our family, our church, or our country. He already knows! What God wants is to get the attention of His people and reveal to us what is on His heart and what is His will, for God's ways are not our ways! (Isa. 55:8-9). Whenever people do not base their lives on God's revelation, they "cast off restraint." That is, they do what is right in their own eyes. They set their goals, arrange their agendas, and then pray for God's blessings. Some Christians are living far outside the will of God, yet they have the audacity to pray and ask God to bless their efforts! The only way for you to know God's will is for Him to reveal it to you. You will never discover it on your own. When you hear from the Father, you have an immediate agenda for your life: obedience. As the writer of Proverbs observed: 'Happy is he who keeps the law.'"

- The Bible helps us develop and maintain self-control through the continual counsel of the Holy Spirit.

- From Oswald Chambers: "There is a difference between holding on to a principle and having a vision. A principle does not come from moral inspiration, but a vision does. People who are totally consumed

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with idealistic principles rarely do anything. A person's own idea of God and His attributes may actually be used to justify and rationalize his deliberate neglect of his duty. Jonah tried to excuse his disobedience by saying to God, "...I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm" (Jonah 4:2). I too may have the right idea of God and His attributes, but that may be the very reason why I do not do my duty. But wherever there is vision, there is also a life of honesty and integrity, because the vision gives me the moral incentive. Our own idealistic principles may actually lull us into ruin. Examine yourself spiritually to see if you have vision, or only principles. Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for? 'Where there is no revelation [or prophetic vision]....' Once we lose sight of God, we begin to be reckless. We cast off certain restraints from activities we know are wrong. We set prayer aside as well and cease having God's vision in the little things of life. We simply begin to act on our own initiative. If we are eating only out of our own hand, and doing things solely on our own initiative without expecting God to come in, we are on a downward path. We have lost the vision. Is our attitude today an attitude that flows from our vision of God? Are we expecting God to do greater things than He has ever done before? Is there a freshness and a vitality in our spiritual outlook?"

10. Proverbs 29:19 -- "By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond."

- Those who lack internal discipline require external discipline. Choose for yourself internal discipline by continuing in obedience to God's word through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- A servant responds to discipline in a relationship based on fear and duty. Jesus says, "I no longer call you servants.... I have called you friends (John 15:15) -- This is a relationship of love. Seek to obey God not merely out of fear or a sense of duty but out of love. Without love as the motivator, it is impossible to please God. Like children who obey their parents, we usually first obey out of fear or duty, but the mark of maturity is obeying because we have a heart to do so. At that point, rules or the law are no longer required.

11. Proverbs 29:23 -- "One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor." From Henry T. Blackaby: "Pride is the great enemy of the Christian. Pride is an overly high opinion of yourself. It motivates you to do things that you know are not Christlike, and it hinders you from doing what brings glory to God. Pride influenced Adam and Eve to try to become like God (Gen. 3:5). Pride motivated Cain to murder his brother (Gen. 4:5). Pride provoked Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery (Gen. 37:8). Pride caused King Saul to resent David so deeply that he tried to murder him (1 Sam. 18:8). Pride led King Hezekiah to foolishly reveal his nation's wealth to his enemies (Isa. 39:2). Pride was at the root of the Pharisees' anger toward Jesus. Pride was the reason the disciples argued over rank in the kingdom (Luke 9:46). Pride is your relentless enemy. If you succumb to its influence, there will be consequences. You may know that you have offended someone, but pride holds you back from asking forgiveness. You may realize you need to reconcile a broken relationship, but pride will lead you to deny that need. The Spirit may convict you that you are living a sinful lifestyle, but pride will discourage your admitting it. Pride will convince you that you deserve better treatment. Pride will impede your serving others. Instead, pride will have you striving for places of prominence. Pride will have you listen to flatterers and ignore honest counselors. Pride will lead you to isolate yourself so that you are not accountable to others. Humility, on the other hand, is pleasing to God and places your life in a position

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where God will honor you. If pride has crept into some areas of your life, ask God to give you victory over it before it robs you of God's will for you."

12. 2 Corinthians 3:3 – "And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." Our transformed hearts and the love that overflows from us bears witness to the power of the Spirit within our lives. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35). 1 John 4 expands upon the fruit of love: "Love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister."

13. 2 Corinthians 3:12 – "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, True faith and hope make you bold."

14. 2 Corinthians 3:14-17 – "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." You cannot understand God's word or will unless you are empowered by the Holy Spirit upon salvation through Jesus Christ and surrender to His leading day by day. Anyone can study the Bible; however only those empowered by the Holy Spirit can truly understand it. The Holy Spirit dwells in true disciples of Christ.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 May: Today, be particularly mindful of your pride. Where are your words and deeds still motivated by pride rather than humble, selfless love? Where is pride causing you to look down on others or denying them your very best? Where is pride causing you to isolate yourself from others who would hold you accountable? Where is pride causing you to surround yourself with those who will tell you what you want to hear? Where is pride holding you back from forgiveness? Where is pride keeping you from service? Where is your pride causing you to trust in yourself rather than God? Pray to God that He will help you overcome your strongholds of pride. (Proverbs 29:23)

DBRP - WEEK 22, Day 1, Monday, 28 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+3%2C4%3B+Prov+28%3B+2+cor+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 28 May 18:

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1. 1 Kings 3:1 -- "Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David." Solomon began his reign by going against God's specific word not to entangle with Egypt, not to marry unbelieving women, and not to have many wives. (Exodus 34:12; Deuteronomy 17:16) Almost immediately, Solomon, the wisest ruler of all time, had sowed the seeds for his downfall -- "When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods." (1 Kings 11:4) Solomon's disobedience to God, the ultimate leadership failure, left Israel permanently divided until its final destruction. Why would Solomon directly disobey God by marrying Pharaoh's daughter? Solomon was following a common practice used by rulers during that historical period in order to maintain peace between nations. His decision was likely celebrated by many as a great step forward for world peace. But there is no real peace apart from peace with God. Solomon chose worldly wisdom over true wisdom which comes only from God. True wisdom would have been to fear the LORD and obey His commands, defying worldly expectations. If only he had trusted the Lord and remained obedient to His commands for marriage and holiness. Today, many of God's commands are viewed as outdated and out of touch with how the world actually works, and Christians have compromised to keep the peace and to get along. As a result, the Church is more divided than ever before, and Christians suffer the same consequences of sin as everyone else.

2. 1 Kings 3:2 -- "The people were sacrificing at the high places, however...." A historic trend revealed as a warning in the Old Testament for future generations is that while a nation is heading down a path of destruction, it often continues proudly in religious practices, deceiving itself in believing that all is well with God. "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35; see also Romans 2:11)

- Jeremiah 6:14 - They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.

- Ezekiel 13:10 -- Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash....

- Ezekiel 13:16 -- ...the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord God.

- Isaiah 56:10 -- His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.

3. 1 Kings 3:3 -- "Only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places." David was in disobedience to Deuteronomy 12. Why? Again, probably because everyone else was doing it. Here is another incident where Solomon's compromise set the stage for his future idolatry that would cause him to lose the kingdom. This is the deceptive, destructive worldly 'wisdom' of "acceptance", "inclusion", and "tolerance", that is so widely proclaimed today. But not every idea or lifestyle is equally valuable or beneficial. God is the Author of ethics, right and wrong, and opposites cannot both be right. No one on earth was smarter than Solomon, yet intelligence cannot overcome pride and an unfaithful heart. Every person makes a choice to obey God or not. There are really only two kingdoms on earth. The Kingdom of God, and the kingdom of man, with its many warring factions. Jesus told us to seek the Kingdom of God. We will soon read Ecclesiastes where Solomon laments at the end of his days over his ultimate failure to simply obey God and serve the Kingdom of God on earth faithfully.

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4. 1 Kings 3:7 -- "I do not know how to go out or come in." Humility is the path to greatness. Knowing that you don't know anything is key. God is very clear in his word. You cannot know how to make good choices without His guidance, and you cannot obtain the self-control required to resist temptation apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. 1 Kings 3:11, 12 -- "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word." Wisdom comes through selfless sacrifice, seeking what is right in God's eyes and best for others over self. You have to decide if you want wisdom or rather comfort. There is no growth in the comfort zone, and there is no comfort in the growth zone.

6. 1 Kings 3:13 -- "I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days." When you focus on God and others, God will take care of you better than you could take care of yourself by directing your efforts towards personal success and security. God gives His people abilities and success, not for their glory and comfort but rather for His glory. If you start to believe life is for you or about you, you have walked away from God.

7. 1 Kings 3:14 -- "And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." Intelligence and talent are not enough. Obedience is essential.

8. 1 Kings 3:26 -- "Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, 'Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.' But the other said, 'He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.'" There is worldly 'love' and then there is genuine godly love. The worldly form of love is ultimately focused on self – getting what you want from someone else, approval, validation, pleasure, gifts, etc. Worldly love, which is not really love, will eventually hurt the object of affection. Godly love is selfless – wanting what is best for the other. True love is ready to surrender everything for the sake the one loved. King Solomon knew that true love would be self-evident by the choices made by the one who truly loves.

9. 1 Kings 4:29 -- "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore." God can take you beyond your natural powers and abilities. He can empower you with "supernatural" (beyond natural) powers.

10. 1 Kings 4:34 -- "And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom." Solomon had a unique opportunity to glorify God before all nations. Unfortunately, he compromised his witness and was ultimately more influenced by them than an influence.

12. Proverbs 28:1 – "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Righteousness produces boldness.

13. Proverbs 28:3 – "A poor man who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food." There is nothing worse than a poor sinner who condemns other poor sinners.

14. Proverbs 28:4 – "Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them." If you love flowers, you must hate weeds. If you love righteousness, you must fight

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against evil. The best way to counter culture and fight against the evils of this world is to personally obey God when others won't, refusing to compromise as others do.

15. Proverbs 28:8 – “Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.” We can profit from our excess by lending it with interest to those who do not have, or we can give our excess to the poor and build our wealth by producing more. Throughout the Bible we can see that God wants us to build wealth by increasing our productivity, through industry; and in our productivity, he wants us to give freely. God forbids accruing wealth by charging interest in lending to other believers. God's retirement plan is to create industry that remains productive in your latter years, not by hoarding your excess in “barns.”

16. Proverbs 28:9 – “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” Don't bring God your prayers in disobedience.

17. Proverbs 28:11 – “A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out.” Wealth brings pride which brings destruction.

18. Proverbs 28:13 – “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Live in the freedom of honest, transparent humility. Be honest about your sin. Do not conceal it in fear and pride. Your confessed sin points to your Savior.

19. Proverbs 28:19 – “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.” God calls us to produce and grow daily, growth in character, competence, and contribution. Don't waste a day.

20. Proverbs 28:20 – “A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.” Be faithful! This is the essence of character, the essence of life. People often ask, “What does God want for my life?” Often, they ask with a preconceived notion that God's will for them involves some version of worldly success – big, visible, proclaimed accomplishments. Many spend their entire lives chasing after big goals, believing this is what God wants for them. However, the Bible tells you what God wants for your life – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

21. Proverbs 28:21 – “To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.” People should be held accountable for sin, but we should not overlook their unfortunate circumstances that might have contributed to their sin.

22. Proverbs 28:26 -- “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool.” Questions?

23. Proverbs 28:27 – “Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.” Christians have the demand from God to give to the poor.

24. 2 Corinthians 2:7 -- “So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.” We must hold people accountable but with the goal of restoring them, not destroying them.

25. 2 Corinthians 2:14 -- “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us... and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.” We make the world better by spreading the knowledge of Christ everywhere.

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26. 2 Corinthians 2:17 -- "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ."

- True Christians only desire to serve Christ as an Ambassador, despite great expense and personal sacrifice.

- Some people use God's word for personal gain. Some have peddled it. Christianity has proven highly marketable. More and more, people are being directed towards books about the Bible rather than the Bible itself, all for a price. A quick online search of some popular Christian names will reveal them to be some of the wealthiest people on earth. The wealthy pastor or preacher stands in stark contrast to the example given by Jesus. "You received without paying; give without pay." (Matthew 10:8)

- In many other ways, people approach God's word from a self-centered perspective in hopes of getting what they want. Many read God's word as a self-help book in order to live happy, comfortable, successful lives. However, God's word is not intended to teach you principles but rather to lead you to the Person of Jesus, to guide you into a very real and personal relationship. Jesus explained, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) Eternal life is not knowing "about" God; it is knowing God in real relationship. It is not about receiving blessings from God but rather about receiving the blessing of God's presence. God did not introduce you to concepts; He introduced you to Christ. The power of your testimony is that you bear witness to the reality of Jesus Christ, and the evidence of your genuine encounter with the Living God is apparent in how you have responded to that encounter. You cannot bear witness to what you do not know or haven't experienced. You won't be truly transformed by what you haven't experienced and aren't experiencing daily. Yes, God's word, being truth, does, if followed, offer paradigms and principles that can drastically improve anyone's life, even a non-believer. Yes, you can repackage God's word, market it, and make some money. However, if you stop at principles and simply knowing 'about' God rather than becoming truly intimate with God, you have missed the prize and joy of eternal life, and you might be leading others to a superficial form of religion. What has inspired so many martyrs over the centuries? It wasn't a story they read, it was a Person they knew. Jesus explained that God's word is essential in our walk with God, but the power comes from the Spirit of God working through His word. Seek the Living God with all your heart, nothing else. Don't view the Bible as a supernatural success book. See the Bible as your conversation with God to build your relationship with Jesus.

-- Matthew 22:29 -- But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

-- Jeremiah 29:13 -- You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

-- John 4:29 -- "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

-- Matthew 11:28 -- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

-- Luke 9:23 -- And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

-- Romans 15:13 -- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

-- 1 Corinthians 4:20 -- For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

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-- 2 Corinthians 4:7 -- But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 May: Approach those who offend you with the intent to lead them to Jesus. Remember, your mission given by God is one of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 2:7)

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 7, Sunday, 27 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+kings+1%2C+2%3B+Proverbs+27%3B+psa+62%2C+63>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 27 May 18:

1. 1 Kings 1:1-4 -- "Let a young woman be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king and be in his service. Let her lie in your arms, that my lord the king may be warm." The Bible notes that, though this young woman was very beautiful, David did not have sex with her, addressing the obvious: why did David need a beautiful young woman to lie in his arms to "keep warm." It would appear David was still a womanizer, and even if he wasn't, this is still not the sort of thing an adulterer king should do because the perception alone is not good.

2. 1 Kings 1:5 -- "Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.' And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him." Adonijah did not consult God before assuming kingship. If your plan isn't God's plan, it is doomed from the start.

3. 1 Kings 1:6 -- "His father [David] had never at any time displeased him by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?' He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom."

- This chapter reveals David's 'fatal flaws,' things about him that he never mastered and that caused great heartache for him and for others. First, he was a womanizer; second, he did not hold himself or people close to him accountable for their actions, particularly, his sons and Joab. Do you have fatal flaws?

- Adonijah was very handsome like Absalom (and David). We are often enamored by the appearance, talents, personality, and popularity of those that would proclaim themselves as leader, rather than seeking to identify people of noble character and lifting them up.

- David lost the ability to lead, but did not effectively transfer authority to a capable leader, causing a leadership void. To whom will you transfer your responsibility (particularly your responsibility to proclaim Christ), and are you preparing them?

4. 1 Kings 1:7, 8 -- "He conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest. And they followed Adonijah and helped him. But Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and Nathan the prophet and Shimei and Rei and David's mighty men were not with Adonijah."

- There were priests on both sides of the "Adonijah" issue. Abiathar not only positioned himself against God, he counseled others against God. What a terrible place to be in life. Today we have many priests boldly proclaiming ungodly lies. They will face severe judgment.

- 1 Kings 1:7 -- Joab was a pragmatist who did what seemed right to him in his own eyes. His ways were not God's ways.

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5. 1 Kings 1:9,10 -- "Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened cattle by the Serpent's Stone." Adonijah attempted to validate his kingship with religious ceremony, but he did not invite the faithful followers of God. We may act like our selfish deeds are being done for God's glory, but God sees through that and will not honor our actions. One indicator that your successes may not be God's successes is if they are not being celebrated with truly holy people within your church who recognize them as the clear activity of God in your life.
6. 1 Kings 1:15 -- "Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was attending to the king." In their old age, David and Bathsheba had grown apart, and this had a negative impact on their adult children.
7. 1 Kings 1:49-52 -- Under pressure, the character of Adonijah and his friends was revealed.
8. 1 Kings 1:52 -- "And Solomon said, 'If he will show himself a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth, but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die.'" Solomon chose justice and mercy over revenge. He was willing to give his brother a chance, but was also ready to hold him accountable.
9. 1 Kings 2:3 -- "Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." David's dying wish for his son was that he would obey God.
10. 14. 1 Kings 2:5, 6 -- "Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals on his feet. Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace." David asks Solomon to settle the score with Joab (and Shimei), something David never had the moral courage to do himself. Your inheritance to the next generation should not be problems you refused to solve.
11. 2 Kings 2:8, 9 -- "And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol." David never really forgave Shimei the son of Gera, though outwardly he presented grace -- "And the king said to Shimei, 'You shall not die.' And the king gave him his oath." (2 Samuel 19:23) Have you ever offered forgiveness but inwardly harbored resentment? True forgiveness and grace are from the heart. God judges the heart.
12. 2 Kings 2:17 -- "Give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." Adonijah's request revealed his ambition to be king over Solomon. Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13) Do your prayers reveal what God wants or what you want? Is your desire "thy will be done," or "my will be done"? When you want what God wants, God will absolutely give you what you want, your prayers will be answered in the affirmative. When your prayers are misaligned with God's will, He will use the conversation to change your heart. Either way, your prayers are essential to your relationship. Communication is key to any relationship.

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13. 1 Kings 2:22 -- "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also...." Adonijah, by asking for Abishag, was actually attempting to leverage more political power against Solomon. Solomon saw through this ploy, realizing that Adonijah could never be trusted.

14. 1 Kings 2:32 -- "The LORD will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head." Again, the biblical theme -- God treats you the way you treat others.

15. 1 Kings 2:32 -- "He attacked and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself." Just because you are righteous doesn't mean God will protect you from persecution, even death. Your reward is fellowship with Jesus, now and forever more. Isn't that enough to make your joy complete?

16. 1 Kings 2:36-46 -- Again, Solomon did not just exact revenge on Shimei but rather sought justice and mercy, giving Shimei a chance to prove himself. Shimei failed the test. One might use this outcome to justify David's lack of forgiveness, but David had condemned Shimei prematurely.

17. Proverbs 27:1 -- "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." Don't put that big job off another day -- do it today. If God puts it on your heart, do it immediately. Delay is disobedience, sin. The Marine Corps definition of discipline is applicable -- Discipline: Instant, willing obedience to orders.

18. Proverbs 27:6 -- "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." Only a true friend will tell you what you need to hear. Others tell you what you want to hear for their selfish purposes -- they want to avoid conflict for their own comfort. Though many justify flattery by telling themselves that they don't want to hurt feelings, they are really setting someone up for more pain later. Most of the time the truth is hard on the messenger too. True love tells the truth in love.

19. Proverbs 27:13 -- "Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for an adulteress." God wants you to intervene to protect others from their own sinful actions. Again, this is an act of love.

20. Proverbs 27:17 -- "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." You cannot sharpen yourself completely. You were made for relationships; your mission is all about relationships. God gave Eve to Adam and Adam to Eve for a reason. God's greatest commandment to us is to love. You cannot grow in love in isolation. If you fancy yourself as a loner, you have a heart problem.

21. Psalm 62:1 -- "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation." Wait for God in silence before just acting on your own knowledge and perceived wisdom. True wisdom is a spiritual discernment, not just an intellectual exercise.

22. Psalm 62:9 -- "Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion." Personal power is a very strong delusion.

23. Psalm 62:11 -- "Power belongs to God." Remind yourself of this daily, hourly!

24. Psalm 63:1 -- "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." Do you thirst for God?

25. Psalm 63:1 -- "Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you." The love of God is better than life -- it is eternal life. See John 17:3

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 May: Wait in silence for The Lord today. Wait on Him. Cast your cares upon Him, and trust Him with your issues. The world would say, "Don't just stand there; do something!" God says, "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 62:1; Psalm 37:7; Psalm 46:10)

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 6, Saturday, 26 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2Sam+23%2C24%3B+Proverbs+26%3B+psa+61>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 26 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 23:1, 2 – "Now these are the last words of David... 'The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.'" Will your last words be about God, from God?
2. 2 Samuel 23:2 -- "The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; His word is on my tongue." The Bible is the inspired (God-breathed) word of God given to men to record. We were created by God in the physical form for the express purpose of translating (through word and deed) His Spiritual truth and will into the physical world for His purposes and for His glory. When David operated in the Spirit, he performed His purpose. As stated previously, Jesus only spoke and did what the Father told him to say and do. He is our example. We should seek to do the same.
3. 2 Samuel 23:3, 4 -- "When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth." God called us to be the primary influence on earth. To govern world affairs through our influence that "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is impossible to rightly govern world affairs, a household, or any situation apart from a "fear of the Lord" and the power of the Holy Spirit. When Christians obey God, and influence others to obey God, they are the light of the world, and they promote life.
4. 2 Samuel 23:5 -- "For does not my house stand so with God?" Is your house a house of God?
5. 2 Samuel 23:6, 7 -- "But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire." Some people will refuse to accept the authority of God or the truth of God's word. You will not be able to convince them because they have rejected the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In their rebellion, they have rendered themselves worthless, and they will only destroy themselves and influence others to follow the path of destruction. We will face inevitable conflict with such people as we seek to promote God's will on earth and as they seek to counter it. We must resist evil and counter the influence of evil people, but we must never condemn those trapped in evil, always praying and hoping for their salvation, not knowing what God might do with them.
6. 2 Samuel 23:8 -- "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had...." God ensured that the names of the faithful were recorded for eternity. Their reward was eternal.
7. 2 Samuel 23:12 -- "But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the Lord worked a great victory." The faithful are willing to face impossible odds, trusting God with the outcome, which is hope.

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8. 2 Samuel 23:15-17 -- "And David said longingly, 'Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!' Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the Lord and said, 'Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?'" David reflects on several leadership lessons in these verses. First, leaders must be very careful not to communicate in a self-centered way to others, even casually. Second, all good leaders are first great followers, willing to do whatever it takes to be obedient and to obey their leader -- our leader is Jesus who always seeks the perfect will of the Father. Finally, leaders must never put their own desires ahead of the needs of others. David refused to drink water that was not available to his troops. Leaders take care of themselves last. This, of course, is contrary to the example of worldly leadership. Do our politicians have more or less than those they presume to lead? Does your pastor have a bigger or smaller house than those with his congregation? Did Jesus have more or less than those who walked with him day by day? Note that coincident with the fall of David was his pursuit of materialism and comfort.

9. 2 Samuel 23:39 -- Uriah the Hittite was one of David's mighty men. Uriah's character, competence, and fidelity did not prevent him from becoming a victim in the worse possible way. His integrity did not guarantee His security. However, his reward is eternal. If our motivation or incentive for fidelity is earthly reward, we do not have real fidelity, we are deceiving ourselves, and we will be sorely disappointed. Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, was murdered by David who had taken from him the one thing he cared most about on this earth, his wife. Yet, God directed David, Uriah's murderer, to list Uriah in the honor roll of the faithful. Within God's eternal, public record, David's secret sin has been exposed as has the fidelity of David's victim. Only through complete humility, a total reliance and faith in the grace of God, and complete surrender could David write the name, Uriah.

10. 2 Samuel 23:1 -- "Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'" This is a difficult Bible verse to understand, an apparent contradiction in God's word. Did God really force David to sin? 1 Chronicles 21:1 says, "Now Satan [rather than God] stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel." And James 1:13 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one." Simply stated, Satan does the tempting, and at times, God allows the temptation in order to expose the truth of people's hearts. The Father allowed the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the desert to expose the truth of Jesus's heart. Jesus was tempted externally by Satan, but He was not tempted internally, proving to be wholly faithful. On the contrary, God allowed Satan to tempt David, and David was tempted externally by Satan and internally within his own heart, exposing the pride that remained in both him and the Israelites. In fact, there was nothing sinful about conducting a census, God had directed it before. What was sinful was not the conduct of the census but rather David's motivation for conducting a census. God fully knew David's heart and the sinful pride of the people, but they could not see it in themselves, so God had to expose it. So, when David wanted to conduct a census for all the wrong reasons, God essentially said, "Do what is on your heart," turning David over to His own sinful desires that he would face the consequences. Both David and the Israelites are soon to get a God smack and learn a lesson.

11. 2 Samuel 24:3 -- "Why does my lord the king delight in this thing?" What was wrong with numbering the troops? Census-taking under the Law of Moses was not inherently evil. In fact, God actually

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commanded Moses to number the Israelite soldiers on two different occasions—once in the second year after deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and again about forty years later near the end of Israel's wanderings in the desert (Numbers 1:1-3,19; 26:2-4). It was wrong in David's case because of the motives behind the action. David was measuring his might in pride as if Israel's strength was a sign of his greatness rather than God's. God will not share the glory. It is interesting that ruthless, prideful, Joab could see the sin David could not see. Joab, yes, Joab, tried to convince David not to do this thing, but David would not listen. Have you ever been blinded by pride this way? What were the consequences?

12. 2 Samuel 24:10, 11 -- "But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly.' And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer." In 2 Samuel 23, David received and recorded the direct word of God. However, now in his guilt, David could only feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit but could not hear God's word. This time, God spoke to David through a prophet.

13. 2 Samuel 24:11-16 -- Repentance doesn't mean you will escape God's discipline. God's discipline is not a form of revenge but rather God's chisel to shape a hard heart. The amount of discipline required depends upon the hardness of the heart. True repentance accepts God's discipline without resentment.

14. 2 Samuel 24:12 -- "Thus says the LORD, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you." Within His Sovereignty, God gives us freedom to choose, and He accomplishes His will regardless of our choices.

15. 2 Samuel 24:16 -- God does show mercy in discipline.

16. 2 Samuel 24:17 -- Other people do suffer because of your sins. Though God allows this suffering, it is not unjust. All are deserving of eternal death. In his discipline, God simply applies less grace to those who justly deserve none. And, He promises to bring all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. In discipline, even discipline unto death, one should remain grateful that any grace remains.

17. 2 Samuel 24:24 -- "I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing." True love is a true sacrifice.

18. 2 Samuel 24:25 -- God honors your prayer of intercession for the sufferings of others when you repent and obey Him.

19. Proverbs 26:3 -- "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools." Animals lack moral attributes and only operate in the mode of stimulus-response. They seek comfort and avoid pain. Animals are motivated primarily by fear and a survival instinct. Humans that are not led by the Spirit and love essentially relegate themselves to the level of an animal. In fact, our popular "science" today now assumes we are nothing more than a higher form of animal, a descendant of the lower forms. Those who act like animals will be treated like animals by God. Even many Christians act like animals, approaching God merely to receive His blessings and to avoid His curses. They are like dogs who want treats and want avoid discipline. God wants His people to move past mere animal-like instincts into the spiritual realm, to approach Him in love, to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

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20. Proverbs 26:12 -- "Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. If you think you have wisdom, you are in big trouble. Wisdom can only come from God, and God says His thoughts are infinitely removed from yours. Wisdom only comes through revelation, not through human reason. Revelation only comes through the Holy Spirit working through much prayer and God's word. Do you want to know what you should do? You must pray, pour into God's word, walk in obedience, and listen for that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.

21. Proverbs 26:18-28 -- Jesus said that we will be held accountable for EVERY careless word that comes out of our mouths. Our words have power, either impacting others in a positive way or a negative way. Jesus said that He only spoke what the Father told Him to speak which is what we are called to do too. If our words are not the product of the Spirit, they are ungodly and wrong, sinful. If you aren't speaking on behalf of Jesus, keep your mouth shut. If there is any agenda behind your words, that agenda had better be the Great Commission, the Great Commandment, and the mission of reconciliation.

22. Psalm 61:8 -- "So will I ever sing praises to your name, as I perform my vows day after day." True love for God causes you to praise Him and obey Him.

23. Psalm 61:8 -- Worship God, not just in song, ceremony, or sacrifice, but, more importantly, it is shown in humility and fidelity. Worship not just in spirit but in "truth," in deed. Decisions without action are lies to self and to God. Integrity comes from follow-through.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 May 16: Examine the motives behind your actions today. Why do you do what you do? You could be doing the right things for the wrong reasons, sinning against God in your apparently good deeds because of selfish motives. You may be motivated by fear, pride, ego, or a sense of duty, but above all of these, God wants you to motivated by selfless love. How many of your decisions are wholly selflessly loving? Of course, our motives are never wholly pure in love as we are not yet perfected in love through our sanctification. But make pure love your goal, search your heart, and pray that God will help you grow in pure love, which is closer fellowship with Him, The God who IS love (2 Samuel 24) "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 5, Friday, 25 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2Sam+21%2C22%3B+Proverbs+25%3B+2+Cor+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 25 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 21:1-14-- For generations, Saul's family suffered the consequences of his sins, long after he had died. Compare with Exodus 20:5. We can't fully comprehend the seriousness of the sins we often treat so lightly. Even the sins we consider to be insignificant can have a devastation ripple effect, often beyond our awareness. But the unthinkable truth of our 'little' sins is that we have committed cosmic treason by defying the Lordship and Authority of the Sovereign God. If just for that moment, we have sought to remove Him from the throne in our lives. In that small sin, we have broken the First commandment in our idolatry (choosing something over God), and we have broken the Great Commandment (by not loving God enough to obey Him). As Hebrews 10:29 says, when we continue in the sins Jesus paid for at the cross, we "trample underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" Do not outrage, quench, grieve, or get out of step with the Spirit. Under grace, pursue righteousness and holiness as

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your act of love and worship. Many people ask, "What is God's will for my life. The Bible gives you the answer -- "This is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thess. 4:3)

2. 2 Samuel 21:2, 3 -- God will not allow you to go against your word, no matter the oath or to whom it was made.

3. 2 Samuel 21:3 -- God expects us to make atonement for the offenses we commit against others.

4. 2 Samuel 22:21-24 -- "The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his rules were before me, and from his statutes I did not turn aside. I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt." We are saved by grace and rewarded through obedience. God expects our obedience, holds us accountable for obedience, and blesses our obedience. Jesus commissioned us to go into the world and make disciples, "teaching them to obey ALL that [He] has commanded." All means all. Partial obedience is disobedience. When we lose sight of the holiness of God, and when we are no longer amazed by grace, we don't take obedience very seriously.

5. 2 Samuel 22:26 -- "With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless" God treats you the way you treat others. Compare this with The Lord's Prayer (or disciple's prayer) -- "...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

6. 2 Samuel 22:28 -- "You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down." The world views humility as weakness, but the truly humble have the power of God on their side. Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:4)

7. 2 Samuel 22:30-51 -- Strength, security, and success are in the LORD's hands. Salvation comes only from God.

8. Proverbs 25:7, 8 -- "What your eyes have seen do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?" Don't be too quick to judge. Your observations are very limited and clouded by preconceived notions and sometimes emotion. Be careful not to judge a situation or person from a position of self-interest. You represent Christ, not your own interests.

9. Proverbs 25:9 -- "Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret." Settle matters one-on-one, quietly in order to preserve the dignity of both parties and to protect the relationship. Don't let an issue distract you or others from Jesus. Better to surrender your rights in a matter than to lose focus on your mission of reconciling yourself and others to Jesus. Life is not about you; it is about Him. You are just a humble servant and messenger. Whatever you give up for the sake of love, God can replace a thousand fold.

10. Proverbs 25:14 -- "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give." Don't make promises you don't intend to keep, even as a casual gesture, such as saying to someone you bump into who you haven't seen in a long time, "Let's keep in touch."

11. 2 Corinthians 1:1 -- "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..." How do you introduce yourself?

12. 2 Corinthians 1:2 -- "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Are you, first and foremost, a messenger of grace and peace to others in the Name of Jesus? Is this what you

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communicate in your words and deeds? Would others describe you as a minister of grace and peace as a representative of Jesus? Does your very presence in a gathering fundamentally change the environment and bring a spirit of grace and peace?

13. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 -- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." Do you reveal God to others as a Father of mercies and comfort? Do you happily accept affliction from others so that you can reflect God's character of mercy? Do you understand that hurting people hurt others, and do you seek to provide comfort rather than to condemn? God comforts you in afflictions so that you can comfort others. God has tasked you with comforting others in affliction. How are you doing on that task day by day?

14. 2 Corinthians 1:12 -- "For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you." Another word for "simplicity" above is "holiness." The credibility of our message will be judged by the world and other Christians by the simple holiness of our daily behavior which stands out in stark contrast to the world around us. Our attitude and behavior as we face the same trials others face reveals what we really believe to be true about our God. Does your attitude, words, and behavior glorify God? If you have failed in the past (which we all have), today is a day of new beginnings.

15. 2 Corinthians 1:12 -- "We behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God..." We are not called to win people to Christ through crafty arguments but rather through the simple word of God and through simple, sincere godliness. The Holy Spirit convicts hearts, not us.

16. 2 Corinthians 1:17, 18 -- "Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say 'Yes, yes' and 'No, no' at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No." God expects us to keep our promises and our word as earthly examples of His character. We must strive to be 100% reliable.

17. 2 Corinthians 1:20 -- "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." Comments from Henry T. Blackaby: "God keeps every promise He makes. When we walk in intimate fellowship with Christ, we have the assurance that every promise God has made in Scripture is available to us. This truth should motivate us to search the Scriptures for each promise in order to meditate upon its potential for our life. Jesus promised that when you ask for something in His will, He will give you what you ask (John 16:23b). This promise is available to every Christian. If you ask God if this promise applies to your life, His answer is yes. If you are not now experiencing this promise, it does not change the fact that God has said it. You may need to seek God's answer for why His promise has not yet reached maturity in you. Paul claimed he had tested each of these promises in his own life and found them all to be abundantly true. That's why he could speak of the "exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7b) and the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8b). Paul had found a wealth of God's promises and enjoyed them all in abundance. Don't become discouraged or impatient if you are not experiencing to the fullest all of God's promises in your life. God may want to prepare you to receive some of the great truths He has made available to you. Walk closely with your Lord and, in time, you will see Him bring His promises to fruition in your life."

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 May: Treat others the way you want God to treat you. Demonstrate God's mercy, comfort, and grace to others. (2 Samuel 22:26; 2 Cor 1:3)

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 4, Thursday, 24 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2Sam+19%2C+20%3B+Proverbs+24%3B+1+Cor+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 24 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 19:1-8 – “So the victory that day was turned into mourning....” People will naturally look to leaders for encouragement, inspiration, and motivation. Leaders must be extremely careful to guard the morale of their people. It is important that leaders celebrate the victories of their teams. Don’t miss the opportunity to celebrate God’s blessings with those you have put their blood, sweat, and tears into the endeavor. Keep your personal disappointments to yourself.
2. 2 Samuel 19:3 -- Leaders can't send mixed signals.
3. 2 Samuel 19:6 -- People need to know they are loved and appreciated. Leaders must communicate their gratitude.
4. 2 Samuel 19:7 -- Victory can quickly turn to disaster without proper leadership. Organizations, groups, and teams are often most vulnerable immediately after a win.
5. 2 Samuel 19:23 -- "And the king said to Shimei, 'You shall not die.' And the king gave him his oath." This is an interesting story. When David was down, Shimei kicked him. Now Shimei wants forgiveness. David appears to give it, but later David will tell Solomon to ensure Shimei’s execution (1 Kings 2:8, 9). This event had all the outward appearance of reconciliation, but it was not genuine.
6. 2 Samuel 19:22 – “But David said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?” Times of celebration are not times to cause divisions or hard feelings. From a position of strength, seek reconciliation rather than revenge, thereby demonstrating Christ-like mercy and grace.
7. 2 Samuel 19:29 -- In 2 Samuel 16, when David flees Jerusalem after Absalom's conspiracy, Ziba comes to David with provisions, and claims Mephibosheth has broken faith with David. David responds by giving all that belonged to Mephibosheth to Ziba instead. Finally, in 2 Samuel 19, when David returns to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth tells David that Ziba had been lying. David responds by saying "You and Ziba shall divide the land." David seems not to know whom to believe, but most commentators have concluded that Ziba had previously lied to David in order to make himself appear to be the only loyal subject worthy of David's benefactions and entitled to Saul's property. The Bible is very clear that you cannot truly and fully know another person's heart or the true motives behind their actions. Also, you cannot know all the facts in a given situation. Sometimes we are forced to make decisions based upon limited information. In that place, we must pray and follow the principles of God's word as closely as possible. When we must decide a case between two opposing parties with limited situational awareness, we must compromise, perhaps giving more credit than is due one of the antagonists. As long as we are operating as best, we can under the principles of fairness, God will honor our decision.
8. 2 Samuel 19:35-37 -- People need to recognize their strengths and weaknesses.

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9. 2 Samuel 19:41-43 -- Regaining unity among a divided people is very difficult if not impossible.

10. 2 Samuel 19:40-43; 20:2 -- The split between North and South has deep roots in history, across many civilizations.

11. 2 Samuel 20:9, 10 -- "And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab....' (2 Samuel 19:13) "And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand. So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died." (2 Samuel 20:9, 10) Competence vs character -- Joab was an incredibly competent warrior (perhaps the very best) with serious character flaws that proved devastating to the king. David relied on Joab due to his competence and loyalty (on Joab's terms), but David should have removed him early on due to his lack of character which made him ultimately untrustworthy and dangerous. Perhaps David was a bit fearful of attempting to challenge Joab's power and considered his relationship with him a necessary evil. Nonetheless, the longer David stayed with Joab, the more dependent he became on him and the more entangled he became with the consequences of Joab's behavior. As we saw in the story of Bathsheba and Uriah, David had completely abrogated his military commandship over to Joab, likely because, in part, Joab was very forceful, competent, and uncooperative in execution. David likely felt it best to avoid conflict with Joab and to let Joab run the army. In so doing, David surrendered one of his most important roles as king, strengthened Joab's hand, and contributed to Joab's demand for power. Today, David seeks to reconcile with Amasa by giving Amasa Joab's position as Commander of the Army, and Joab responds by murdering Amasa. One can only speculate about what David was thinking here, but Joab's actions should come as no surprise. Joab demonstrated this sort of violent expediency against David's wishes previously (E.G., Abner: 2 Samuel 3:27, and Absalom: 2 Samuel 18:14). David handled Joab poorly and it cost him dearly. We all have a tendency to admire competency and overlook character flaws in others – big mistake. Between character and competence, character must be supreme. A leader or employee MUST be good at what they do, but it is MUCH, MUCH more important that a leader or employee is a good person who can be trusted to do the right things in the right way at the right time. From BOTH character and competence, trust and confidence are earned.

12. 2 Samuel 20:10 -- "But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand." You may not recognize your enemies when you meet them.

13. 2 Samuel 20:13-15 -- Some tasks require a powerful, experienced leader. God may call you to be that leader even if you don't necessarily feel like you are very powerful and experienced.

14. Proverbs 24:10 -- "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." Strength is built before you need it. Adversity reveals what you have built over time. Challenges prove what you are really made of.

15. Proverbs 24:11, 12 -- "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" We will be held accountable for not speaking out against sin.

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16. Proverbs 24:16 -- "...for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity." Everyone falls, but God empowers His people to overcome.

17. Proverbs 24:19-20 -- "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out." Oftentimes, the wicked seem to prosper, but God will bring all things into final judgement.

18. Proverbs 24:27 -- "Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house." Prioritize productivity over leisure.

19. Proverbs 24:32 -- "Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction." Truth is self-evident, it reveals itself. You can learn much by watching the consequences of others' actions.

20. 1 Corinthians 16:9 -- "For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." Comments from Henry T. Blackaby: "Open doors of service may also let in adversaries. Paul had many of both. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Ephesus, he was trying to determine where to go next. He chose to remain longer in Ephesus because of the open doors of service God granted him. Knowing that God had opened the doors of ministry, Paul was not going to leave, regardless of how many enemies he faced. We might assume that Paul would reach the opposite conclusion. In light of the opposition he faced, he could have concluded that it was best to serve in less hostile regions. Instead, Paul based his decisions on God's activity rather than on what people were doing. As you respond to God's invitations, don't be caught by surprise when adversaries try to thwart what you are doing. If you concentrate on your opponents, you will be sidetracked from God's activity. Don't base your decisions on what people are doing. They cannot prevent you from carrying out God's will (Rom. 8:31). Many times, the most rewarding spiritual work is done in the crucible of persecution and opposition. While Paul was in Ephesus, a riot broke out in reaction to his ministry. The city theater resounded with an angry mob who shouted for two hours in support of their god, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:23-41). Despite this fierce rejection of the gospel, Ephesus became one of the chief cities from which the gospel spread throughout Asia. It takes spiritual discernment to see beyond human activity to God's will. As you seek places of service, look beyond what people are saying to find what God is doing."

21. 1 Corinthians 16:13 -- "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." We have too many weak-willed Christians who act defeated. "Stand firm, act like men, be strong!"

22. 1 Corinthians 16 -- Paul was committed to relationships and cared deeply about his many friends, encouraging all to support one another and to look out for each other. Relationships come first in the life of a Christian.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 24 May: Overlook all offenses today for the sake of the Gospel. When offended, respond with shocking love as a testimony to Jesus. Don't worry about what you will lose in the situation. What you gain in Christ will be much more valuable. (Proverbs 25:7-9)

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 3, Wednesday, 23 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2Sam+17%2C+18%3B+Proverbs+23%3B+1+Cor+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 23 May 18:

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1. 2 Samuel 17:14 -- "And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'he counsel of Husham the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.' For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom." God arranges circumstances and changes hearts to fulfill His will. How important is it for us to live aligned to God's will?

2. 2 Samuel 17:17 -- "A female servant was to go and tell them...." God will use seemingly insignificant people whose actions seem insignificant to accomplish great, even historic works. God may use people you hardly notice (or never notice) to have a tremendous impact on your life. Also, the small, unrecognized roles you play may not be small at all in God's economy.

3. 2 Samuel 17:23 -- "When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father." Ahithophel lost all hope when his counsel was ignored. On what do you base your hope? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:2)

4. 2 Samuel 18:33 -- "And as he went, he said, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!'" The consequences of sin are devastating! To make light of sin is the worst kind of denial. The Bible describes those who do not consider the consequences of sin as "so nearsighted that [they are] blind." (2 Peter 1:9) Even more important than the practical consequences of sin is the fact that our sin is a direct affront to the KING, a direct challenge to, and rebellion against, His Lordship, an offense beyond measure. (Psalm 51:4) In our readings today, David, now facing the terrible consequences of his sin, wishes that he could exchange his life for Absalom's, but he can't -- Absalom is gone. If only David had "died of self" when God had first called him out and empowered him. David's choices to place his own desires over God's perfect will led to the death and victimization of many; it tore a nation apart. David's murderous adultery was a crime deserving of death; one cannot help but wonder how things would have been different if David had publicly confessed his sin and faced his own consequences. One of primary responsibilities of any leader is to take responsibility and to hold themselves fully accountable for their actions -- David did not do that at the expense of his family and the nation. Conversely, we see in our NT readings today that Paul takes a different approach. He very publicly admits his sin and in so doing proclaims the grace that he has received through Jesus Christ. Confession destroys false pride and also gives us freedom in our honesty. In grace, Paul has truly surrendered his life to the Lord and has chosen to work more diligently than anyone for the spreading of the Gospel. It was Paul's understanding of God's grace that gave him such passion to preach what was to him truly "Good News." The more we understand the magnitude of the mercy, grace, and love that we have received from our Father, the more we are inspired to conform to His will and to preach the Gospel to others. The greater we understand the implications of living outside of God's grace, the greater our urgency to proclaim the truth to a lost world.

5. 2 Samuel 18 -- David continually failed to hold himself and others accountable. He didn't hold Joab accountable, and he didn't hold his children accountable. Joab defied the king's orders and killed Absalom just as Joab had defied the king's intent in killing Abner. Joab did what he thought was right or expedient, regardless of what the king desired. David always knew about Joab's defiance but did not keep Joab in check; now it cost David his son. This was all a part of God's punishment of David for his own pride, compromise, adultery and murder. Though David was forgiven by God, David's sins cost him dearly for a lifetime.

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6. Proverbs 23:1-3 – “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you.... Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.” Gifts from the government always have strings attached.

7. Proverbs 23:4 – “Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.” Do not think that your security comes from wealth and so neglect your relationship with God in order to pursue riches. If you cannot find time to study the Bible, pray, fellowship with your church, raise your family as disciples, minister to the needs of others, etc, you are likely doing something wrong. People work too hard when they do not trust God for their future provisions or when they are not satisfied with what God has provided. Their insecurities and appetites cause them to toil to the point where they lose their peace and joy. They cannot even enjoy what they have.

8. Proverbs 23:15 -- All that godly parents want from their children is that they too live godly lives, surrendered wholeheartedly to Jesus.

9. Proverbs 23:17 – “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.” Obey and follow God; don’t just do what is popular.

10. Proverbs 23:20, 21 -- Bad company corrupts good morals.

11. Proverbs 23:26 -- “My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.” Your heart guides what you choose to focus on, but what you choose to focus on also affects the condition of your heart. We must do as Job did and make a covenant not to gaze upon what we shouldn’t in order to guard the heart. (Job 31:1) This is a premeditated decision.

12. 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10, 33, 34, 58 -- “For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.... Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’ Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.... Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” Paul speaks to what should be our response to God’s grace. Paul, having previously persecuted Christians, was very aware of just how unworthy he was of the incredible gift of grace he had received through Jesus. With that perspective, he worked harder than all the others, not to re-earn what he had freely received but rather to glorify God out of love for Him and to “know” God more fully (as opposed to the continued sinner who has “no knowledge of God” to their shame) and to make him known. Certainly, Paul was “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Today people might call him fanatical, judgmental, ignorant, and close minded. You are what you are because of your relationship with Christ. You are saved by grace, and grace should drive you to loving, impassioned obedience. Grace doesn't make sin less of a concern to us; grace makes sin unthinkable to us. When it comes to your faith in Jesus Christ, would you be described by these words – “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”?

- Galatians 2:20 -- I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

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- Proverbs 15:9 -- The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness.

- Proverbs 21:21 -- Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.

- Isaiah 51:1 -- Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

- 1 Timothy 6:11 -- But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

- 2 Timothy 2:22 -- So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

13. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 -- Christ's resurrection is the foundation for Christian faith, preaching, and hope.

14. 1 Corinthians 15:14 -- "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Proclaim the Resurrection. Our hope is in the Resurrection.

15. 1 Corinthians 15:22 -- Every person will experience resurrection but not everyone will experience salvation.

16. 1 Corinthians 15:26 -- Christ will destroy death.

17. 1 Corinthians 15:14, 20, 22-24 -- Love motivates all God's work. Do you have a love relationship with Him? Does this shine through in your relationships with others?

18. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 -- "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.' Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame." Avoid complacent Christians who use "grace" as a reason to make light of sin.

19. 1 Corinthians 15:55 -- "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" Comments from Henry T. Blackaby: "Over the centuries, death has been our relentless and unyielding enemy. No one, regardless of worldly rank, strength, or wealth has been able to escape death. As soon as we are born, death becomes our destiny. Many have tried, but no one has developed an antidote for death. The reality of the resurrection is that death has been defeated! It is no longer the impregnable enemy, for Christ marched through the gates of Hades and claimed decisive victory over death. He conquered death completely; now He assures His followers that we, too, will share in His victory. Christians need not fear death. Christ has gone before us and will take us to join Him in heaven. Death frees us to experience the glorious, heavenly presence of God. No illness can defeat us. No disaster can rob us of eternal life. Death can temporarily remove us from those we love, but it transfers us into the presence of the One who loves us most. God's glory is His presence. Death, our greatest enemy, is nothing more than the vehicle that enables believers to experience God's glory! Do not allow a fear of death to prevent you from experiencing a full and abundant life. Death cannot rob you of the eternal life that is your inheritance as a child of God. Jesus has prepared a place for you in heaven that surpasses your imagination (John 14:1-4). Death will one day be the door by which you gain access to all that is yours in heaven."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 May 16: Believing in the Christ is not the same as following Christ. The Bible says that even the demons believe in Christ. Our call is discipleship,

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sanctification, growing in obedience and in unity with Jesus. Today, seek the company of fully committed disciples of Christ. Choose close friends who will encourage you and walk with you in the footsteps of Christ.

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 2, Tuesday, 22 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2Sam15%2C+16%3B+Proverbs+22%3B+1+Cor+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 22 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 15:1-6 – In yesterday's readings, David and Absalom are finally reunited – “So he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.” However, there was never any real reconciliation between David and Absalom, and the relationship only continued to erode with inevitable and deadly consequences looming.

2. 2 Samuel 15:2, 3 -- "And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, 'From what city are you?' And when he said, 'Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,' Absalom would say to him, 'See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.'" It appears that David was not adequately fulfilling his responsibilities as the king, and Absalom was quick to take advantage of the leadership void. It also appears David's guilt and Absalom's animosity helped create an environment of division.

3. 2 Samuel 16:3 -- "And the king said, 'And where is your master's son?' Ziba said to the king, 'Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.'" Not everyone will return your mercy, grace, and kindness. Don't be surprised, just do what you know you are supposed to do.

4. 2 Samuel 16:12 -- "It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today." In humility and repentance, David surrendered to the will of God and left his defense and fate to God. Surrendered to God, he responded to critics completely differently than the way he used to and the way others did. How do you respond to those who curse you?

- "David was guiltless of the crime of which Shimei accused him; but his conscience reminded him of other flagrant iniquities; and he, therefore, regarded the cursing of this man as a chastisement from heaven. His answer to Abishai's proposal evinced the spirit of deep and humble resignation--the spirit of a man who watched the course of Providence, and acknowledged Shimei as the instrument of God's chastening hand. One thing is remarkable, that he acted more independently of the sons of Zeruiah in this season of great distress than he could often muster courage to do in the days of his prosperity and power." (Robert Jamieson)

5. 2 Samuel 16:20 -- "Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, 'Give your counsel. What shall we do?'" Absalom trusted in the counsel of a godless man rather than seeking counsel from God. Ahithophel counseled Absalom to sin greatly.

6. 2 Samuel 15:21 -- Ittai was a model of love and faithfulness to David while David faced the consequences of his own infidelity and suffered from his son's unfaithfulness. Meanwhile, God brought David to rock bottom in order to deal with his prideful heart.

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7. 2 Samuel 15:25, 26 – "...If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place.... let him do to me what seems good to him." David recognized that his fate was totally in God's hands, regardless his actions or anyone else's. Previously, David was desperate to receive the Ark, not as much to be in the presence of God but in order to gain personal power. Now, finally, David's priorities are reversed. He now wants a renewed relationship with God rather than simply the blessings of God.

8. 2 Samuel 15:31 -- "O Lord, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." David recognized that God influences the thoughts of people to bring good circumstances to His people.

9. 2 Samuel 16:3 -- Showing someone kindness does not guarantee they will return kindness.

10. 2 Samuel 16:5-14 -- Once again, David saw all circumstances within God's control and relied upon God for the outcome, for protection, and for vengeance. Notice how differently David responds to circumstances and to people after he has been truly humbled by God.

11. Proverbs 22:1 – "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold." Your character is your most precious asset.

12. Proverbs 22:2 – "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all." Riches mean nothing on Judgment Day.

13. Proverbs 22:4 – "The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life." Riches and honor and life are in the hands of the LORD. He gives them to the humble.

14. Proverbs 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." The formative years of a child's life are critical to life-long success.

15. Proverbs 22:9 – "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor." Giving requires trust that God will richly provide. Generosity is a measure of faith.

16. Proverbs 22:10 -- "Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease." Strong teams, churches, or organizations cannot tolerate divisive people.

17. Proverbs 22:11 – "He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend." Gracious speech comes from a pure heart; a pure heart is to be greatly valued.

18. Proverbs 22:14 – "The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit; he with whom the Lord is angry will fall into it." Adultery is a punishment from God against the adulterer who has already been unfaithful to God in his heart. "...none who touches her will go unpunished." (Proverbs 6:29)

19. Proverbs 22:21 -- "...to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?" God's word will give you a true answer.

20. Proverbs 22:29 – "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men." God expects you to be excellent in what you do. Your excellence will give you influence and magnify your testimony as you glorify God.

21. 1 Corinthians 14:1 -- "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy." Often those who are quickest to boast of their spiritual gifts are the most unloving. Love is the measure of the person.

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22. 1 Corinthians 14:6 – “Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?” Our spiritual gifts are meant to benefit others more than ourselves.

23. 1 Corinthians 14:37 -- "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord." Many of God's commands seem foolish to people. Many have developed clever arguments to refute God's commands based on current cultural standards. You will have to choose what you will believe and upon what you will act. “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15, 16)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 May: Don't respond negatively to criticisms, insults, slights, or other forms of unfair treatment. Bear the burden, and leave your defense to God. (2 Samuel 16:12)

DBRP - WEEK 21, Day 1, Monday, 21 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2Sam13%2C+14%3B+Proverbs+21%3B+1+Cor+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 21 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 13:3 -- "But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man." Real friends will encourage you to obey God, not to find creative ways to sin.

2. 2 Samuel 13:15 – “Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Get up! Go!’” Lust is not love, though we often use the word ‘love’ to describe lust. Even our Bible translation uses the word ‘love’ for ‘ahab’ which in Hebrew can mean a good or bad affection. Love is selfless. Lust is selfish. Love grows more love. Lust always ends in hate. Often, people will pretend to love in order to satisfy their lust. But when their lust is satisfied, hate is revealed.

3. 2 Samuel 13:21 -- "When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry." He was angry, but he didn't do anything. Amnon raped his sister Tamar, and David did nothing – wow! Amnon's crime deserved death; David does not appear to even address the matter but rather seems to act as if it never happened. Could this be because David himself was guilty of sexual sin that was deserving of death? Was he concerned about the risk of Amnon's crime further exposing his hypocrisy? Or was he merely attempting to do damage control, wrongfully protecting his son Amnon from the consequences of his crime? Whatever the reason, David is perverting justice, failing to protect the victims of this sin, and setting the stage for increased pain and destruction. In his guilt and self-centeredness, David has failed to address the reality of sin within his family, and it has and will cost them dearly. Too often, for many reasons, we fail to address the sins of those we care about. Usually this decision to ignore sin motivated by pain avoidance, the desire to avoid the consequences of the confrontation. We cannot lovingly ignore the sin of a brother or sister, being a party to their destruction. Of course the Bible is VERY clear that confronting sin must be done “in a spirit of gentleness.” (Galatians 6:1) “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-

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20) "And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh." (Jude 1:22-24)

- Galatians 6:1 -- Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:15 -- Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

- 2 Timothy 4:2 -- Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

- 1 Timothy 5:20 -- As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 -- All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

- Titus 1:9 -- He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:6 -- Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 -- And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

- Colossians 3:16 -- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

4. 2 Samuel 13:30 -- "While they were on the way, news came to David, 'Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left.'" Things are not usually as good or as bad as first reported. Stories are often inflated due to emotional excitement or minimized to avoid accountability. Don't be quick to judge a situation until the dust settles.

5. 2 Samuel 14:13 -- "And the woman said, 'Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in giving this decision the king convicts himself, inasmuch as the king does not bring his banished one home again.'" God's ways combine justice and mercy, holding people accountable while allowing for reconciliation. The world demands justice without mercy or no justice at all. (2 Samuel 14:10)

6. 2 Samuel 14:14 -- "But God will not take away life, and he devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast." The Father provided His Son, Jesus that we would not remain as outcasts.

7. 2 Samuel 14:24 -- "Let him dwell apart in his own house; he is not to come into my presence." Both David and Absalom desired reconciliation, but David could bring himself to offer total forgiveness. Partial forgiveness is not forgiveness and does not fulfill our mission of reconciliation.

8. 2 Samuel 14:27 -- "There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman." Absalom never got over what happened to his sister, and it

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affected his character development, his decision-making and the course of his life. It is a terrible thing to be driven by anger, bitterness, and by a quest for revenge.

9. 2 Samuel 14:32 -- "Now therefore let me go into the presence of the king, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death." Again, Absalom wanted to settle things with his father. Never be the barrier to reconciliation.

10. Proverbs 21:2 -- "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart." God defines right and wrong not people.

11. Proverbs 21:13, 21 -- Pursue love today by seeing and meeting the needs of others around you. Love requires genuine sacrifice. Sacrifice your time, energy, and resources today for those who need some love today. Give from the abundance you have been given through Jesus.

12. Proverbs 21:27 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." God examines the motives behind what you do. You can do the right things for the wrong reasons and receive God's disfavor.

13. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 -- God sees the true motive behind the deed. All of our charity, all of our good deeds, all of our accomplishments are just vanities if they are done from a prideful "aren't I good" heart. You can make great sacrifices for all the wrong reasons and receive no credit from God. It is only genuine if it comes from a selfless heart of love. "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."

14. 1 Corinthians 13:2 -- "If I... have not love, I am nothing." Love is the measure of the person, nothing else.

15. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 -- Our love is revealed by how we treat others in relationships, not by how well we accomplish tasks and projects or what deeds we do on behalf of a concept of love or religion.

16. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 -- "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." This is a popular verse at weddings, but this one of those verses we should probably read to ourselves every morning and then use as a nightly debrief to ourselves at the end of every day to assess how we did. To be a person who truly displays these attributes is far more impressive, miraculous, and powerful than speaking in tongues, prophesying, preaching, teaching, or anything else. Some Christians boast about their spiritual gifts or simply natural gifts, but few can boast of this sort of love. Love like this is genuine proof of a close relationship with Jesus.

- Comments from Henry T. Blackaby -- Love has no limits. Love never says, "You've gone too far. I can't love you now." "All things" means everything is included. Christlike love leaves no doubt in the mind of another that you will continue to love steadfastly. Do those close to you know that they can fail and do foolish things, yet you will not falter in your love for them? Are others assured that, even when they hurt you, you still love them, holding nothing against them? Love assumes the best about others. If someone inadvertently offends you, you choose to believe the offense was unintentional. If someone seeks to harm you, you "bear all things," forgiving unconditionally. If a positive light can be shed on a difficult encounter, you grasp it. If someone continually provokes you, you "endure all things." You

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never lose hope in the ones you love. You practice the same unconditional love toward others that Christ gives to you. Paul said that he was nothing if he had the faith to move mountains, the tongue of an angel, and the gift of prophecy to understand all mysteries, yet did not have God's love. It is unacceptable to say, "Well, I just can't love people that way!" When God loves people through you, this is the only kind of love He has! Read 1 Corinthians 13 with gratitude that God has already expressed this complete and selfless love to you. Pray and ask Him to express it through you now, to others.

17. 1 Corinthians 13:11 -- "When I became a man, I gave up childish ways." It is time to grow up in love. God calls us to have a childlike faith, not a childish faith. When an adult acts immaturely, we might tell him to stop acting like a child. Likewise, those who should be spiritually mature might need to be reminded what is expected of them.

18. 1 Corinthians 13:13 -- "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." The requirements of knowledge change over time, but the demands of love have never changed. Smart people come and go, but a truly unconditionally loving person is a very rare treasure.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 May: Make 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 love your goal today. Display these verses somewhere prominently; memorize them; recite them to yourself throughout the day; practice them; pray about them; compare your thoughts, words, and deeds to them; and evaluate your behavior.

DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 7, Sunday, 20 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+sam+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+20%3B+psalm+59%2C+60>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 20 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 11:1 -- "In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel.... But David remained at Jerusalem." To me one of the most shocking, tragic, and frightening stories in the Bible is that of David's adulterous and murderous deeds committed against his faithful warrior Uriah. How could this "man after God's own heart" do such terrible, terrible things (deserving of the death penalty), particularly against someone as faithful and dedicated as Uriah who was deployed in combat fighting for the king? If David, a man who had such a close relationship with God, could do such a thing, what does that suggest about the potential susceptibility to sin of ordinary people like us? There are countless lessons in this story which will continue to unfold as we read on, but when I look at the chain of events (or decisions) that led to this tragedy, 2 Samuel 11:1 jumps out at me – when David should have gone out with Israel to battle, he stayed home. Simply stated, David wasn't where he should have been or doing what he should have been doing. David set the conditions for his demise through his complacency towards personal responsibility. Complacency kills! He had let his personal guard down and had, as we say in the Marine Corps, "gone internal" or became "focused inward." His focus shifted from "He" (God) to "me." Self-gratification became the goal. Verse 11:2 expands upon David's mental/emotional state: "It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful." Why is the king, during a time of war, on his couch late in the afternoon or idly walking around the roof of the palace? As the saying goes, "An idle mind is the devil's playground." David's wandering mind led to wandering eyes which led to inappropriate inquiries which led to adultery and murder. Small decisions led to massive

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destruction (much of which we haven't read about yet). David should have stayed focused on his responsibilities and should have gone to battle with the rest of the men. You can imagine David telling himself, "I deserve a break; after all, I am the king, and look how hard I have been working all these years; Joab can handle it." Be very careful when you find yourself looking for an escape from the burdens of responsibility or commitment. During these times of weakness, you are very susceptible to sin. For most Americans the threat comes from where or how they seek entertainment or "amusement." In Latin the word "muse" means to think. In Latin, when you place the letter "a" in front of a word it means the opposite; so "a-muse" means to not think or to stop thinking. So, amusement involves letting your guard down intentionally, to "just relax and escape the concerns of life." Where do most Americans choose to stop thinking? In front of media devices or in front of TVs, which promote very destructive behaviors. Also, many choose to 'relax' at social establishments which promote excessive eating and alcohol. Does that make sense? "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8) We all need a break from work, but replace amusement with recreation, which is to 're-create' oneself. Do enjoyable, constructive things that refresh you, revive you, and contribute to a better you. Like your heart, your brain must never stop working. Have fun, but with a sober, fully engaged mind.

2. 2 Samuel 11:11 -- "Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.'" Uriah was a real leader. Uriah displayed the loyalty and fidelity one would have expected from God's anointed king. Uriah loved his wife more than anything, but he did not go to see her because the other soldiers in battle couldn't, and Uriah made this choice realizing that it could be his last chance to ever see his wife again since the battle continued. Uriah honored God through his noble character, yet God did not spare him from these tragic circumstances. The test of character is your willingness to do the right thing when no one is looking, regardless the outcome. Are you willing to be as faithful as Uriah even if it costs you everything?

3. 2 Samuel 11:15 -- "In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die.'" There is no limit to what a person enslaved by sin will do. Sin is selfishness. When a person becomes wrapped up in sin, others become expendable.

4. 2 Samuel 11:24 -- "Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." Many people needlessly died as part of the plot to cover up David's sins which, by law, warranted the death penalty for David. At this point, David made himself one of the greatest 'villains' of the Bible.

5. 2 Samuel 12:1 -- "And the LORD sent Nathan to David." God uses His messengers to communicate judgement. Nathan did not remain silent in the face of sin and, in fact, risked his life to confront David, the most powerful man in the nation who had already demonstrated his willingness to go to extremes to cover up his sin. What would you have done? How do you confront sin where you are?

6. 2 Samuel 12:2 -- "You are the man!" Perhaps no more powerful, more damning words were ever spoken to David. David often did the things expected of a godly, humble leader but from the wrong heart. However, Nathan has now exposed David's hidden hubris which has led David to tremendous, unthinkable sin. David's hubris was always there, and if you reexamine what we have read about David to date, you can trace the thread of this character flaw, this "fatal flaw," through many stories. Perhaps

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even Eliab had a sense of his younger brother David's pride when he rebuked him (seemingly unfairly) many years before – "Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.'" (1 Samuel 17:28, David and Goliath) Despite his moments of great faith, we have seen glimpses of David's pride, ambition, deceptiveness, sense of entitlement, and lack of self-control. David had a character flaw that grew over time, while simultaneously David grew more powerful, with fewer and fewer people holding him accountable -- a dangerous combination. Proverbs 18 says, "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." (Proverbs 18:1) Perhaps, if David had remained in the company of people like Uriah and Nathan, he never would have sinned with Bathsheba. David had a weakness; so do you. Under what conditions are you most vulnerable to sin? Who is your Nathan? Who knows you well enough to see in you what you cannot or will not see in yourself, and who do you respect and trust enough to tell you the truth about yourself? Who have you placed in position to protect you against yourself? This person usually cannot be your spouse or a member of the opposite sex. This person should ideally be a senior mentor or trusted peer who shares your faith perspective, sees you perform your daily functions, and has the courage to speak candidly to you with the right mix of firmness and gentleness. Pray for a Nathan if you don't have one, and make a conscious effort to place protective barriers around yourself where you know you are weak.

7. 2 Samuel 12:3 -- "But the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb." David took Uriah's everything without blinking an eye. Bathsheba abandoned the one who loved her with his life. Shocking! Yet David and Bathsheba are in the genealogy of Jesus. In fact, Mathew 1:6 describes their roles in the genealogy this way – "And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah." Bathsheba is not listed as the wife of David but rather Uriah! How are we to reconcile all this? As with all stories of the Bible, this story is a testimony to our total depravity and our total reliance on the grace of God. Take note that those who are often called "heroes" of the Bible fail greatly in their areas of strength. Abraham, known for his great faith, impregnated Hagar rather than waiting on God's promise. Moses, the humblest man of his time, lost his temper and sought to share glory with God at the rock. We will soon read that Solomon, the wisest man on earth, foolishly and permanently divided the kingdom. Courageous Peter will deny Jesus three times when confronted by a group of strangers. God will humble us in our pride and tear down our idols so we will understand our total reliance on Him and Him alone. If our hope is in our abilities, we have no hope at all. We must build our house on the rock of Jesus. "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7)

8. 2 Samuel 12:5, 6 -- "Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'" In the Name of The Lord, David imposed judgment on others he was not willing to impose upon himself. David's crimes deserved the death penalty, but he did not hold himself accountable to the same standard. The Lord's Prayer (which is really the disciple's prayer), says, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Do we not impart a curse upon ourselves when we don't show unmerited forgiveness and grace to others?

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9. 2 Samuel 12:10 -- "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." No matter what David told himself about his sin. The truth was that he committed adultery because, in his heart, he really despised God. In his shocking sin, David had rejected the Almighty as Lord. The ripple effect of David's sin lasted for generations.

- Comments from Henry T. Blackaby on 2 Samuel 12:10 -- What is required for God to forgive sin? Repentance. But even repentance does not ensure the removal of the consequences of sin. The consequences often remain as a reminder of the terrible, destructive nature of sin. David was forgiven for his grievous sins of lust, adultery, robbery, and murder. God forgave him absolutely and removed his sin from him completely (Ps. 103:12). God did not, however, remove the pain that David would endure as a result of his transgressions. The child born of David's adultery died (2 Sam. 12:14). David's son Amnon raped David's daughter Tamar (2 Sam. 13:14). David's son Absalom murdered Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28-29). Absalom brought the kingdom into rebellion (2 Sam. 15). For the rest of David's reign, violence filled his home and his kingdom. Although David knew he was forgiven, he bore the painful consequences of his sin for the rest of his life. It is presumptuous to assume that God removes every consequence the moment you repent of your sin. Do not think that the instant you show remorse God will restore everything as it was. He may not. Some sins, such as adultery, come from a flawed character. God forgives sin immediately upon repentance, but it takes longer to build character. It is character, not forgiveness, that determines what God brings next to your life. Because we know the devastating consequences of our disobedience, let us diligently avoid every sin and "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1b).

10. 2 Samuel 12:11 -- "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.'" Throughout the Bible, God punishes by giving sinners a taste of their own medicine. What David did to Uriah secretly would now be done to David publicly. In fact, David's sin has been exposed and recorded for all eternity, which is why we are now reading about it.

11. 2 Samuel 12:13 -- "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die." This is an example of "Amazing Grace" -- The Lord did not condemn David. However, grace did not free David from life-long punishment. Jesus was not done with David and would use discipline to sanctify Him. No one wants to be disciplined, but God's goal for us is not to comfort us but to draw us closer to Him. "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:11, 12)

12. 2 Samuel 12:23 -- "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." There is no sense in lamenting the past. What is done is done. Be faithful with today, and trust God with the future. David knew he would see his son in the afterlife.

13. 2 Samuel 12:24 -- "Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the LORD loved him." David's sin did not detract from God's love for Solomon. Solomon was the child of adulterous parents, but that did not affect his relationship with God. It is not from where you came that matters; what matters is who you are with. With Jesus, you are a new creation. When He is with you, who can be against you? In Him, there is no condemnation.

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14. 2 Samuel 12:28 -- "Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called by my name." While David was wrapped up in personal issues, Joab was doing the work of the king. Slowly David was losing respect and credibility. A leadership void will be filled by someone, perhaps the wrong one. Leaders must lead. We are called to be leaders in love, to be the primary influencers in our environments for God's glory. If we don't lead people to Christ, someone else will lead them away from Christ.

15. 2 Samuel 12:28 -- David has allowed himself to become too dependent on Joab for his successes; this hindered David's willingness to hold Joab accountable later, which would eventually lead to the death of David's son. When you rely on someone else's strength, you promote your own weakness.

16. Proverbs 20:6 -- "Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?" Truly faithful people are a very rare commodity.

17. Proverbs 20:11 -- "Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright." Our true character is eventually revealed by our habitual actions. What is in the well comes out in the bucket.

18. Proverbs 20:24 -- "A man's steps are from the Lord; how then can man understand his way?" Trust the path of your life to the LORD and focus on obedience

19. Psalm 59:7 -- "...for 'Who,' they think, 'will hear us?'" Sinners think they are getting away with something. Sometimes we think they are too. Check your perspective.

20. Psalm 59:9 -- "...you, O God, are my fortress." When God is your fortress, what worries should you have? Who can threaten you?

21. Psalm 59:11 -- "Kill them not, lest my people forget; make them totter by your power and bring them down, O Lord, our shield!" David's sins deserved death, and God could have delivered it, but God made an example of David that His people would never forget; and God used David to reveal the greater truth of His grace.

22. Psalm 60:11 -- "Vain is the salvation of man!" There is no strength, no peace, no success, no hope apart from God. Many people are striving today to create their own heaven on earth and to achieve their own salvation from sorrow, pain and death. They come to no lower point in life than when they eventually realize that they hoped in nothing. Salvation is only found in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Bible offers many practical steps to better living, but we must be very careful not to turn the Bible into a supernatural self-help book or to preach good advice to others rather than Jesus. The goal of the Bible is found in John 17 -- knowing Him and being one with Him. The goal is not comfort but rather Christ Himself.

23. Psalm 60:12 -- "With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes." Victory is in the hands of The Lord.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 20 May: "God has spoken in his holiness...." Pray to God with your ears open. Prayer is a two-way conversation. Listen patiently for God's response to your prayers. Listening requires attentive silence. (Psalm 60:6-8).

DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 6, Saturday, 19 May 2018

2018 Defenders Bible Reading Plan Study Notes

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+sam+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+19%3B+psalm+58>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 19 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 9:8 -- "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" The appropriate response to grace is humility.

2. Today in 2 Samuel 10, David sends a delegation to king Hanun to console him concerning the recent death of his father. Hanun, the young, inexperienced, poorly advised king of the Ammonites misinterprets David's gesture of kindness, believing it to be a trick, and responds by publicly humiliating and dishonoring David's envoys. The result is a pointless war between the Israelites, Ammonites and Syrians where over 40,000 people needlessly die. It is not at all hard to understand why Hanun acted the way he did: sending spies as envoys is a common tactic, and David's modus operandus included this sort of deception. Remember in 1 Samuel 27, king Achish trusted David while David was secretly massacring villages within his land, leaving "neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath." (1 Samuel 27:11) During the death of a king and the subsequent transition to new leadership, a kingdom is very vulnerable, and Hanun surely felt insecure and defensive. A wiser David would have recognized the sensitivity of the situation and would have dealt with Hanun more carefully; but David, rather than considering Hanun's perspective, assumed that Hanun would see things from his perspective, a big mistake we often make in our relationships. Hanun on the other hand reacted to David's poorly timed gesture rashly, likely due to his insecurity as a new king. Insecurity makes people defensive and often causes them to assume the worst in others. Insecurity can destroy relationships. Hanun did one of the worse things someone can do in a relationship, he belittled, embarrassed, humiliated and dishonored David and his men. He robbed them of their dignity. In this case, neither party had the maturity, self-confidence, or moral courage to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. It continued to escalate into great destruction. The first rule in relationships is to seek first to understand rather than be understood. We must be sensitive to the vulnerabilities and insecurities of others. If we have offended someone, we must quickly seek forgiveness, restitution and reconciliation, even if the other party is not wholly innocent. If we have been offended, we must quickly forgive and seek reconciliation. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18) "Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Corinthians 13:11) Finally, we must NEVER dishonor or humiliate another person, but rather treat all people with dignity and respect.

3. 2 Samuel 10:5 -- "When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, 'Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return.'" Good leaders protect the dignity of others.

4. 2 Samuel 10:6, 7 -- "When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob, 12,000 men. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the host of the mighty men." Misunderstandings can escalate into tremendous destruction. "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out." (Proverbs 17:14)

5. 2 Samuel 10:9-15 -- Joab used the tactics of interior lines, forming a defensive circle in order to quickly maneuver within his interior to mass his forces against the more dispersed, thinner lines of his

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adversaries. He also exploited the weakness that forces of an alliance have in their inability to effectively reinforce one another. Much later in history, Napoleon would gain great success from implementation of these same tactics. Simply stated, Joab was good at what he did, and God used Joab's talents for God's purposes. God calls us to be excellent at whatever we put our hands to, and He will likewise use our talents for His purposes. When our talents bring us victories, make sure you give God all the glory. It is a terrible thing to try to share God's glory.

6. 2 Samuel 10:18 -- "David killed of the Syrians the men of 700 chariots, and 40,000 horsemen, and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there." All this and much more because Hanun humiliated David's servants. Don't miss the lessons in this powerful story, which has been recorded in the bible for you -- "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction." (1 Corinthians 10:11)

7. Proverbs 19:2 -- "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." Think before you act.

8. Proverbs 19:3 -- "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD." Don't blame God for your poor decisions and self-induced problems. Rather turn to God in repentance, and walk in obedience.

9. Proverbs 19:6, 7 -- "Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts. All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him!" People often approach friendship selfishly, choosing friends based on what the friend can do for them. People often approach their relationship with God the same way. How would you be treated by your friends if you had nothing left to offer them (including emotional benefits)? How would you treat a friend who could no longer offer you anything, not even the benefit of encouragement? How much does the quality of your relationship with God depend upon His blessings upon you? If God removed the blessings, would you love Him just the same?

10. Proverbs 19:11 -- "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." When offended, are you glorious or inglorious, sensible or senseless?

11. Proverbs 19:21 -- "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." Such an important verse! Isaiah 55:8, 9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." The key to life success and fulfillment is to align our thoughts and ways with God's thoughts and ways, but contrary to popular secular humanist teachings which have crept into even much modern theology, we cannot do this on intellect alone. A better education won't do it. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14) The key is to truly "know" Jesus, which was His final recorded prayer for us recorded in John 17 -- "'For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16) This is your goal in life. Know Jesus and make Him known.

12. Proverbs 19:21 -- Trust the LORD with all of your circumstances. Focus on walking in obedience and faith rather than worrying about what is going to happen next. Faith is trusting God now, enough to obey at the moment of decision; hope is trusting God with the future.

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13. Proverbs 19:24 – “The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.” Knowledge without action is worthless. True theology is not conceptual but rather applied. There may be much about the Bible you don’t understand, but if you apply what you do understand, you will have a tremendous impact on the world for God’s glory. Start with unconditional forgiving and giving and see what happens.

14. Psalm 58:3-6, 10 -- “Even from birth the wicked go astray, from the womb they are wayward and speak lies. Their venom is like the venom of a snake, like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears, that will not heed the tune of the charmer, however skillful the enchanter may be.... Break the teeth in their mouths, O God.... The righteous will be glad when they are avenged.” The Bible says that we are all born sinners, trapped in sin; in fact, dead in sin, powerless to escape sin and to have spiritual life. There is no human remedy to sin, and no amount of education or social engineering can solve our sin problem. Will power can’t overcome sin, nor can laws. Only God can free us from sin and give us spiritual life and salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. We can only be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, not by any human action and not through any other religion. None of us deserved salvation, but God gave it freely, while we were still sinners. So, isn’t it ironic that while living in a state of grace, totally reliant on God’s mercy, we demand justice be imparted on those who have offended us or hurt us? We proclaim mercy while demanding personal justice – how can this be? When we start to mistake righteous through Christ for self-righteousness, we have a serious problem. Key to love, faithfulness, forgiveness and compassion is having a right perspective on the condition from which we have been saved and the love we have received from the God who saves us.

- “I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little (Luke 7:47).”

- “If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house. The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out (Proverbs 17:13, 14).”

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 May: As you walk in the freedom and confidence of grace today, freely give grace to others today as an act of faith, gratitude, and worship. Deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus in spirit AND in truth. Practically apply your theology. Fully accept your life mission as Christ’s Ambassador and as His reconciler. It takes faith to freely forgive and freely give to others who don’t deserve it; it takes a humble spirit that appreciates having received the unmerited gift of eternal life through Jesus. As you respond to circumstances and to other people today, consider your perspective – who is Jesus really to you? How you respond reveals what you truly believe to be true.

DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 5, Friday, 18 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+sam+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+18%3B+1+cor+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 18 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 7:3-5 -- "And Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.' But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, 'Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in?'" Nathan originally gave counsel to David based on what seemed right to him without actually asking God. However, God’s thoughts and ways are as far from our thoughts and ways as the heavens are from the earth. Our first response, based upon our own

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understanding, is often wrong. We need to be VERY careful to understand the difference between new revelation (extra-biblical revelation), Biblical revelation, human reasoning, intuition, and emotional (irrational) decision-making. By his own calculus, the prophet Nathan inappropriately advised David – “the Lord is with you.” God corrected him, and Nathan had to return to David with a different word. In fact, the Lord was not supportive of David’s intent to build the House of God. Though a genuine prophet, Nathan was speaking from his human perspective and reason. That’s ok as long as it is understood for what it is and not misrepresented as a word from God. Nathan knew that, in fact, God was generally “with” David, and Nathan was perhaps giving David general advice in lieu of specific direction from God. After all, Nathan did not say, “The Lord says....” However, Nathan’s first counsel, on no small matter, was presumptuous. Many today are far too careless speaking on behalf of God – “God told me....” or “God has revealed to me...,” when in fact they are speaking from their human perspective (hopefully at least informed by the Bible, prayer, and Christian counsel). Many self-proclaimed prophets and teachers announce new revelation from God that later proves to be false. This is why the Bible says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) How do you test the spirits? For one, follow the example of the Bereans who judged the merit of prophecy and teaching from the word of God – “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:11) God will not tell someone to do something that is contrary to God’s word. Second, consider the source by looking at the fruit of the life of the prophet or teacher. Those in the Bible who were appointed as apostles, prophets, and teachers were not self-appointed but rather appointed by God; were known for their holiness, humility, and love, and usually paid a heavy, heavy price for their position. Not a hint of pride should be found in them. Nathan was a true prophet; but not everything he said was prophetic. When God speaks; there is no doubt that it is God; God’s words will be very clear, and ALWAYS true. Most importantly, God’s revelation will never contradict His written revelation of the Bible.

- Jeremiah 27:15 -- I have not sent them, declares the Lord, but they are prophesying falsely in my name.

- Lamentations 2:14 -- Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.

- Ezekiel 13:9 -- My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions.

- Matthew 24:11 -- And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

2. 2 Samuel 7:7 – “...did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel.., saying, Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” David intended to do for God what God never desired from him. We can easily get wrapped up in activities, projects, or programs with good but misguided intentions. This is one of the reasons people are so harried and often burned out. “If only I had more time....” God has given you just enough time in the day to peacefully do what He intends for you to do, but no more. What are we doing that was never intended?

3. 2 Samuel 7:27-29 -- God’s promise of mercy and grace gives us courage to approach God in prayer and to count on His blessings forever.

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4. Proverbs 18:1 – “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” Isolation is a form of self-centeredness. Our command to love demands a life of relationships. The evidence of how much we love God is primarily revealed in how much we love people. A Christian loner is an oxymoron.

5. Proverbs 18:2, 13 -- Wise people seek to truly understand another person’s point of view rather than just seeking to defend their own position.

6. Proverbs 18:6, 7 – “A fool’s lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. A fool’s mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.” A foolish mouth only gets you in trouble. Always consider your words very carefully. Why walk into a fight. Even still, how could you since you have been given by God the ministry of reconciliation and have been appointed by Him as His Ambassador? Consistently remind yourself, with each new encounter, that you have been crucified and no longer live, that you don’t represent yourself but rather Jesus, that as a follower of Jesus, you must deny self and take up your cross. Your goal for all conversations is that Christ be revealed and that the other party might be drawn, in some way, closer to Him.

7. Proverbs 18:9 -- “Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.” Everyone suffers when people don’t do their jobs well. Make no mistake, negligence is a sin. Before God gave Adam a helpmate, He gave Adam a job. Before sin, work was worship; it was productive and fruitful. After sin, work became burdensome, secular. God calls us to return to worshipful work that glorifies Him. Work is an act of love, providing the best, our best, to others. Be excellent in all you do, and in all you do, do it for His glory.

8. Proverbs 18:13 -- “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” Fools interrupt others while they are talking. If, while talking to someone, you find yourself calculating your next response while they are still talking, rather than listening fully and empathetically, you are also being foolish.

9. 1 Corinthians 12:3 – “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit.” The truth of God can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit, human intellect cannot discern it.

10. 1 Corinthians 12:7 -- “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Spiritual gifts are for the benefit of others, not for personal glory or gain. It is never about you.

11. 1 Corinthians 12:12 – “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” Our spirituality is intended by God to be communal, never intended to be administered independently from the body of believers.

12. 1 Corinthians 12:12 -- Body parts strewn about is just horrific gore. So is a divided, disconnected or unfeeling church. If a part of the body is injured and the rest of the body doesn’t react, that is a very sick body.

13. 1 Corinthians 12:18 -- “But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.” God puts every person in a church for a specific purpose. Yes, even the ‘unmentionables,’ those annoying people who, in profane terms, might be called private parts of the body – “He’s a real” In fact, Paul says those people are essential to the body’s health and must be covered over in love, just as we do with the private parts of our human body. A church body can’t really learn to love without them.

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Remember, part of what makes Christian love different than worldly love is that we love those who are hard to love, even enemies.

14. 1 Corinthians 12:14-20 -- God establishes unity in diversity. God created the universe -- a unity of diversity, many different things coming together in unity of purpose. People attend a university, providing many diverse, disparate classes in an organized curriculum for a complete, well-rounded education. The word universe combines two words – unity and diversity. People today like to talk about diversity in order to promote individualism (albeit a collective call to individualism); calls for greater diversity are often divisive. God calls for unity of diversity – university, or *e pluribus unum* – of many, one. When others proclaim diversity, you proclaim university. Read John 17 to see Jesus' prayer for us. Jesus' prayer for us was unity, but not unity around a political party, a nationalistic spirit, a social stratification, or any other concept, rather unity in Him.

15. 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 -- "On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another." As stated above, in popular culture, people who are hard to get along with are often profanely called names related to body parts which remain covered in modesty. God says these people are indispensable to your church and should be treated with special care. God uses these people to teach you how to love people who are hard to love. God calls you to bring out the best in them, to help them draw closer to Jesus. If you separate yourself from them, you will not mature as you should. Watch and see how your church treats these people. Help others understand the essential role these people play and the challenge to love them unconditionally.

16. 1 Corinthians 12:23-26 -- The body depends on the "unpresentable parts" to be healthy and to function as a body. A body that cannot feel the pain of all of its members is very seriously diseased.

17. 1 Corinthians 12:26 -- "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." A body that cannot feel the pain of its members has got a serious, life-threatening disease. If a church doesn't feel the pain of its members, that church is terminal.

18. 1 Corinthians 12:28 – "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues." Administration is a spiritual gift, akin to working miracles. Miracle workers often receive honor from people, receiving their reward on earth; administrators often go unrecognized by people, receiving their reward in heaven.

19. Standby for the "Way of Love," presented by Paul tomorrow....

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 May: Today, endeavor to speak only the words God would have you speak. Do not give advice unless it is prayerfully considered and perfectly aligned with God's written word. Endeavor to speak only timely, uplifting words that promote peace, life, unity, and knowledge. (2 Samuel 7:3-5)

DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 4, Thursday, 17 May 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+sam+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+17%3B+1+cor+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 17 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 5:10 -- "And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him." David was successful because the LORD enabled it. Success is in the hands of God.
2. 2 Samuel 5:12 -- "David knew that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel." It's not about you.
3. 2 Samuel 5:20 -- "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood." David was successful while he was going to the LORD for instruction and following God's lead. God even gave David specific details as to how to be successful. (2 Samuel 5:17:25) During that time, David publicly gave God the credit for his successes.
4. 2 Samuel 6:5 -- "And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals." There was a great celebration, right up to the point where The Lord's anger kindled and He struck down Uzzah. True worship is not about great songs and much display; it is about a reverent, obedient heart.
5. 2 Samuel 6:6, 7 -- Uzzah assumed that his sinful hand was cleaner than the ground. He had no business being anywhere near the Ark, and he died "because of his error."
6. 2 Samuel 6:8 -- "And David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah." David was angry at God because God killed Uzzah, but ultimately it was David's fault as the leader. David set Uzzah up for failure. David led his men in flagrant violation of God's laws concerning the handling of the ark in accordance with the holiness of God. The Ark of the Covenant was most Holy, God's throne, and God was "above it" (Lev 16:2). The Ark was kept in the Most Holy Place in the temple where only the High Priest could enter, and only after much ceremonial cleansing. God gave very strict regulations for transporting the Ark. When the ark was moved, it was covered with at least 3 layers of cloth by the priests to protect others from seeing it (Num 4:5-6, 15, 18-20); the priests/Levites carried it and everyone else had to stay about a thousand yards away (Josh 3:4). These laws enforced the concept of God's holiness: sinful people couldn't be in his presence, not even the high priest. In his rush to receive the Ark, perhaps to reinforce his own power, David broke all of God's regulations. Following David's lead, Uzzah died from carelessly handling the Ark (1 Samuel 6:19). When God held Uzzah accountable for his complacency, David became angry with God rather than taking responsibility for his poor leadership. Perhaps, David did not know he was breaking God's commands concerning the Ark, but ignorance is no excuse for a leader. Bad leadership hurts others.
7. 2 Samuel 6:9 -- "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" When your desire for God is all about "me" you miss the mark.
8. 2 Samuel 6:13, 14 -- "And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod." All of this was unnecessary. All they had to do was obey the laws of Exodus 25. God desires obedience, not extravagant religious ceremony and sacrifice.

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9. 2 Samuel 6:16-23 -- The marriage between Michal and David was never based on love and devotion. Michal had love for another and despised David. David's pride caused great pain. The relationship was never right.

10. 2 Samuel 6:20 -- "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" Michal knew David's prideful heart.

11. 2 Samuel 6:23 -- "And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death." Deep seated resentment destroys marriages.

12. Proverbs 17:1 -- "Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife." God does not want us to work so much that we lose our joy or let stress affect our relationships.

13. Proverbs 17:3 -- "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts." God uses hard times to show you what you are really made of. He already knows.

14. Proverbs 17:9 -- "Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends." Love covers over offenses and seeks unity in Christ.

15. Proverbs 17:14 -- "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out." In most cases, no one really wins an argument.

16. Proverbs 17:16 -- "Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?" Wisdom is the key to success in life, not circumstances, resources, talents, or knowledge.

17. Proverbs 17:20 -- "A man of crooked heart does not discover good, and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity." A good life is cultivated by a good heart.

18. Proverbs 17:27, 28 -- Wise people are even-keeled and not easily angered.

19. 1 Corinthians 11:1 -- "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." We should be examples to others by imitating Christ, acting exactly like Jesus.

20. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 -- Customs and courtesies are often helpful visual reminders and acts of respect for the system of social order established by God. They speak to positional authorities and responsibilities, not to personal worth or value. Many honorable captains have saluted less honorable majors out of respect for the position, despite the person. God commands us to honor our fathers and mothers, not because they are always right, but because their position demands it. God does not call us to be contentious against rules of social order. However, customs and courtesies must never supersede God's specific commands.

21. 1 Corinthians 11:3 -- "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." Jesus is just as much God as the Father and equally worthy of honor, praise, and worship; yet He remains subordinate to the Father positionally. Likewise, wives are called to subordinate to husbands, but are not any less valued or less used by God.

22. 1 Corinthians 11:10 -- "That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." The Bible explains that marriage is intended to be a visible symbol/reminder/metaphor of

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the love relationship between Christ and the Church. (Eph 5) Head coverings were intended to be a part of that symbology.

23. 1 Corinthians 11:11 -- "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman." Again, the man and woman are equally important and interdependent, though they have different roles and responsibilities ordained by God.

24. 1 Corinthians 11:17 -- "But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse." In your relationships, are you making things better or worse? Are you reconciling or causing greater division?

25. 1 Corinthians 11:19 -- "...for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized." Some division is inevitable due to sin, but Christians must be true to God while continually seeking, from a heart of love, to bring others closer to that truth, not allowing their own sinful behavior to stand in the way.

26. 1 Corinthians 11:22 -- "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not." In our worship, we should naturally be placing others ahead of ourselves, from the heart. Leaders of love do not have to be reminded to eat last.

27. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 -- Jesus broke bread even with Judas, who he never kicked out of the group. Judas accepted the gift in an unworthy manner. We must continually offer peace and grace to sinners, regardless of what they do with it (which is their responsibility, not ours). We must continually search our own hearts to consider what we have done with God's grace.

28. 1 Corinthians 11:32 -- "But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world." The Lord disciplines His people in painful ways within His grace. Grace saves us but doesn't remove the demand for obedience of which we are still accountable.

29. 1 Corinthians 11:33 -- "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another." Again, leaders eat last. Worship puts everyone else ahead of self.

30. 1 Corinthians 11:34 -- "...if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment." If your heart is not right for the situation, best to remove yourself from the situation rather than add to your sin or misrepresent Christ before others. For example, when you start to become emotional during a disagreement, remain silent rather than say the wrong thing. Don't let your lack of self-control impact others in a negative way. As we continually partake in God's grace, we must always offer grace to others and put them over ourselves.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 17 May: Deny your rights, overlook insults, put sinners before yourself, and speak to others in a way that promotes healing and reconciliation, opening the way to the preaching of the gospel. Do this as an act of worship and in gratitude for the grace that you have received from God. Reference from today's readings: 1 Corinthians 11:34. Listen to others to truly understand them. Do not worry about making them understand you. Listen empathetically, seeking to promote love, unity, healing, and joy. Practice 1 Corinthians 13 love in your conversations today. Put everyone else ahead of yourself; submit to all authority, even if those in authority seem less mature than you (submission can be an act of leadership); obey God's commands. (1 Corinthians 11)

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DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 3, Wednesday, 16 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+sam+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+16%3B+1+cor+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 16 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 3:1 -- "There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker." David was anointed king, but he did not become king overnight; success did not come quickly or easily for David. Even when he seemed close to his goal, obstacles seemed to always be in the way. His situation demanded faith and perseverance. God calls us to work for what He wills in our lives.
2. 2 Samuel 3:6,7 -- Ungodly ambitions are selfish, self-centered ambitions; therefore, others cannot ultimately trust an ungodly person. Sooner or later, "me" will win over "we."
3. 2 Samuel 3:6-11 -- Power struggles never end well and counter our mission of reconciliation.
4. 2 Samuel 3:6-11 -- Leaders who are inspired by selfish pride and ego will be divisive leaders, abusing their powers, overstepping their bounds, betraying trusts, and abusing others. Abner was not motivated by loyalty to the house of Saul (though that was his claim), he was motivated by a quest for personal power.
5. 2 Samuel 3:14-16 -- "Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, 'Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bridal price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.' And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, 'Go, return.' And he returned." David pursued his own rights without regard for the collateral damage inflicted upon others. David's actions were not motivated by love but rather by pride. He demanded his rights (which also served to legitimize his claim to the throne) at the expense of compassion and grace. David broke a man's heart to get what he wanted, and he never again had the respect of Michal, nor did Michal have respect for him. Much of the Christian life, is surrendering your rights for the sake of grace -- denying self, taking up the cross (accepting persecution for the sake of grace), and truly following the selfless, sacrificial example of Jesus.
6. 2 Samuel 3:18 -- Abner conveniently quoted from God's word when it suited his own desires. He knew God's word but ultimately did whatever he wanted to. Politicians often use God's word to rally support for their agendas, though they might have little desire to conform to God's word.
7. 2 Samuel 3:21 -- So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.... [Joab said] 'You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing.'" Joab made an assumption about the motives of Abner which was not based on fact but rather on his hatred for the man who killed his brother. Joab's counsel to his king was biased due to self-interest.
8. 2 Samuel 3:26-30 -- "Joab... sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. But David did not know about it." Joab acted upon his own self-interest, contradicting the king's desires and intent in order to fulfill his personal vendetta against Abner. David did nothing about Joab's insubordination, washing his hands of the whole affair. This is the beginning of a pattern of unchecked defiance which will eventually cost David his son.

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9. 2 Samuel 3:29 -- "May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!" Despite his harsh words, David did not remove Joab as Commander of the army. He never really held him accountable. How often have you seen parents threaten and yell at their kids but never really discipline? How do those kids turn out?

10. 2 Samuel 3:36 -- "And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people." It appears that David's mourning may have merely been a show for the people.

11. 2 Samuel 3:39 -- "The Lord repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!" David declared Joab guilty of murder but did not punish Joab in accordance with the law. Essentially, Joab became above the law because of his value to David, a double standard was set counter to justice. David would later use that same double standard for himself, again defying justice. God is a just God. Justice belongs to God. To honor God, we must honor justice.

12. 2 Samuel 4 -- No one respects an opportunist or careerist.

13. 2 Samuel 4:1-6 -- When we partner with the ungodly, we set ourselves up for pain and destruction.

14. 2 Samuel 4:12 -- Again, David shows his double standard by executing the murderers of Saul's son after having washed his hands of Joab's crime.

15. Proverbs 16:1-3 -- "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established." If your plans aren't God's plans for your life, they are doomed to fail.

16. Proverbs 16:6 -- "By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil." The proof of your repentance is no longer desiring in your heart to continue in sin and by your changed behavior.

17. Proverbs 16:4 -- "The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." God has a plan for everything.

18. Proverbs 16:6 -- "By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil." The better our perspective of God, the easier it is to turn away from evil.

19. Proverbs 16:32 -- "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." The key to real strength is self-control.

20. Proverbs 16:33 -- "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." Nothing is left to chance.

21. 1 Corinthians 10:4, 5 -- "For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Believing in God is not the same as following God, not the same as being a disciple. We are called to make disciples, not merely believers. James says that even the demons believe in God. Love of God naturally produces obedience to God. God is never pleased with disobedience and doesn't just

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accept it as ok. Grace is not a license to sin; it is the power to obey in love rather than in fear and obligation.

22. 1 Corinthians 10:6-22 -- "Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.... We must not indulge in sexual immorality.... We must not put Christ to the test... nor grumble.... Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.... Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.... You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" The entire Bible not only warns us to flee from sin but also reminds us that, through Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin. We like to make excuses for our sin and claim that we "can't help it" or "can't control ourselves." Some will even go so far as to proclaim that, "God understands." However, the Bible points out that there is no temptation to which we can't say "No." The problem is not that we can't say no to sin, it is that we really don't want to say no – we choose our desires over what God commands; this is idolatry (placing something ahead of God). The Bible warns us, not to avoid idolatry, but to "flee from idolatry." We must actively avoid all sin before it becomes tempting to us. We can't be in fellowship with the Lord and with sin at the same time. As Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters (Luke 11:23)."

23. 1 Corinthians 10:7-10 -- All sins (defiance of God's will) from sexual immorality to grumbling, reveal rebellion in our hearts against the LORD-ship of God; they reveal a lack of love and render us guilty of the Greatest Commandment. This is idolatry, placing something ahead of God in our lives.

24. 1 Corinthians 10:11 -- "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." The Old Testament stories were recorded for our instruction. Dig deep into the Old Testament (which was quoted by Jesus regularly), and learn all that God wants to reveal to you.

25. 1 Corinthians 10:13 -- "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." Again, your temptations are no greater than those of others. You have the ability to resist if you want to.

26. 1 Corinthians 10:14-17 -- The blood of Christ SHOULD compel us to flee from all sin in our gratitude for the blessing bestowed upon us. It SHOULD compel us to likewise bless others.

27. 1 Corinthians 10:21, 22 -- We cannot love both God and the world. We cannot walk with God and continue to sin. Just as a married person cannot continue in sexual relations with others, the bride of Christ must be set apart as holy.

28. 1 Corinthians 10:23 -- "'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up." You can act within the bounds of the law concerning a matter and still be immoral by doing "legal" things that will hurt others. In this case, you would be breaking the ultimate law of love. We must consider how our actions hurt others. We must remain on the mission of reconciliation.

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29. 1 Corinthians 10:24 -- "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." We are called to do the most good for the most people, not what is best for us.

30. 1 Corinthians 10:32, 33 -- "Give no offense.... please everyone.... not seeking [your] own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." Don't let your behavior stand in the way of the message of Christ. Beyond our actions, our motive must always be love. Doing the right things with the wrong motives is sin for you.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 May: Today, take time to truly consider the motives behind your actions. Were you motivated by fear, hope for reward, a sense of obligation, or by the greatest motivation of genuine, unconditional love? God calls us to be motivated by love, not just duty, and definitely not fear, pride, or greed. (1 Corinthians 10:31-33) Deny self, proclaim Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:24-33) Journal how many times you resist the temptation to defend yourself and how many times you proclaim "Jesus Christ" to others.

DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 2, Tuesday, 15 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=2+sam+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+15%3B+1+cor+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 15 May 18:

1. 2 Samuel 1:1-16 -- The Amalekite's story differed than the account given in 1 Samuel. The Amalekite was merely an opportunist. He was driven by greed. Unfortunately for him, he misjudged David's motives and intent by projecting his own selfish motives upon David.

2. 2 Samuel 1:17-27 -- David did not rejoice but rather lamented over the death of his adversary.

3. 2 Samuel 2:1 -- "After this David inquired of the Lord, 'Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?' And the Lord said to him, 'Go up.' David said, 'To which shall I go up?' And he said, 'To Hebron.'" David didn't just do what seemed right to him; he waited for the Lord's specific guidance and direction. When David waits on the Lord's direction, he does well; when he trusts in his own understanding, he does poorly.

4. 2 Samuel 2:8 -- "But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim." Ish-bosheth took matters into his own hands and only caused divisions. His plan was contrary to God's and ultimately futile.

5. 2 Samuel 2:8, 9 -- When God calls you to a task, He does not necessarily remove all the obstacles or opposition.

6. 2 Samuel 2:20-27 -- Meaningless quarrels can quickly get out of hand and cause irreversible pain, suffering, and enmity.

7. 2 Samuel 2:22 -- "Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?" Pride and anger cause dangerous divisions between people who know each other very well, and they work against God's mission of reconciliation. If only Abner and Asahel had been obedient to God's command of forgiveness and reconciliation, healing and peace would have spread to many.

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8. 2 Samuel 2:26 -- "Then Abner called to Joab, 'Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn from the pursuit of their brothers?'" Abner wanted peace.

9. Proverbs 15:1 -- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." A mark of wisdom is tact.

10. Proverbs 15:8 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." God looks at the heart or motive behind the action. God is not impressed with empty or self-centered ceremony.

11. Proverbs 15:8-12, 25, 26, 33 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness. There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die. Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of man! A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.... The Lord tears down the house of the proud.... The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.... Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.... The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor." We cannot live in willful disobedience and expect God to honor our prayers and bless our lives. Rather, we can expect his harsh discipline. God despises even the thoughts of those who continue in unrepentant sin and act as if God doesn't really care. That person has made himself an enemy before God. God offers forgiveness and instruction; "whoever ignores instruction despises himself;" yet the proud will still blame God when consequences catch up to them. The trend in the church today is that "love" and "grace" are used as free passes for sin. However, what does the New Testament say?

- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 -- For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

- Hebrews 10:29 -- How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

- 1 Timothy 1:5 -- The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

12. Proverbs 15:15, 16 -- "All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it." Loving relationships with God and others is true life success.

13. Proverbs 15:33 -- "The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor." The greatest leadership attributes are fear of the Lord, humility, love, and faithfulness.

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14. 1 Corinthians 9:12 -- "Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." Paul did not demand his rights before others because he didn't want anything to detract from his preaching of the Gospel of Christ. He preferred to suffer maltreatment from others than to risk any conflict standing in the way of his message. Paul points out that self-control in our relationships and encounters with others takes great self-discipline, empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 9:25). Sometimes everything within us wants to "put people in their place," or "give them what for," but if we do, they may not hear another word we say. Are you willing to quietly and patiently suffer maltreatment from others, responding only with love and the Gospel message that you may glorify God? "Pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41)." 1 Corinthians 9:13 -- "Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ." We are called to surrender our rights for sake of the Gospel.

15. 1 Corinthians 9:16 -- "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" Do you say this? Woe to Christians who do not preach the gospel.

16. 1 Corinthians 9:18 -- "What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel." Preach the Gospel without regard for any reward or credit. Remove self from the conversation. Take yourself out of the picture. It has nothing to do with you, only Jesus. Don't make a name for yourself through the Gospel. Just Jesus.

17. 1 Corinthians 9:24 -- "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it." Keep your eyes fixed on the prize of Jesus. Running is hard; it takes every bit of your effort, sometimes you feel like you can't go any further, but you must keep pressing forward with all your might. You must run your best race, not getting distracted by the other runners, no comparison. When you are winning the race, you are often running alone. Don't be surprised if there are not many people who are willing or able to run with you. Find a running partner who can push you to new levels.

18. 1 Corinthians 9:25-27 -- "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.... But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." Self-control and discipline are key attributes of a disciple. It takes incredible self-control not to respond to abuse from others. Again, don't stand up for yourself. Read Galatians 6:1-3. Deny self; take up your personal cross of abuse, and follow the lead of Jesus through personal adversity as you love sinners unconditionally.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 May: Show shocking love by not defending yourself against maltreatment and by responding to evil with good. Do this as an act of worship and as a testimony to others for the Gospel. Think nothing of yourself, but preach the Gospel. Have the strength, courage, and faith to trust God to restore what is denied you by others. Don't let an issue of maltreatment stand in the way or be a distraction from the Gospel. Remember, when you defend yourself, you make yourself and the issue the center of attention rather than Jesus. Deny yourself and take up your cross in that situation, and bear the burden of the offense against you as a gift to God and as an act of fellowship with Jesus who suffered and died on the Cross for you (1 Corinthians 9:15-27).

DBRP - WEEK 20, Day 1, Monday, 14 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+29-31%3B+proverbs+14%3B+1+cor+8>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 14 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 29:9 -- "And Achish answered David and said, 'I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God'." In his deceitfulness, David misrepresented God before an unbeliever. Tragic.
2. 1 Samuel 30:3 -- "And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive." God showed mercy on David who had been pillaging Amalekite villages.
3. 1 Samuel 30:8 -- "David inquired of the Lord." Only in a completely helpless situation did David again inquire of the LORD. God intends for us to always live by Revelation which guides us beyond our human knowledge to reveal God's will. It is impossible for us to determine the will of God strictly from our own intellect.
4. 1 Samuel 30:23 -- "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the Lord has given us." Those who have received grace from God must, in turn, bestow grace upon others.
5. 1 Samuel 31:11-13 -- There remains a valiant few who will not do what the ungodly desire.
6. Proverbs 14:2 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him." How we live our lives reveals what we really think about God.
7. Proverbs 14:4 -- "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox." If you are going to get anything done, you are going to have to be willing to get your hands dirty. You have to break a few eggs to make an omelet.
8. Proverbs 14:5 -- "A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies." Liars lie as easily as breathing. Like the old saying goes, "I know he is lying because his lips are moving." You cannot trust a deceiver.
9. Proverbs 14:9 -- "Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance." Wise people seek to make restitution when they have offended others.
10. Proverbs 14:10 -- "The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy." Everyone around you is going through challenges you know nothing about. Show them grace.
11. Proverbs 14:12 -- "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." If we rely on our own understanding rather than Divine revelation, we will surely fail. You must rely on the wisdom of God.
12. Proverbs 14:16 -- "One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless." Christians are cautious, not reckless or careless, in their thoughts, words, and actions.
13. Proverbs 14:16, 17 -- "The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless." The world is wicked and full of deception. Many teachers proclaim godless lies, leading many astray. You need godly discernment grounded in Scripture and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Compare every philosophy, theory, policy, or opinion you hear today with the standard of God's word. Judge customs and traditions from the standard of God's word. Obey God's word over popular opinion.

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14. Proverbs 14:17 -- "A man of quick temper acts foolishly." If you get emotional during a disagreement or when offended, keep your mouth shut, and walk away so that you don't say or do a regrettable thing.

15. Proverbs 14:21 -- "Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor." Whenever we fail to love or care for others, even our enemies, we are sinning.

16. Proverbs 14:23 -- "In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty." Afghans have a saying, "Talk doesn't make flowers grow." There is no substitute for hard work.

17. Proverbs 14:27 -- "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death." Stay under the spout where the blessings are coming out.

18. Proverbs 14:28 -- "In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined." Life is about relationships. Leadership is all about influencing others.

19. Proverbs 14:31 -- "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him." The way we treat people who can do nothing for us reveals the quality and content of our love.

20. Proverbs 14:34 -- "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." God judges nations that condone sin.

21. 1 Corinthians 8:2, 3 -- "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God." We cannot even comprehend how much we don't understand and how completely dependent we are on the love of God.

22. 1 Corinthians 8:2, 3 -- "This 'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God." We have a tendency to be prideful in our "knowledge," considering ourselves better than others. However, in love we lift up others ahead of ourselves. The more we grow in love, the closer we get to God and the deeper our true knowledge and understanding. Paul said he desired to know nothing but Christ, and he desired to proclaim nothing but Christ. Is there any knowledge more important than the knowledge of Christ? How are you investing in your learning? How are you sharing the knowledge you have of Him?

23. 1 Corinthians 8:13 -- "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 8 deals with how our actions affect others, particularly weaker Christians. Two points jump out at me from this chapter. First, within the church in Corinth, there were apparently some who still believed that there really were other gods -- "Yet for us there is one God.... But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled." Though believing that there is no other god but God is an essential truth, Paul urges the church to go out of their way to be considerate of others' weakness and lack of true understanding -- "'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up.'" How many churches have you seen divide over far lesser issues than that? Second, Paul encourages the church not to eat meat that had been previously sacrificed to idols (likely very good meat) for the sake of those who still had a weakness with idols. I have heard these verses used most in discussions concerning alcohol -- "Should Christians in America drink alcohol knowing that we have such a problem with alcohol in our nation?" It is clear from the Bible that drinking alcohol is not, in isolation, a sin; only drinking in excess is a sin.

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However, 1 Corinthians 8 puts a greater burden on the decision to drink or not to drink – When you exercise your freedom to drink, does it influence others who cannot handle the freedom to drink to be tempted into sin? Should we condone alcohol use in a society that has such a problem with alcohol? This is a highly debated topic within the church. From our readings today, I would say that if you have any doubt about the impact of your potential decision to drink, don't drink. What does it cost you? Just a little pleasure. This is a small price to pay for your weaker brother or sister. Conversely, should we be overly critical of the Christian who does drink? I think today's verses would also tell us, "No." I have seen Christians ostracize other Christians who drank socially (not in excess). This is not how the Bible teaches us to handle disputable matters -- "'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up.'" With disputable matters, we should approach others "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2, 3)." With non-disputable matters, such as blasphemous teachings or unrepentant sexual sin, the church must hold firm.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 May: Be patient with those who are less spiritually mature than you, and seek to lead them (through example and through gentle counsel) to greater love, closer to Jesus. Be a leader in love who embodies fear of the Lord, humility, love, and faithfulness. When offended, take up your cross and fellowship with Jesus in that moment. Return nothing but good for evil. Speak the truth, but speak the truth in love, without defending yourself in any way. (1 Corinthians 8:13)

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 7, Sunday, 13 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+27%2C+28%3B+proverbs+13%3B+psalm+56%2C+57>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 13 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 27:1 -- "Then David said in his heart, 'Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul'." David lost hope and made a questionable choice. Our decision-making is affected by our M-E-P-S strength – Mental, Emotional, Physical, and Spiritual. David was likely mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted which affected him spiritually. We must be careful about decisions we make when we are weak mentally, emotionally, or physically. We must rely more on our spiritual strength which is cultivated over time (before you need it) through daily, genuine relationship with Jesus.

2. 1 Samuel 27:5-7 -- Relying in his own wisdom and strength (which seemed to work), David entangled himself in relationships with the ungodly. This reminds me of when Abraham went back to Egypt.

3. 1 Samuel 27:10 -- "When Achish asked, 'Where have you made a raid today?' David would say, 'Against the Negeb of Judah,' or, 'Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites,' or, 'Against the Negeb of the Kenites.'" Deception is an acceptable part of warfare, but in this case, David was violating a personal trust of hospitality which was unrighteous.

4. 1 Samuel 27:12 -- Having turned to the ungodly for sanctuary, David lived a deceitful, bloody life, returning evil for good – "And Achish trusted David." Though these were the enemies of Israel, they entered into a relationship of trust with David, yet David reduced himself to their practices which had been used to victimize the Israelites for years.

5. 1 Samuel 28:6, 7 -- "And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, 'Seek out for me a woman who is a

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medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.' And his servants said to him, 'Behold, there is a medium at En-dor.'"

- Under pressure, Saul would rather reject God to save his own skin than be faithful. Saul also showed that, deep down, he had no integrity. It is also interesting to note that his servants were aware of lawbreakers acting behind Saul's back and only told him now.

- Against God's Law (see verses below), Saul sought a medium because "the Lord did not answer him." This is the same reason people today turn to other sources rather than God for answers. For most people, it's not a medium they go to but rather world philosophies, other people, "common sense," etc. They go to others for answers rather than God because they have never heard or no longer hear the voice of God. However, Jesus said, "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.... they will listen to my voice." (John 10:3-5, 14, 14-16) Do you clearly hear, recognize, understand, and obey the voice of the Good Shepherd, and are you able to discern between His voice and the voice of the thieves that seek to steal the sheep?

- The Bible explains why God did not answer Saul: "Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord.... the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy (28:18, 16)." His disobedience had separated him from God and hardened his heart. In his sin, not only could he not hear God, God had stopped talking with him. As Proverbs tell us, "Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those of blameless ways are his delight (Proverbs 11:20)." Of course, most people with a crooked heart, don't believe they have a crooked heart – "I'm a good person." As the old joke goes: "What do all prisoners have in common? They are all innocent." In their pride, some refuse to acknowledge their sin, to repent, and to repent and to walk by God's word in humble obedience. They accept the consequential silence from God as "reality" and turn to other forms of "knowledge" for answers. Often, they tell themselves that their imagination is the voice of God.

- The Apostles would rebuke this kind of "Christian" -- "Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame (1 Corinthians 15:34).... For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).... destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).... know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:9)...., the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:2, 3).... come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).... Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge (1 Timothy 6:20)'.... "If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:26).... make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore,

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brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:5-11).... For if, after [you] have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, [you] are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first (2 Peter 2:20).... But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge (1 John 1:20)."

- From today's readings, consider how different David's life and testimony is from Saul's: "This I know, that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life (Psalm 56:9-13). Despite his circumstances, David lived life in confidence knowing that God was "for him" because David praised the word of God and kept his vows before God. He gave thanks to God and "walked before God." Are you walking before God or men? Saul did not desire God but only the blessings of God. Saul's religion was all about Saul. God does not relate to us that way. Saul revealed his true heart when he didn't get what he wanted from God – he turned to a medium (forbidden by God) to get what he wanted. To do this he had to counter his own orders to Israel and completely compromise his personal integrity. When pressed in a corner, Saul revealed the truth of his character.

- If you want to hear from God, you must be careful to obey His written word which He has freely provided and which is not hard to understand. Don't look for a special revelation when you have ignored His general revelation.

- Leviticus 19:31 -- Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.

- Leviticus 20:6 -- If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

- Leviticus 20:27 -- A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them.

- Isaiah 8:19 -- And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?

6. 1 Samuel 28:10 -- "But Saul swore to her by the LORD, 'As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.'" Saul made oaths in God's name while disobeying God.

7. 1 Samuel 28:16 -- "Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy?" When we disobey God, we are working against Him like an enemy. God, of course, will never bless that, no matter how 'sincere' we are in our desires and requests. God must be honored as God when we approach Him. In this case, Saul's fate was already determined. There was no escaping the consequences.

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8. 1 Samuel 28:14 -- "And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage." Many commentators suggest that this was not really Samuel. The verse seems clear that it was. You decide.

9. Proverbs 13:4 -- "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied." Dreams are not plans; plans are not actions. Nothing happens without a plan well executed. This is true in our spiritual development as well. Discipleship requires daily discipline.

10. Proverbs 13:7 -- "One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth." It is not what you say you are that matters or what others think you are but rather what you really are, what you are in the dark, what you are in your heart.

11. Proverbs 13:8 -- "The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, but a poor man hears no threat." Life is easy when you have nothing left to lose. Discipleship is easy when you have already been crucified with Christ and no longer live, when you have truly died of self.

12. Proverbs 13:11 -- "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." There are no shortcuts to the things that matter most in life. Everything that matters takes daily, persistent, hard work over a lifetime. This applies to discipleship too.

13. Proverbs 13:13 -- "Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded." Do you revere the word of God?

14. Proverbs 13:18, 20 -- "Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.... Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." Many verses in today's proverbs speak to the wisdom of accepting sound, godly counsel, and the foolishness of ignoring godly counsel and being influenced instead by the ungodly. How important is it to surround yourself with godly counsellors and friends?

15. Proverbs 13:22 -- "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous." God expects his people to think generationally, long-term, not short term. Abraham was promised to be the father of many nations and to receive the Promised Land, but that promise was not fulfilled until generations after his death. A theme through the Bible is that God's plan is generational. We have the burden of responsibility to pass the teachings of the Gospel on to the next generation, training them to do the same.

16. Proverbs 13:24 -- "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." Love and discipline go together. External discipline prepares the way for internal discipline.

17. Proverbs 13:25 -- "The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want." The righteous have enough because they are satisfied with God's provision. The wicked are never satisfied, always wanting more because they are ruled by uncontrolled appetites.

18. Psalm 56:2 -- "...my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. Attacks are motivated by pride.

19. Psalm 56:3, 4 -- "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?" The remedy for fear is trust in God. Fear is a trust

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problem, a faith problem. "Do not be afraid," is a command often repeated in the Bible. It is a command because, in our lack of faith, we must be reminded to practice trust, to do it even when we don't feel it. The more we do it, the more we will start feeling it. These verses tell us that an important process to learning to trust and no longer fear is to 'praise God's word.' It is very difficult to become fearless without impassioned Bible study. Put on the full armor of God BEFORE you begin the day's battle; praise God (even if you don't completely feel like rejoicing) for the truths you read in God's word and trust in them. What does "rejoice" mean? It means, essentially, to 'joy' again. When you feel doubtful or down, re-joy – praise God and be filled with joy, despite your apparent circumstances. Focus on the love and faithfulness of God and His promises for you. Obey the command to fear not. Don't allow yourself to be afraid or the worry. Replace your negative thoughts with the truth of Jesus. This is something you must decide to do.

20. Psalm 56:4 -- "In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?" If you truly trust in God, you will not be worried. When you are worried, turn to Jesus. You won't trust someone you don't know very well. You can't know someone very well you haven't spent much time with and who you haven't seen to be trustworthy. Spend more time with Jesus and see His love and faithfulness in your life.

21. Psalm 56:8 – "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" God knows every bit of your sorrow, counting every tear you shed. The Psalmist is struggling with fear and doubt, and is reminding himself of God's perfect love and reliability. This is written as an example for us.

22. Psalm 56:10 -- "In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise." How you feel about God's word reveals how you feel about God. A worn-out Bible usually belongs to someone who isn't.

23. Psalm 56:12 -- "I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you." Your level of obedience reveals your level of gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice for you.

24. Psalm 56:12 -- Fear is one of the biggest causes of sin. In your fear, remain obedient. In your obedience, God's fidelity will become more evident to you, you will trust more, and fear less.

25. Psalm 56:12, 13 -- "I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." God loves you so much that He gave his only Son so that you would not perish but would have eternal life. How then should you live your life on earth?

26. Psalm 57:2, 3 -- "I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!" God will fulfill His purpose for you. Even your trials are part of God's plan for your life, though you cannot understand why while you are going through them. Mary and Martha could not understand why Jesus delayed in healing Lazarus and allowed him to die, but Jesus wanted to bring Mary, Martha, and Lazarus into a much deeper understanding of Him and relationship with Him; He wanted them to truly experience that He is the Resurrection and the Life. God always shows you perfect love and faithfulness, and you might have to go through your own fiery furnace or lion's den in order to truly see it.

28. Psalm 57:7 – "I will sing and make melody!" In the midst of trials, praise God!

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29. Psalm 57:9 -- "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations." What you say to others about Jesus reveals what you really think about Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 May: Today, make the decision to trust God completely with your trials and challenges. Trust that God knows exactly what is going on in your life and is fulfilling His plan for you which is based on His perfect love for you. Praise God today. Do not worry about anything, but pray about everything. You have to decide to trust -- today is the day (Psalm 56, 57).

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 6, Saturday, 12 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+12%3B+psalm+55>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 12 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 25:9-13 -- David displayed hospitality to a stranger but expected reciprocation. When insults were returned instead, David's pride (with perhaps a root of insecurity) caused him to lose control of his temper, bearing, and self-control. He reduced himself to Nabal's level. David originally demonstrated gracefulness. Now he was acting very ungraceful.

2. 1 Samuel 25:13 -- "And David said to his men, 'Every man strap on his sword!' And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage." Treated poorly, David, in pride, acted emotionally and rashly. God expects us to be bigger than that. In his prideful rage, David also incited others. Don't let hot-headed people drag you into their fights.

3. 1 Samuel 25:17 -- "...he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him." Nabal was considered a worthless man in part because he would not listen to the concerns, requests, or advice of others. He lacked emotional intelligence.

4. 1 Samuel 25:18 -- "Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys." Abigail was a reconciler who protected others from their own foolish behavior.

5. 1 Samuel 25:21 -- "Now David had said, 'Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good.'" If you do good deeds only to seek a future reward, you will only experience frustration which may tempt you to sin.

6. 1 Samuel 25:22 -- "God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him." David made a rash vow to God in pride and arrogance. He revealed a flaw in his character that will hurt him later. We need to be able to not only identify the flaws in our character but to also have the strength to correct those flaws.

7. 1 Samuel 25:23-25 -- Abigail took responsibility for Nabal's failures and appears to have established a practice of protecting both Nabal and others from the consequences of Nabal's shortcomings. Abigail models loyalty to a weak leader. She is a protector.

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8. 1 Samuel 25:23-31 -- Abigail tactfully points out to David that he is in danger of bloodguilt, and rather than speaking to God's punishment for bloodguilt, she speaks about the blessings God bestows upon the faithful, all while offering David a gift.

9. 1 Samuel 25:24 -- "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant." See Gal 6:1, 2 -- Abigail showed Christ-like love by bearing the burden of her husband's sins.

10. 1 Samuel 25:28 -- "Please forgive the trespass of your servant." See the Lord's Prayer -- "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Doesn't 1 Samuel 25:28 sound a lot like the Lord's Prayer?

11. 1 Samuel 25:32 -- "And David said to Abigail, 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!'" David recognized that his encounter with Abigail was not a coincidence but was orchestrated by God. One of the primary ways God works in your life is by arranging circumstances and encounters with others to affect His purpose and impact your life at just the right time in just the right way. Don't think that anything in your life is accidental. Keep your eyes open for what God is doing.

12. 1 Samuel 25:33 -- "Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand!" We have recently read and commented much on the Bible's many commands to us concerning how we are to respond to insults and abuse: Remember Romans 12:14-19 -- "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.... Do not take revenge;" and Romans 15:1 -- "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." Today we read about the value of having and giving sound counsel when emotions could lead to sin. Abigail prevented David from acting emotionally, rashly and in a way he would have always regretted. Abigail was not only beautiful, she was discerning (The opposite of the woman described in Proverbs 11:22 from yesterday's readings). She was a peacemaker. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons (daughter in Abigail's case) of God (Matthew 5:9)." Are you an Abigail? Do you have an Abigail in your life?

13. 1 Samuel 25:36 -- "Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk." Nabal was a drinker -- no surprise.

14. 1 Samuel 25:39 -- "The LORD has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." David did not need to defend himself and stand up for his rights. Neither do you.

15. 1 Samuel 26:8 -- "Then Abishai said to David, 'God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!'" Henry T. Blackaby's comments on this verse: "You will sometimes be tempted to take shortcuts to your destinations in life. David faced this temptation numerous times before he finally assumed the throne. Samuel, God's prophet, had anointed David and prophesied that he would be the next king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:12-13). Yet, while David waited on God's timing, he watched in frustration as a crazed King Saul brought the kingdom into jeopardy. Saul pursued David to murder him, forcing David to flee for his life. Then an incredible opportunity presented itself to David. David found Saul in a vulnerable position, sleeping with his army. Abishai, one of David's warriors, offered to kill Saul. It seemed to make perfect sense. Saul had tried to kill David on numerous occasions. God had said He intended for David to be the king. By taking matters into his own hands, David could

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bring an end to his exile and assume the throne as God's anointed servant. Yet he refused to compromise his integrity in order to become king, even though he wanted the position and it was rightfully his. Accomplishing God's will in any manner other than the way God prescribed was unthinkable. At times you may face similar temptations. Well-meaning friends advise you to hasten God's will for you rather than waiting upon Him. You may be sorely tempted to take control of your situation, assuming the end will justify the means. These are the times when you must trust God's perfect timing. God may plan for you to attain a certain position or take a new direction, but the timing may not be right. Watch over your heart. Don't allow others to persuade you to compromise your integrity as you follow God's will."

16. 1 Samuel 26:12 – "No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them." God enabled David's actions in a supernatural way which was not observable to men.

17. 1 Samuel 26:21 – "Then Saul said, 'I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake.'" Note once again in today's readings Saul's false repentance. True repentance, a changed heart, does not return to sin.

18. 1 Samuel 26:24 – "Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation." David recognized the expectation to treat others with the same mercy and grace he desired from God.

19. Proverbs 12:9 – "Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread." What matters is what you really are, not what you say you are.

20. Proverbs 12:16 – "The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult." It is wise to overlook an insult in order to preserve peace. As stated previously, it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to have this kind of wisdom.

21. Psalm 55:6-8 – "And I say, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah. I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest.'" Running away from problems won't solve your problems; turning to God will.

22. Psalm 55:12-14 – "For it is not an enemy who taunts me— then I could bear it.... But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.... The closer someone is to you, the greater they can hurt you.

23. Psalm 55:22 – "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved." Trust your burdens to the Lord.

24. Psalm 55:23 – "But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you. Make the decision to trust in the Lord, regardless the circumstances."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 May: Be a peacemaker and reconciler today. (1 Sam 25)

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 5, Friday, 11 May 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+11%3B+1+cor+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 11 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 23:10-13 -- "Then David said, 'O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O Lord, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.' And the Lord said, 'He will come down.' Then David said, 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the Lord said, 'They will surrender you.' Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go." This passage reveals some very important principles for our lives: We cannot make good decisions simply from our limited perceptions and understanding. We must go to God for answers to our important questions, questions that only He can answer. God gives us a choice to obey Him or not. Either way, there are definite consequences. If we trust in ourselves and ignore the counsel of God, it will lead to destruction. David sought answers from God concerning what might happen in Keilah. God tells David that Saul will come down and the people of Keilah will surrender David into Saul's hands. So, David leaves and lives. First, if David hadn't consulted God, he would have been killed -- "He will come.... They will surrender you." Second, David's fate was not predetermined but depended upon His response to God's word. Had David not listened to God, he would have died. David had decisions to make. The Bible is clear that there is predestination (God has a plan that will happen), but there is debate about what exactly is predetermined. It would appear that God's predetermined plan accommodates our freedom to choose as well as the consequences of our choices. Some believe that concepts of "free will" challenge the Sovereignty of God. I believe that, in His Sovereignty, God has given us freedom to choose, and our choices have consequences which don't alter God's overall plan. When I tell my kids to take out the trash, they have choices to make. One way or another though, the trash is going to get taken out. Consider what Mordecai said to Esther as she struggled with her perilous decision to approach the king or not on behalf of the Jews: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this (Esther 4:14)?" God's plan is at work. We must choose whether or not we will listen to Him, obey Him, and follow Him or go our own way and suffer the consequences. If we choose to be a part of God's plan, we have to listen to what He is telling us through Bible study and prayer. We then have to do what He says, one decision at a time, day-by-day.

2. 1 Samuel 23:17 -- "And he said to him, 'Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this.'" No man can alter what God has intended. Even Saul knew his fate was inevitable though he continued to pursue David in futility. Don't blindly follow your own dream or plan in pride. You will have to choose between what you want and what God wants for you.

3. 1 Samuel 23:21 -- "And Saul said, 'May you be blessed by the Lord, for you have had compassion on me.'" Those who oppose the will of God will still claim that they are being blessed by God in their sin. Jesus said that we must worship both in spirit and in truth.

4. 1 Samuel 23:26, 27 -- "As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them, a messenger came to Saul, saying, 'Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land.'" God can arrange circumstances to protect His servants.

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5. 1 Samuel 24:1-7 -- Even fellow believers may encourage you to compromise your standards or take short cuts in order to accomplish goals or achieve success. However, true success always requires that the right things are done for the right reasons, in the right way, and at the right time. It takes great faith to wait on God's timing, and it takes the leading of the Spirit to know how to rightly apply knowledge. Knowledge rightly applied is wisdom. Wisdom can come only from God.

6. 1 Samuel 24:6 -- "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed." David's desire to honor the things of God outweighed his desire to overcome his adversaries, at least at this point in His life.

7. 1 Samuel 24:12-15 -- Wait on the Lord to avenge you when you are wronged. Only return good for evil. Again, it takes great faith to wait on the Lord. Consider your suffering to be a gift of love and sacrifice to God and to the offender.

8. 1 Samuel 24:16-22 -- David's act of faith and mercy convicted Saul and changed Saul's heart.

9. Proverbs 11:15 -- "Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm, but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure." Avoid needless commitments and entanglements.

10. Proverbs 11:3-5 -- The wicked destroy themselves.

11. Proverbs 11:20 -- "Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those of blameless ways are his delight." Blameless ways come from a pure heart.

12. Proverbs 11:23 -- "The desire of the righteous ends only in good, the expectation of the wicked in wrath." The righteous truly desire what is good. They have no need to be controlled by the law because they are controlled by their hearts.

13. Proverbs 11:25 -- "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." God will bless us in accordance with how we bless others.

14. Proverbs 11:30 -- "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise." Righteous people change hearts and lives.

15. 1 Corinthians 7:5 -- "Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." Satan tempts us by targeting our lack of self-control. Self-control is a spiritual gift that must be empowered by the Spirit. Pray for self-control.

16. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 -- God expects us to take responsibility for our decisions and to keep our vows, regardless of the personal cost. It takes faith to believe that God will bring good out of a bad situation.

17. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 -- Our circumstances are not what matter most but rather what we do in our circumstances, how we respond. We should focus on being faithful and obedient right where God has placed us and walk by faith knowing that God will direct our obedient path. We cannot control our circumstances, but we can control our decisions. Often God will test you with circumstances, not so He can see what is truly in your heart but so that you can see what is truly in your heart. Pay attention to your responses.

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18. 1 Corinthians 7:21 -- "But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity." Seek as much freedom as you can in life that you can more freely serve The Lord. However, don't use a lack of freedom as an excuse for disobedience.

19. 1 Corinthians 7:21, 24 -- "Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity....) So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God." We tend to worry too much about our circumstances and not enough about how we are responding to our circumstances. We tend to worry too much about where we are and not enough about why we have been placed there by God. No matter where we find ourselves or how we got there, we are surrounded by opportunities to both glorify God and enjoy His presence. Whether in a palace or a prison, we can testify to the glory of God. The Lord has placed us in our current situations for His purposes. If we can improve our conditions, then that is great. However, we need to make the most of the opportunities God has placed in front of us today, where we are now. If we are not careful, we can become so concerned with what we don't have or where we wish we were, that we fail to appreciate what we do have right in front of us in the place where God wanted us all along. Consider the lives of people like Noah, Joseph, Moses, David, and the many other people we have read about who God used mightily. None of them would have chosen the paths down which God led them; but if they had chosen their own paths, they would not have developed the character and competence that made them so usable by God, nor would they have experienced the close relationships with God that they enjoyed. It is exciting to know the God has placed you in your current circumstances on purpose. Remain faithful with today, and see what develops for tomorrow.

20. 1 Corinthians 7:25-40 -- As a general rule, we should seek to remain as free of contractual obligations or debts as reasonably possible. We should maintain as much personal freedom as possible and avoid entanglements with the world. We should live life as simply as possible, avoiding the temptation to make things complicated and stressful. "Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." (Antoine de Saint-Exupery)

21. 1 Corinthians 7:39 -- "A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives." Marriage is permanent, whether you, the government, or anyone else says otherwise.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 May: Wait on the Lord to avenge you when you are wronged. Only return good for evil. Have the faith to wait on the Lord. Consider your suffering to be a gift of love and sacrifice to God and to the offender. (1 Sam 24:12-15) Also, consider what commitments you have made that only hinder your ability to serve The Lord to your fullest potential. Free yourself of those commitments where you can. Avoid new commitments that don't support your ability to serve The Lord. (1 Cor 7:21-24)

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 4, Thursday, 10 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+10%3B+1+cor+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 10 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 21 -- David deceived Ahimelech, and it would later cost the priest his life. David did not have to lie to the Priest. We must be very careful to be transparent in all of our dealings and consider how our

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actions might impact others. Most of us are far more deceptive, day-to-day, than we realize. Living honestly and transparently can be very difficult at first, but it becomes liberating, and it places you in the fast lane for growth.

2. 1 Samuel 21:7, 22:18, 19 -- The Chief of Saul's herdsmen was an Edomite. There are more Bible passages pronouncing judgment on the Edomites than on any other nation. Only the Edomite was willing to slaughter the priests upon Saul's command. Saul turned to the ungodly to do what the godly wouldn't on His behalf.

3. 1 Samuel 22:2 -- "And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men." This is a great verse on leadership. David turned outcasts and losers into mighty men. Leaders bring out the best in people.

4. 1 Samuel 22:8 -- "...all of you have conspired against me... No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day." Saul was a narcissist who was full of self-pity and thought everyone was out to get him. Self-centered people tend to define reality on their own terms to justify themselves. They are usually complaining through the process and blame everyone else for their problems.

5. 1 Samuel 22:13-15 -- In pursuit of faithful David, Saul accused everyone else of infidelity and conspiring against him. Guilty people often project their own sins upon others -- liars call other people liars, racists accuse others as being racists, etc.

6. 1 Samuel 22:18, 19 -- Godless people have no respect for the things of God and show no mercy. God does not always save His people from persecution, but He always brings out a greater good in every situation for those called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

7. 1 Samuel 22:20 -- "But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David." God preserves a witness to continue His work and His ways. This is reminiscent of what happened with Gideon's sons.

8. 1 Samuel 22:22, 23 -- "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house. Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." David took the blame for the slaughter of the priests. David took responsibility for his actions and errors, not in the world's way where you say you're sorry and then walk away from the consequences, rather by owning up to the consequences and seeking reconciliation and restitution (as the Bible commands). David personally and publicly took responsibility for Abiathar's welfare. How many others would have placed the blame on Saul or Doeg and simply walked away? True leaders take responsibility for their actions. Unfortunately, David will show us later what happens when leaders don't.

9. Proverbs 10:3 -- "The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked." God will bless your obedience but not your disobedience.

10. Proverbs 10:4 -- God expects you to work hard.

11. Proverbs 10:4 -- "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." Proverbs mostly provides principles, fundamental truths, rather than tactics or specifics on what to do in a given

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situation. With experience and with the leading of the Holy Spirit, we learn to apply the principles to our daily lives. One of my favorite Bible principles is the “Principle of the Farm”: success in life comes from regular disciplined, daily effort. A farmer cannot expect to reap a bumper crop by being lazy for three months and then “cramming” to catch up. Similarly, the greatest successes in life are built slowly and deliberately through focused, consistent, high-quality efforts on a daily basis. Success is built upon the most basic building block of time — the day. Success comes not from sudden, sporadic bursts of activity but through the cumulative effect of disciplined, daily effort. Today, it seems like many people want instant wealth, wisdom, health, and success. They want the rewards of life, but don’t really want to put forth the effort and creativity it actually takes to become successful. But the Bible will tell you that there are no shortcuts in life. The Principle of the Farm applies to our spiritual growth as well. For a time, Christians wore WWJD (What would Jesus Do) bracelets with good intentions, but this Christian fad too often reflected a “get rich quick” spiritual mentality that set many Christians up for failure and disappointment. The idea was, when a situation arose, the bracelet would remind the Christian to ask themselves, “What would Jesus do?”, and then the Christian, having been reminded, would then follow Jesus’ example in the situation. However, more often than not, when the Christian failed to do what Jesus would have done, they would only walk away disappointed and frustrated. What happened? Well, in part, they didn’t consider closely enough what Jesus actually did — he spent a lifetime in diligent study, prayer, and obedient application preparing for the moment — countless hours with early mornings and late nights, sitting at the feet of elders, memorizing Scriptures, praying, observing the world from God’s perspective, getting out and about walking with God, meditating (the Biblical way, not the Buddha way). As Gen Mattis said when asked how he knew what to do in a critical situation during Operation Enduring Freedom, “I spent 33 years preparing for that decision which took me 30 seconds to make.” Why is it that successful people are so decisive, able to make rapid and sound decisions? Because they come to the point of decision fully prepared. We, with good intentions, because of shallow teaching, can dress the part of a Christian but fail to behave like a Christian. I can learn to act just like a professional football player and buy all the gear; I can talk and walk like a professional football player, and I can hang out with professional football players, but that doesn’t make me ready for the Super Bowl. In my spiritual life, If I want to even earn a place on the bench, I have to train. I have to do the work of a true disciple. I have to study, pray, meditate, memorize, rehearse, practice, and get dirty through daily application. Discipleship is the watering hole where God selects His “Gideon’s army.” Today’s Proverbs readings say, “The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin. Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life (Proverbs 10:16, 17).” The payment for the righteous comes through daily diligence and discipline, heeding instruction (that comes from the Bible) while on the “path to life,” a journey that takes time. It is many inglorious days that leads to glorious moments. Take time this morning to consider what Jesus actually did to be ready for Satan’s temptations in the desert, the challenges of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the woman at the well, the beggars, the adulterous woman, Pontius Pilate, the cross. What Would Jesus Do with each quiet morning and night when no one was around? Are you willing to do the work of a true disciple?

12. Proverbs 10:5 — “He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.” You will either face the daily pain of personal discipline or the ultimate pain of regret. At the moment of need, you cannot make up for what you didn’t invest in. You must build up over time for the inevitable “rainy day” whether it be in finances, health, relationships, etc.

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13. Proverbs 10:7 – “The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.” You will be remembered for your character more than for your talent, personality, wealth, intelligence, or personal achievements.

14. Proverbs 10:12 -- "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." A loving person covers over offenses and promotes reconciliation and unity. Do you love? Then let go of that issue and focus on fixing the relationship.

15. Proverbs 10:25-30 -- Life is hard for everyone, but the Lord sustains His faithful people.

16. Proverbs 10:19-21, 31, 32 -- Everyone has something to say, but very few are worth listening to.

17. 1 Corinthians 6: 1, 4, 5, 7 -- “When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints...? So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame.... To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?” Christians are not to take disputes between one another to the secular court system – this is shameful and defeats our witness before the world. It is better to suffer wrong and be defrauded than to defame the Church and the Name of Christ with public, worldly disputes. Matters between Christians are to be settled within the church by church leadership; but how often have you seen Christians actually adhere to this teaching? Today we even see entire church denominations suing each other in public, secular courts, surrendering their authority as “Priests” to unbelievers. And how often do we see Christians going to secular counselors to solve their problems instead of church leaders? What does this say about the condition of the church?

18. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 – Once again, disputes between Christians should be handled within the church. If two people can’t resolve a problem, they are already displaying spiritual immaturity.

19. 1 Corinthians 6:7 -- "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" Love often demands that you accept unfair treatment without defending your rights.

20. 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 -- "Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." The saved Christian will still sin through the sanctification process but will not be inclined to sin or controlled by their former habits of sin.

21. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 -- It is unthinkable that a Christian indwelt with the Holy Spirit would commit adultery, homosexuality or any other sexual abomination. We are called not to just avoid sexual immorality but to “flee” from it.

22. 1 Corinthians 6:18 -- "Flee from sexual immorality." Sexual sin is considered especially egregious and is greatly condemned, in stark contrast to the world's complacency.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 May: Settle personal disputes in private, and be willing to accept a wrong in order to keep the peace and to preserve dignity rather than allowing strife to hinder your witness. Forgive, particularly when it is undeserved. Keep the peace with those who mistreat you. Respond to badness with goodness; respond to curses with blessings; respond to hostility with graciousness. Do this with thanksgiving as an act of worship to God. (1 Cor 6:7) Also, give freely to those in need from the bounty of your blessings from God. Trust God enough to give without worry

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about your future provision. Reference from today's readings: "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." (Pro 11:24, 25)

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 3, Wednesday, 9 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+9%3B+1+cor+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 9 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 19:6 – “And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, ‘As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death.’” With a selfish, self-centered person, a vow made before God is easily broken. In the end, the idol of self is worshipped by this person more than God is, regardless of how much the name of God is used to justify ungodly decision-making.
2. 1 Samuel 19:17 – “Saul said to Michal, ‘Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?’ And Michal answered Saul, ‘He said to me, ‘Let me go. Why should I kill you?’” There was no trust in Saul’s house between Saul and his children, and deception went both ways.
3. 1 Samuel 19:18-24 -- Saul had lost all respect for the “church” and was prepared to use force against it.
4. 1 Samuel 19:18-24 -- God can easily control the hearts and souls of men in order to protect His servants. If He doesn’t, then there is a reason.
5. 1 Samuel 20:1, 2, 8 -- In a love relationship with God, you are willing and eager to admit your faults and try to correct them.
6. 1 Samuel 20:3 – “But David vowed again, saying, ‘Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he thinks, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.’ But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.’” The human way is to cover up bad news and try not to hurt the other person's feelings.
7. 1 Samuel 20:4 – “Then Jonathan said to David, ‘Whatever you say, I will do for you.’” A covenant love relationship with God makes you want to do whatever another person wants or needs.
8. 1 Samuel 20:17 – “And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.” A covenant love relationship means loving another as yourself.
9. 1 Samuel 20:22 -- “...for the Lord has sent you away.” Jonathan understood that all circumstances were orchestrated by God for His purposes; we are not merely victims of uncontrolled events.
10. 1 Samuel 20:23, 31 -- A love relationship with God extends to an unselfish love relationship with believers in which you are willing give up life's dreams to help the other.
11. 1 Samuel 20:34 – “And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him.” A love relationship for God's sake may disrupt family relationships.

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12. Proverbs 9:1, 2 – “Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table.” Wisdom is orderly, productive, and bountiful.

13. Proverbs 9:8, 9 – “Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser.” God calls us to avoid needless arguments.

14. Proverbs 9:12 – “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” We will bear the consequences of our actions, whether good or bad. We reap what we sow.

15. Proverbs 9:17 -- “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” What we do in secret reveals who we really are, and the truth of who we really are will determine our destiny.

16. 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2 – “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.” To tolerate or make light of sexual sin, something God abhors and has strictly forbidden, is the very highest form of arrogance.

17. 1 Corinthians 5:1-3 -- Paul was surprised by sexual immorality within the church and expected that there would be great grief and shame.

18. 1 Corinthians 5:3, 12 -- “I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.... Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?” Paul judged the behavior of other Christians and expected judgement to occur within the church. This is not the form of judgment that Jesus condemned, which judgment with spite. This was a judgment that challenged the behavior in hopes that the sinner would repent and be brought to reconciliation with God and with others.

19. 1 Corinthians 5:8 – “Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” We must worship God in “truth” by obeying His commands.

20. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 -- God expects us to hold other Christians to a standard of obedience, purity, and holiness.

21. 1 Corinthians 5:11 -- “I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.... Purge the evil person from among you.” How many Christians do you know who practice this guidance? Do you?

22. 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 -- “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. ‘Purge the evil person from among you.’” One of the reasons the Church in America has lost much of its influence is because it has lost its integrity. While Christians are to expect (not approve of or condone) sin from unbelievers, Christians are not to tolerate unrepentant sin from those who call themselves believers and claim to be Christ’s ambassadors. We are not even to associate with unrepentant Christians. The Bible offers clear guidance for the appropriate way to administer church admonishment and discipline, but it is practiced very, very

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rarely. "Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?" The church today is very confused about how to respond to sin, hence the deafening silence from the church during this latest sexual revolution. As a result of our confusion and syncretism, the church has largely lost its holiness, its power, and its witness. The problems we have in society are a reflection of a church whose "light" has dimmed and whose "salt" has lost its saltiness. The incredible loss of power did not occur over night but rather occurred over decades as the church allowed sin to creep in, it has been an erosion. As Paul explains today, our response to sin within the church, with those who bear the name of Christ, is to be far different than our response to unbelievers who, by virtue of their unbelief, are trapped in sin. Through compromise, the church has lost its moral authority, and we now worship largely in a state of anarchy, lawlessness. Today, not only does the church ignore internal sin, it is now starting to legitimize it. We desperately need revival and renewal within the church. Jesus began his public ministry, not with the population of unbelievers but rather to the "lost sheep" within the church, and his message was "Repent." He called the believers to return to God's authority as KING. Yes, Jesus ate with the "tax collectors," but a close examination of those verses reveals that these were tax collectors who had repented and who were ready and willing to make restitution for the sins that they had committed. Having repented, now they needed discipleship – "teach them to obey all that I have commanded." Review the Great Commission: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20)." Many churches today are preaching to "all nations," and baptizing, but they are not discipling – "teaching them to observe all that [God] has commanded." Many within the church are lamenting over the state of our nation, but we need to be lamenting over the state of the church. How does your church deal with sin from within the congregation?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 May: Before you blame others, consider how you might have contributed to the problem, and do whatever you can to correct the issue (1 Sam 20:1, 2, 8).

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 2, Tuesday, 8 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+8%3B+1+cor+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 8 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 17, 18 -- "Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch." Some have questioned why David chose five stones to kill Goliath instead of just one -- does this suggest that David lacked the faith to believe God would kill Goliath with just one stone? In no way did David demonstrate a lack of faith, quite the contrary; David demonstrated a willingness and readiness to fight a long fight. David did not presume of God that He would give David an easy victory, though David trusted God with the victory. Also, David may have recognized that the battle wouldn't be won simply by defeating the first giant. Jumping ahead in our readings, 2 Samuel 21:22 tells the rest of the story: "These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants." What 1 Samuel doesn't reveal is that there were four other giants, family members of Goliath. Not only was David facing Goliath, but he knew that when he picked a fight with this giant, he was picking a fight with four others too. David knew that when he stood up to Goliath, his life would never be the same and that the fight to bring glory to God would

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never end. There was no turning back; David was all in. Are you willing to face the giants for God even if it means your life will never be the same?

2. 1 Samuel 17:28 -- "I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." David's oldest brother may seem unfair in his judgement, demonstrating mere sibling rivalry; but perhaps he saw in David a dangerous pride that would come back to haunt David later in life. People often have a fatal flaw in life that, if not checked, may grow to be disastrous. Often individuals are blind to their own flaws which are very apparent to others. You cannot change what you cannot see or refuse to see in yourself. You cannot fix what you aren't willing to be honest about. Pray that God will humble your spirit enough to be truly introspective.

3. 1 Samuel 17:34-37 -- David's faith in God came from real-world experiences. Faith is strengthened when it is used and tested. The more you are willing to walk in faith, the more your faith will be validated and the more you will grow in faith. If you are not willing to step out in faith, you will stay right where you are.

4. 1 Samuel 17:37 -- "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." God used life events to prepare David for this significant assignment. The challenge you are going through today is preparing you for greater things. Be faithful with today, and tomorrow will be a better day.

5. 1 Samuel 17:39 -- "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." You cannot serve God by trying to be something you are not, and what works for others may not be right for you. God has equipped you uniquely. Be who God created you to be, and do what God has called you to do in the unique way He has called you to do it. Often, when you are leading the race, you are running alone. Keep running in such a way as to win the prize.

6. 1 Samuel 17:42-44 -- Others will mock your faith.

7. 1 Samuel 17:46, 47 -- "I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand." God wants the world to see His power, not yours. We must not attempt to share any glory with God.

8. 1 Samuel 17:46, 47 -- David's faith caused him to consider the outcome as already determined, a done deal, without doubt. This is true faith and hope. Faith is trusting God at the moment of decision; hope is trusting God with the future.

9. 1 Samuel 17:51, 52 -- The Philistines, who put their hope in a man, were morally defeated when their hope proved futile. In an instant they went from a mighty army to a panicked mob.

10. 1 Samuel 18:1 -- "As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Jonathan desperately sought the friendship of someone as fully committed to God as he. True friendship is united in the purpose of serving God wholeheartedly. Finding a friend who is like-minded with you in their faith is difficult; a friend like that is a great treasure. Marriage should be such a friendship.

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11. 1 Samuel 18:8, 9 -- "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day on." Envy is highly destructive, divisive, and sinful. It was the envy of religious leaders that incited the mobs to seek the crucifixion of Jesus. Envy is hating someone because God gave them something He didn't give you. So, in reality, envy is a direct offense against God, the giver of gifts. When you envy others, you set yourself against God.

12. 1 Samuel 18:8, 9 -- Popularity contests test the character of those being compared.

13. 1 Samuel 18:12 -- "Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul." People will fear you if you are a Spirit-filled Christian. The power of God in your life may threaten others.

14. 1 Samuel 18:14 -- Success comes from God.

15. 1 Samuel 18:25 -- "Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines." Enemies may use what appears to be blessings and gifts in an attempt to undermine you. Be wary of negotiations with unbelievers.

16. Proverbs 8:1-5 -- Wisdom cries out to all; the truth is self-evident; it reveals itself through very observable consequences revealed in the lives of countless people around us. But pride can blind and deafens us. Pride is foolishness. Humility is honorable and leads to life.

17. Proverbs 8:10,11 -- "Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. Wisdom is our most precious asset in life."

18. Proverbs 8:13 -- "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." To love God is to hate evil. If you don't hate evil, you have a love problem.

19. Proverbs 8:22-31 -- When we walk in wisdom, we tap into the power of all Creation and open ourselves up for the blessings of the Creator.

20. Proverbs 8:35 -- "For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord." Wisdom, with its foundation of the Fear of the Lord, is the key to life.

21. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 -- "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.... I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." This is how we must see ourselves -- "as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." We have a sacred calling and requirement -- that we "be found faithful." We must diligently critique ourselves, but not by just considering our behavior, we must search our hearts to understand the motivations behind our behavior, seeking to eliminate pride, fear, self-centeredness, and guilt that would cause us to do the "right" things for the wrong (fleshy) reasons. We should also remember that we remain poor judges of our own character, often deceiving ourselves, thinking higher of ourselves than we ought. Spirit-enabled humility is key, particularly when we begin feeling confident

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in our actions. We must also remember that if we are poor judges of our own character, we are far worse judges of the character of others. We cannot see another person's heart and cannot understand what motives are behind the other actions of others. Only God knows the heart. Until God discloses the purposes of the hearts of ourselves and others, we can only hold each other accountable to behavior from the measure of the word of God, but with humility and gentleness, recognizing that we all sin and fall short of the Glory God, and that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Strive relentless but humbly to be found worthy of your sacred calling, and be prepared to proclaim why the Good News is so "good."

22. 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2 -- We are stewards of truth. God expects us to be faithful in our responsibility to communicate God's truth. We do not do the convicting, He does. God expects you to be faithful with the Gospel message. Who has God used you to bring to Christ? Will you be faithful with the message today?

23. 1 Corinthians 4:4, 5 -- "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." Only God knows the motives of another person's heart, and it is God who will judge a person based upon the truth of that person's heart. Again, we can judge to outward actions of a person, but only God knows a person's heart and true motives. Many people do the right things for the wrong reasons. Many don't do the right things but still have a heart for God. Only God is the judge of the person.

24. 1 Corinthians 4:7 -- "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" Don't be impressed by your own intellect, talents, or abilities, and don't seek to impress others, rather proclaim Jesus and draw all attention away from self. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. We think that we have earned knowledge, and therefore, are tempted to get prideful in it. Love is received and given as a gift. Therefore, there is no boasting.

25. 1 Corinthians 4:11-12 -- "We are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure." Who do you know that serves Jesus to this level? Do you?

26. 1 Corinthians 4:12, 13 -- When reviled, bless; when persecuted, endure; when slandered, entreat.

27. 1 Corinthians 4:15 -- Many churches are full of believers but few disciple makers. Again, how many people have become Christians because God used you to lead them to Christ? How many people are growing in Christ due to your direct teaching and coaching? Jesus spent three years walking day-by-day with 12 believers (focusing especially on three) in order to prepare them to serve Him with power. In whom are investing in this way?

28. 1 Corinthians 4:20 -- "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power." Many people have Bible knowledge and can even parrot theology, but real faith is powerful and changes lives.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 May: When reviled, bless; when persecuted, endure; when slandered, entreat. (1 Corinthians 4:12, 13)

DBRP- WEEK 19, Day 1, Monday, 7 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+7%3B+1+cor+3>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 7 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 15:1-4 -- God reminds Saul from where Saul came and what God had done for him before God gives him the command to totally destroy the Amalekites. Don't lose perspective on who it is that commands you.
2. 1 Samuel 15:9 -- Saul and the people devoted to the Lord only gave what they didn't really care about but kept for themselves what they really valued. The best they saved for themselves. Have you ever seen Christians do that?
3. 1 Samuel 15:11 -- "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." Following means obeying. Jesus told us to deny self, take up our cross, and "follow" Him. This requires obedience.
4. 1 Samuel 15:13 -- Saul set up a monument for himself, disobeyed God and yet had still convinced himself that he was godly -- "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." How often do people use religion in an attempt to validate their pride?
5. 1 Samuel 15:14 -- "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" Having chosen his own desires over obedience, Saul still attempted to claim obedience and fidelity to God though his disobedience was plainly obvious.
6. 1 Samuel 15:15-16 -- "Saul said, 'They have brought them.... the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.' Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Stop!' Instead of humbly confessing His sins, Saul blamed other people and said his actions were for The Lord -- good intentions. Samuel couldn't listen to Saul's pathetic denial and deflections any longer.
7. 1 Samuel 15:20 -- Partial obedience is disobedience.
8. 1 Samuel 15:21 -- Like Adam, Aaron, and countless others, Saul blamed his disobedience on someone else -- "But the people took of the spoil...." No one can make you sin. You own it.
9. 1 Samuel 15:22, 23 -- "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king." True worship is obedience to God's word, not just ceremony, displays of emotion or sacrifice. Disobedience is a rejection of God's Lordship and makes an idol of ourselves as we place our selfish desires over God's commands. Partial obedience is disobedience, and like Saul, we have a tendency to hold something back from God, often telling ourselves, "God is OK with it; he understands." As you consider your life and your fidelity to God can you hear the "bleating of the sheep... and the lowing of the oxen?" What sins have you been holding on to that you need to surrender this moment? "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15)."
- James 4:7 -- Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
10. 1 Samuel 15:23 -- "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

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We reject the word of The Lord when we make ourselves idols and serve ourselves instead of God. We might not practice witchcraft or worship statues, but the Bible says that rebellion and presumption are essentially the same thing, prioritizing something over the LORD.

11. 1 Samuel 15:24-28 -- There are basically three levels of motivation (from worse to best): fear/pride, duty, and love. We should always consider why we do what we do. Saul was motivated by fear. He disobeyed in fear, and he only obeyed in fear. God commands us to love and only accepts obedience which comes from love, not from fear, greed, or duty.

12. 1 Samuel 15:25 -- "Please pardon my sin." Being sorry and being repentant are not the same thing. A person can be sorry because they don't want to suffer the consequences of their sins without having a heart that is genuinely sorrowful for having sinned, regardless of consequences, and that earnestly desires to never sin again.

13. 1 Samuel 15:32, 33 -- The pain Agag's loved ones would feel due to his death was not Samuel's concern. Agag himself bore the burden of the consequences of his crimes even though those consequences would continue past his death. The consequences did not transfer to another.

14. 1 Samuel 16:1 -- We should not grieve over the Lord's decisions, His perfect will.

15. 1 Samuel 16:6-13 -- The Lord chooses who He desires and provides the Holy Spirit to whom He desires. We cannot know who God is calling and who He has rejected unless God reveals it.

16. 1 Samuel 16:7 -- "For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." The Lord does not look at what we display to others but rather what is really in our heart. God is looking for the faithful to lead his people, not just the talented.

17. 1 Samuel 16:18 -- "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him." David was very talented, but what set him apart was that The Lord was with him.

18. 1 Samuel 16:18 -- "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him." -- quite a resume. David was known to have not only competence but also character, someone who could be trusted.

19. 1 Samuel 16:21 -- "And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer." Again, God arranges circumstances to prepare His faithful servants to accomplish His purposes. With God's people, there are no coincidences.

20. Proverbs 7:6, 7 -- The truth is evidenced by the consequences of sin in the lives of those who reject the truth.

21. Proverbs 7:18 -- The sinful call lust love.

22. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 -- You will either act spiritually or carnally (like an animal) in any given situation. Selfishness reduces you to the same motivators to which animals and infants respond.

23. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 -- "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now

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you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?" God's word says, "Grow up!" An adult can't help but be an adult, but they can still act like a child. Certainly you have known adults who failed to mature in some area of their lives as expected of an adult and subsequently limited the effectiveness of their lives and robbed themselves of the fullness of life. Similarly, a Christian can't help but be spiritual but can act worldly, failing to mature in sanctification, and remaining an "infant in Christ," incapable of experiencing the life of an adult in Christ. We know that adults experience far more in life than children do. Are you living a full, mature, spiritual life, or are you letting worldliness get in the way? One of the easiest tests of your spiritual maturity is the quality of your relationships with others, particularly with those closest to you. If there is strife or separation, immaturity remains.

24. 1 Corinthians 3:2, 3 -- "And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?" The Corinthians were not maturing in their faith because they were still acting worldly.

25. 1 Corinthians 3:4 -- "For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not being merely human?" You may say you are "naturally" impatient, cynical, or (insert negative trait here), but God works in the supernatural realm. We are not called by be "merely human."

26. 1 Corinthians 3:7 -- "Only God who gives the growth." We are but messengers of God's word. The Holy Spirit does all the convicting and convincing.

27. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 -- Everything we do outside of genuine, selfless service for Jesus Christ, as a true disciple, is worthless. All that we do for self is meaningless, regardless of how much we say it was really for Jesus.

28. 1 Corinthians 3:19 -- "For the wisdom of this world is folly with God." Just obey and teach God's simple word. You don't need to be clever, just faithful.

29. 1 Corinthians 16:21 -- "So let no one boast in men." It is VERY tempting for Christians to focus on popular preachers and pastors more than Jesus, to proclaim their pastor's name more than Jesus, and to identify with a church rather than with Jesus. Don't tell people about your pastor; tell them about Jesus. Don't just invite people to your church, invite them to know Jesus.

30. 1 Corinthians 3:16-22 -- Don't build with the world's wisdom.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 May: Pay attention to your first responses to crisis, conflict, or strife. Do you at times think or act negatively and then say, "Well I am not really like that; I just got caught off guard." How you first respond is a better reflection of what is in your heart than your calculated response. C.S. Lewis said it this way: "When I come to my evening prayers and try to reckon up the sins of the day, nine times out of ten the most obvious one is some sin against charity; I have sulked or snapped or sneered or snubbed or stormed. And the excuse that immediately springs to my mind is that the provocation was so sudden and unexpected: I was caught off my guard, I had not time to collect myself. Now that may be an extenuating circumstance as regards those particular acts: they would obviously be worse if they had been deliberate and premeditated. On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it

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only prevents them from hiding. In the same way, the suddenness of the provocation does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am. The rats are always there in the cellar, but if you go in shouting and noisily they will have taken cover before you switch on the light." Pray that God will help you exterminate the rats that remain hidden in the dark. (1 Cor 3:4)

DBRP- WEEK 18, Day 6, Saturday, 5 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+5%3B+psalm+52>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 5 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 11:6 -- "And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul." The world is full of leaders but very few Spirit-led leaders.
 2. 1 Samuel 11:6 -- "...and his anger was greatly kindled." Not all anger is bad. There is a righteous anger that stands against evil for God's glory and for the sake of others. Righteous anger is never motivated by selfishness or self-preservation. Righteous anger is not absent of love but rather inspired by love, love for God and love for others. Similarly, though we are accustomed to self-centered jealousy, there is a righteous jealousy that defends those we love from things we know will only lure them away from the path of love. Key to handling your emotions well is to understand the true source of the emotion or the "heart" behind to emotion. Is it truly selfless or selfish?
 3. 1 Samuel 11:12-13 -- "'Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death.' But Saul said, 'Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel.'" Saul began his reign showing mercy and grace and leading with a heart of reconciliation. He did not seek revenge or use the power plays most political leaders used. He sought to bring unity. Unfortunately, his heart will change over time. As you continue to read, see if you can identify what causes Saul's downfall after such a great start. The Bible has something to teach us all from the life of Saul.
 4. 1 Samuel 12:3, 4 -- "Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you. They said, 'You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand.'" Samuel lived a blameless life with no debts and no secrets, always willing to confess his sins publicly and always willing to make full restitution. This is the sort of person God uses mightily. Samuel understood that the way he lived his life before others affected his ability to perform his primary mission as God's messenger. Samuel lived with such integrity, that he could confidently stand before everyone and challenge them to name a wrong he had committed. He also adhered to God's command to make restitution to anyone you have wronged (see Exodus 22, Leviticus 5, Numbers 5). The principle of restitution is something that has largely been forgotten in the modern church, but Proverbs 14:9 says only "fools mock at making restitution." To whom do you need to make restitution today?
- Of the two attributes of leadership, character and competence, character is of primary importance. Yet the world honors competence over character to its detriment. Originally, the people wanted a king who possessed the competencies they felt necessary to compete with the kings of their enemies. At first, they rejected Saul as king because he appeared unconfident and weak. However, after his victory in battle the people were quite anxious to accept Saul as king because he had proven himself competent.

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However, Samuel emphasized from the beginning that it would be the character of the king that would make or break the nation. Therefore, as Samuel surrendered the primary leadership role to the new king, he asked: "Where have I done wrong?" Where have I not proven myself to be honorable and faithful?" There is a reason why the motto of the Marine Corps (an organization that prides itself on competence) is *Semper Fidelis* – Always Faithful, rather than always skilled. Character is primary.

5. 1 Samuel 12:14 -- "If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well." Following a human leader is only helpful if that leader is following Jesus. Better to follow Jesus than any human. Many ask whether a politician believes in the Bible or not. What matters is whether or not they are wholehearted disciples of Jesus. If not, they will lead people astray with a different 'gospel', a man-made path to 'salvation' that eventually leads only to destruction.

6. 1 Samuel 12:20 -- "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart." Don't worry about your past mistakes. Obey today!

7. 1 Samuel 12:21 -- "And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty." Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

8. 1 Samuel 12:23 -- "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way." Samuel prayed for sinful people and also instructed them – he prioritized prayer first. Many are ready to instruct, but few are willing to pray. When we instruct, we are tempted to think that our abilities will make the difference. Prayer acknowledges that it is the Spirit that must affect the change.

9. 1 Samuel 12:24 -- "Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." When you truly appreciate Jesus, you have a heart to follow Him regardless of circumstances. Serve God wholeheartedly today, one thought, one word, one decision at a time. At the end of each hour, take a moment to consider how you did through that hour, and note your trends. Each hour, take a moment to listen to your Coach, the Holy Spirit. Pray for God's strength to grow you in faithfulness.

10. Proverbs 5:1-6 -- Wisdom enables discretion which gives us the self-control to resist the temptation for instant gratification now in order to preserve our greatest possible future. Wisdom is never short-sighted but rather can see the long-term implications of even the smallest decisions.

11. Proverbs 5:11, 12 – "...and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, 'How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!'" You will either suffer the pain of discipline (self-control) now, or the pain of regret later.

12. Proverbs 5:22, 23 – "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray." Sin, is a dangerous, deadly trap that exploits a person's lack of self-control. The Way of life is Jesus and following Him. Disciples are those who truly follow Him and obey Him. The life of a disciple is, by definition, a disciplined life, a life of wholehearted obedience. Joy is found in obedience. The Christian who uses "grace" as an excuse for half-hearted obedience (or disobedience) is demonstrating an incredible lack of understanding and is dishonoring our Holy LORD. The more we truly appreciate our LORD, the more natural obedience becomes.

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13. Psalm 52:1-5 -- "The steadfast love of God endures all the day.... But God will break you down forever." God who IS Love cannot tolerate sin because of His love. We can only see the tip of the iceberg of the pain and destruction our sins cause, but God understands the full ramifications of our sins which are far beyond our comprehension. God who IS Love HATES sin because He loves His children perfectly. Those who "love evil more than good" (Psalm 52:3) make themselves enemies of God, though they don't see it that way.

- James 4:4 -- You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

14. Psalm 52:7 -- "See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction!" Those who seek security in anything other than Jesus will face destruction. Man's efforts apart from God are futile.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 May: If you have not done so already, make a list of your family, church members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers for whom you should pray. Pray for them by name today -- "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you (1 Samuel 12:23)." Also, make every effort to settle your debts today. If you have offended someone, seek forgiveness from them today and reconcile. Return what you have borrowed, repay what you have taken, and as much as possible, fix what you have broken. "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another." (Romans 13:8) You may not be able to do it all today, but at least make the commitment and take the first steps.

DBRP- WEEK 18, Day 5, Friday, 4 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+4%3B+1+cor+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 4 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 9:15, 16 -- "Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: 'Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel.'" God arranges circumstances and relationships to accomplish His purposes. If God calls you, you need only obey and let Him do the rest.

2. 1 Samuel 9:21 -- "Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?" Those chosen by God don't need political power, social status, prestige, or anything else to accomplish God's will. Christians can do anything with God's power as God wills.

3. 1 Samuel 10:6, 7, 10, 11 -- "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power... and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.... God changed Saul's heart... the Spirit of God came upon him in power.... 'What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?' Saul was not searching for God, he was searching for donkeys; but God had chosen him, and God changed his heart and filled him with the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill God's purposes. Saul's life was forever changed. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit could Saul accomplish the work God had in store for him, not through his own wisdom and might (see today's 1 Cor readings for more on the Holy Spirit). When the people looked at Saul (from their human perspective) they said, "How can this fellow save us?" They could not understand the

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power of the Spirit. Were you ever surprised by God while you were searching for proverbial lost donkeys? How is the Holy Spirit working in your life to fulfill God's purposes?

- Those who are saved are filled with the Holy Spirit and live by the Spirit, not by flesh. We rely on the power of God, not on our own power – apart from God, we can do nothing. As our readings from 1 Corinthians tell us today, we should not put any faith in the wisdom of man but rather place ALL of our faith in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:5). It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can understand God's word and His direction for our life (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). The Bible says the God's thoughts are farther from our thoughts than Heaven is from the earth (it is impossible to measure how far). Only through the Holy Spirit can God's thoughts be revealed to us – it is vital that we continually seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit in our worship, prayer, Bible study, and fellowship, and that we follow the Spirit's direction. Those without the Spirit (the unsaved) cannot accept God's truth and view God's word as foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14). However, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 warns that even Christians can "quench" or "grieve" the Holy Spirit through disobedience, warning us to "abstain from every form of evil." How important is it to receive the counsel of the Holy Spirit through the study of God's word and through prayer, remaining receptive and obedient?

4. 1 Samuel 10:9 -- "God gave him another heart." Only God can give you a new heart. No one can fix your old heart.

5. Proverbs 4:1-9 -- God's commands don't rob you of joy and life, they enable joy and protect life.

6. Proverbs 4:5, 7 -- Anyone, regardless of intelligence, background, or experience can get wisdom. It starts with obeying God's commands.

7. Proverbs 4:23 -- "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Whatever is in the well will come out in the bucket. Said another way, whatever is in the glass, spills out when it is bumped. Said still another way, no good tree bears bad fruit, and no bad tree bears good fruit. What is really in your heart will determine the product of your life. Above all else guard your heart.

8. 1 Corinthians 2:1 -- "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Our faith does "not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:5)." It wasn't logic and reason that brought you to your knees and transformed you, it was the power of the Holy Spirit working in a real, personal, one-on-one love relationship with you. Likewise, logic, reason, science, and well thought out arguments are not going to bring anyone else to Jesus. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him (John 6:44)." Today, Paul reminds us, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14)." When God is working on the heart of a person, God may invite you to serve as Christ's Ambassador to that person through the process. The most powerful testimony you can offer someone is to proclaim the Jesus you know personally, to tell of what God did in your life, to be a first-hand witness to the real power of God – "You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)." As you proclaim the power of God in a real and personal way, the evidence of God's power should also be very observable to others by the fruit of your life. Much like Gideon and his army, you will not win the battle for the soul, you will only participate in what God is doing. God prepares hearts to receive your testimony, and you might not realize the impact

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your testimony has – seeds planted in soil that have yet to sprout. A fisher of men has no control over the fish, but the Creator does.

9. 1 Corinthians 2:2-5 -- "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.... so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Again, people aren't convinced by clever arguments to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior; they are moved by the Holy Spirit. Getting caught up on pointless debates only cheapens the Gospel. Also, many Christians try to find clever ways to share their faith without ever mentioning Jesus – "I don't want to scare them off." I'm not sure how you share Jesus without sharing Jesus. The Holy Spirit will do the convicting.

10. 1 Corinthians 2:10 -- "...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit." Today we read that Samuel told Saul, "Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man." (1 Samuel 10:6) Only through the Spirit could Saul understand the truths of God and prophesy, not through intellect. Today Paul explains that wisdom can only be revealed through the Spirit, not through human reasoning. (1 Corinthians 2:10) Therefore, Paul did not attempt to convince the Corinthians to believe through clever, intellectual arguments. People come to Christ only through the Spirit as the Father draws them. People only rightly interpret God's word as instructed by the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:12) How important is it to be in tune with the Spirit? How important is it to not only have God's word but also the "mind of Christ"?

11. 1 Corinthians 2:11 -- "So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." It is dangerous in a relationship to assume what another person is thinking because we tend to misinterpret. This is one reason why open communication is so important to a relationship. Similarly, it is very dangerous to presume the thoughts of God in a particular situation, beyond what has been clearly revealed in the Bible. This is one reason prayer (communication) is so important. God reveals truth to us via the Spirit. Also, the Spirit convicts the heart. We cannot know what God is doing in the heart of another person. Be very careful not to presume you do. We don't know which "Saul" we know God is about to make a "Paul." Proclaim the truth in love to all without showing partiality, and let God do the rest.

12. 1 Corinthians 2:14 -- "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." A person cannot receive God's word and truth without aid of the Spirit. Do not be surprised when what seems so obvious to you is rejected as folly by unbelievers.

13. 1 Corinthians 2:16 -- "But we have the mind of Christ." If everyone has the mind of Christ, there is unity. Unity is found only in Christ. Today, many seek to unify around something other than Christ in order to bring peace, order, and progress; perhaps the common bond is a philosophy, a cause, a political party, an ethnicity, a gender, etc. However, all these identifiers fall short in 'saving' people from themselves, more importantly from the wrath of God. The Bible says, God is love, and Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life – no one gets to The Father (who is the source of love, peace, and wisdom) but through Jesus. Be truly united through Jesus (see John 17)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 May: Seek to only communicate what is put on your heart by the Spirit, rather than speaking from your own knowledge. Are you proclaiming Jesus Christ to others or just morals based on the Bible – there is a difference. We are not called to make

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“good, moral people,” we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ. If you aren’t proclaiming the Name, you are not proclaiming Jesus. The name of Jesus will divide a room quicker than anything else. Jesus said this is exactly what would happen. Have the moral courage to be judged a fanatic. Simply proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ today without adding to it (1 Corinthians 2).

DBRP- WEEK 18, Day 4, Thursday, 3 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+3%3B+1+cor+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 3 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 7:3 -- "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart.... direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you." You cannot serve God and your own personal interests. Serve the Lord wholeheartedly, Him only.
2. 1 Samuel 7:5 -- "I will pray to the LORD for you." God wants you to pray for other Christians who need to return to The Lord.
3. 1 Samuel 7:14 -- "The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel." God can restore what you lost in your sin.
4. 1 Samuel 8:3 -- "Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain." Faith remains a personal decision. Parents must raise their kids to follow God, but they must ultimately choose to follow God or not. Samuel's sons made the very common choice of serving self over God.
5. 1 Samuel 8:5 -- "Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." It is very tempting for Christians to want to do what seems to be working for the world instead of doing what God wants. God's ways usually don't make sense to the world. It takes faith to choose God's ways.
6. 1 Samuel 8:7 -- And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." From Henry T. Blackaby: "The Israelites were to be a nation unlike any other. Every other nation had a king or ruler, but Israel's king was to be God Himself! Still, the Israelites complained that they wanted to be like other nations and have an earthly ruler! As we read about the Israelites, we marvel at their foolishness. Yet we are prone to make the same mistake, choosing our human wisdom over God's leadership. There is much discussion these days about leaders and managers. According to popular teaching, leaders have the vision and set goals for people or organizations to follow. Managers handle the day-to-day marshaling of resources under their charge. In the Christian life, God is the leader of our lives, our families, and our churches. God sets the direction; He establishes the priorities; He provides the resources. We are the managers. We take what He gives us and do with it as He directs. The biblical term for leader is Lord. As our Lord, Christ has the authority to reveal the direction for our lives. As Lord, He chooses our careers, leads us to our marriage partners, and helps us set our daily priorities. We are to be good managers of the mind, body, and spiritual life He gives. He is the Lord of our families. He knows what is best for our children. He knows how to make marriages strong. Our responsibility is to obey Him as He leads our families to Christlikeness. Christ is the Lord of our church. He takes responsibility for expanding it (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:18). Only He knows what is best for our church. Our task is to faithfully perform the role He assigns us. Do not foolishly trust in human wisdom and leadership as the Israelites did. Follow your Lord and trust Him alone."

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7. 1 Samuel 8:11-18 -- "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day, you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day." Nothing has changed with politics. Our hope is in God and God alone. In the Book of 1 Samuel, God's people put their trust in government rather than in God and offered their allegiance to a king rather than the KING. Therefore, God turned them over to the leaders they chose over Him. Today, we have placed the laws of man over the Law of God, and we have allowed ourselves as Christians to become offensive to no one but God in an era (and error) of "political correctness." As a nation, God will turn us over to what we have preferred. Christians must remain faithful to the Kingdom of God. While everyone else is talking politics, proclaim the Gospel, and pray for repentance and revival.

- God warned his people of abuses of power that would come from government officials who are chosen by those who have rejected God and who have placed their trust in government rather than God.

8. 1 Samuel 8:22 -- "Go every man to his city." God gives the rebellious what they want, turning them over to the consequences of their choices.

9. Proverbs 3:3 -- "Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck." Love and faithfulness go hand-in-hand.

10. Proverbs 3:7 -- "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil." Human wisdom leads only to sin; true wisdom can only come from God and is beyond human reasoning.

11. Proverbs 3:12 -- "...for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." God disciplines those He loves.

12. Proverbs 3:19 -- "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens." God's wisdom is the foundation of all Creation. How important is it to live by God's wisdom?

13. Proverbs 3:35 -- "The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace." Only godly wisdom brings honor in the end.

14. 1 Corinthians 1:1 -- "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus." Paul was called by God's will, not by his will.

15. 1 Corinthians 1:2 -- "To the church of God..., to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...." You have been set apart and called to be a saint. How are you doing with your calling in life?

16. 1 Corinthians 1:7, 8 -- "Jesus Christ... will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus makes you guiltless, not your efforts.

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17. 1 Corinthians 1:10 -- "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." Christ unifies. Where there are divisions there is a lack of godliness because there is not unity in Christ. When everyone has the mind of Christ, everyone has the same mind, unity. Read John 17.

18. 1 Corinthians 1:17 -- "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." We need not attempt to use wisdom to convince others that Jesus is The Lord and Savior. Disbelief is a spiritual issue, not an intellectual issue. The word of God is what the Holy Spirit uses to convict people of the need for repentance and Salvation. Proclaim God's word, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest through the Power of God.

19. 1 Corinthians 1:20 -- "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" Don't get wrapped up in pointless debates over the Gospel with unbelievers. No one comes to the Son but the Father draw Him.

20. 1 Corinthians 1:22, 23 -- "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles." Those who demand proof of Jesus have the same problem as those who demand miraculous signs: their hearts aren't really seeking God. Jesus said that proof will never satisfy the unbeliever. Many people who trust in their own understanding negate what they cannot see. Therefore, they remain out of touch with the Spirit which is unseen but the source of all wisdom. How foolish is it for people to think that reality is defined by their perceptions and limited intellect?

21. 1 Corinthians 1:29 -- "...so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." If it were possible to convince others to surrender to Jesus, we would take the credit. God intends to leave no doubt that it was His power that changed the heart.

22. 1 Corinthians 1:31 -- "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." We share no glory with Jesus; He does it all and gets all the credit. Paul was saved when He was not seeking Jesus; so were you.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 May: Truly consider your thoughts, words, choices, and deeds today. Question the motivations behind them. Are they motivated by unconditional love for God and love for others? Does selfishness remain? Do temptations remain? Identify the dark closets in your heart where you need the Holy Spirits help to do some cleaning. Be honest with yourself today and do some real soul searching. Share the word of God with others and your testimony without trying to appeal to others with clever arguments. Trust God to do the convicting and convincing. (1 Corinthians 1:20-31)

DBRP- WEEK 18, Day 2, Wednesday, 2 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+2%3B+romans+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 2 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 5:3 -- "Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place." Could the Philistines actually believe that Dagon falling down was coincidental? Unbelievers are blind to the spiritual realities occurring around them.

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2. 1 Samuel 5:7 -- "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." The Philistines were suffering greatly because of the presence of the Ark of God. What was their solution? Separate themselves from the Ark so that they could be restored to their gods and their lives apart from The God. The Philistines saw the power of God and "believed in" God but did not have a heart for God to "believe" Him and to worship Him as God. The Philistines preferred to remove the presence of God rather than conform to it. Many people ask for more evidence from God, but evidence won't solve a heart problem. In the New Testament, the Jews demanded of Jesus a sign that they might have proof that He was in fact the Son of God, but Jesus new their hearts and said that only a wicked and perverse generation demands a sign. It wasn't due to a lack of evidence that they refused to believe in him, it was due to a lack of desire.

3. 1 Samuel 6:9 -- "If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence." The Philistines knew that God controlled nature and would more powerfully influence the milk cows than their natural desire to be with their calves. The cows would obey God over instinct. Only man rebels against the Creator; only man requires salvation. The power of God in a person's life overpowers all other desires.

4. Proverbs 2:9, 10 -- "Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart." How do you gain wisdom, and how do you understand the purpose of your life and your direction in life? Proverbs says, "if" you receive God's word and truly "treasure up" His commandments within you, truly inclining your heart to understand them; "if" you cry out to God Himself from your heart to understand them, "then" you will "understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." It won't be a set of rules or a doctrine that you find, it will be a relationship with God Himself. The word of God will point you to the Word of God, Jesus Christ. "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6) The Holy Spirit will speak personally to you through Scripture to reveal the truth of God that cannot be understood solely through human reasoning or intellect. But it is critical to our understanding and to our relationship with God that we "walk in integrity." (Proverbs 2:7) Jesus said it like this: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24) You can't get to know someone simply by reading about them. To know God, you must walk with God, live life with God. You cannot just step out each day on your own course, living your own life, accomplishing your personal goals, living the best life you know how; you must wait on God, let Him show you where He is going, and then follow. (Psalm 52:9) It is important to remember that the Bible is not a holy self-help book, a super-powered book on ethics or a guide to living a "successful life." The Bible is a guide to a relationship with Jesus. If your goal in Bible study is to merely receive blessings from God, you are missing the mark. The goal is to know Jesus personally, to experience Him day-by-day. How will you experience God today?

5. Romans 16:3-16 -- These verses are often overlooked, but they reveal how important relationships were to Paul. Paul's heart was for his brothers and sisters in Christ. How many people in your church do you consider to be the closest, most trusted people in your life?

6. Romans 16:17 -- "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles." Paul considered divisive people to be a threat to the church and to the mission of reconciliation.

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7. Romans 16:18 -- "For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites." Divisive people are self-serving, self-absorbed, selfish, and ungodly, though they often vocalize Christian intent in their self-righteousness.

8. Romans 16:19 -- "For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil." Are you known by everyone for your obedience to the Lord? Are you wise to what is good and innocent to what is evil? What a great way to live life.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 May: Today, make a list of your closest Christian friendships, and take definitive steps to cultivate those relationships. Invest in your family members and in your church relationships to build up your Christian family. Romans 12:10 – "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." (Proverbs 27:10, Romans 16:3-16)

DBRP- WEEK 18, Day 2, Tuesday, 1 May 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+1%3B+romans+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 1 May 18:

1. 1 Samuel 3:1 -- "And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision."

2. 1 Samuel 3:1 -- "And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision." Samuel 3 begins with the above ominous statement. The people had stopped hearing from God, and without God's leading, they are doomed. The Book of Amos makes a similar statement -- "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11). Today's readings reveal not only that the "branch" had been separated from the "Vine" and was withering and dying, but the readings also reveal that the people were not aware of their condition – they felt that they were in a normal relationship with God. Why had they ceased to hear God? Simple: Iniquity! (1 Samuel 3:13, 14) They had walked away from God and expected Him to follow them down their unholy path. So, when they were being defeated by the Philistines, they asked, "Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:3)?" Then, in desperation, they turned to the idol of religion and the ark of God (which had become for them an idol), believing that their salvation rested in it rather than God -- "Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies (1 Samuel 4:3)." Remember that similarly, Samson believed that his strength came from his uncut hair rather than from his relationship with God. Eli fell dead when he had heard that the Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant, the wife of Phinehas died in child birth "because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband." Her dying words were, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." She did not understand that the glory of God departed long before the ark of God had been captured; it departed when the people departed from God. Too many Christians have grown comfortable both with iniquity and with not hearing from God or experiencing his presence in their lives. They believe that the "distance" from God they feel, along with the silence, is normal – "From a distance God is watching (Bette Midler)." To fill the void, many turn to religious activities, but religion is no substitute for relationship and fellowship with God that comes through obedience. Self-serving, self-justifying, presumptuous, and prideful religion has no real power. God does not honor ritual without love and

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obedience. Only those who have a true relationship with God hear from God. Even Bible study can become an empty ritual. We must study God's word, which is our primary source of revelation from God, but we must also walk with God in spirit and truth.

- James 4:8 -- Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

3. 1 Samuel 3:13 -- "...his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them." God expects His people to challenge sin, both within the family and in other relationships.

4. 1 Samuel 3:18 -- "And he said, 'It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him.'" Eli's response to God's malediction could be interpreted two different ways: 1) Eli's statement could be taken positively as a demonstration of Eli's respect and trust in God's sovereignty through his punishment, Eli subjugating all else to God's glory. 2) On the other hand, Eli's statement could be seen as a complacent fatalism -- "It doesn't matter what I do, God is going to do what God is going to do, so why try?" The Bible does not reveal a concerted effort on the part of Eli to repent and to plead for mercy from God, contrary to the response we see from so many others when God pronounced judgment against them. What do you think?

5. 1 Samuel 4 -- "The glory has departed from Israel!" If God is not with a person or nation, their plans are futile. Proclaiming that God is with you doesn't mean He is. If you are not with God, He is not with you.

6. Proverbs 1:2 -- "To know wisdom...." There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied and understanding beyond experience. There are many knowledgeable people in the world, but few with wisdom. Wisdom can only come from God, and the Holy Spirit uses God's word to give wisdom. How much you value God's words reveals how much you care about wisdom and truly knowing Him.

7. Proverbs 1:7 -- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Both true knowledge and wisdom require a proper respect for God. How tragic it is that schools in America start with the premise that God is not required to obtain knowledge and wisdom. The decision to take God out of our schools has sown the seeds for national destruction.

8. Proverbs 1:8, 9 -- Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

9. Romans 15:1 -- "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." You must be patient with immature Christians who act inappropriately. When someone offends you, you want to defend yourself and get gratification, but the Bible says not to, but rather to respond to abuse with love and kindness. As we read previously, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.... Do not take revenge... (Romans 12:14-19)." Of course this is really, really hard and goes against everything we are taught by the world. Yes, you will likely mess this up almost daily. If you doubt that you will, ask the people closest to you how often you get it right. God knows how hard this is and commands us to have "endurance" but also to be encouraged by Jesus' perfect example which ultimately resulted in the Cross -- he knows better than anyone what you are going through: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me (Romans 15:3)." You must take up your personal cross to follow Jesus, and this starts with denying self and considering others, particularly those who offend you

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as more valuable than yourself, the lost sheep that consume the mind of the Shepherd. Try this experiment for a while: stop defending yourself; respond to everyone who lashes out at you with love, kindness and blessings. See what happens.

10. Romans 15:5 -- "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus." God wants you to suffer maltreatment from others with endurance so that you can promote unity and reconciliation.

11. Romans 15:18 -- "...bring the Gentiles to obedience." The goal is obedience. Look at your great godly commission at the very end of Matthew 28.

12. Romans 15:30, 31 -- "I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea." Paul's words teach us much about prayer: First, Paul greatly valued to prayers of fellow believers, appealing to or begging them to pray. Obviously, he understood the prayers of the righteous are powerful. Second, he had in mind prayer that was akin to striving, a true struggle. This was earnest, persistent prayer that was effective and powerful, more powerful than any physical power. Third, he recognized the unique power of communal prayer, hoping that they would "strive together." Fourth, he asked for prayer for requests he believed were aligned with God's purpose and will, not for selfish ambitions or desires. Finally, Paul was not certain his prayers would be answered in the affirmative by God (as often they weren't), but this did not hinder his understanding of the importance of prayer. We all need a deeper understanding of the power of prayer. The best way to grow in prayer is to pray, pray, pray.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 May: Overlook offenses committed against you, remembering that people are weak and need mercy and grace just as you do. Don't satisfy your own desire to defend yourself or to stand up for your 'rights' but rather consider how you can transmit the peace of God. References from today's readings: "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.'" (Romans 15:1-3) Strive in prayer today -- committed, hard, tiresome prayer. (Romans 15:30)

DBRP- WEEK 18, Day 1, Monday, 30 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=1+sam+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+30%3B+romans+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 30 Apr 18:

1. 1 Samuel 1:14 -- "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." Eli made judgements based upon outward appearances. Generally, Eli will prove to be a poor judge of character.
2. 1 Samuel 2:7 -- "The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts." Every person's faith is in God's hands. In your lowest state, God has greatness in store for you.
3. 1 Samuel 2:12 -- "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD." A person's character is defined by their relationship with God.

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4. 1 Sam 2:20 -- "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed." God does not honor those who dishonor Him. The New Testament confirms this:

- Revelation 2:5 -- Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

- Revelation 2:16 -- Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

- Revelation 2:22 -- Behold, I will throw...those who commit adultery...into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works.

- Revelation 3:1-3 -- I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

- Revelation 3:15-19 -- I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

5. 1 Samuel 2:22, 23 -- "Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And he said to them, 'Why do you do such things?'" Though Eli's sons were sinning in unimaginable ways, Eli only scolded them without holding them accountable. Proverbs 19:18 says, "Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death." Eli's failure to discipline his sons led to their deaths.

6. 1 Samuel 2:26 -- "Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man." Compare this verse with Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." God's people have strong vertical and horizontal relationships, having been given the mission of reconciliation. Your relationships with others is a reflection of your relationship with God.

7. 1 Samuel 2:29 -- "Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me." When Eli chose not to hold his son's accountable, he chose his sons over God. When you overlook sin in order to maintain relationships, you dishonor God.

8. Proverbs 30:1-3 -- "The man declares, I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One." Life outside of a genuine relationship with God and a life lived outside of His guidance will wear you out. Like so many before and after him, Agur discovers this late in his days. Now he is starting to gain wisdom. The more you know, the more you know what you don't know.

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Socrates said, “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” Proverbs says, the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, understanding our total reliance on Him.

9. Proverbs 30:4 – “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!” Too many people reject the word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit, preferring instead to seek wisdom from their own understanding, rejecting the guidance of the One who created all things and who is the actual source of all wisdom – how incredibly foolish! Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, follow His leadership as Lord, and He will make your paths straight.

10. Proverbs 30:6 – “Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Many cults and false leaders add to God’s word.

11. Proverbs 30:7-9 – “Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” Agur understood the limits of his own integrity and character. So, he prayed to God for strength of integrity. Wisely, Agur understood that the most important thing in life was the quality of his character before the Lord. Reputation is what others say about you, but character is what God knows to be true about you. What sins are struggling with? Are these issues at the center of your prayer life? The things that hinder your relationship with God (sin) should be your greatest prayer concern. Remember, self-control, the power to do what you ought, is a fruit of the Spirit, not of the intellect. For the most part, people know what they should do; they just fail to do it because the sinful desires within them (the flesh) has not been surrendered to the Holy Spirit. Pray for God to reveal the truth of you and to strengthen your faith, hope, and love that you would be “one” with God in thought, word, and deed. This was Jesus’ prayer for you before His crucifixion. (see John 17)

12. Proverbs 30:10 – “Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.” Be very careful what you think and say about a fellow Christian. You don’t know what God is doing with them and within them. We are quick to see the faults of others, but we cannot know from where they have come and to where they are going. In God’s economy, He may view them as worthier to be praised than you. For example, the one who grew up in a good environment might act better than the one who grew up in a bad environment, but the latter might still have a more receptive heart for the Lord than the former.

13. Proverbs 30:11-14 – “There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth. There are those—how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift! There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.” Once again, the Bible reminds us that character is formed in the home. The way people treat their parents is how they will treat others. The respect they have for their parents reflects the respect they have for God. If parents allow their children to speak disrespectfully to them, they will grow to be disrespectful, unloving people. The power of the Holy Spirit can heal old wounds and change old habits that were forged during childhood, but it will also take much effort on the part of the person who learned the bad habits.

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14. Romans 14:1 -- "As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.... So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." How incredible would it be if Christians and their respective churches put Romans 14 into practice? The body of Christ suffers from tremendous disunity and consequential disempowerment because of irreconcilable quarrels over how to worship God -- "One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike." Divisions between denominations and even churches within denominations can become quite worldly and hostile, destroying the witness of those involved. Some church denominations even forbid certain Christians from participating in communion, not because those Christians aren't committed believers in Christ, but because they aren't members of that particular denomination; this is contrary to the teachings of the Bible -- "decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother (Romans 14:13)." Scriptural interpretations also divide denominations. But why can't we disagree without being disagreeable? Why can't we disagree about some of the more complex theological issues while remaining united in the love of Christ? Can't we trust God to reveal truth to His faithful servants? "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4)." In Corinth, Paul encouraged knowledgeable Christians to show gentleness and understanding to new believers who, get this, still did not understand that there is only one God -- "not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled (1 Corinthians 8:7)." Rather than ridiculing these new believers for their tremendous lack of understanding, Paul encouraged the enlightened Christians not to eat meat sacrificed to idols in order to remove that stumbling block from the spiritual development of those baby Christians. Be gracious to those who are misguided in their faith but love God. One of the best methods of restoring unity within the Body is by getting Christians back into the word of God. I am very thankful for the Defenders Group with representation across the denominations, studying God's word together with a heart for the Lord and for each other.

15. Romans 14:12 -- "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God." God is Judge, not man. Everyone will give account of their actions before The Lord.

16. Romans 14:13 -- "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother." Everything we say and do to others should be intended to bring people closer to Jesus and to each other.

17. Romans 14:15 -- "For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love." If others are offended by what you say or do, change your ways if possible, within the bounds of godliness to accommodate them, even if your actions aren't ungodly. Don't let an issue distract others from Jesus. If you choose your rights over love, your actions are ungodly. Seek reconciliation first.

18. Romans 14:18, 19 -- "Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." Compare this verse with 1 Samuel 2:26 and Luke 2:52. If you are serving Christ and showing grace to others, you will receive favor from others who need to be loved.

19. Romans 14:21 -- "It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble." Good things become bad if they cause issues or problems for others.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 April: Put other people's feelings ahead of your rights. If something you justifiably do bothers someone else, don't do it so that peace might remain. (Romans 14)

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 7, Sunday, 29 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Ruth+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+29%3B+psalm+50%2C+51>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 29 Apr 18:

1. Ruth 3:11 -- "My fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman." Ruth's reputation of honor was well known despite her poverty. Boaz spoke of her integrity above her beauty -- "All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character (NIV)". "...for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman (KJV)."

- Though not wealthy, famous, or equipped with any particular skill or talent, Ruth had a reputation of possessing noble character. God cares about our character. The Bible says that noble character is worth more than great riches (Pro 31:10). Luke 2:52 points out that, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." But the world honors talents, skills, and appearance over character. Those lifted up by society are those who are good at something (or just good looking), regardless of whether or not they are good people. In fact, the world is quite willing to overlook major character flaws of those who have enough talent or beauty. However, God calls His people to have character and competence -- character first. So how does a Christian develop character? The character development process is a perpetual cycle -- your thoughts turn into decisions; your decisions turn into actions; your actions become habits, which solidify into your character (who you are); and the cycle continues as your character guides your thoughts. To develop a Christ-like character, the Bible will instruct you to target all areas of the character development cycle through a changed heart, changed mind, changed thoughts, changed decisions, changed habits, and a changed character (be the new you that you already are). In other words, the perpetual cycle of change is not linear (one step to another), it is interdependent, mutually supportive, synergistic, and continuous. The secular world sees character development as a wholly human endeavor, a product of the human will. Many religions hold the same viewpoint. However, though the Christian understands the importance of willpower in the process of sanctification, the Christian realizes their total dependence of the power of the Holy Spirit for both salvation and for sanctification (Christ-like character development -- oneness with Christ). Without Christ, character development is a house built on a foundation of sand. Without Christ, one can obtain the appearance of character without the true power of character; a person can act out character (hypocrite is the Greek word for stage actor), and become a whitewashed tomb -- outwardly impressive but dead inside. The worldly version of character can produce results in life, but not eternal results. It is easy for Christians to be deceived by the many popular secular teachings on character development, placing their faith in the inherent goodness of people, which only needs to be unleashed through proper education and practice, but the Bible teaches that "self-control" is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fruit of human willpower (Galatians 5:23). "Let no one deceive you with empty words (Ephesians 5:6)." Christian character development is not building up a better you but rather sacrificing you for Him -- being crucified with Christ and no longer living for self but for Christ alone. As stated above, the Bible gives many instructions on how to personally develop Christ-like character, instructions which demand daily discipline (disciples require discipline) and long-term perseverance, but we must recognize these as disciplines as acts of denying self rather than self-denial. Jesus said the first step was to "deny self" (Matthew 16:24), while the

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secularist says the key to success is self-denial. Self-denial has been described as giving up something you want now in order to get something you want more later – making daily sacrifices to achieve long-term goals. For example, you don't eat that cheese cake so you can look good at the beach this summer, and you motivate yourself by saying things like, "Nothing tastes as good as being thin feels." Ultimately though, the focus is on self, self-control for self-glorification. Denying self is putting an end to self-seeking, self-serving, self-justifying, self-glorifying, self-centered and self-confident living. It is no longer living, but Christ living in us. Instead of resisting what you want now for sake of what you want later, it is no longer wanting what you wanted but rather wanting Him, appreciating that you have Him, walking in fellowship with Him, and sharing Him with others. It is an end to chasing after the worries of this world. Ask yourself this question: "Why do I what you do?" What is your true motivation behind your actions? What is the foundation of your character? Jesus said that eternal life was knowing Him (John 17:3). Are you experiencing eternal life today to the fullness of joy? What might be standing in the way?

2. Ruth 4:17 -- "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David." God used the humblest of people and foreigners to raise the lineage of Jesus. Naomi and Ruth certainly could never imagine that God would use them in such an important way just as we cannot possibly imagine how God is using us for eternal purposes.

3. Proverbs 29:26 -- "Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the LORD that a man gets justice." If only we sought the favor of God the way we seek the favor of influential people.

4. Psalm 50:7-9. 16, 17, 23 -- "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds.... What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you.... The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" You cannot remain in right fellowship with God while sin remains, and you cannot expect God to honor your prayers and worship while you continue to dishonor Him. I read this story about Norman Vincent Peale: "When Peale was a boy, he found a big, black cigar, slipped into an alley, and lit it up. When he saw his father approaching, he quickly put the cigar behind his back and tried to act casual. Desperate to divert his father's attention, Norman pointed to a billboard advertising the circus. "Can I go, Dad? Please, let's go when it comes to town." His father's reply taught Norman a lesson he never forgot. "Son," he answered quietly but firmly, "I learned long ago never to approach my Father with a petition while at the same time trying to hide a smoldering disobedience." In today's readings, Psalm 50 gives God's perspective on the disobedience of His people. In Psalm 51, David gives us a model of repentance as he pleads with God to "restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit (Psalm 51:12)." David understood God's perspective: "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:16, 17)." While through Christ we have eternal fellowship with God (Romans 8:38, 39), our sins hinder our temporal fellowship with Him (1 Corinthians 3:3). Daily we must practice 1 John 1:9:

- 1 John 1:9 -- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

5. Psalm 50:14 -- "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High." Your daily attitude and actions are your worship to God more than your religious activities.

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6. Psalm 50:16-18 -- "But to the wicked God says: 'What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers.'" Studying, memorizing and reciting the Bible is pointless if you aren't intent on living the words of God with the desire of unifying with God in love. A true Christian will walk the talk. Some false Christians can be very deceptive in their religious speech, perhaps even deceiving themselves. Beyond our words, our attitudes, choices, and deeds often reveal the truth of what is in our hearts. But "good deeds" are nothing but "filthy rags" if not done from a heart of selfless, genuine love for God. Sometimes people will use religious activity, charitable activity, and Bible knowledge to conceal or attempt to compensate for a wicked, self-centered heart. Sometimes people will justify to themselves their self-centered behavior by claiming it to be acts of "service." But virtue only comes from a truly virtuous, selfless heart. Everything else is a façade. God always knows the difference between genuine selflessness and disguised selfishness, and usually other people figure it out over time. Watch out for the Christian that frequently uses the words "I" and "me." Check yourself too. Why do you do what you do? Honestly, is it for you or only for Him? In honesty, we can all say that our motives are mixed – there is always a bit of selfishness in there, but recognizing, acknowledging, and addressing that with the Lord is key – it is humility. None of us are perfected in love, but we must genuine love our endeavor.

7. Psalm 50:18 -- "If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers." Contrary to popular misinterpretations of the Bible, Jesus did not 'hang out' with unrepentant sinners, and He doesn't want you to either. He certainly engaged and challenged the unrepentant sinner (in love), but He fellowshiped with those who sought Him. Jesus ate with the repentant sinners and tax collectors, those sinners who sought a right relationship with Him, though very imperfectly. Who do you prefer to hang out with? How often do you talk about Jesus, in regular conversation, with your good friends? What you discuss with your close friends says much about the foundation of your friendship.

8. Psalm 50:21 -- "These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you." God's apparent silence before your sin does not signal His indifference or acceptance. He will hold you accountable. God will not be mocked.

9. Psalm 50:22 -- "Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!" When you choose to sin, you have forgotten or disregarded God in that moment. You have defied the KING. You have committed cosmic treason. Fortunately, God's fidelity does not depend on our fidelity, and His love is not limited by the limits of our love, but in our reliance on and confidence in grace, we must not lose perspective on the seriousness of sin; we must not take grieving the Spirit lightly. Our love and appreciation for Christ should make sin horrific to us.

10. Psalm 50:23 -- "The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" Are you living out thanksgiving? A thankful heart is an obedient heart. Obedience is a demonstration of gratitude, love, and an act of worship.

11. Psalm 51:1-9 – When we understand the difference between who God is and who we aren't, when we have a glimpse of the gravity of our sin in defiance of the Almighty, we approach God in complete humility, acknowledge our complete reliance on His mercy and grace, and respond to other sinners accordingly.

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12. Psalm 51:10 -- "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me." When your goal in life is to be right with God and close to Him, you are on the right path, and He will not deny you your desires. Considering the comments above on character development, notice that the psalmist recognizes that he cannot fix his own heart, only God can create a clean heart and renew a right spirit.

13. Psalm 51:13 -- "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you." A person who truly has been saved has a natural passion for telling others how to be saved too. It is not a hard thing to get people to talk about what they care most about.

14. Psalm 51:17 -- "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." God seeks genuine, humble love. Unlike our human relationships, you can't mask your true feelings with God. He knows the truth of you, your motives, desires, and emotions. Walk with the Spirit as He searches your heart.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 April: "My fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman." (Ruth 3:11) Today, consider what the people in town would say about you. Would you primarily be described as a faithful follower of Jesus or just a 'good' person? Next, consider what God knows about you that others don't. If others knew about you what God knows, would your reputation change? Strive to be a genuine person with no secret self. Seek the truth of you to be nothing but Christ in you. Be honest with God, yourself, and with others, and be transparent. The grace of God eliminates guilt, shame, and fear and brings freedom. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed (James 5:16)."

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 6, Saturday, 28 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Ruth+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+28%3B+psalm+49>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 28 Apr 18:

1. Ruth 1:16, 17 -- "For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." True love is a commitment to fidelity for life. Ruth demonstrated this sort of commitment not only in her marriage but also in her extended relationships. To whom do you show this sort of commitment? These words are often recited in weddings, but many don't really mean what they are saying. Some have said these words truly believing they meant it, but they really didn't have the heart for them. Peter said similar words to Jesus during the time of the Last Supper -- "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." I believe Peter really meant what he said, but Jesus knew his true heart. Jesus knew Peter had not yet been perfected in love, but Jesus had a plan for Peter, to grow Peter in love. We have all failed in love and continue to fail in love. Jesus has a plan to make us leaders in love. In God's grace, strive for greater love. Where you are still a Saul, Jesus has a plan to make you a Paul. Can you also see a Paul in the Sauls around you?

2. Ruth 2:5-7 -- Ruth's story was known by others who watched her actions and thereby formed an opinion about the kind of person she was. She was known as uncommonly faithful and hardworking. What do people who don't really know you say about you because of your reputation and deeds?

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3. Ruth 2:12 -- "The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" Boaz saw himself as an instrument through which God might repay Ruth for her fidelity. He treated Ruth with kindness on behalf of God. Do you serve others in the name of God?
4. Ruth 2:20 -- "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers." God arranges circumstances for His purposes and brings the right people together at the right place at the right time to bless His people.
5. Ruth 2:22 -- "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted." The Book of Ruth reminds us of what we read in Judges that, during that time, sexual sin and violence was common.
6. Proverbs 28:2 -- "When a land transgresses, it has many rulers, but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue." A nation full of people with selfish, disobedient hearts is divided and unstable. Wisdom, which can only come from a right relationship with God, brings order and stability.
7. Proverbs 28:4 -- "Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them." The wicked will unite in their wickedness with disobedience as their banner. Those who desire to live by the law and justice must be willing to strive against them.
8. Proverbs 28:8 -- "Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor." Some people make money off the backs of others, and some people are true producers who provide tangible resources to others. Many super-wealthy people have actually produced nothing but rather have manipulated currency to their benefit. Be a producer.
9. Proverbs 28:9 -- "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Don't presume that God will give you what you want while you are refusing to obey Him in what He has clearly told you to do. Settle the matter first.
10. Proverbs 28:12 -- "When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, people hide themselves." The wicked can rise. When they do, the Christians, who have been given the power and authority of God to make disciples in the world, have only themselves to blame. If you don't like the current state of affairs, look at the condition of the church -- the darkness is because the light is not very bright.
11. Proverbs 28:19, 20 -- "Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty. A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished." Stable wealth is obtained slowly over time through faithful production. You don't get something for nothing.
12. Proverbs 28:25 -- "A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched." All fights are the product of selfishness -- someone wants something that God did not give them, and they blame someone else. James said it this way: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do

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you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:1-4) No one can withhold from you what God intends for you. Don't waste your time or harden your heart fighting with others. Live in peace, obey God, and wait patiently on Him to provide your every need.

13. Proverbs 28:26 -- "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered." You will either walk in your own understanding or by the God's word and the counsel of the Holy Spirit. How foolish is it for us to think that our very small minds, informed by some decades of limited experience, could serve as a substitute for the mind of God? God warns, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones (Proverbs 3:5-8)." If you want to live the life God intended for you, if you want to stay on the straight path, if you want to experience the fullness of joy and the peace that transcends all understanding, you will have to obey God's word and follow His lead even when it doesn't seem profitable or beneficial to you.

14. Psalm 49:5 -- "Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me." If you are serving God faithfully, you having nothing to worry about even if everyone is against you.

15. Psalm 49:7 -- "Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life" Only Jesus in His perfection is worthy to pay the price of our sin and give us salvation.

16. Psalm 49:10 -- "For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others." Knowledge and wealth can't bring you salvation.

17. Psalm 49:13 -- "This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts." Popular opinion favors humanism over submission to God.

16. Psalm 49:15 -- "But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me." Only Jesus can save you.

18. Psalm 49:15-20 -- "... Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. For when he dies, he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him. For though, while he lives, he counts himself blessed —and though you get praise when you do well for yourself— his soul will go to the generation of his fathers, who will never again see light. Man, in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish." The psalmist points out the foolishness and blindness of pursuing blessings and praise on earth rather than the blessings and praise of God. Jesus said, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul (Mark 8:36)?" It is quite easy to get caught up in the worries of the world and lose the eternal perspective. However, when our daily pursuit is nothing but Jesus Christ, when our eyes remain affixed to Him, we will not be distracted or deceived.

- James 4:14 -- What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

- Job 14:1, 2 -- Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.

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- Psalms 90:12 -- So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

- Psalm 89:47 -- Remember what my span of life is; For what vanity You have created all the sons of men!

- 1 Peter 1:24 -- All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls.

19. Psalm 49:20 -- "Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish." Without spiritual rebirth through salvation in Jesus, a person is not much different than an animal.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 April: Today, recommit to trusting God with all of your circumstances, challenges, and concerns. Resolve not to worry. Just pray, trust, and obey. (Psalm 49:5)

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 5, Friday, 27 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+21%3B+proverbs+27%3B+romans+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 27 Apr 18:

1. Judges 21:4-12 -- The people went through the proper religious rituals but still pursued their own solution to the problem that they had originally caused by doing things their own way.

2. Judges 21:17-24 -- Israel failed to reach its goals with one immoral act; so they tried another.

3. Judges 21:19 -- During a time dedicated to the worship of God, Israel executed an immoral, ungodly plan in order to achieve the worthy purpose of restoring a tribe – a good thing done a bad way. God expects His people to do the right things for the right reasons in the right way at the right time. The ends do not justify the means.

4. Proverbs 27:1 -- “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” Make today count.

5. Proverbs 27:5, 6 -- It is unloving not to rebuke someone who needs it.

6. Proverbs 27:7, 8 -- "One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home." A person starving for love is more susceptible to sin.

7. Proverbs 27:18 -- "Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored." If you can protect him from his mistakes, you will only benefit from it.

8. Romans 13:1, 2 -- God demands that you obey human authorities and says that disobeying human authorities is the equivalent of disobeying Him.

9. Romans 13:1 -- “For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” How should a Christian prepare for the next election cycle? “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Our national problems are spiritual problems. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all the other issues become non-issues (Romans 13:14). The only hope for the nation is collective repentance among God's people and revival.

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10. Romans 13:3-5 -- "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but too bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval.... But if you do wrong, be afraid.... Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience." While the topic of the above verses is respecting governing authorities, how much more does it apply to respecting the authority of God in our own lives? How much better would life be if we would simply obey all of God's commands? How much easier and more joyful would life be if we had a heart that truly wanted to obey God's commands? And if Christians made economic decisions based upon God's commands, entertained themselves in ways that honored God, and chose politicians who truly honored God, how would that change the political and socioeconomic landscape? God's commands are a product of His perfect love and are intended to give us fullness of life, that our joy might be complete. God's commands are not hard to understand but difficult to follow when our hearts are selfish and unloving. "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct (Romans 13:3)." Stated in 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." When we are living in love, we are obedient; there is no need to fear. Jesus said, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them (John 14:21)." John adds to Jesus' words in 1 John 5:3 -- "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome." When we truly love God, it isn't burdensome to obey His commands because we genuinely desire to do it, and it is our focus. Obedience is love that produces peace, not fear. Romans 13:5 -- "One must be in subjection.... for the sake of conscience." 1 Timothy 1:5 says, "love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." We cannot adequately love God or others without a clear conscience. Guilt, particularly hidden guilt, puts up walls and separation between relationships. It generates feelings of vulnerability and defensiveness. It creates fear and doubt. It is an unpaid debt that hangs over us. The debt must be settled, either paid or forgiven. God offers forgiveness, as should we. Let no debt remain but the debt of love.

11. Romans 13:5 -- "Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience." God cares about our obedience, but even more about the motives behind our obedience. In immaturity, we might obey God out of motives of fear, guilt, self-interest or even pride – much the same motives as a small child obeys a parent. As we grow in maturity, obedience comes more and more from a genuine, heartfelt desire to please, honor and love God – similar to the motives that cause young adults to still obey their parents, not "because of possible punishment," but from a heart of love and respect." The highest quality of character and maturity is selflessness; small children are naturally selfish, and even their obedience is self-centered – "What's in it for me?" If you are motivated to obedience based on the potential for rewards or punishments, you are in one sense not much different than a small child or even an animal who responds to "stick and carrot" discipline. However, the children of the God of Love should be inspired by love to do what is right and true. It is the Spirit that overpowers the natural (flesh). Paul encourages us, "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Romans 13:14)."

12. Romans 13:7 -- "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed." God expects you to gladly pay taxes and to respect governing authorities.

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13. Romans 13:8 -- "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Settle your debts immediately.

14. Romans 13:9, 10 -- In today's readings, Paul naturally transitions his conversation from obeying authorities to love, saying, "any... commandment [is] summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." James said it this way: "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right (James 2:8)." If we are disobedient or if we struggle to be obedient, it is a heart issue; it is a love issue.

15. Romans 13:14 -- "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." God wants you to live like Jesus and to stop trying to be something you're not. You are not an independent agent in life. The world will tell you, "Be yourself." The Bible says, "Be Jesus," the embodiment of his Spirit and character. Your life is over. You are now living His life on earth.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 April: Settle your debts today. If you owe someone \$1.25, pay them back today. If you owe someone a letter, send it today. If you promised to lend something to someone or give them something, do it today. If you are behind on a deadline, finish it today. If you owe someone an apology, wait no longer. (Romans 13:8)

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 4, Thursday, 26 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+26%3B+romans+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 26 Apr 18:

1. Judges 19:12 -- "And his master said to him, 'We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel, but we will pass on to Gibeah.'" The Levite believed that God's people would be more trustworthy than unbelievers, but he was wrong. Today in America, the statistics on destructive and anti-social behaviors is almost identical within the church as within the secular society. What does the book of Judges have to say to us today?

2. Judges 19:22 -- "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." There is no limit to the depths to which people can sink when they turn from God. Sexual perversion is one of the most mentioned traits of the ungodly.

3. Judges 19:24 -- "Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing." The man was willing to sacrifice the women, even his daughter, to the sexual perverts in order to protect the Levite. Morality had come to a point in society where God's people were willing to compromise on one horrific sin in order to prevent another horrific sin. Today, we run the risk of giving in to sin after sin without realizing that it will never be enough to appease the ungodly. There is no compromising with the ungodly.

4. Judges 19:30 -- "Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak." The Levite had to do something shocking enough to get the nation's attention. To that point, no one seemed to care that the land had become so depraved.

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5. Judges 20:5 -- "They meant to kill me, and they violated my concubine, and she is dead." The Levite didn't mention that he actually gave the concubine to the mob to save his own skin. This is like a child saying, "The lamp broke," rather than, "I broke the lamp." Adam demonstrated the same lack of acceptance of responsibility -- "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree...." (Genesis 3:12) The first step to growth is humility and a willingness to be honest with yourself, God, and others about your sin.

6. Judges 20:13 -- "'Now therefore give up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and purge evil from Israel.' But the Benjaminites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel." The Benjaminites violently defended their sexually perverse and lawless lifestyle. Perhaps, they defended the perverse under the notion that people should have the right to live life however they want to live it. When the laws of man override the Laws of God, society is doomed to destruction. Today, our Nation has established and celebrates laws that directly defy God's laws. Watch and see what happens next.

7. Judges 20:16 -- "Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss." Many talented people are terrible sinners, and many will seek to validate sin by pointing to how talented the sinner is. For example, many people who openly practice sexual sins today, such as promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, etc, are very talented and very personable; so, people will point to their talents to legitimize their sinful lifestyle. Regardless of shifting public opinion, sexual sins remain an abomination before God which will be judged.

8. Judges 20:19-48 -- Tens of thousands had to die to address normalized perversion in the land.

9. Proverbs 26:3 -- "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools." If you don't live by the spirit, you will like an animal that only responds to pain or pleasure.

10. Proverbs 26:6-9 -- "Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence. Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools. Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool. Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." We are the messengers of Christ, and we must be very careful to be worthy of the calling. The Bible can be used improperly if not used in the Spirit. Bible knowledge is not Bible wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. A proverb in the mouth of a fool is hurtful. Often God's word is misused in ungracious and inappropriate ways by people with self-centered, self-serving, self-righteous motives. We are commanded to speak the truth – in love. When truth and love go together, this is true love.

11. Romans 12:1 -- "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Real worship is to surrender your life to God in holiness.

12. Romans 12:2 -- "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The message of the world is not acceptable to God and competes with and distracts from the message of the Bible. You must be deep in the word and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be able to discern right and wrong in daily decisions.

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13. Romans 12:3 -- "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." If you catch yourself singing your own praises, check yourself.

14. Romans 12:9 -- "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil." To truly love is to hate evil; it is impossible to love while accepting evil which is always wholly contrary to love. God, who is Love, hates, "abhors" evil; therefore, we must hate evil also. God says that to truly worship Him, we must "present [our] bodies as... living sacrifice[s], holy and acceptable to God," and He warns us that the world's concept of love (along with concepts such as "acceptance" and "tolerance") are contrary to His -- "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2)." As we read in Judges today, the world loves evil and will violently oppose those who live by the love of God, but Paul encourages us, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21)."

15. Romans 12:9-21 -- This section of Romans 12, often entitled "Marks of the True Christian" is worth re-reading every day: Abhor evil; strive for goodness; love everyone as a brother or sister; work hard in service to God; persevere and pray; go out of your way to help other Christians; be uncommonly kind to those who are unkind to you; empathize with others; be equally kind and hospitable to everyone; do not think yourself wise.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 26 April: Today, consider everyone around you as far more important than you, and serve them accordingly. References from today's readings: "Outdo one another in showing honor." (Romans 12:10) Note: the word used for "honor" here is the same used to describe the value of an object or the money paid to acquire something -- worth. Consider everyone around you worthier than you today. Treat them that way and see what happens.

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 3, Wednesday, 25 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+25%3B+romans+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 25 Apr 18:

1. Judges 17:2 -- "And he said to his mother, 'The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.' And his mother said, 'Blessed be my son by the LORD.'" Micah stole from his mother who, in return, blessed him rather than holding him accountable for his actions, which helps us understand why Micah developed wanting character.

2. Judges 17:3, 4 -- "'I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you.' So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah." Not only did Micah's mother make a carved image, she also short-changed the promise by only dedicating 200 of the 1100 pieces. Integrity and fidelity were absent in Micah's home, while the family lived idolatrous lives 'for the Lord' -- more on this below....

3. Judges 17:5, 6 -- "And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did

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what was right in his own eyes." In a lawless land, Micah created his own rules for worship in complete disregard of God's commands, all the while believing God accepted his abominable worship. It is not uncommon to hear people tell themselves and others that God has blessed their idol or abomination; it is not uncommon to see people defy God's laws 'in the name of the lord.' Many examples of such practices are obvious to us, but Judges is written so we all would examine ourselves carefully to see where we are doing what seems right to us (in the name of the lord) rather than what God truly commands.

4. Judges 17:6 -- "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." This verse, which is repeated several times in Judges, can be considered the theme of the book, and the modern reader often misses the power of this verse because we do not understand how shocking these chapters were to the Jewish reader -- let's review the chapter: A man steals 1,100 pieces of silver from his mother (unthinkable), and when he confesses to this crime, his mother doesn't scold him but rather blesses him (absurdity) and promises to use all this money for idolatry (though calling it worship to the Lord). As shocking as all that is, she then dedicates only 200 of the 1,100 pieces (not what she had vowed), to carve an idol, yes, an idol. Micah "ordains" the idol and makes one of his sons the priest (today you can become an ordained minister online) until a Levite comes along who agrees to be Micah's personal priest (instead of serving God's Temple, supported by the people, as God requires). In the midst of all this incredible, shocking sin which in God's Law is all punishable by death, Micah says, "Now I know that the Lord will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest (Micah 17:13)." Then some Danites, on a mission of pillage, visit Micah's house and the Levite actually blesses their evil journey: "Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord (Judges 18:6)." [Do you not see this sort of false blessing all the time today?] When the Danites return later to Micah's house with a raiding party to attack a peaceful, unsuspecting village, they rob Micah's house of its idols and take the Levite with them, whose "heart was glad" because he considered being the priest of the Danites a more prestigious position (again, shocking). Micah pleads with the Danites: "You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left (Judges 18:24)?" However, the Danites show no mercy. "But the people of Dan took what Micah had made, and the priest who belonged to him, and they came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire (Judges 18:27)." The Nation had drifted into shocking lawlessness, completely rejecting God's commands while all the while, maintaining their religion and claims of godliness. They were both religious and heartless, abominable to the Lord. They conformed religion to their evil hearts rather than conforming their evil hearts to the holiness of God. How did they get to this place? "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Note that they didn't think they were doing wrong, but in their own eyes, they thought they were doing right. However, to anyone who knows God's word, all of this should have been utterly shocking. Do you see any comparisons with what is going on in America today? What should be shocking to us is what is no longer shocking to us. Have you not noticed that the more the church drifts into sin the less we talk about sin? "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

5. Judges 17:10 -- "And Micah said to him, 'Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living.'" God gave specific instructions to the Israelites on how to care for the Levites who were also given specific instructions on when, where, and how to lead worship. However, by this point in Judges, the Levites have become traveling Priests for hire. Turning religion into a profession can be a dangerous thing. Today, there are many

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talented people profiting from the Gospel message. Matthew 10:8 -- "You received without paying; give without pay."

6. Judges 17:12 -- "And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah." Micah thought he could ordain priests. Lawless brings highly presumptuous religious activity which does not honor the holiness of God.

7. Judges 17:13 -- "Then Micah said, 'Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest.'" Deep in religious activity, Micah was completely out of touch with The Lord. Many claim to hear from God and presumptuously assume God is ordaining what they have chosen to do. However, their focus is self-serving rather than Christ-serving. God is not deceived. Spiritual talk is not the same as spiritual walk. Jesus said, if you haven't started with denying self, and if you haven't taken up your cross, you are not truly, wholeheartedly following Him, and God has not ordained it, regardless of how many Bible verses you attach to it out of context (Matthew 16:24). In the Old Testament, God condemns the defiled and lame sacrifices offered to Him by the people -- "You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts (Micah 1:7, 8)." Don't offer to the Lord what is acceptable to you, offer what is acceptable to Him.

8. Judges 18:5, 6 -- "And they said to him, 'Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether the journey on which we are setting out will succeed.' And the priest said to them, 'Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD.'" The Levite had not heard from God, and God was not with the Danites, but the Levite, who led unauthorized worship, told these ungodly marauders what they wanted to hear. Again, the Bible warns that we must not presume to speak for God in order to please ourselves or others -- "But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:4)." We cannot proclaim "peace" to others when they do not have "peace" with God through repentance and obedience -- "They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11)." Throughout the Bible, God has called His ambassadors to speak the truth in love, particularly to those who do not want to hear it -- "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37)." However, too many have distorted God's word to "keep the peace" by telling people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear, a sign of end times -- "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:3-5)." Our readings from Proverbs warn us continually not to be a messenger who is unfaithful with the message.

9. Judges 18:20 -- "And the priest's heart was glad. He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people." The Levite proved himself to an opportunist with no loyalty.

10. Judges 18:24 -- "And he said, 'You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left?'" Micah placed all of his hope in false religion. Though he claimed that his false religion was

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honoring to God, it was powerless. If you place your hope in anything but Jesus, you will discover that you built the house of your life on sand. The house of cards will crumble, and the bigger the house, the harder it falls.

11. Judges 18:27 -- "...and they came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire." The Danites, blessed by their illegitimate priest, were ruthless and took advantage of the weak. Some of the most ruthless people claim to be the most righteous. Moralism is often the excuse for lawlessness.

12. Judges 18:30, 31 -- "And the people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up Micah's carved image that he made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh." Once again, the Danites used man-made religion to validate their sinful lifestyles as many do today. Today's most popular religion is secular humanism supported by a fake science that starts with the premise that there is no God. Judges 17 and 18 mark a transition point in the Book of Judges, the third, final section of the book. In this section, no foreign oppressors are mentioned, no judges identified, and the many shocking sins of the protagonists are not called out (it is left to reader to identify them). Most specifically, there are no longer accusations of idolatry – their syncretism was so complete that they thought that, in some strange way, their idol worship was actually acceptable to God, and it had become totally integrated into their worship. Note that there are no prayers to God, only blessings proclaimed in the name of God to validate sinful behavior. This section in the Book of Judges reveals a disintegrated, lawless society where every important societal institution has been totally corrupted – the family, the church, the government, the economy. To paint this picture, the book artfully guides the reader to follow a thread that leads from 1,100 pieces of stolen and cursed silver to a permanent idol set up in an unauthorized and ungodly "church" on bloody stolen soil not far from both the land that had been allotted to the tribe of Dan by God through Joshua and the town of Shiloh, the place of worship authorized by God. Again the numerous, appalling sins throughout the story are only mentioned, not specifically addressed. At this stage in the Book of Judges, the writer merely repeats the phrase, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6)." To drive the point home concerning the depths at which the nation had fallen, the author reveals at the end of chapter 18 who the "young Levite" was: "Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses!" While scholars debate today over whether or not "Moses" should really read "Manasseh," the point remains that this unfaithful, ungodly, idolatrous priest for hire had come from a once great and noble lineage – everything had been ruined. I believe in this stage of the game, God has turned them over to their own desires to face the consequences, no Judges, no rebukes, no protection from themselves. At this stage, their worship is utterly worthless – keep in mind that we are talking about God's chosen people, not pagans. They are now on an inevitable path of terrible destruction. This is a terrifying place to be. The situation described in Judges is very similar to what Paul describes in Romans 1. How does this story apply to us today?

-- Matthew 16:3 -- "And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times."

-- 2 Timothy 4:2-4 -- "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound

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teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

-- Matthew 24:11-13 -- "And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

13. Proverbs 25:2 -- "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out." The old adage says, "Knowledge is power." Knowledge can be very valuable, but not when knowledge is used to build up pride, to achieve personal power for self-centered ends. Many subconsciously seek knowledge as a substitute for faith, an effort to free oneself from dependency on God, an effort to worship the god of self. Of End Times, Daniel says, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Also, Jesus said, "because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12) Today, society is in a frenzied pursuit of knowledge in order to save themselves and to eliminate the need for the Savior. As a result, the love of most is growing cold. As Paul said, "This 'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up. (1 Corinthians 8:1) Read Romans 1:18-32 (written prior to Rome's fall) to see an accurate description of what is happening in society today. Seek knowledge in a selfless, humble way, and glorify God with your faith.

14. Proverbs 25:15-16 -- "With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it." A key principle in God's word is that lasting success is achieved little by little, step by step, overtime, and that patient restraint is vital. As the pastor says, "People always overestimate what they can do in a day and underestimate what they can do in a lifetime." Said another way, "Persistence overcomes the resistance." The mantra of society today is, "more, faster, better." People want quick fixes, quick answers, and instant success. Resist the temptation to "get rich quickly." Patiently obey and watch God work over time -- "The mighty oak does not grow over night."

15. Romans 11:4-5 -- Israel's failure to believe did not surprise God.

16. Romans 11:17-24-- God is both good and stern. You should trust and fear Him.

17. Romans 11:33-36 -- God's wisdom is beyond human understanding.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 April: Today, search yourself to see where you might be presuming that God will bless your idolatry. "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5) "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry." (1 Samuel 15:23)

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 2, Tuesday, 24 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+24%3B+romans+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 24 Apr 18:

1. Judges 15:6 -- "Then the Philistines said, 'Who has done this?' And they said, 'Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.' And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.'" Samson's revenge resulted in the death of his wife. Had he handled it differently, she would have lived.

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2. Judges 16:1 -- "Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her." Samson, though called by God to serve Him mightily, completely defied God's commands, something for which God will certainly hold him accountable. Likewise, God will not tolerate any unrepentant sin in your life.

3. Judges 16:5 -- "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies...." Samson's relationships were not godly or loving; therefore, he was not treated with love and faithfulness by those to whom he made himself vulnerable.

4. Judges 16:15 -- "And she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me?'" The ungodly talk about love, but they have no idea what love really is. Love can only emanate from the Source, which is God Himself. We don't create love, we only share the love that flows from God through us. He is the Vine, we are but branches.

5. Proverbs 24:27 -- Do the hard things first.

6. Proverbs 24:32 -- "Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction." Wisdom is revealed all around you if you will consider what is going on around you from the perspective of God's word. God's truths have predictable and visible consequences. You can learn much by watching how others apply or ignore God's commands to their lives.

7. Romans 10:1-4 -- "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." I suspect most Christians would not say that their heart's desire (their truly earnest desire), their impassioned prayer is for the salvation of those who have hurt them or are hurting them. Paul's example is convicting.

8. Romans 10:3 -- "For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." There is absolutely nothing we can do to make ourselves righteous or "right" with God, though many, even many who claim Christianity, seek to establish their righteousness by virtue of their good deeds. Many become prideful in their behavior and look down on others who appear, in their eyes, to be more sinful than they are. However, righteousness can only come through faith in Jesus Christ and the free gift of salvation that comes through Him and Him alone as He imparts his righteousness upon us. It is by faith that we are saved and not by anything we do. None of our efforts contribute to our salvation. Will you "submit to God's righteousness" rather than attempting to "establish [your] own?"

9. Romans 10:2 -- "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Sincerity and conviction are not enough. Being devout is not enough either. Many people are devout in many religions, but there is no way to salvation but through faith in Jesus Christ.

10. Romans 10:9 -- "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." How is one saved? "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (v13) Calling upon His name is not merely a verbal act, it is a matter of the heart.

11. Romans 10:14, 15 -- "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone

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preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" Do you have beautiful feet? Does your love for God and your love for others (the Great Commandment) compel you uncontrollably to preach the Good News?

12. Romans 10:17 -- "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Does your love for God and others arouse in you a passion to study God's word so that you will be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15)?"

- Mathew 28:19, 20 -- Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

- Proverbs 24:11-12 -- Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?

13. Romans 10:21 -- "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." The sceptic will often ask, "What about those in foreign lands who have never heard of Jesus?" This question is often an attempt by the sceptic to shift attention away from their own burden of responsibility to deal with the Truth presented to them. There is not enough evidence or logic in the world to convince someone to believe what they really don't want to accept – it is not an issue of intellect; it is an issue of the heart, the spirit.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 April: Today, earnestly pray for the salvation of those who you find most offensive. If this is hard for you, pray that God will change your heart. (Romans 10:1-4)

DBRP- WEEK 17, Day 1, Monday, 23 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+23%3B+romans+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 23 Apr 18:

1. Judges 13:1 -- "The LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years." God's discipline of the nation lasted for decades.

2. Judges 13:4 -- "Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean." God expects parents to prepare themselves to raise godly children and then guide them in godliness at the earliest of age.

3. Judges 13:8 -- "Then Manoah prayed to the Lord: 'O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.'" Oh, what a different world it would be if more parents sought the Lord's guidance and direction in raising their children as did Manoah. The Bible says that a primary purpose of marriage is to raise up godly children (Malachi 2:15). Parents are accountable before God for how they raise their children. Proverbs tell parents, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6)," and the key to parenting is to teach children "so that [their] trust may be in the Lord (Proverbs 22:19)." Parents have no greater responsibility in life.

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4. Judges 14:2 -- "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife." Hebrews 11 lists Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson in the "Hall of Fame of Faith," as men who "were made strong out of weakness (Hebrews 11:34)." These were all men who had been uniquely and mightily empowered by God but let pride, lust, and self-centeredness get the best of them. They failed to guard their hearts -- "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life (Proverbs 4:23)." An uninspired book written by men for the sake of a false religion would have made these "heroes" out to be both mighty and noble in character, but the word of God intentionally reveals the truth of these men to reveal the truth of our sinful condition, the truth of God's holiness, mercy, grace, love and righteousness, and the truth of our need to walk by the Spirit in obedience and not by the flesh. Samson was set apart as a Nazarite (Numbers 6) for a great mission, and he was mightily empowered by God for God's purposes. However, although empowered by the Spirit, Samson did not walk by the Spirit but rather walked in the flesh, (Galatians 5:16-26) recklessly pursuing self-gratification, never asking God, "What is to be [my] manner of life, and what is [my] mission (Hebrews 13:12)?" He stubbornly and irrationally pursued his own passions. Notice in our readings today that, while his parents had personal, powerful encounters with God, there is no recorded dialogue between Samson and God, no prayer life, no concern for God's word. It wouldn't be long before Samson broke every vow of the Nazarite and committed many other sins too. In today's readings, he marries a Philistine woman (forbidden by God in Deuteronomy 7) because he was attracted to her (Judges 14:3). He eats honey out of the carcass of a dead lion, even offering honey to his parents, blatantly defying the Nazarite requirement not to touch the dead, and he is driven by fits of rage and "hot anger" (see Galatians 5:20). Though God would still accomplish His purposes through Samson, despite Samson's blatant infidelity, the consequences of Samson's behavior would be needlessly devastating to him. Already, Samson has lost his first wife -- "And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man (Judges 14:20)." What can be confusing in our readings is the fact that Samson's improper marriage was "from the Lord" (Judges 14:4) and that despite Samson's incredible sin, the Spirit continued to empower him. Is God condoning or overlooking sin? Did God intend for Samson to sin? No. The Bible is clear that "God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one (James 1:13)." God used the truth of Samson's bad character and the inevitable fruit of Samson's bad character to reveal truth and expose sin. Notice that when the Spirit empowers Samson it is either to protect Samson or to bring destruction upon the Philistines, not to enable sin. As we shall see, God doesn't overlook Samson's sin at all -- Samson will soon be driven to his knees. The truth can be revealed in a positive way or a negative way. I pray that we will walk by the Spirit, not by the flesh, that the Truth will be revealed to a watching world through our lives in a very positive way.

5. Judges 14:3 -- "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." What is right in our own eyes is not what matters but rather what is right in God's eyes.

6. Judges 14:20 -- "And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man." Samson's closest relationships with unbelievers were unreliable. God is love. Those who do not know God cannot truly love others.

7. Proverbs 23:1-3 -- "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you.... Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food." The American Founding Fathers had a healthy distrust of government for good reason. As the saying goes, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. God gives authority to government, and we are to submit to it. Government is necessary as a means to protect life and property. But any government of man will reflect man's

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fallenness and shortcomings, and government often empowers sin. There is no such thing as a Christian nation. There are only Christian people who may influence a nation and its processes. Christians in America are given a unique access to government, which we should use wisely; but it is important that we maintain perspective on the realities of government. When we start to think that our hope is in government, we are in danger. Political leaders promise many delicacies, but it is deceptive food. There are no gifts from the government that don't have a string attached.

8. Proverbs 23:4 – “Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.” Do not think that your security comes from wealth and so neglect your relationship with God. If you cannot find time to study the Bible, pray, fellowship with your church, raise your family as disciples, minister to the needs of others, etc, you are doing something wrong.

9. Proverbs 23:17 – “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.” Obey and follow God; don't just do what is popular.

10. Romans 9:1, 2 -- “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.” Paul loved his people so much that he was willing to confront them with the truth, even at the expense of his relationship with them, even at the expense of his own life. He sought peace – peace between them and God, not peace with them (a truce) while they remained in sin. On the contrary, he was willing to cause conflict in order to promote love, true love, love that can only come from fellowship with God. He would rather be hated than that they might learn the love of Christ. John the Baptist had the same heart for Herod when he challenged Herod on his adultery. Do you have the heart for those around you to tell them the truth, to call them to repentance in love?

11. Romans 9:8 -- "This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring." God has spiritual children on earth but no grandchildren. Spiritual birth is strictly between God and the individual and has nothing to do with earthly heritage. Galatians 3:29 -- "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

12. Romans 9:18 – “So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.” It is impossible for us to understand what God is doing in the lives of others or who God will draw to His Son. At one point, Paul, still known as Saul, actively persecuted Christians; would you have maintained hope in his salvation at that time, prayed for him earnestly from the heart, and sought opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to him? Or would you have viewed him as the enemy, seeking ill will towards him? The Bible reminds us that people are not the enemy; Satan who controls them is the enemy. People separated from God are the goal of our mission. Prayer is our primary weapon. It might have been wise to avoid Paul when he was still Saul, but during that time praying for him and remaining prepared to proclaim the Gospel to him in word and deed remained essential. Check your perspective and your heart very carefully when dealing with ungodly people, particularly ungodly people who threaten you in some way. Pray for them with a genuine heart for their reconciliation; and if you find any resentment in your own heart, pray that God will conform your heart to that of Jesus' who died for those who persecuted Him.

13. Romans 9:32 -- Faith without works is dead. Works without faith is also dead. Salvation comes through faith. Obedience is the natural result of faith. Jesus is very clear, those who truly love Him obey

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Him because they love Him and are compelled to care deeply about what He cares about. Those who love Jesus need not be constrained by the Law. The Law is still valid, reflecting the character and desires of God, but no longer something one struggles over.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 April: Today, always speak the truth in love when others need to hear it (Romans 9:1, 2). Remember that you are an ambassador for Christ, and your goal is to bring others to peace with God (reconciliation), not necessarily to keep the peace when sin abounds. Consider the words of Jesus -- "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37)."

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 7, Sunday, 22 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+22%3B+psalm+47%2C+48>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 22 Apr 18:

1. Judges 11:2, 3 -- "...they drove Jephthah out and said to him, 'You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.' Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob, and worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him." How often do we judge others without considering the circumstances that contributed to who they have become and that helped to influence their behavior? If we had experienced their circumstances, are we certain that we wouldn't have made the same mistakes in life if not worse? And how often does our response to sinners merely drive them into deeper sin rather than lead them toward repentance, reconciliation, and a right relationship with God? God has given us a message of reconciliation before a sinful world. Does our behavior draw sinners towards Jesus Christ or repel them?

- 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 -- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

2. Judges 11:31-39 – Did Jephthah sacrifice his daughter? Jephthah may not have actually killed his daughter, though this is what is usually preached. Jephthah may have committed his daughter to celibate service to the Lord (a living sacrifice). Human sacrifice was forbidden to a Jew (Leviticus 20:2; Deuteronomy 18:10), and the Bible offers substitute (or redemption) for human sacrifice -- "And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem." (Exodus 13:13) Many believe that Jephthah and his daughter did not mourn her looming death but rather the fact that she would never have children:

- "Several contextual indicators support this conclusion. First, the two-month period of mourning that Jephthah granted to his daughter was not for the purpose of grieving over her impending loss of life, but over the fact that she would never be able to marry. She bewailed her virginity (bethulim)—not her death (11:37). Second, the text goes out of its way to state that Jephthah had no other children: "[S]he was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter" (11:34). For his daughter to be consigned to perpetual celibacy meant the extinction of Jephthah's family line—an extremely serious and tragic matter to an Israelite (cf. Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1ff.). Third, the sacrifice is treated as unfortunate—again, not because of any concern over her death, but because she would not become a mother. After stating that Jephthah "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed," the inspired writer immediately adds, "and knew no man" (11:39). This statement would be a completely

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superfluous and callous remark if she had been put to death. Fourth, the declaration of Jephthah's own sorrow (11:35) follows immediately after we are informed that he had no other children (11:34). Jephthah was not upset because his daughter would die a virgin. He was upset because she would live and remain a virgin. Hannah made a similar sacrifice when she turned her son over to the priestly direction of Eli for the rest of his life (1 Samuel 1:11). How many are willing to make such sacrifices? Actually, however, these tremendous acts of devotion were no greater than that which God requires of all Christians: to offer ourselves as spiritual burnt-offerings in service to God (Romans 12:1)." -- Apologetics Press

- On the other hand, if Jephthah did kill his daughter, it would be no more shocking than other stories we are about to read in Judges. As previously mentioned, Gideon's personal ephod was a direct affront to God that should jump out as scandalous to the highest degree; the Bible does not specifically call out the point, assuming the reader would clearly understand the nature of the offense. Human sacrifice was common among the Baal worshippers, and we know that God punished the Israelites for practicing child sacrifices as the Baal worshippers did. Archeology has also confirmed that the Jews slipped into child sacrifice associated with Baal worship. There is no limit to the evil of people who have rejected God. Where God reigns in the hearts of men, we have a reflection of Heaven – "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)." Conversely, were God has been rejected, we will see a reflection of Hell. The Book of Judges is a warning to future generations as to what happens when society turns from God; it is appalling. "Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near." (Luke 10:11)

3. Judges 11:35 -- "I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow." Take your promises to God very seriously -- He does, and He demands that you fulfill them, holding you accountable if you don't. Be very careful not to make promises to God in haste. Having said that, if you have made a vow to sin against God, you must not keep it. You will simply have to bear the burden of your careless words, rather than also the guilt of the act. Remember, Jesus said that we will be held accountable for every careless word that comes out of our mouth.

4. Judges 11:36 -- "My father, you have opened your mouth to the LORD; do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth." Jephthah's daughter demonstrates incredible faith, surrendering her fate to God while honoring the promises of her father.

5. Judges 12:1 -- "Why did you cross over to fight against the Ammonites and did not call us to go with you?" People will hate you simply because God has blessed you. People will also hate you when you receive the reward for doing what was right when they didn't choose to do what was right. Gideon previously faced the same envy that Jephthah does in this chapter, but Gideon handled it better. The 42,000 Ephraimites who are about to die are a reminder of how destructive envy is and why one should avoid a quarrel before it gets out of hand.

6. Judges 12:6 -- "Then say Shibboleth." This may be the first recorded example of racial profiling. Ephraimites could not pronounce "Shibboleth" but rather said, "Sibboleth." Anyone trying to escape the battle by crossing the river who was an Ephraimite died that day. This was a real tragedy. Discrimination is not always a bad thing. The word "discrimination" has two definitions: one simply means to distinguish one thing from another by identifying exposed differences, such as distinguishing men from women, tall people from short people, adults from children. This form of discrimination is used by everyone every day, including law enforcement. For example, if a man commits a crime, it would likely

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be a waste of time and resources to question women too, simply out of some self-induced “fairness” rule. However, men should not be presumed guilty or treated differently simply because they are men. The other definition for discrimination is to make a difference in treatment or favor based upon anything other than individual merit. The Bible strictly forbids favoring or treating people differently by virtue of their natural physical attributes or cultural attributes. However, it is foolish to act as if physical attributes and cultural attributes aren’t used to distinguish one person from another. Observe how many times the Bible mentions that someone was known for a physical or cultural attribute. God made us able to see the difference. The main issue is how you treat people who are different.

7. Proverbs 22:10 -- "Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease." Strong teams, churches, or organizations cannot tolerate divisive people.

8. Proverbs 22:21 -- "...to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?" God's word will give you a true answer.

9. Psalm 47:5-9 -- “God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!” If we don’t feel overwhelmed with a desire to praise God today, despite circumstances, it is because we have a wrong perspective of God and the reality of the situation at hand. Joy is an issue of perception and understanding.

10. Psalm 48:13, 14 -- "Tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever." One of our greatest responsibilities is to pass our knowledge of God to the next generation.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 April: Pray that God will reveal Himself to you in a way that will naturally make praising Him your passion. Throughout the day, recount your many blessings today. Share with others the joy you have in Jesus. Proclaim the goodness of God to as many as you can today but especially to your own family.

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 6, Saturday, 21 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+21%3B+psalm+46>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 21 Apr 18:

1. Judges 9:3-5 -- "...their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, 'He is our brother.'... Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. And he went to his father’s house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone." When greed and prejudice dominate politics, corrupt and heartless leaders are chosen who will destroy.

2. Judges 9:14, 15 -- “Then all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come and reign over us.’ And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade.’” The first parable recorded in the Bible is about the consequence of raising up corrupt leaders, professional politicians: Abimelech (meaning: "my father is king"), an illegitimate son of Gideon’s, born of a concubine who was in Shechem, convinced the leaders of Schechem, appealing to their racism (Shechem was a Canaanite city), to make him King. With the money that he was paid, Abimelech hires “worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him,” and he eliminates his legitimate

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opposition, the rightful successors of Gideon – he kills “his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself.” At Abimelech’s inauguration ceremony as King before the people of Schechem, Jotham stands on top of a distant hill and shouts out the “Parable of the Trees.” In the parable, the trees decide to elect a king, and they ask first the Olive tree, then the fig tree, and then the grape vine, but they all refuse to be king because they are all successful, important contributors to society and have no desire to leave their industry to “hold sway over the trees.” So, finally, they go to the bramble (thorn bush), and ask the bramble to reign. The bramble who serves no productive value in society, produces nothing, but only feeds off of the labors of others gladly accepts leadership, promising to give all the other trees “refuge” in his “shade,” as if a thorn bush offers any shade. The parable accurately predicts that the bramble will “devour the cedars of Lebanon.” This story in Judges goes far beyond revealing the consequences of Gideon’s sin (an important lesson in itself), it sends an important message/warning about politicians. There is a terrible consequence of electing worthless leaders, lacking character and competence, men and women who make empty promises and rally rabble to political action in order to remain in power, who feed off of the productivity of others. These career politicians, brambles offer refuge and shade but only destroy. Our Founding Fathers had a healthy distrust of government that came from not only their own experiences but also from their knowledge of the Bible:

- “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth [you wish it was just a 10th] of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.” (1 Samuel 8:11-18)

- How important is it to elect men and women of true character and competence to office? I don’t believe this can be done without a concerted effort on the part of Christians who have always served as the conscience of America. Like the olive tree, the fig tree, and the grape vine, we can get so focused on contributing to society that we miss that the thorn bushes are slowly devouring us. Christians must re-discover their voice in the social dialogue in order to influence change.

3. Judges 9:56, 57 -- "Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers. And God also made all the evil of the men of Shechem return on their heads, and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal." God will judge both corrupt leaders as well as those who chose them.

4. Judges 10:8 -- "For eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead." It takes a long time to change the character of a people so that they will again seek The Lord.

5. Proverbs 21:2 -- "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart." God defines right and wrong not people.

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6. Proverbs 21:27 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent." God examines the motives behind what you do. You can do the right things for the wrong reasons and receive God's disfavor.

7. Psalm 46:10, 11 -- "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress." Relax. God is God, and He is with you and will protect you.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 April: Resolve not to get worried about news, politics, and the craziness of life around you. Rather, "be still," and trust God. When others start talking about politics and politicians, talk about Jesus and the Ways of God. Proclaim the truth in love and remain calm. Remind people that only Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the only true hope for peace and unity.

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 5, Friday, 20 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+20%3B+Romans+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 20 Apr 18:

1. Judges 7:2 -- "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'" God intends to eliminate your pride in your accomplishments and your idol of self. He doesn't just want you to experience your full potential; He wants you to experience Him.

2. Judges 7:4 -- "The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there." There is a difference between being willing and being worthy. God sifted 32,000 to find 300 who were both willing and worthy. Within the original 32,000 who formed for battle with Gideon, only 10,000 were willing to stay when given a choice. However, at the watering hole, only 300 proved to have the character to participate in God's great battle. Desert thirst revealed the discipline, self-control, and fortitude of the troops (or lack thereof). Most of the troops, inwardly focused, abandoned their security posture and bearing and essentially dove in the water; meanwhile, 300, who were just as thirsty as the others, knelt at the water, likely with weapons in hand and, in a controlled, disciplined manner, drank. These 300 revealed the strength of character required for God's service. God wanted his people to understand that it was His power, not theirs, that would bring victory, but He would use their discipline, courage, and obedience in the process, giving them the opportunity to experience Him in a way few others would. The 300 took the signaling devices (trumpets and torches) of 30,000+ troops and surrounded the Midianites in the middle of the night. When Gideon's 300 broke the jars concealing the torches, shouted, and blew their trumpets, the Midianites and their allies believed they were being attacked on all sides by 30,000; in their panic they turned on each other and fled. Gideon's army then pursued the enemy as far as they could. Over 120,000 enemy were killed. This bold and daring shock attack required perfect execution on the part of every member of the 300. They had to be wholly reliable. They had to have uncommon discipline, courage, and commitment. They had to be more than willing to serve God, they had to be worthy. The difference was discipline. The discipline of a true disciple. Discipline is the force multiplier and game changer that separates the strong from the weak. Discipline (self-control) is the fruit of the Spirit that draws from your true passions, your desire to love Jesus rather than to seek comfort. Discipline is developed day-by-day but pays off when the hard times

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or big challenges come. If you don't develop your discipline today, you won't have it when you really need it. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10)

3. Judges 7:14 -- God can cause the hearts of your adversaries to melt without you doing a thing.

4. Judges 7:19 -- It is easy to exploit the weakness and complacency of those who are undisciplined.

5. Judges 7:19-22 -- God uses tactics. Gideon's plan involved surprising the enemy in the middle of the night, using trumpets and horns (signal devices for large troop formations) to give the enemy the impression that they were surrounded by 30,000 troops without warning. This caused the enemy to melt in panic and fear. God's plan for Gideon's army required perfect execution with every single person doing exactly what they were told to do exactly when and how they were told to do it. When God gives you a plan and instructions, you have to follow the plan and obey. Can you imagine what would have happened if Noah decided to skip some of God's directed steps for building the ark? Can you imagine what would have happened if the Israelites decided to only march six times around Jericho rather than seven? Follow-through is also an act of faith, hope, love, and discipline.

6. Judges 8:1 -- "Then the men of Ephraim said to him, 'What is this that you have done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against Midian?' And they accused him fiercely." God's blessings in your life will cause others to be jealous of you and hate you.

7. Judges 8:1-4 -- "What have I done now in comparison with you?" Though wrongly accused and scorned, Gideon acted wisely by swallowing his pride and responding to criticism with gracious words in order to prevent a needless fight -- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1). A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention (Proverbs 15:18). It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling (Proverbs 20:3)."

8. Judges 8:6 -- "And the officials of Succoth said, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?'" Most people only stand for what is right when it is safe to do so. Things that matter require courage and the willingness to take risks. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

9. Judges 8:23 -- "Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you.'" Gideon had a false humility which is a common character flaw of which the Bible warns. He said he didn't want to be king yet he names his son "son of a king" -- his words did not match his true heart, motives, and actions. Most shockingly, he uses some of the gold to make for himself an ephod (Judges 8:27) which was only to be worn by the high priest -- the leader. His approbation (desire for recognition, praise and attention -- Matthew 23:5) lust turned into power lust and materialism (Isaiah 14:13-14; 1 Timothy 6:10). In his self-centered leadership, Gideon wanted to rewards and honor of a King without the responsibilities. Gideon used God's gifts to make himself rich and famous. Though he said he didn't want to be king, his son's name means "son of the king." His pride and greed would literally destroy His family, about which we will soon read. One key message we can't miss in the Bible is that we are not heroes but mere sinners. ALL glory and honor go to God. We have important lessons to learn from Gideon who was uniquely empowered by God and was incredibly successful, up to the point where he thought himself worthy of honor; then the house of cards fell.

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- The story of Gideon's Army is one of my favorite stories in the Bible which reveals how God takes simple people with the willingness and discipline to follow and obey Him and uses them in mighty ways to do the seemingly impossible, not for their glory but rather for His glory; and not using their might, talent and skills, but rather using His power through them that the world may see His power rather than what men can do. The story of Gideon's Army' victory in Judges 7 offers powerful life lessons, but so does the rest of Gideon's story, which starts in Judges 8, describing Gideon's tragic and destructive failure. Gideon, the simple farmer, was used mightily by God, but pride got the best of him, and he sought to glorify himself rather than God. Though he claimed to be humble and to put God first, he used God's blessings to make himself rich and bring himself prestige. Gideon did a shocking thing by making for himself an ephod. He made himself to be an idol before the people and caused great sin in the land due to his presumptuous arrogance. Have you ever been to a church that was quite proud of their very talented and well-known pastor? As we will read tomorrow, Gideon's pride not only brought great destruction to his family, it also proved tragic to his community. How often have you seen blessed people bring honor to themselves? How many fortunate people have you seen name things after themselves – buildings, hospitals, foundations, institutions, even churches? How about us? How have we used the blessings God has bestowed upon us? Have we sought to gain comfort and status for ourselves, or have we sought to use what God has given us for His glory and honor? Do you want people to honor you or Jesus?

10. Proverbs 20:1 -- "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." The Bible does not forbid the drinking of alcohol, just drinking in excess. However, the Bible gives us a higher calling to "walk" in love and not to do anything that would cause another to stumble -- "If your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love.... For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.... it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble.... (Romans 14:13-23)." America has an alcohol problem, and many people around you struggle with alcohol. Is your employment of your freedom to drink alcohol normalizing or promoting a behavior that leads others astray? Yes, you are your brother's keeper.

11. Proverbs 20:3 -- "It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling." Don't be a fool and get involved in quarrelling. Have you ever, through sound wisdom and gifted speech convinced a fool of anything? Fools are people who refuse to hear and learn, who are controlled by emotions and passion. Stay away from pointless arguments that only distract people from the Gospel. You are an ambassador for Christ, not for good ideas, current standards of morality, social customs, or politics. Proclaim Jesus and stay above the fray.

12. Proverbs 20:5 -- "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." Understand what a person really cares about, what is at the center of his life, and what is the primary source of his motivation, and you can predict very accurately what he will say and do. And you can discern if the path he is on is taking him to where he really needs to go, which is closer to Jesus. Most people are unconsciously and subtly deceptive (to themselves and others) in their words and behavior, saying, displaying, and often doing things that they don't really mean -- smiling when inside they are upset, asking others how they are doing when really, they don't care, saying they want to do something when they really don't, or saying they don't want to do something when they really do. Many communicate deception because in their hearts they believe the truth is unacceptable. It takes patient discernment to see beyond the façade or masks people wear to understand the deep waters of a

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person's heart, and ultimately, only the Holy Spirit can show you something about a person that is impossible for you to see through human discernment. So, the first step is to pray for Holy Spirit enabled discernment and to love others enough to move past the superficial.

13. Romans 8:5 – “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.” Living by the Spirit causes a completely different way of thinking and acting. It is impossible to think and act the same after genuine salvation.

14. Romans 8:12, 13 – Mature Christians no longer live by the flesh. Mature Christians obey God, not just because they have to or are afraid not to but because they really want to.

15. Romans 8:26, 27 -- Pray continuously and remember that the Spirit is helping you with your prayers.

16. Romans 8:28 -- All things don't work together for good for everyone, just for those who truly love God and are called according to His purpose. See John 17 to understand His purpose for you.

17. Romans 8:31-35 -- No matter what anyone says or how you might feel during times of failure, nothing can hinder God's love for you as a Christian.

18. Romans 8:39 -- When the Bible says nothing can separate you from the love of God, it doesn't mean few things can separate you; it means NOTHING.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 April: Today, examine your humility. What is Christ-like humility? Are you humble? Are you proud of how humble you are? Humility is the product of a true appreciation of who God is and of our total dependence on His mercy and grace. Humility is a produce of Spirit-empowered love. Humility results in selflessness and is revealed in how we treat others and how we respond to situations. Too often we act humble (for personal approval or for the approval of others -- self-righteousness) when we are not really humble at heart. Too often, like Gideon, we speak and act humbly when our actual motives are prideful. Consider your humility today. Will you value God and others today more than yourself and totally surrender yourself to the love?

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 4, Thursday, 19 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+19%3B+Romans+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 19 Apr 18:

1. Judges 5:4 -- "Yes, the clouds dropped water." God uses things only He can control to determine circumstances and to accomplish His purposes. Rain storms are not normally viewed as miraculous events, but when God uses them to bog down chariots at just the right time, God's people see His power in action.

2. Judges 5:4, 21 -- "...yes, the clouds dropped water.... The torrent Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon." Sisera had 900 iron chariots while the Israelites had largely disarmed themselves. For 20 years Sisera oppressed the Israelites as God allowed because the nation had turned away from God. Under impossible circumstances, God called His people to join Him in what He was going to do. This required faith to believe God would do the impossible. Some believed and went to battle and some did not. Those who did not live by faith missed an encounter with God, and now their rebuke is recorded in God's word for eternity. The faithful experienced the power of God in their

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lives and are forever praised in God's word. God revealed Himself to his people by doing only what He can do: He "lured" Sisera's chariots to the Kishon River and then brought heavy rains causing the river to flood. Iron chariots don't provide much mobility in water and mud. God then orchestrated the meeting of Sisera and Jael. God brings the victory; we just need to be willing to show up and obey. God will always ask us to do the impossible because He intends to show the world His power, not ours. If we refuse to step into the impossible, we cannot experience God and be used by Him. What is God telling you to do that is impossible? Are you ready to obey?

3. Judges 5:9 -- "My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the Lord." Some people offer themselves willingly to serve the Lord, others don't. God knows the difference and favors the willing and faithful servant.

4. Judges 5:15-18 -- "In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart. Why did you stay among the campfires to hear the whistling of the flocks? In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart. Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan. And Dan, why did he linger by the ships? Asher remained on the coast and stayed in his coves. The people of Zebulun risked their very lives; so did Naphtali on the heights of the field." Deborah the prophetess was called at a time when God's people lacked leadership and, as a result, evil reigned. Deborah had to cajole Barak to stand up against God's enemies. Among the tribes, only Zebulun and Naphtali and some other stragglers (10,000 foot-mobile men in total) had the courage to fight Sisera's 900,000 iron chariots. The vast majority of "God's people" were more impressed with the seemingly impossible odds than God's message to them -- "Has not the Lord gone ahead of you (Judges 6:14)?" For the majority, at the moment of decision, when it really mattered, "there was much searching of heart." Today there is a major spiritual war underway, and the Church lacks leadership. Will you be among the faithful willing to stand up and be counted, or will you remain "in the rear with the gear?" Don't be mistaken, if you are not getting shot at, you are not in the fight. As a Christian, you don't want to end up on the wrong side of eternal history for not serving when you had the chance.

5. Judges 5:23 -- "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the Lord, curse its inhabitants thoroughly, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Again, don't be that person, stuck with a story like this for eternity. Your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is today.

6. Judges 6:11 -- "Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites." Gideon was in a winepress because He was hiding. He needed courage only God could enable. "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor." (Judges 6:12) God saw the Gideon that Gideon himself could not see. The angel of the Lord could see beyond current realities to future realities and addressed Gideon as the man he would be rather than who he was currently. Similarly, we must see people not just as they are but as who they could become in faith in Jesus Christ. Treat people like they are the person they could be and watch what happens.

7. Judges 6:14 -- "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" Once again, God calls us to do what is impossible for us of our own strength so that the world can see the power of God operating through His people, bringing glory to Him and not to the people. Today, the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon, a man of social insignificance who is hiding out from the Midianites in a winepress (a hole), and the angel addresses him as "mighty man of valor (Judges 6:11)." The irony of this address is as clear to the reader as it is to Gideon, and the angel's charge to Gideon to "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian" is from all observations downright absurd. The

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Midianites were heavily armed, highly trained, ruthless, camel-riding marauders who fought for a living and who significantly outnumbered the Israelites ("both they and their camels could not be counted"). The Israelites had succumbed to subjugation – "Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel (Judges 5:8)?" Like Gideon the rest of the Israelites had gone to hiding in dens and caves in the mountains. Gideon was not only weak, he was lacking in faith. Even after the angel of the Lord appeared to him, Gideon asked for a series of "signs" that might prove his calling. Apart from God, there was no mighty warrior in Gideon, and he was powerless before the Midianites, but God was not asking Gideon to do what Gideon could do, God was commanding Gideon to OBEY in faith because God could work through him to accomplish His purpose with His power for His glory. This command to Gideon caused a crisis of belief. It doesn't take faith to do what we know we can do with our own abilities. It always takes faith to do what God is asking us to do because God always asks us to do the impossible – "And without faith it is impossible to please him (Hebrews 11:6)." What made Gideon a "mighty man of valor," and what was the "might of yours" to which the angel referred? God's answer to Gideon is the same answer God gives us: "The Lord is with you.... do not I send you?" (Judges 6:12-14) The question is, what will we do when God's call to us to do the impossible causes a crisis of belief for us? Will we have the faith to step into the Red Sea, fiery furnace, or the lion's den to put our lives on the line for the Lord? Or will we be like the districts of Reuben, Gilead, Dan, and Asher who refused to stand and be counted for the fight (see Judges 5:15-18). What will be recorded of you in the Book of Life?" We need only take ownership of the might God has given us.

- Henry T. Blackaby offers the following: "In Gideon's mind, victory over the Midianites was an impossibility, and he was absolutely right! The Midianites, along with their allies, overwhelmed the feeble Hebrews. Yet the moment God told Gideon to fight them, victory was no longer an impossibility! When Jesus commanded His small group of followers to make disciples of all nations, was that possible (Matt. 28:19)? Certainly, if Jesus said it was! When Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies, was He being realistic? Of course, because He was the One who would achieve reconciliation through them (2 Cor. 5:19–20). Do you treat commands like these as implausible? Do you modify God's word to find an interpretation that seems reasonable to you? Don't discount what is possible with God (Phil. 4:13). When God gives an assignment, it is no longer an impossibility, but rather it is an absolute certainty. When God gives you a seemingly impossible task, the only thing preventing it from coming to pass is your disobedience. When God speaks, it can scare you to death! He will lead you to do things that are absolutely impossible in your own strength. But God will grant you victory, step by step, as you obey Him. How do you respond to assignments that seem impossible? Do you write them off as unattainable? Or do you immediately adjust your life to God's revelation, watching with anticipation to see how He will accomplish His purposes through your obedience? God wants to do the impossible through your life. All He requires is your obedience."

8. Judges 6:15, 16 -- "'Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.' And the Lord said to him, 'But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.'" God chooses you in your weakness intentionally that He can reveal His strength through you. He will always ask you to do what is impossible for you without total reliance on Him.

9. Judges 6:34, 35 -- "But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them." God can give you the support you need.

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10. Proverbs 19:2 -- "Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." God expects you to think before you act.

11. Proverbs 19:9 -- "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish." All lies are destructive.

12. Proverbs 19:10 -- "It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury, much less for a slave to rule over princes." You have to earn the right through character development to achieve success and to lead. There are no shortcuts to character development.

13. Proverbs 19:19 -- "A man of great wrath will pay the penalty." Anger hurts the angry more than anyone else.

14. Romans 7:6 -- "But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code." The more you live by the Spirit, the less your earthly desires need to be controlled by the Law. The Law is not required where the Spirit reigns. There are three levels of motivation -- the lowest is fear (pride is the other side of that coin); the second lowest form of motivation is duty (doing something because you know you are supposed to). The Law threatens the fearful with punishment and gives rules to the dutiful to control behavior, but in the end, the Law will never be enough to constrain the heart. The highest form of motivation is love, doing something because you really want to, despite the personal cost. When the heart is controlled by love, no law is required. The Law is not abolished, it still exists, but it is no longer a concern because it comes naturally. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17) Jesus called us to fulfill the law out of love rather than fear or duty. When you are lacking in love, you must still fulfill the law of love, though your motivation of fear or duty are impure. However, you must use the mirror of the law to see that in yourself, to search your heart, and to pursue love. And remember, we are not just seeking to be good people, we are seeking to be one with Jesus in love. God searches the heart, seeing beyond words and deeds to motivations.

15. Romans 7:7 -- "For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" The Law is a guide, a curb, and a mirror. It shows you the way to go, keeps you on the road, and as a mirror, the Law reveals your sinful desires.

16. Romans 7:14, 15 -- "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. There is no self-control in the flesh.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 April: Today, practice trusting in God's strength rather than yours. Be willing to do what God says, even if it seems impossible, simply because God commanded it -- this is faith and hope. Today, search your heart for the motivations behind your actions. Seek to do what God has commanded you simply out of love, not out of fear, a hope for reward, or out of a self-righteous sense of honor and duty.

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 3, Wednesday, 18 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+18%3B+Romans+6>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 18 Apr 18:

1. Judges 3:1 -- "Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan." God will leave you with adversaries to test you and to develop your ability to handle adversity.

2. Joshua 3:2 -- "It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before." War is a terrible thing. It is a consequence of unchecked sin. God knew that there would be war and He ensured that His people were ready for it. Much of the Book of Numbers deals with the conscription and training of a military force for Israel. The call to arms, "whoever was able to go to war," appears fourteen times in the first chapter. God brought the Jews of Exodus out of Egypt for a purpose – to seize the land He promised them. Chapters 1-4, 10, 13, 26, and 31 delineate their mobilization plan: an order of battle (2:1-32); an alert system (10:7-8); an order of march (10:14-28); reconnaissance, intelligence gathering (13:1-21), and debriefing (13:26-33); a roll call of eligible males (26:1-51); a deployment for battle (31:3-6); and the division of plunder (31:11-54). A military establishment and a battle plan were crucial to the survival of Israel (as they are today). A godly nation not only has an inalienable (it cannot be transferred) right to self-defense, it has an inalienable responsibility to be prepared for war. Preparing for war comes at a price, and as we will read in the Bible, there has always been an internal resistance to pay that price – "In Judah it was said, 'The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 4:10 – complaints about military mobilization while attempting to rebuild the defensive wall).'" We will see in our readings that failure to prepare for warfare has devastating consequences. Already in Judges, we have seen that the Israelites did not drive out the Canaanites who had superior military technology (iron chariots – Judges 1:19), and in today's readings the people of "Israel cried out to the Lord for help, for [the Canaanites] had 900 chariots of iron and... oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years (Judges 4:3)." Also, often the consequences of not going to war are far worse than the consequences of war itself. Of course, there are wrong times to go to war, further highlighting to requirement to have godly leadership -- "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time for war, and a time for peace (Ecclesiastes 3:8)." In developing our national doctrine for defense, our Founding Fathers were guided by their knowledge of the Bible. From that knowledge, they understood that just as a nation has an inalienable right and responsibility to self-defense, so does a person. They understood that a person could not abrogate that right/responsibility or transfer it, especially not to the government, hence the right to bear arms. Remember when Lot was captured during a battle in Sodom, Abram rescued him with 318 men that he had personally trained (Genesis 14:14). No person can take away another person's God-given right to self-defense; no person can abrogate their God-given responsibility to self-defense.

- Psalm 144:1 -- Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle.

3. Judges 3:4 -- "They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord," The test is whether or not, in the face of personal adversity, you will obey God, not whether or not you can get what you want. Sometimes you will have to lose the human contest of wills in order to remain faithful to God's commands.

4. Judges 3:6 -- "And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods." The primary purpose of marriage is for two people to learn to have unity in Christ and to raise up godly children. (Malachi 2:15) God commands His people to

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marry other believers who will walk with them in fellowship with Christ and who will partner in Christian parenting. Marrying an unbeliever contradicts God's plan for marriage, hinders the Spirit's work in the life of the believer, and sets the next generation up for failure.

5. Judges 3:7 -- "And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth." The spiritual decline of the nation started in the homes when parents turned from God and did not teach their children to obey God. As the family goes, so goes the nation.

6. Judges 3:8 -- "Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia." God will intentionally use other people, often bad people, to teach you a lesson.

7. Judges 3:10 -- "The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel." Holy Spirit power is required for real leadership. If the leader isn't following Jesus and being guided by the Spirit, the people are in trouble. A leader led by the Spirit will have to take people not led by the Spirit where they don't really want to go because they don't know any better. If you are going to be a leader, you will need to learn to lead difficult people. You can't be a shepherd if you can't stand the smell of sheep.

8. Judges 3:12 -- "And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord." God uses politics, economics, ecology, and circumstances to punish those who stray from Him.

9. Judges 3:14 -- "And the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years." God's discipline may be long-lasting. It will take as long as it takes to make the change needed in your heart.

10. Judges 4:4 -- "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time." Women play significant roles of leadership in the Bible.

11. Proverbs 18:1 -- "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." Prideful and selfish people avoid close relationships. Loving Christians put relationships first and don't keep others at a distance.

12. Proverbs 18:22 -- "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." Increasingly, popular culture has a negative view of marriage, and more and more people are giving up on marriage. However, God says marriage is good. Marriage is ordained by God as the most important institution on earth and to serve as a model of Christ's love for His church. Marriage is the schoolhouse for Christian character development, the primary place where people learn to bear another's burdens in love. You will have to learn to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus to make a marriage thrive. When two people choose to obey Jesus' command of love in a home, there is unity in Christ, fulfillment, and the fullness of joy.

13. Romans 6:1, 2 -- "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" True Christians don't debate about obedience to God because obedience is the natural response to salvation. The love of Christ compels them to obedience. They don't use grace as an excuse to continued sin or to make light of sin; quite the opposite, grace

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empowers them to obey and makes sin much weightier -- "How could I trample upon the blood of Jesus?"

14. Romans 6:2 -- "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" If Christ is our Lord and savior, we absolutely cannot allow sin to reign over us, obeying ungodly passions (Romans 6:13). God has given us freedom from sin, and calls us to present ourselves to Him as "instruments for righteousness; to do anything else would be the greatest treason and an unspeakable offense before the Creator (Romans 6:14). As Jesus said, it is impossible to serve two masters. We are either slaves to Christ or slaves to sin. "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:22, 23)."

15. Romans 6:12-14 -- "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." Genuine love has the restraint on us that mere laws never could. Those who proclaim that they don't live by the law but rather by grace, as a means of justifying their sin, might question whether or not they were ever really overcome by grace and crucified with Christ. We are not saved by works, but faith without works is dead.

16. Romans 6:15 -- "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" Paul is desperate to make the point.

17. Romans 6:19 -- "Having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness." Before you were a Christian you were a slave to sin. You were trapped in sin and unable to do otherwise but sin (Rom. 7:15–24). When God saved you, He freed you from sin, but you now remain a slave, bound to righteousness. With salvation through grace alone comes an obligation to do what honors God. Contrary to what some preach, grace does not mean that you are free to do whatever you want. You have become a "bondservant" of Christ, and your life is no longer your own (Rom. 1:1). When you accepted forgiveness and grace from God through Christ, you forfeited the right (you never really had) to live a self-guided life based upon your own "natural" desires and understanding. You forfeited your right to demand justice for offenses committed against you. As a slave to righteousness, you can no longer act selfishly. You are obligated to live a holy life, honoring your Master. Righteous living is not optional for a Christian.

- Sin has no control over a corpse. Temptation can present itself enticingly and persistently, yet a corpse will not succumb! Before you were a Christian you were keenly susceptible to sin. Sin held you in its grip. When you became a Christian, your old self died (Gal. 2:20). Sin now has no more control over you than temptation has over a cadaver.

- God's grace is a further motivation for us to resist sin. It was God's grace that enabled Jesus to endure mocking, beating, and crucifixion at the hands of those whom He had come to save. It was grace that led God to forgive our sin despite our rebellion against Him. It is this same grace that God expresses toward us each time we sin against Him. Knowing this grace, we cannot continue to practice sin (Rom. 6:1–2). We cannot presume upon God's forgiveness by committing further offenses.

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- You are no longer the helpless victim of your sin. The victory has already been won. God does not have to win a victory over your sin; He already has! You only need to apply His victory to each area of your life. If there is a sinful habit, an ungodly attitude, or an unrighteous relationship that you need to put to death, claim the victory of Christ's resurrection today. Then you will be free to experience the abundant life that God intends for you."

18. Romans 6:22 -- "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life." How should this reality impact the way you live today and every day?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 April: Today, check your heart -- is it hard for you to obey God in certain areas? What does that say about your heart? Do you obey because it is your passion or because you know you are supposed to? Pray for a heart that obeys out of love and not out of fear of consequences or out of a sense of duty. Love does not need rules to control behavior. Love fulfills the law of God naturally, producing the fruit of love. If you are struggling with obedience, you are struggling with your heart and your relationship with Jesus. For example, if forgiving is difficult for you, you have not fully realized the significance of the price Jesus paid for you and the significance of the grace you have received. If giving freely is a problem for you, you have not learned to fully appreciate what Christ has given to you and what He has promised for you. If anger is a problem for you, you have not learned to appreciate God's mercy. If fear is a problem, you haven't learned to trust God enough because you don't know Him well enough as trustworthy. Read John 17 again. Jesus wants you to "know Him" and to be "one" with Him -- this is eternal life. Check the motives behind your actions today. Are you motivated by love or by fear, pride, and duty?

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 2, Tuesday, 17 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Judges+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+17%3B+Romans+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 17 Apr 18:

1. Judges 1:1 -- "After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, 'Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?'" The Israelites begin the book of Judges well by inquiring of the Lord before making important decisions. After verse 1 in Judges, the Israelites do not "inquire of the Lord" again until the end of the book: "The people of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and inquired of God, 'Who shall go up first for us to fight against the people of Benjamin (Judges 20:18)?'" The Book of Judges reveals what happens when God's people disobey God and compromise their holiness. It also reveals what happens when a nation rejects God's commands. Judges is highly relevant to us today – consider carefully what you read. At the beginning of the book, God's people, from a position of great national strength, are inquiring of the Lord as to how to have dominion for His glory. By the end of the book, in a state of complete lawlessness, they are asking God how to massacre each other – spoiler alert: The Book of Judges does not end on a high note. Today we read how after a long period of triumph under the leadership of Joshua (because the Lord was with them), the Israelites disobey God by allowing the Jebusites, Canaanites, and Amorites to live among them rather than driving them out completely as the Lord had commanded. As soon as God's people chose to be led by their own desires and wisdom rather than the "voice of God," God no longer supported their efforts (Judges 2:3). At that point, all of their religious activities were meaningless (Judges 2:5). After just one generation, the people "did not know the Lord." The national decline was shockingly fast – "And the people... did what

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was evil in the sight of the Lord... and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers.... And they provoked the Lord to anger..., and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress (Judges 2:11-15)." God in His mercy and grace raised up leaders (Judges) to steer the people back on the course of obedience to God, but "they did not listen to their judges...; they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways." Therefore, the nation remained under God's judgment. Of the Old Testament, the New Testament says, "Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.... these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11)." What will we learn from Judges? How will we apply what we learn?

2. Judges 1:7 -- "As I have done, so God has repaid me." The Bible repeats the theme that God judges you the way you judge others.

3. Judges 1:27, 29, 30, 31, 33 -- "Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants.... And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites.... Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants.... Asher did not drive out the inhabitants.... Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants." The Israelites did not complete the task God had given them, a sin that would rob them of the peace and blessings God had intended for them. Partial obedience is disobedience. God does not accept half measure.

- "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27-33)."

4. Judges 2:1-3 -- "Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'" Though the Jews were in a covenant relationship with God with the promise of His protection and blessings, there remained a terrible and permanent consequence for their disobedience. Rather than remaining obedient, holy, and pure, the Jews chose the easy, and likely profitable (temporarily), path of compromise with the sinful culture around them. They thought erroneously that they could control and contain the sin that they permitted in their land -- "Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants.... When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely.... the Canaanites lived among them, but became subject to forced labor." (Judges 1:27, 28, 30) However, as is always the case, when God's people attempt to compromise with sin, they are ultimately destroyed by it. As Proverbs says, "Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?" (Proverbs 6:27) "The little foxes spoil the vineyards." (Song of Solomon 2:15) "Like a

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muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.” (Proverbs 25:26) When we compromise with sin, our light is dimmed, and our salt loses its saltiness. We become unusable in some ways and deny ourselves the blessings of God. We all have allowed wickedness into our homes. Have we torn down the alters in our lives, or have we found convenient ways to keep them there? We must repent and remove the wickedness from our tents.

- “Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. Receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents, if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver. For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways. For when they are humbled you say, ‘It is because of pride’; but he saves the lowly. He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands (Job 22:21-30)

5. Joshua 2:2, 3 -- "But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you." Disobedience has consequences that might be permanent. We are warned over and over in the Bible to not take sin lightly but to respect the holiness of God and to obey wholeheartedly. We must not presume upon God's mercy and grace.

6. Judges 2:4 -- "As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept." Be sorrowful because you are being punished is not the same as being repentant. God knows the difference and knows your heart.

7. Judges 2:10 -- "And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel." It is critical that Christians effectively disciple the next generation. This is the primary role of parents but also of senior Christians to junior Christians.

8. Judges 2:11, 12 -- "And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.... They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them.... And they provoked the Lord to anger." The Israelites compromised with the pagan culture and became more influenced than an influence. The greatest risk to God's people is syncretism, the blending of belief systems. God is Holy and demands holiness from His people. We cannot allow popular culture to tarnish our fidelity.

9. Judges 2:15 -- "Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress." When we join with the world, we make ourselves practical enemies of God, fighting against His will – “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters (Luke 11:23). God cannot support sinfulness.

10. Judges 2:17 -- “...for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them.” The Bible calls the church (us) the bride of Christ. Likewise, the Bible compares our unfaithfulness to God with adultery and prostitution. Do you see your sin this way? Do you see God’s forgiveness from the perspective of an

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adulterer? Do you understand the magnitude of grace you have received? How do you respond to such love?

11. Judges 2:18 -- "For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them." In His anger, God still has a heart for the sinner and seeks reconciliation.

12. Judges 2:19 -- "But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers." There are two types of discipline: internal discipline (self-control), and external discipline (law and authority). God expects Christians to have internal discipline (self-control being the last fruit of the Spirit), not requiring external laws and authority to control them. When people lack internal discipline, they require external discipline to keep them in line. Remove external discipline and you will discover what is truly in someone's heart. The Israelites revealed their rebellious hearts whenever external disciplines were removed, proving that God could not trust them to obey from the heart. God disciplined the Israelites with foreign enemies to draw them back to Him. What does God have to do to keep you focused on Him and to keep you disciplined?

13. Proverbs 17:1 -- "A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers." It is what is inside that counts (what is in your heart), not your circumstances or any other external factors which will determine the impact of your life. It is not what others believe to be true or even what you say is true about you that matters but what is really true – the truth of your character. And it doesn't matter if you are rich and talented or have a great personality, ultimately your character will determine your future. The pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus said it this way: "ethos anthropos daimon," - "Character is destiny." The character that Heraclitus spoke of, "ethos", from where we get the word "ethics," which involves the collection of one's virtues, with virtues being measured by something Heraclitus spoke of, something of which Christians should be well familiar: "logos" – "that which governs everything." Heraclitus, the "Weeping Philosopher," did not have the advantage of the revelation of God's Word – "In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word (Logos) was with God, and the Word (Logos) was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1-5)." Heraclitus did not know that "that which governs everything" is Jesus, but he still understood that our conformity with the "Logos" determined our fate. The Bible calls living by the Logos, "wisdom," and, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 4:7, 9:10) Today's Proverbs point out that wisdom prevails over any situation.

- The ancient Greek philosophers had another imperfect perception of the truth which Jesus made clear: you must be born again. The Greek philosophers understood that acting (the Greek word for stage actor is hypocrite) virtuous doesn't make a person virtuous, rather a person had to truly be virtue, virtuous in their soul. To them, a virtuous person consistently does virtuous things because virtue is who they are inside. To them, the law was merely to contain the unvirtuous and had no purpose for the virtuous which are self-controlled from their souls. But the Greeks did not understand the power of the Holy Spirit and believed that consistent hard work could slowly transform an unvirtuous person into a virtuous person. However, the Bible reveals that we can only be set free from sin through Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:2) When Christ is in us, we are virtue, and the law is no longer required to govern our once wild spirits. Our minds are now controlled by the Spirit (Romans 8:5) The Holy Spirit within us now

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obligates us to live by the Spirit which puts to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:12-15). Even so, the Bible points out that we must take hold of what we have already received. We must live by the Spirit and not quench the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, or get out of step with the Spirit. We struggle with the flesh and rely on God's grace as we grow up in faith. As children, we must learn from the Father. The children of God naturally act like their Father. Don't act godly; be godly.

14. Proverbs 17:2 – "A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers." How does this proverb relate to the Gentiles receiving the Good News? See Romans 11.

15. Proverbs 17:6 – "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers." God intends family to be a blessing.

16. Proverbs 17:10 – "A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool." Wise people learn without having to suffer the consequences of their foolishness.

17. Romans 5:1 -- "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you feel a peace that transcends all understanding today? Is your peace evident and bewildering to others?

18. Romans 5:2 -- "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Are you rejoicing in your hope today?

19. Romans 5:3-5 -- "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." A person of noble character is developed through adversity. There is no easy path to character. There is no comfort in the growth zone, and there is no growth in the comfort zone. It has also been said that the life of ease will ruin a person. Resolve to be willing to pay the price for character and to trust God through the process -- that is faith. Faith trusts God now; hope is faith projected forward, trusting God with your future. As you grow in character (trusting God now), you will grow in hope, trusting God with tomorrow. Are you rejoicing in your sufferings today, knowing that God is using your sufferings to develop you?

20. Romans 5:6-11 -- "While we were still weak... Christ died for the ungodly.... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.... we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." Are you ready to show the love of Christ to others by giving your life to your weak, sinful, ungodly enemies in pursuit of their reconciliation? The Bible says, "Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..., entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us (2 Cor 5:18-20)." God expects you to bear the burden and suffering of maltreatment in relationships (your cross to bear) in order to reveal the grace of Jesus to others. Yes, it is completely unfair (from an earthly perspective). But aren't you glad Jesus didn't deal with you on the basis of fairness? Love is not about fairness or fair exchange – good for good, bad for bad. Love is about grace, mercy, and peace – giving to give, not giving to get. When you are abused for His Name's sake, while on the mission of reconciliation, you fellowship with Jesus and truly worship Him. This is the type of suffering that builds your Christ-like character. Deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. You will not be disappointed.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 April: Today, memorize Romans 5:3-5. Say it to yourself whenever you face challenging circumstances or challenging people.

- "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

DBRP- WEEK 16, Day 1, Monday, 16 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+16%3B+Romans+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 16 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 23:10 – "One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you." Physical power is no match for spiritual power. The power of God makes all other power meaningless.

2. Joshua 23:11 – "Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God." Your relationship with God is your strength and your purpose. Be very careful not to let sin get between you and God.

3. Joshua 23:14 -- "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed." Joshua's dying wish was that none of his people would fall away from the Lord.

4. Joshua 24:13 -- "I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant." God owns it all and controls it all. He can give you whatever He wants to give you, and many people who are laboring against God don't realize that they are really laboring for God. God works all things for His purposes.

5. Joshua 24:14 -- "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord." A theme that is repeated over and over again in the Bible is that you cannot serve God half-heartedly. By definition, a casual response to God is really to deny Him as God. You cannot be partially committed to God and honor Him as God, and you cannot expect God to honor your partial obedience which is really just disobedience. Nor can you expect to wander from God and stay close to Him at the same time. Love of God results in obedience. Unity with God requires obedience. Only in God's presence is there fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). Today, Joshua tells the people to stop kidding themselves. Either serve God or stop pretending to. If we are using grace as an excuse to continue in sin, we are denying that we ever truly accepted grace in the first place – "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-29)

- Joshua 14:14 – Caleb.... wholly followed the Lord.

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- 2 Kings 20:3 -- “Now, O Lord, please remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.”

- 2 Chronicles 19:9 -- And he charged them: “Thus you shall do in the fear of the Lord, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart:

- 2 Chronicles 25:2 -- And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.

- Psalm 119:2 -- Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

- Luke 11:23 -- Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

- Proverbs 25:26 -- Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

- Revelation 3:16 -- So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

6. Joshua 24:15 -- “Choose this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Everyone on earth chooses who they will serve, God or an idol. Some will verbally proclaim the Lordship of God and may even back their oaths up with religion, but in reality, their hearts are not with God. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness (Matthew 7:21-23).’” A person can do “many mighty works” in the name of God and still lack a saving faith. Even born-again Christians can drift comfortably out of fellowship with God into a “me’-ology” that plays by the religious “rules” and uses “good works” to legitimize to themselves and others what has been termed approbation lust – the desire to be recognized, to promote oneself. The desire for recognition or approval can become a powerful, all-encompassing motivator in life that can cause us to do our will for self-glorification while proclaiming the will of God. We can do “right” things for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way. Only you and God know what motivation is behind your daily actions. Pray that God will continually incline your heart more and more toward him and less and less toward self. And be introspective. Whenever you hear yourself saying or thinking “I”, ask yourself if that “I” is not for “idol.”

- Isaiah 10:15 -- Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

- Luke 18:14 -- I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- Romans 15:18 -- For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,

- Galatians 6:14 -- But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

- Jeremiah 9:23 -- Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches,

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- Proverbs 27:2 -- Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.
- 1 Corinthians 4:7 -- For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?
- 2 Corinthians 11:30 -- If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.
- Ephesians 2:8-9 -- For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- 1 Timothy 6:10 -- For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.
- Mark 8:35 -- For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

7. Joshua 24:19 – “But Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.’ Following God requires complete humility to see that you have no hope apart from the grace and power of God. God convicts the proud of their moral bankruptcy that they will turn to Him for mercy, grace, and power.

8. Joshua 24:31 – “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.” Good leaders have a preserving effect on society by keeping people in compliance with God’s laws.

9. Proverbs 16:1, 2 – “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.” Key to success in life is making sure your plans are God’s plans for you. Don’t expect God to bless what you want to do. Receive God’s blessings by doing what He wants you to do.

10. Proverbs 16:4 – “The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.” No matter what you choose to do, God will be glorified by your life and His truth will be revealed in your life. He will either use you to reveal His truth in a positive way or a negative way. Either way, God is glorified. Better to reveal to others the blessings of God rather than the curses. God says, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live....” (Deut 30:19)

11. Proverbs 16:7 – “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” God can control people in ways you can’t.

12. Proverbs 16:17 – “The highway of the upright turns aside from evil.” Those on the fast-track in life stay far from evil. Sin always drags you down and keeps you from getting to where you need to go.

13. Romans 4:11 – “He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.” We are not saved by our obedience; our obedience is evidence that we were actually saved, empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome our sinful nature and obey. We are not saved by obedience, but we are sanctified through obedience. Do not grieve the Spirit, quench the Spirit, or get out of step with the Spirit through disobedience.

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14. Romans 4:16 – “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all....” The children of Abraham are children in faith, not children in blood.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 April: Today, renew your commitment to lead your family in wholehearted service to the Lord, and build a spiritual family that is united in the love of Jesus. (Joshua 24:15; Romans 4:16)

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 7, Sunday, 15 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+15%3B+psalm+44%2C+45>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 15 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 21 -- Everyone was called upon to provide for the priests.
2. Joshua 21:43-45 -- “Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.” God fulfilled all of His promises after many generations. God’s plan is generational, and God intends for His people to think generationally and plan for generations. It is a very modern and destructive phenomena that so many Christian parents are shortsighted, thinking merely about getting their kids out the door (usually in separate directions) so the parents can retire and occasionally visit the grandchildren. There is great strength in family. The Bible demonstrates building families for generations, dynasties, families that stay together, support one another, raise godly children together, and glorify God together for hundreds of years. We should plan for a godly legacy. Today, this is very hard but not impossible.
3. Joshua 22:5 -- “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” All relationships are based upon trust. Joshua explained to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that the foundation of their relationship of trust would be each party’s obedience to God. You can trust the godly neighbor.
4. Joshua 22:12 -- “And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war against them.” The Israelites feared that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh would drift into rebellion due to their geographical separation, so the Israelites looked for evidence to validate their fears. They viewed these tribes with undeserved mistrust and started a fight based upon false assumptions. Have you ever done that?
5. Joshua 22:20 -- “Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity.” Sin always hurts others, whether intentional or not.

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6. Joshua 22:24 -- "We did it from fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the Lord.'" Parents must have a plan to ensure that their children's children don't forget the Lord.

7. Joshua 22:31 -- "Today we know that the Lord is in our midst, because you have not committed this breach of faith against the Lord. Now you have delivered the people of Israel from the hand of the Lord." The Israelites had misjudged the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh and almost acted rashly which would have been a great sin. Fortunately, they communicated their concerns and resolved the matter, discovering that what they once viewed as sin was actually an act of good faith. We too, acting from fear or envy, might view the actions of others as sinful when in actuality their behavior is reasonable. Best to give others the benefit of the doubt and communicate gracefully any concerns you might have. Open, honest, humble, communication is key. Christians should be masters at resolving conflict or potential conflict. We are all about peace.

8. Proverbs 15:1 – "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Again, Christians should be masters of relationship, experts at conflict resolution. Unlike the worldly, Christians enter into relationships as ambassadors to Jesus (not representing self), on a mission of reconciliation. Christians should not see people as others do but rather see them as Jesus does. Christians should enter into relationships intent on administering grace even to the point of great personal suffering (taking up the cross) and should remain in a state of perpetual forgiveness. Christians don't regard others as the enemy but rather regard the dark spiritual forces controlling them as the enemy. Guided by the Spirit, Christians enter into relationships with the power and perspective of the Holy Spirit to see and understand what is impossible for others to see and understand. Christians should enter into relationships as leaders in love, intent on taking others where they cannot go by themselves – leaders know The Way (Jesus) and show The Way. Christians listen in order to hear beyond the words, to truly understand the heart and hurt behind words. Christians strive to always return love and blessings for hate and curses. Christians have nothing to lose in an encounter with others because they have already died in Christ and are already living eternal life in Christ. A Christian who is secure in Christ should have peace and never lose it. Christians radiate peace and love and light when others are trapped in hate, anger, and bitterness. Practice your Christianity today; don't just contemplate it. Make your every word and deed intentional and for God's glory. You were purposefully made by God in physical form and placed intentionally on this earth to communicate God's truth and to translate God's invisible truth into tangible, visible reality for His glory – this is your earthly purpose. Reveal to others the Spirit that they cannot see through your reconciling words and acts of kindness.

9. Proverbs 15:4 – "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." Even when Christians have to tell people things they may not want to hear, they always do it in a way that is receivable by them, that lifts them up rather than tears them down, that heals rather than hurts, that potentially draws them closer to Jesus rather than pushing them farther away. Christians never make the "issue" the focus but rather Jesus.

10. Proverbs 15:7 – "The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools." The wise understand and accept that knowledge and wisdom come from God, and they have the requisite humility to submit to the will of God, not so the foolish.

11. Proverbs 15:8 – "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him." A gift (a sacrifice or act of admiration) can be given as an act of genuine

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love or selfishly, hoping to get something in return such as favor or a special blessing. Two people could give the exact same gift, but the gifts could be valued completely differently in God's sight based upon the true heart of the giver. People cannot truly know the heart of another and can be deceived by a gift. However, God knows the heart of all people and is never deceived. Be careful not to deceive yourself by your own 'sacrifices.' Effort is not always love. In their relationships with God and with others, many people go through the motions, doing all the things they know they are supposed to do in relationship but for all the wrong reasons. Before you make the sacrifice of time, resources, work, etc, ask yourself, "Why am I really doing this?" Is it out of selfless love or because of an outcome you are hoping to achieve for yourself? Jesus said that, "denying self," was key to following Him, not "self-denial." The dictionary defines "self" as, "A person's essential being that distinguishes them from others." Popular psychology lifts up and finds hope in self-esteem, self-realization, self-actualization, self-respect, etc. This teaching has crept into Christian thinking. Self-denial is a struggle against our "self," against our independent will, placing restrictions on self in an attempt to control self. It sees self as the problem but also self as the answer. However, denying self is seeing our essential being as Christ, with no distinction between ourselves and Him. We seek perfect oneness with Him. We seek the mind of Christ and the perfect will of Christ. And we seek the power of Christ (which is already ours) rather than our own strength. We become crucified with Christ, self dies, and we are resurrected in Him – the new life is Christ, the body His vessel. The last-mentioned fruit of the Spirit is self-control, something that is impossible for man, but possible with Christ. The key to self-control is denying self, becoming nothing that Christ in you would be everything.

12. Proverbs 15:14 – "The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly." Why haven't increased education, increased information, and incredible technological advances made the world a better place? Because wisdom is a heart issue not a head issue. Information is not transformation. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. As the world gets smarter and smarter while walking farther and farther away from God, people merely get more capable of spreading evil and destruction. Jesus' final prayer was for our unity, but unity in Him. The world wants unity too, but unity in man. Globalized technology has become the new Tower of Babel, and the secular unity being created will lead the global heard to a cliff. The message of the Gospel is the hope of the world.

13. Proverbs 15:16 – "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it." Christianity has become less appealing in America because people, more and more, seem to be getting the results they are looking for through the knowledge of man. You can have a large screen TV and two cars in the garage without ever reading your Bible, going to church, or walking with Jesus. But while the world seeks to build mini kingdoms on earth, the Christian seeks the Kingdom of God. The more you value Jesus, the less you value earthly treasures and the less you are impacted by the worries of the world.

14. Proverbs 15:17 – "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it." Joy is found in love, not in pleasures. God is love. Joy is found in God. The love we share with others must be the love we have received from God, transferred over through us to them. Be one with God and with others in God, and experience the fullness of joy.

15. Psalm 44:3 -- "For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them, but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them." Christians

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understand their total dependence upon God and NEVER take credit for their own success but give ALL glory to God.

16. Psalm 44:6 -- "For not in my bow do I trust." It is not your own talents and abilities that will ultimately determine your success but rather your relationship with God and His mercy and grace bestowed upon you. Your future is solely in His hands. Eternal life is "knowing Him," being truly one with Him (John 17:3). Don't wait until you die to experience eternal life.

17. Psalm 44: 9, 17 -- "But you have rejected us and disgraced us and have not gone out with our armies.... All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you, and we have not been false to your covenant." God does use circumstances to discipline His people, and during trials, we should search our hearts, minds, and actions as the psalmist does to ensure that we are aligned with God and that we haven't hidden forbidden booty in our hearts that has caused our own "defeat at Ai" (Joshua 7). How foolish and dishonorable it is for a Christian to suffer needlessly due to the consequences of personal sin (Hebrews 10:29; 1 Peter 4:15)! However, as Job and his friends learned, you cannot explain every problem you have as a punishment for sin. Nor is crisis an indication that God has abandoned you, rejected you, or fallen asleep. God may be preparing you for greater things or to use you in a very mighty way. In any case, you can always trust God with your circumstances, even if you are partly to blame for them (Romans 8:8). Consider the lives of the protagonists in the Bible -- how do you think Joseph felt having been left forgotten in prison with a life sentence, having previously been sold into slavery by his brothers? How do you think Moses felt before his burning bush experience, wandering in the desert as a deposed prince, a fugitive murderer? In their seemingly helpless situations, they could not understand that God was preparing them for great leadership. God has placed us in service to Him to reach the lost in a sinful world that is both corrupted by sin and full of sinners. He knows that this calling will often involve pain while we operate in this world of destruction and hurt. In the battlefield which we fight, the wounded are all around us; sin has corrupted even the cells of our bodies; and hurting people hurt people -- God knows as you reach out to the wounded, you are going to get hurt too. The Bible says that when we suffer trials in the name of Jesus, we actually have cause to rejoice because we are experiencing a special and unique fellowship with Jesus as we "share Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:13). Paul would encourage us: "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3)." However, it gets lonely and sometimes terrifying deep in enemy territory, and what do you do when you appear surrounded and are receiving no communications from the Commander? Trust and Obey! And Pray! We see today that, in silence, the psalmist recounts that God has always been more than faithful -- the evidence upon which faith is based (Psalm 44:1-8). In dark, silent times, remember that God is always faithful even when we are not, and trust in Him; wait on Him; be still and know that He is Lord (Psalm 46:10). Don't let your pride stand in the way of allowing others to minister to your needs. In your times of strength and confidence, remember how you suffered, and empathetically minister to the needs of others going through trials -- God never intended for us to go it alone.

- 1 Peter 4:19 -- Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

- 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 -- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

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- Philippians 4:4-13 -- Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.... The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.... I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

18. Psalm 44:24 -- "Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?" Faith is tested when God appears to have forgotten you during your trials. During the exam, the professor remains silent. God is faithful to see you through.

19. Psalm 45:7 -- "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness." If you love righteousness, you have to hate wickedness. How much do you hate wickedness? Are you prepared to "ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness (v4)?"

20. Psalm 45:17 -- "I will perpetuate your memory through all generations; therefore the nations will praise you for ever and ever." Our readings have much to say about God's desires for the Christian family. First, Christian families recognize their total reliance on the grace and blessings of God (Psalm 45:2). They are led by honorable, mighty men who fight for "truth, humility, and justice," who "love righteousness and hate wickedness (Psalm 45:4, 7)." These families are led by noble matriarchs who have committed fully to their husbands (never looking back) and honor them in every way (Psalm 45:10, 11). Through wisdom, these women build secure homes for their families (Proverbs 14:1). Together, these parents lead a house that flourishes because they don't just hope for good but rather are diligent enough to "plan for good (Proverbs 14:11, 22, 23)," working very hard, and investing in the capabilities required for future productivity (Proverbs 14:4). The Christian family is characterized by love and faithfulness (Proverbs 14:22). The Christian home is a sanctuary (Proverbs 14:26), a place where everyone feels safe. A Christian home is led by noble parents who raise generations of noble Christian leaders after them (Psalm 45:16). As the Bible says, "Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring (Malachi 2:15)." Every Christian parent can recount countless parental failures. Today is a new day. Trust God with the past and the future. Seek to parent today like your Father in Heaven would, walking in His grace, which is sufficient in your constant failure. Demonstrate the love and ways of God to your family today.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 April: Praise the Lord with all of your heart today, all day. Share the hope of your salvation with as many as possible today.

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 6, Saturday, 14 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+14%3B+psalm+43>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 14 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 19:14-21 -- God used Joshua, Eleazar and the tribal leaders to give out land when rulers usually try to take land away from people for their own use.
2. Joshua 19:47 -- As God told the tribes of Joseph to work for their land, so He made Dan fight for theirs. (see 17:14-48)

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3. Joshua 20 -- Many times the Bible describes the system God put in place to protect both victims and the accused until a fair trial could occur. The system also protected the innocent from retaliation.

4. Proverbs 14:1 -- "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down." It is much easier to tear something down than to build it. It is harder to save up money than it is to spend it. It takes a longtime of consistent performance of behavior to build a good reputation, but it doesn't take much bad behavior to lose it. Trust is hard to gain but easily lost. Things that matter most in your life require daily diligence and perseverance. What you did yesterday won't make up for what you don't do today. Each day, above all else, guard your heart.

5. Proverbs 14:2 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him." What you do reveals what you really think about God. Particularly revealing are the things you do when no one is looking. If no one sees, to whom is it being revealed? You. God already knows.

6. Proverbs 14:9 -- "Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright." Christians make amends for sin when it is within their power to do so. Exodus 22, Leviticus 24, and Numbers also speak to the principle of restitution.

7. Proverbs 14:14 -- "The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his." The deceiver is deceived. Throughout the Bible you will see a pattern where God allows sinners to get a taste of their own medicine (Galatians 6:7, 8; Job 4:8; Hosea 8:7; Luke 6:38; Mark 4:24). Jacob deceived by pretending to be someone else, and he was subsequently deceived in the exact same way -- "Why have you deceived me?" How do you think Jacob interpreted these circumstances? Do you think Jacob saw himself as an innocent victim? Do you think he asked himself, "Where is God?" Do you think Jacob asked for forgiveness from God for his deception while simultaneously asking for justice concerning Laban's deception against him?

8. Proverbs 14:30 -- "Tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot." Most health issues start out as heart issues.

9. Psalm 43:5 -- "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God." In hard times, have you ever felt like God had rejected you, abandoned you, forgotten about you? Take note and comfort that the Bible reveals to us in Psalms that David often felt this way and, like us, had to remind himself to "Hope in God," to "praise Him," and to rejoice in salvation, even when he didn't really feel like it. Sometimes we all need to counsel and coach ourselves not to lose hope in God. This is a normal part of spiritual development. This is also why it is important for you to have strong Christian friends and family who can gird you up while you are weak. Sometimes, when you feel like you need Him the most, God is silent -- He is building your faith, trust, and hope. Trust God in His silence and rest in faith and hope. For the true follower of Christ, God's silence always ends in a greater revelation and a greater relationship with Him than previously known. Consider what happened to Mary and Martha when they petitioned Jesus to heal their brother Lazarus -- in Jesus' deliberate delay, Lazarus died. This "silence" from Jesus was in fact Jesus preparing to respond to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in a way that they never could have imagined; Jesus intended to take them to a new place in their relationship with Him, to reveal to them something about Himself that they did not previously grasp -- Jesus is the Resurrection! God's silence is not absence. Quite the contrary, God is preparing you for greater things.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 April: Today, relax. This doesn't necessarily mean don't work hard; it means don't be stressed or bothered. Be tranquil. Be content. Be grateful. Be at peace. Today, if you find yourself getting worried, stressed, angry, etc. Reread Proverbs 14:30.

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 5, Friday, 13 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+13%3B+Romans+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 13 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 17:4 – “So according to the mouth of the Lord....” The word of God is sufficient authority to call for obedience without any further evidence or conditions. Many leaders have been frustrated subordinates who question their orders because they simply don't understand them or don't really like them – “But why?” This challenge of authority ultimately comes down to a lack of trust in the leader (often due to a lack of understanding), and it delays progress and success. Perhaps there is good reason to question an imperfect human leader, though perhaps not always good justification – as the adage goes, “Leaders have the right to be wrong.” However, there is no good reason to doubt our perfect God or to delay in our obedience, even without understanding. Again, delayed obedience is disobedience, which only robs us of God's best for us and for others. The word disciple is related to the word discipline. Discipline has been defined as, “instant and willing obedience to all orders and respect for authority.” Are you a disciplined disciple, or is your delay robbing you of God's best?

2. Joshua 17:11, 14 -- God gave Joseph's sons a strong portion including places inside other tribes' territories, but Joseph was not satisfied. We are challenged enough to be faithful simply with what God has already given us. When you are faithful with little, God can give you more. He knows what you can handle better than you do. Often, we are so worried about what we don't have, we fail to see and appreciate what we do have. Leading small teams can often produce more fruit than leading big teams because the leader can dedicate more attention to those being led. The Father gave Jesus 12 to facilitate global change – “While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled (John 17:12).” Contentment is the mark of faith and the attitude of gratitude that pleases our Lord and produces fruit.

3. Joshua 17:13 -- “Now when the people of Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.” A small compromise in your obedience to God that seems like no big deal to you, is always a big deal to God. Even small acts of disobedience reveal what you care about is more important to you than what God cares about, that something other than God has become your priority. All disobedience is you saying, “God, you are not Lord here.” Rather than driving out the Canaanites, the Israelites made a comfort-based decision and put them into forced labor, avoiding conflict while promoting financial gain. No big deal, right? I wonder how the Israelites justified this defiance of God? Have you ever told yourself that you could control the apparently small sin in your life or keep it in a box? “I know the words of this song are bad, but I just like the music....” Have you ever said something like this: “Other than the profanity and sex scenes, that was a pretty good movie.”? Proverbs 6:27 asks, “Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?” Don't strive to control sin in your life – drive it out. Accept no compromise with sin. Trust and obey.

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4. Joshua 17:14, 15 -- “‘Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, although I am a numerous people, since all along the Lord has blessed me?’ And Joshua said to them, ‘If you are a numerous people, go up by yourselves to the forest, and there clear ground for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.’” Once again, God expects us to be thankful for what we have, not complain about or make excuses based upon what we don’t have. God wants us to make the most of what He has given us, under the conditions in which He has placed us. Circumstances don’t determine our success but rather how we respond to those circumstances. One of the easiest and most common copouts is to claim that we don’t have the resources (time, abilities, materiel, people, etc.) to get done what needs to get done. However, if God called us to do it, He will provide the resources. But God expects us to work diligently, persistently, and obediently. (Proverbs 10:4, 5) Proverbs remind us, “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” (Proverbs 10:22) The people of Joseph were not satisfied with God’s blessings and commands and made excuses for their lack of obedience. As a result, they induced sorrows with the blessings they had received. Work joyfully, thankfully, contently, diligently, persistently, faithfully, and confidently with what God has given you and be blessed. Don’t make excuses. Don’t add your own sorrows.

5. Joshua 17:17-18 – “For you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong.” God calls you to accomplish what is impossible for you to accomplish without His power so He will be glorified rather than you. It doesn’t take faith to do what you already know you can do.

6. Joshua 18:4-6 – “Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may set out and go up and down the land. They shall write a description of it with a view to their inheritances, and then come to me. They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall continue in his territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall continue in their territory on the north. And you shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me. And I will cast lots for you here before the Lord our God.” God gives us instructions for how to deal with the realities of human nature in order to keep peace and unity. People often struggle with rules of equality and fairness, particular when concerned with who gets what. Politics has been described as the process of deciding who gets what. God’s plan for dividing the land fairly was to send out teams of three (three witness are required for big decisions) to survey and record (putting the agreement in writing) the portions of land. Since the surveyors had no idea which portion of land they would ultimately get, they were incentivized to make equal portions. Casting lots takes the human out of the process, thereby eliminating any perceptions of bias. This God-given approach to negotiations should serve as a model for us today in order to preserve unity.

7. Joshua 18:6 – “And I will cast lots for you here before the Lord our God.” What we call chance is never chance to God. God is in total control. God gives the final answer. If you ever feel that you are the victim of circumstances, you fail to fully appreciate the sovereignty of God.

8. Proverbs 13:25 -- “The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.” This is a very interesting Proverb. The appetite of the righteous is satisfied, but why? Perhaps it is because the appetite of the righteous is content with “enough” rather than “just a little more.” The righteous have learned to be content with what God has provided while the wicked are never satisfied in their empty cravings. The choice of the word “enough” in this Proverb is significant – it doesn’t say

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“plenty,” or “an abundance.” Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” rather than “give us this day bread for a lifetime.” Learning to walk in daily dependence on and confidence in God is where we find peace, contentment, and joy. In this position, we are like the “poor man” who “hears no threat (Proverbs 13:8).”

9. Romans 3:2 -- To be entrusted with God's word is a great advantage. What are you doing with God's word?

10. Romans 3:3 – “What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?” God is faithful even when we are not faithful. And a lack of faith does not change the truth of God's word or the consequences of living or not living by God's word. Without faith it is impossible to please God because faith trusts God's faithfulness to receive what He has already given us. In unfaithfulness, we don't use what we have been given and act as if we had never received it. Our failure to take hold of what God has given us does not change the fact that He freely gave but merely demonstrates our lack of appreciation for the giver and the gift and robs us of the joy that comes from receiving.

11. Romans 3:5, 6 – “But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means!” Our sin only further reveals the truth of God's word, the truth of His Righteousness, and the need for salvation through Jesus Christ.

12. Romans 3:5-8 – “And why not do evil that good may come?” The reality of our sinfulness and the reality of God's grace for those who rely on Jesus does not in any way lighten the seriousness of sin or provide a license for continued sin.

13. Romans 3:9-18 -- All people are subject to God's judgement and need salvation through Jesus.

14. Romans 3:10-18 -- Your thoughts, words, and deeds continually reveal your dependence on God's mercy and grace and your need for continued sanctification.

15. Romans 3:19 – “...so that every mouth may be stopped....” The reality of our sin should eliminate all pride and boasting. Most people feel that they are generally good people. “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20).”

16. Romans 3:22-26 -- “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” God is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice. In fact, love and justice go hand-in-hand. A loving God cannot accept injustice. God in His character of love and justice cannot simply overlook or excuse any sin – that would be unjust, unloving. The penalty must be paid. God has shown His righteousness through Jesus Christ by demanding the full penalty for sin, and penalty that we could not bear. And He has shown His love through the sacrifice of His One and Only Son on our behalf. Through Christ, God reveals that He is “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” God Himself offers to pay the penalty for our sins “as a gift.” Said another way, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).” However, a person doesn't own a gift until they

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accept it from the giver. Who do you know who hasn't accepted the gift of grace through Jesus Christ? Do you love that person enough to patiently lead them to Christ and to freedom? We have all fallen short, and justice demands our eternal death, but through the grace of God, Jesus paid the price for our sins that we can have freedom from God's judgment and the gift eternal life. Having received grace and forgiveness from God through Jesus, God expects us to live our lives lovingly but also justly, and He holds us accountable for our sins and disciplines us, though not unto eternal death. Of God, the Bible says – "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he (Deuteronomy 32:4); of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice (Job 24:12). Shall one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty (Job 34:17)? But the Lord sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice (Psalm 9:7); He loves righteousness and justice (Psalm 33:5). Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you (Psalm 89:14). Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord (Jeremiah 9:24). But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness (Isaiah 5:16). It is from the Lord that a man gets justice (Proverbs 29:26)." The God of love hates injustice: "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight (Proverbs 11:1). For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense (Isaiah 61:8). But woe to you Pharisees! For you... neglect justice and the love of God (Luke 11:42)." God calls justice light and injustice darkness (Isaiah 59:9). God says that His disciples are to be a light in the world, modelling the attribute of God's justice. The God of love who hates injustice demands that people not only live justly but also fight against injustice -- "You shall not pervert justice (Deuteronomy 16:19). Justice, and only justice, you shall follow (Deuteronomy 16:20). You shall not pervert the justice (Deuteronomy 24:17). Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice (Deuteronomy 27:19). He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 17:15). The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy (Psalm 111:7). "So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God (Hosea 12:16). Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate (Amos 5:15)." Can you imagine a world totally without any justice? How dark would that be? How unloving? How evil? Have the courage to stand up against injustice in the Name of Jesus and under the authority of Jesus. Matthew 12:18 -- Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

17. Romans 3:22 -- Ultimately, righteousness cannot come from living a "good" life but only through total dependence on Jesus, His righteousness imputed to the unrighteous. Salvation depends on God's accomplishments, not yours. Having been made righteous through Jesus, our only worthy response is to strive to live righteously in accordance with His character and will. We were paid for with the ultimate price of the blood of Jesus. The thought of trampling on the blood of Jesus should horrify you.

18. Romans 3:22-24 -- Salvation in Jesus is available to every person who will believe and surrender their lives to Jesus.

19. Romans 3:31 -- Grace does not nullify the law but gives us freedom to obey Jesus without fear.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 April: Explain Romans 3 to someone today.

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 4, Thursday, 12 Apr 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+12%3B+Romans+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 12 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 15 -- God blessed by providing His presence, His protection, family, and land. Concerning the latter two, God's commands are very intentional in the protection of the family, their rightful inheritance, and property rights. When a government establishes laws and policies that threaten family and robs people of inheritance and rights to property, that government is operating against the will of God.
2. Joshua 15:8 -- Jerusalem is not part of Judah's inheritance but Benjamin's. Interesting....
3. Joshua 16:10 -- "However, they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor." You must obey ALL of God's commands and be willing to go the distance to receive the full blessings of God. There are always consequences for disobedience, and some consequences may be tangibly significant, but always spiritually significant. Often the consequences are not realized until many years later, perhaps not for generations, but the roosters always come home to roost. In this case, the Israelites chose to disobey God by not driving out the Canaanites -- this was the easy thing to do and didn't seem to result in many problems for them. However, we will soon read that this decision to disobey God would prove extremely costly over time. In Joshua, chapter 6, God gave strange and very specific instructions to bring down the walls of Jericho -- "You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him." March around the city for seven days and march around the city seven times on the seventh day. Imagine how the people must have felt marching around the city on days 1 (nothing happens), day 2 (nothing happens), day 3 (nothing happens), etc. What if the people simply stopped marching on the sixth day or only marched around once on the seventh day, giving up when no results were observed? It takes faith to be totally obedient to God, particularly when it doesn't appear to make any sense or produce positive results. However, unconditional obedience is required to receive the blessings God intends for you. Don't quit on day six -- keep marching in fidelity!
4. Proverbs 12: Today's proverbs speak of the wise person's approach to building economic security. First, a wise person does not make deceptive wages and does not get rich taking advantage of others (Proverbs 12:2). A wise person's integrity produces stability in all areas of life. (Proverbs 12:3). I wise person marries well (Proverbs 12:4). The wise don't just jump from one thing to the next; they do long-range planning and follow their plan without distraction, though remaining ready to follow God's unexpected redirection (Proverbs 12:5). The wise person is guided by sound thinking that comes from years of Spirit-led character development, and because of his/her outstanding character, (s)he gains a great reputation. (Proverbs 12:8). The wise person does not spend money to impress others or pretend to be wealthy; rather, the wise person uses money to provide for self and others and to build (Proverbs 12:9). The wise person has a giving heart and uses growing resources to further provide for others (Proverbs 12:10). The wise do not pursue get rich quick schemes and are not driven by the need for instant gratification. Rather, the wise work diligently day by day to build wealth little by little over time.

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His wealth is built the old-fashioned way – with his hands (Proverbs 12:11, 12). The wise person learns to work well with others, deals patiently and honestly in all relationships, and accepts the counsel of other wise Christians (Proverbs 12:13-19). The wise pursue peace, knowing that conflicts destroy (Proverbs 12:20). The wise mind their own business and do not get entangled in worthless arguments (Proverbs 12:23). A wise person works hard, does not worry, and avoids friendships with the ungodly (Proverbs 12:24-27). The wise person stays on the path of life.

5. Romans 2:1 -- “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.” We all expect mercy from God but demand justice for others. We are quick to defend our rights and honor but expect God not to demand His. We are quick to proclaim, “That’s not fair!” However, we certainly don’t want God to judge us based upon rules of fairness. We are quick to claim “grace”, but we don’t live by grace and give grace freely to others. If we are truly living by grace, we are driven to humility, repentance, forgiveness, holiness, selflessness, surrender, and servitude (to God and others). “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.” (Romans 1:2) Those who claim grace as their excuse to continue in willful disobedience (which includes partial obedience) only fool themselves as they demonstrate the reality of their prideful self-centeredness (lack of genuine repentance). (Romans 2:8) And the church-goer is cautioned that more Bible knowledge does not make you anymore virtuous; only doing God’s will has value. (Romans 2:13) Information is not transformation. The modern grace movement within church culture today tends to disrespect the holiness of God and condones compromise. In fact, if you attend a popular church today, you will likely hear a lot about grace, but you may never hear the word repent. Even “sin” is a word rarely used in churches today. Grace, repentance, and obedience go together.

6. Romans 2:3 -- “Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?” We are all sinners and, by faith, rely on the mercy and grace of God through Jesus Christ for salvation. We all have a debt that cannot be paid, but Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. Only the One who had no debt of His own (from sin) could pay the debt of others. Only Jesus is worthy. Therefore, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).” Since while you were still a sinner Christ died for you, how now will you threaten those who are still sinning against you? Will you extend sacrificial grace? Will you ‘wash the feet’ of those who you know will betray you?

7. Romans 2:4 -- “Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” Yesterday we observed that Paul had committed his entire life (and gave his life) to the spreading of God’s “Good News,” a message he felt obligated to share with tremendous urgency to all that he could. Paul began to explain that the importance of this message (more important than life itself), the greatness of this message, and the urgency of this message, the reason why this “Good News” is so good, is because it is the answer to the greatest problem facing every living person. This is far more critical than a matter of life or death; it is a matter of ETERNAL life or death for all humanity! No greater issue has faced, or ever will face, mankind. The issue: before The One and Only Holy and Righteous God, every person will stand totally guilty, without excuse, of sins that demand the righteous wrath of God and the penalty of death, everlasting punishment -- Hell. The more one truly understands the reality of what it means to deserve the total wrath of Almighty God, the more this situation should instill a sense of utter terror, the kind of terror that leaves you “undone.” Conversely, the greater the understanding of the problem, the more

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magnificent the solution, which turns unthinkable terror into unimaginable joy, thankfulness, freedom, and peace. Jesus Christ paid the penalty of sin and has accredited to us righteousness before God as well as total access to God. The greater the appreciation of this "Good News," the greater the love for God and love for others, the greater the sense of urgency to get the Good News to those who don't have it. Hence, the reason Paul gave his all for the "Good News." You would think that the messenger who gave up everything to bring this message of unsurpassed import, free of charge with no strings attached, would be more than well received. Of course we know that Paul and countless other martyrs throughout history were viciously persecuted for the message of mercy, grace, peace, and reconciliation. The problem for the messenger is that the audience has no terror but rather, for various reasons, lives in denial (not the river in Egypt). In various ways, forms, or fashions, these self-righteous, self-seeking people (both the religious and unreligious), attempt to have God dethroned (whether they admit it or not). Treason! To place themselves in authority over God and to justify their disobedience to the KING for the sake of their own passions, they have suppressed the truth of God and replaced the truth of God with lies intended to nullify His Lordship. Paul's audiences are quick to demand "justice" from others, quick to defend their own rights or stand up for themselves when they feel they have been slighted by others (even though their judgment is myopic and flawed); they somehow think that they can continually disobey and dishonor God, and God will simply do nothing (Romans 1:1-4). It makes no difference who Paul is addressing. The Jews who had been given special access to God, unimaginable blessings from God, divine revelation, and every detail of His Law disobeyed God anyway; or they followed the commands of God only to prop themselves up before men (place themselves on a throne), thereby disobeying the Great Commandment of love. They stared Jesus in the face, watched him perform miracles of mercy, and then crucified him. The Gentiles who could not obey their own consciences revealed that they were just like the Jews, simply without as much information. For everyone, the issue is with the heart -- "Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself... the work of the law is written on their hearts... a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God... God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." (Romans 2:5, 15, 29, 16) The inability of people to obey God's Law or even their own consciences reveals that our hearts are rebellious and wicked. We don't want God in reality to be God; we want to be the god of our lives. This was true for Adam and Eve ("when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5)), and it remains true today. We come up with all sorts of belief systems or excuses to justify (just-as-if-I'd never sinned) our rebellion or to convince ourselves that our defiance of God does not really matter so that we can continue to build our own kingdom on earth. Why such a violent response to the Good News throughout history until today? Because it threatens the kingship of man and exposes the truth of our great treason. It reveals the truth of ourselves, our secret heart. It strips us of our self-righteous garments exposing our nakedness. The Good News demands repentance and surrender. The Good News reveals the LORDSHIP of the KING. Jesus began his proclamation of the Good News like this: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2)." This message he intentionally presented first to the "religious." How does the church today present the Gospel?

8. Romans 2:8 -- "For those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury." Disobedience is selfishness, in direct contrast to the selflessness of love.

9. Romans 2:16 -- "God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." There are no secrets with God.

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10. Romans 2:24 -- "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." How terrible is it to give God a bad name due to bad behavior as an unfaithful Christian?

11. Romans 2:28, 29 -- "For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly.... But a Jew is one inwardly... a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God." Likewise Christianity is about the heart, not just outward appearances.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 April: Today, vow to extend to everyone around you, the same level of grace you are counting on from God. (Romans 2:1-3) Meditate upon the below verses:

- Matthew 6:12 -- Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- Ephesians 4:32 -- Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

- Matthew 5:23-26 -- So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly....

- Hebrews 12:14 -- Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

- Colossians 1:20 -- And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- Luke 23:34 -- And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

- 1 Peter 4:8 -- Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

- Luke 6:27-42 -- But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

- Romans 12:14-21 -- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.... Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

- Matthew 18:33 -- And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' (Review the Lord's Prayer)

- Galatians 6:1-3 -- Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

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- Philippians 2:1-8 -- So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.... Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 3, Wednesday, 11 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+11%3B+Romans+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 11 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 13:1, 6 -- "Now Joshua was old and advanced in years.... allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you." God inspired Joshua to make plans for the next generation. God's plan has always been generational. God calls us to plan for generations to come too.

2. Joshua 13:13 -- "Yet the people of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites, but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day." God's plan will require you to do what you cannot do without Him or under your own strength. "I can't" is often an excuse for disobedience that robs you of God's blessings and a genuine experience of His power in your life. Don't short change yourself by obeying only those commands you can do easily. Faith boldly dives into impossible odds. It doesn't take faith to do what you know you can do. It takes faith to do what God told you to do when you don't know how you possibly can.

3. Joshua 13:14 -- "To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance." Today's readings reiterate four times that Levi received no earthly inheritance. As today's "priests," we too should anticipate no earthly rewards. Our inheritance is Jesus.

4. Joshua 14:5, 9 -- God honors obedience.

5. Joshua 14:10-12 -- "And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said." Caleb is a great example for older people (and for anyone else). He had no desire or plan for "retirement". He didn't ask Joshua for a bass boat or a membership to a golf country club; rather he asked for the greatest challenge, to secure the hill country and the fortified cities in the Name of the Lord. He volunteered for this challenge in the hope that "the Lord will be with me." Caleb remained healthy, vibrant, and influential in his later years because he chose to stay in the fight, to remain active and committed for God. He did not consider his age a drawback but rather a testimony and an attribute. God will use a faithful servant of any age to do great things in His name and through His power. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul encourages Timothy not to be concerned about his young age, but rather to serve God with confidence to the best of his ability. Naturally, young people lack a degree of experience, and older people lack a degree of vitality, but they both have equal access to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 20:29 -- "The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray

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hair." God calls us to use what we have, and He warns that if you don't use it, you will lose it (see Luke 16:10, and Matthew 25:14-30).

6. Joshua 14:12 – God's most faithful followers desire the hardest assignments and trust God's provision for success.

7. Proverbs 11:18b -- "But he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward." From Henry T. Blackaby -- "There are many ways to invest our lives, but none offers greater reward than devoting ourselves to the pursuit of righteousness. Every area of our lives should reflect the holiness of God that is ours by salvation: our thoughts, so that nothing we think about would be inappropriate for a child of God; our actions, so that our lives demonstrate that we serve a holy God; our integrity, so that we are above reproach in all our relationships. Are you taking God's righteousness in your life for granted? Righteousness is something you must allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Instead of sowing holy thoughts, are you allowing evil and sinful thoughts to grow in your mind? Are you allowing lust to grow unchecked within you? Does enmity, bitterness, jealousy, or unforgiveness remain in your life? Jesus said if we seek first God and His righteousness, everything else will follow (Matt. 6:33). There is great reward in sowing righteousness. What are you presently doing to plant holiness in your life? (1 Pet. 1:15). How are you putting righteousness in your mind so that your thoughts are holy? How are you cultivating righteousness in your relationships so that you maintain your integrity? Are you instilling righteousness in your activities so that your life is above reproach? If you want to harvest righteousness in your life tomorrow, you must plant seeds of righteousness today."

8. Romans 1:1 – "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...." Paul realized that salvation set him apart for the Gospel. His identity was "servant of Christ Jesus." How do you introduce yourself to others? For what are you most known?

9. Romans 1:1 -- "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...." Paul uses the word "gospel" four times in the first chapter of Romans, a word that is used over 90 times in the New Testament. Paul says that he has been set apart for the gospel, that he serves with his spirit "in the gospel," that he is eager to preach the gospel, and certainly not ashamed of the gospel which is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Jesus preached the gospel and then called us to preach the gospel to "all creation." So, what is the gospel? Without digging into the entire word study (though recommended if you have the time), the word "gospel" means "good news." So, what is this good news for which Paul and so many others have been willing to give their very lives to share? Most Christians will say that the good news is that God has provided the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. But salvation from what? From what are we saved? Today, many, if not most Christians will answer, "saved from our sins." However, we are not saved from our sins, we are saved from the wrath of God --

- "The gospel is called the 'good news' because it addresses the most serious problem that you and I have as human beings, and that problem is simply this: God is holy and He is just, and I'm not. And at the end of my life, I'm going to stand before a just and holy God, and I'll be judged. And I'll be judged either on the basis of my own righteousness—or lack of it—or the righteousness of another. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness, of perfect obedience to God, not for His own well-being but for His people. He has done for me what I couldn't possibly do for myself. But not only has He lived that life of perfect obedience, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice and the righteousness of God. The great misconception in our day is this: that God isn't concerned to

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protect His own integrity. He's a kind of wishy-washy deity, who just waves a wand of forgiveness over everybody. No. For God to forgive you is a very costly matter. It cost the sacrifice of His own Son. So valuable was that sacrifice that God pronounced it valuable by raising Him from the dead—so that Christ died for us, He was raised for our justification. So, the gospel is something objective. It is the message of who Jesus is and what He did. And it also has a subjective dimension. How are the benefits of Jesus subjectively appropriated to us? How do I get it? The Bible makes it clear that we are justified not by our works, not by our efforts, not by our deeds, but by faith—and by faith alone. The only way you can receive the benefit of Christ's life and death is by putting your trust in Him—and in Him alone. You do that, you're declared just by God, you're adopted into His family, you're forgiven of all of your sins, and you have begun your pilgrimage for eternity." (R.C. Sproul)

- Paul offers greetings and reviews the gospel which "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," the gospel of "Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace," he immediately turns to "the wrath of God [being] revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It is the awfulness of God's wrath that warrants the urgency for salvation and that displays the true magnitude of God's mercy, grace, and love through Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, too many have lost perspective of the Holiness of God and the seriousness of God's wrath. God's wrath doesn't preach well today. Sinners are often characterized as merely misguided "victims" of circumstances, and sins are just "mistakes", no longer something for which a person can be held totally accountable. Today's more popular God has little if any wrath, rather affection all the time; He is now accepting and tolerant of anyone and everyone because "He understands that we are just human". However, the Good News is only as good as the potential bad news -- the looming wrath of God. Where there is no sin, there is no need of a savior, the good news becomes seemingly less relevant, certainly not worth sticking your neck out for. Remember, the first recorded word preached by both John the Baptist and Jesus was "Repent," a word used 65 times in the Bible but less and less from pulpits.

-- Revelation 4:8 -- Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!

-- Revelation 8:13 -- Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth."

10. Romans 1:5 – "...we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations..." Christ's Ambassadors were saved to call others to saving faith and obedience empowered by faith in and love for Jesus.

11. Romans 1:7 – "To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints...." Rome was an ethically corrupt society. Those who are loved by God are called to be saints in a fallen world.

12. Romans 1:8 – "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world." Is your faith being reported all over the world?

13. Romans 1:9, 10 – "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you." The love of Christ compels Christians to love others earnestly, pray for them continually, and do all they can to draw them closer to Jesus.

14. Romans 1:11, 12 – "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." God

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wants Christians to earnestly seek to encourage one another and strengthen each other in their faith. Is this a top priority in your life?

15. Romans 1:14, 15 – You are obligated to preach the Gospel to all people, eagerly without favoritism.

16. Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Paul realized that some would be ashamed to preach the Gospel, but Paul reminds us that faith in God and love for others should overcome any shame.

17. Romans 1:18 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” World events reveal God’s wrath and a suppression of the truth of the Gospel.

18. Romans 1:19 – “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.” Unbelievers have enough evidence to believe in God if they want to.

19. Romans 1:21 – “...their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” The more you reject the truth, the less likely you will ever accept it.

20. Romans 1:22 – “Claiming to be wise, they became fools....” Unbelievers believe they are wiser than believers.

21. Romans 1:24 -- “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts.” As the old preachers says, whenever you see the word “therefore” in the Bible, you should ask, “What is it there for?” This word points to a relationship of causation and signals that you can’t understand what is going to be said next without understanding what precedes it. So, “God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts” for a specific reason that is critical to our understanding: “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” Paul reiterates the point – “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie.... since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.... Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.” God turned them over to their lusts because they rejected Him as God. Having chosen to reject God and disobey Him, their thinking became futile until their hearts lost all desire for God. This is a pride that God hates. (Proverbs 8:13) They became completely desensitized to their sin and went from bad to worse. Paul says that in observing this, the discerning can see the “wrath of God” being revealed. Ultimately, all sin is a rejection of God (even but for just a moment); it is treason, it is subversion, an affront to the Lordship of God. Knowing that God is God, knowing that Jesus Christ paid for our sins through His blood, we willing continue in that which He abhors – unthinkable! Fortunately, the Good News, as Paul points out, is that God gives us grace and peace through the Lord Jesus Christ, but this gift is certainly nothing to take lightly. With grace comes apostleship (or discipleship) “to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all nations.” (Romans 1:5) Having received grace, we now “belong to Jesus Christ.” Just as rejection of God has a consequence of destruction, grace and salvation through faith has an obedience consequence, driving us to follow God in love (rather than fear or mere duty). The saved don’t just “believe in God” they surrender their lives to Him, becoming disciples, intent on making more disciples who “obey” all that God commands – this is the Great

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Commission. The goal of salvation is not that God will bless our lives and that we go to Heaven; the goal of salvation is that we glorify God and enjoy Him forever, that we grow in love and unity with Him and encourage others to do the same. We deny self, take up the Cross of Christ, and follow Jesus. In opposition to the world, the follower of Christ can only hate evil. (Proverbs 8:13) The one who hates evil won't take it lightly, make light of it or overlook it. To do so, by definition, would be to make light of grace, or as Paul says, to trample underfoot the Son of God, to profane the blood of the covenant, and to outrage the Spirit of grace. (Hebrews 10:29) Today, the vast majority of Christians in America will entertain themselves with various forms of media which glorify that which God abhors, slowly desensitizing themselves to the horrors of sin. This should never be! It is time for repentance. Pray for revival (which must come from God).

22. Romans 1:24 – Unbelief is often revealed by sexual sin.

23. Romans 1:26, 27 – “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.” Homosexuality as with all other sexual sins (promiscuity, pornography, adultery, etc.) is the consequence of rejection of God's truth.

24. Romans 1:29-31 – “They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.” Like homosexuality, many other sins are the consequence of rejection of God's truth.

25. Romans 1:32 – “They not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.” Approving of sin, tolerating it, or accepting it is also unacceptable to the Lord.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 April: Today, resolve to no longer focus on what you don't have (youth, experience, talent, money, time, etc.) but rather to use what you do have to love and serve the Lord with all your "heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." (see Joshua 14:10-12 and Luke 10:27)

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 2, Tuesday, 10 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+10%3B+mark+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 10 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 11:5, 6 -- "And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. And the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel.'" While Christians find unity in the love of Jesus, the world will find unity in hatred toward Jesus and His disciples. God says not to worry as more and more people turn against Jesus and His followers. Victory is in His hands.

2. Joshua 11:15 -- “Just as the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.” God honors obedience. Like Moses, Joshua understood that partial obedience is disobedience. Joshua was wholly obedient and God worked far beyond Joshua's obedience to reveal Himself by doing only what God can do: “For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the Lord commanded Moses.” (Joshua 11:20) Only God can work in the hearts of people and control

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circumstances. As we walk in obedience, we will see God working far beyond our activities to accomplish His purposes, to reveal Himself, and to bring glory to Himself. Our job is to be obedient, regardless the personal cost, for reasons we cannot even understand. If we are simultaneously attempting to fulfill our own personal agenda, we will end up being partially obedient which, again, is disobedience. Disobedience is working through the flesh, not the Spirit. Disobedience is why the churches lose their lampstands and real spiritual power, operating on the talents and abilities of men which is ultimately meaningless. Pray for repentance and revival in the church.

3. Joshua 11:20 -- "For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the Lord commanded Moses." God hardens hearts by giving the wicked what they really want, along with the inevitable consequences, all for His good purpose. The practical implication for us is that we will face opposition and persecution from the wicked as God's plan for both the righteous people (righteous through the blood of Jesus) and the unrighteous people unfolds over time. This calls for perseverance and persistent fidelity. Trust and obey through your circumstances. God knows what is happening to you and will work it all together for a greater good you cannot possibly imagine.

4. Joshua 12:6, 7 -- "Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the people of Israel defeated them.... And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated...." God works generationally, over time. Christians are often shortsighted, wanting immediate results. However, God wants us to leave results in His hands and to focus on obedience in the moment. If we are faithful and obedient with what God has placed in front of us, we are fulfilling our purpose and living successfully, regardless of outward appearances. Part of our mission is preparing to handover fidelity to the next generation so they can continue to serve God's eternal plan. Moses prepared Joshua, and Joshua continued in the mission. Who are you preparing to receive the torch of fidelity from you?

5. Proverbs 10:8 -- Fools debate about commands rather than simply obeying.

6. Proverbs 10:12 -- "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." We have been given the mission of reconciliation. This involves covering over all offenses with love, bearing the burden of others' sins as a gift of grace and an act of worship before the Lord.

7. Proverbs 10:19 -- "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent." When you feel slighted, offended, and emotional, hold your tongue.

8. Mark 16:1 -- "When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him." The disciples played lead, visible roles in Jesus' ministry, but it was others behind the scenes, unlikely protagonists, who remained faithful to the end. It was Joseph of Arimathea (previously unmentioned) who "went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body," no doubt at great personal risk and definitely at great personal cost. John records that Nicodemus claimed Jesus' body with Joseph, again at great personal risk. While many watched Jesus' trial from a distance (spectator believers), the Bible says that the two Marys and Salome "cared for [Jesus'] needs in Galilee. It was these same three who chose to anoint Jesus' body while the disciples remained in hiding (John 20:19), and because of their quiet faithfulness, these women were the first to be given the Good News -- "He has risen!" At one point the disciples were very enthusiastic about their leadership roles within the Kingdom, even arguing about which among them was the greatest, but now

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they remained fearful behind closed doors. Of course we know that this isn't the end of the story for them, and after a personal encounter with the Risen Jesus, they are transformed into men of valor. However, I think this story has much to tell us about leadership – too much to discuss here but worth pondering today as we mediate on our readings. Often those most enthusiastic about leading are the last people who should lead. "False" leaders are like false prophets, pursuing their own appetites. Jesus said "you will recognize them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16)." Galatians 5:22-23 says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." If a leader or teacher lacks these qualities, then there is a problem. Another test of leadership is selfless sacrifice – real leadership always comes at a tremendous personal cost, not profit or fame. Finally, I believe that true Christian leadership always lifts up the name of Christ and Christ alone. The Marys, Salome, Joseph and Nicodemus were focused on one thing – serving Jesus despite the personal cost. They served quietly, behind the scenes and modeled the foot-washing type of leadership that Jesus taught. Something to consider today.

9. Mark 16:15, 16 -- "And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'" Jesus commanded his disciples to proclaim the gospel, not just to a select few or to who were likely to accept it, but to the "whole creation." The Christian's responsibility is to boldly proclaim the Gospel to everyone; how others respond to the Gospel is their responsibility. Question: have you chosen not to share the Gospel with someone because of how you feel about them or because of how you think they will react? Can you withhold the truth of the Gospel and remain obedient to God?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 April: Resolve today to be a willing behind the scenes leader, someone who simply remains faithful to God's word, without recognition, regardless the personal cost. Endeavor to be a nobody that Christ might recognized rather than you. Don't seek credit or reward. Simply serve Jesus with all of your heart, be a leader in love, and lead people to Jesus. Someone once said, "Leaders know the way and show the way." Know and show Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If you are leading people to something else (good ideas, morals, ethics, philosophy, etc.) or showing them something else (your talents and skills, a more practical way of living, etc.), you are leading them astray, presenting a false gospel which is no gospel at all. (see notes above on Mark 16)

DBRP- WEEK 15, Day 1, Monday, 9 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Joshua+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+9%3B+mark+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 9 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 9:14 -- "So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord." Against God's will, the Israelites were deceived into a covenant with the Gibeonites which resulted in a war between Israel and five kingdoms. This happened because the Israelites did "whatever seem[ed] good and right in [their] sight" rather than asking for "counsel from the Lord." (Joshua 9:25) Christians have full access to the power of God, and God's promises to empower us mightily in order to perform His will (not ours) for His purposes (not ours), for His glory (not ours), and through His power (not ours). God will always ask His people to accomplish what is impossible for them so that the world will see the power of God through them rather than merely the power of talented people. We see throughout the Bible how God works beyond human abilities to bring His people victory and to reveal Himself to a watching world: He knows the hearts of people (we cannot), He controls the hearts of people (we

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cannot); He orchestrates circumstances and the timing of events to produce amazing effects (we cannot do that); He controls nature (we cannot), and He directs the course of all activities on Heaven and Earth for His glory (we cannot even fathom that). God does not intend for His people to operate within the narrow constraints of their own extraordinarily small perceptions and abilities but rather He expects His people to operate with total faith and reliance in the unmatched wisdom and power of God. How foolish is it for us to trust ourselves rather than God? As God's servants, we are on very dangerous ground if we are making decisions apart from God's leading and walking along our own path under our own power. As God warns, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) With the Israelites facing seemingly impossible odds, God says to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you." (Joshua 10:8) If we are walking with God, we have ABSOLUTELY nothing to fear. If we are leaning on our own understanding, we have good reason to be concerned; life will be far harder and less joyful than God intended.

- Matthew 10:24 -- A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

- Jeremiah 29:11 -- For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

2. Joshua 9:14, 15 -- "...but did not ask counsel from the Lord. And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them." Failing to ask counsel from the Lord, rather trusting in their own reasoning, the Israelites became entangled in commitments with the ungodly which resulted in tremendous conflict for the Israelites (war against a coalition of five kingdoms). The Bible warns us time and time again not to establish dependencies with the ungodly or to establish covenants with them. Proverbs say that if we have become "ensnared" in a pledge to a "stranger," we should seek to save ourselves "like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter." Our faith teaches that unrepentant sinners are trapped in sin. What partnership can the godly have with the ungodly, the servants of God with the servants of Satan? "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?" (Amos 3:3) How do we agree with both God and man? The Christian is on a mission of reconciliation (reunion with God) that by definition requires God at the center of all agreements – it is impossible to achieve unity and peace without this essential. As slaves to Christ, we have no authority to make covenant with the world. Even among believers, promises are often made falsely, with the wrong motives. Commitments always involve promises based on trust; trust is based upon an assumption about the heart or character of the other party. The Bible says that no one can really know the thoughts, heart, and character of another person -- only God knows. (1 Corinthians 2:11; Proverbs 15:11) Often all we have to go on is reputation. As someone once said, "Reputation is what others say about you; character is what God knows about you." Only God can reveal another person's true motives and character to you. So, the first place to start when you are considering a partnership with another is in earnest prayer. If the partnership clearly doesn't conform to the Bible standard, your prayer has already been answered. Beyond that, God can reveal through the Holy Spirit what you do not see through His written word. Key is to not rush into a promise but to wait on the Lord. Another point the Bible drives home is that God expects His people to honor their commitments and promises, even the ones made rashly. Once you have made a decision, you own that decision – your "yes" must be a yes, and your "no" must be a no. The importance of avoiding entanglements with the

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ungodly and waiting upon to Lord in decision-making cannot be overstated. We can only do what God has told us to do. Does God want you to make that promise?

3. Joshua 9:19 -- "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them." Again, God expects you to keep your commitments even if you made those commitments without the right information or if the commitment is later discovered to be unfair. We are called to demonstrate godly fidelity despite the infidelity of others.

4. Joshua 9:26 -- "So he did this to them and delivered them out of the hand of the people of Israel, and they did not kill them." God expects you to show mercy to others while still holding them accountable.

5. Joshua 10:6 -- "And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, 'Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us.'" Getting entangled with the world will cause you many unneeded conflicts.

6. Joshua 10:8 -- "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands." God will honor your willingness to honor even your misguided commitments.

7. Joshua 10:14 -- "There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel." God will work through you in a way that reveals Himself -- it's not about you.

8. Joshua 10:19 -- "Pursue your enemies; attack their rear guard. Do not let them enter their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand." God's plan involves thoroughly defeating enemies of the Kingdom, and often He uses strategy to do it.

9. Joshua 10:27 -- "But at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day." Joshua made a public example of God's enemies but did not desecrate their bodies, remaining faithful to God's commands. (see Deut 21:22, 23)

10. Proverbs 9:1 -- "Wisdom has built her house...." Wisdom is organized, prepared, and purposeful.

11. Proverbs 9:8, 9 -- "Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." Wise people get wiser every day, and foolish people get more foolish every day because they refuse to listen and learn.

12. Proverbs 9:13, 14 -- "The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town." Foolish people are loud and proud, live by their passions, and consider themselves better than everyone else, always pursuing places of honor.

13. Mark 15:2 -- "And Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' And he answered him, 'You have said so.'" Some have legal authority to lead, and others have the moral authority to lead. By law, Pilate was the ruler, but by God, Jesus is the KING of kings, and Pilate could not deny the true leadership of Jesus. Before imparting the Great Commission to the disciples in Matthew 28, Jesus reminds them that

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all power and authority had been given to Him, and under that authority, the disciples were commissioned to lead the world to Him. He then reminded them that they would not lead solely on their own power. You may not have much legal authority, but you have been given the moral authority and the power to change the world one heart at a time.

14. Mark 15:10, 15 -- "For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.... " Religious envy and selfish politics condemned Jesus to death. What destructive impact have you seen from envy in your own life and in the lives of others?

15. Mark 15:18 -- "And they began to salute him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" The guards callously mocked and abused Jesus, The Truth. There is no limit to what the godless will be willing to do in defiance of the truth and those who proclaim it. God's plan includes allowing His people to suffer for His glory. Whatever you are going through, remember what Christ went through on your behalf -- He is not one who doesn't understand your suffering. And remember, there is a big difference between persecution and prosecution. Too often, Christians suffer because of their own foolish behavior and then call it martyrdom in order to justify themselves. Most of our problems in life are self-induced.

16. Mark 15:28 -- See Isaiah 53:12 -- God had a plan for even the robbers to fulfill prophecy.

17. Mark 15:30-32 -- Self-preservation is the human way; the cross is God's way.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 April: Consider carefully who you are choosing with which to partner, in relationships, in business, in activities, etc. Are you surrounding yourself with people who share in your commitment to draw closer to Jesus every day, to follow Jesus wholeheartedly? Are you fully united to your fellow Christians as the body of Christ? Is Jesus at the center of all of your important relationships? Concerning your relationships with your ungodly friends, ask yourself how many times you have mentioned the name of Jesus to them. Is your primary focus for them reconciliation to God? How many others are you discipling daily? Fully commit to the Body of Christ and temple of God, God's people. Partner with God's people and engage everyone else with the goal of their reconciliation with God. Remember, a body must be fully connected to stay healthy, and the stones of a temple must be completely joined and in place to have strength. (See today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 7, Sunday, 8 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=josh+7%2C+8%3B+prov+8%3B+psalm+41%2C+42>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 8 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 7:1 – “But the people of Israel broke faith.” All sin is breaking faith with God.

2. Joshua 7:1 – “...for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.” Achan's sin affected everyone. God held the people of Israel accountable until the people of Israel held Achan accountable. God's discipline was to protect the holiness of his people. One bad apple can spoil the bunch.

3. Joshua 7:6 – “Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, he and the elders of Israel.” In times of crisis, where do you turn? Joshua went straight

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to the Lord, and he didn't go alone but took the elders with him. God responded to Joshua, and He will respond to your fervent prayer.

4. Joshua 7:7 – “And Joshua said, ‘Alas, O Lord God, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!’” We ere when we assume the motives or intent of God (or of other people). From our myopic perspective, we tend to underestimate God and others, while thinking more highly of ourselves than we should. Joshua could not understand God's behavior and assumed the worst, while implying the issue at hand was God's behavior rather than the sins of the Israelites. “When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.” (Proverbs 19:3) But Joshua approached God in all honesty as we see done so often in the Psalms. God accepted Joshua's candor. God wants you to approach Him honestly in your prayers too.

5. Joshua 7:9 – “For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?” Joshua understood a couple of things – Reputation (and trust) takes a long time to establish but can be ruined by one major failure; and, more important than what people think about us is what they think about our God, the One we have been called to glorify. The name “Christian” means, “little Christ.” We represent the character of Christ before others. What do we do to the Name of Jesus when we destroy trust and establish a bad reputation? We must guard our character carefully.

6. Joshua 7:10 -- “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?” – First pray, then obey. When God gives you a work, don't delay – step out.

7. Joshua 7:11, 12 – “Israel has sinned.... Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies.” Good parents to give defiant children gifts. Often God has to deal with your sin before He can bless you. The Israelites had “stolen and lied,” yet expected God to reward them with victory against their enemies. God will not bless disobedience. Are their sins of which you still need to repent that your holding you back? “...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1) “I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.” (Joshua 7:12)

8. Joshua 7:20,25 -- “And Achan answered Joshua, ‘Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did'.... And all Israel stoned him with stones.” Being sorry doesn't excuse you from prosecution or punishment.

9. Joshua 8:1-9 – God's ways may involve the use of tactics and even tactical deception in warfare to defeat enemies.

10. Joshua 8:30 – “At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal.” The proper response to God's salvation is worship.

11. Proverbs 8:8 – “All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.” Your Teacher, Counsellor, Coach, and Guide should be the Holy Spirit, not a person. Don't let any person or philosophy be a substitute in your life for the Holy Spirit and God's word, the only source of truth that is not partially crooked. Even your favorite pastor, priest, preacher, or Bible scholar sees the truth from a limited perspective -- 1 Corinthians 13:12 – “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” It is amazingly

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tragic how many Christians turn to others to filter and interpret God's word for them rather than getting it first hand from the Holy Spirit. Commentaries and commenters can be helpful, but always be like the Bereans – "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11)

12. Proverbs 8:13 – "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil." Do you hate your own pride like God does? Are you proud of your humility – think about it....

13. Proverbs 8:17 – "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." Knowing God more and more each day is your life purpose and goal. It is not what you do or where you end up, it is who you know and who you are with – Jesus.

14. Proverbs 8:34 – "Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors." Practically applying this proverb involves being immersed in God's word, applying it, keeping your eyes open to see what the Holy Spirit is doing and obediently serving Him in the moment.

15. Psalm 41:1 – "Blessed is the one who considers the poor!" Again, give freely! God gave you all, at the expense of His One and Only Son, when you deserved nothing at all, in fact, when you deserved death. How you give displays how you truly feel about what God has given you. It also reveals how much you really trust God to take care of you in the future – "If I give away what little food I have, God may use it to miraculously feed thousands, but what will I eat?"

16. Psalm 41:9 -- "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me." Having just read in Mark 14 the story of the Last Supper and Jesus' betrayal, the similarities with David's betrayal described in Psalm 41 are not missed: "one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me... one who dips bread into the bowl with me... you will all fall away." (Mark 14:18, 20, 27) However, David highlights a significant difference between his situation and that of Jesus: David was not innocent. Jesus displayed mercy and grace from a position of perfection and complete holiness. Jesus was the only soul who has ever walked on earth who could have demanded justice, yet he didn't for our sake. Conversely, David, in his persecution, recognized that he could not stand simply on justice; he too relied upon forgiveness, mercy, and grace from God – "As for me, I said, 'O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!'" (Psalm 41:4) Towards the end of Psalm 41 David says, "But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever (Psalm 41:12)." What integrity could the sinner David be talking about? I believe it is the truth of his statement in Psalm 41:4 – David has truly acknowledged that he is a sinner who relies totally upon God's grace for salvation. David understood Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." I believe he also had some level of understanding and put his hope in the promise of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." While Jesus certainly had the right in his perfection to demand justice from others, we, total sinners relying totally on God's grace, certainly do not have the right to demand justice for ourselves from others. Jesus points this out throughout his teachings. He taught us to pray to God, "forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us (Luke 11:4)," and his famous parable about the "Unforgiving Servant" in Matthew 18 points out that we stand in no position to offer anything but forgiveness mercy and grace to others being totally dependent on the same so wonderfully provided to us by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. To live in integrity is to acknowledge our total dependence on God's grace and to

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treat others accordingly. The more we truly understand what God has done for us, the easier it is to treat others graciously.

17. Psalm 42:2 – “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” Do you thirst for God’s presence? He will not deny you.

18. Psalm 42:4 – “How I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise.” Are you leading many to God with shouts of praise?

19. Psalm 42:11 -- “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” Are you ever doubtful, fearful, or depressed when you know that, through faith, you shouldn’t be? It is comforting to know that the Bible records that all of God’s servants struggle with these feelings and that God understands them. Remember last week when we read in Mark 9 of the man who begged Jesus to heal his son? When Jesus questioned the father’s belief, “the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe; help my unbelief (Mark 9:24)!’” Perhaps you feel that way sometimes – you have faith but desperately want more complete faith. Be grateful that God knows your limitations and can provide all the strength you need in your weakness. Pray that God will build up your faith and help you in your unbelief.

20. Psalm 42:11 – “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” Sometimes you have to remind yourself and coach yourself to trust in God and to praise Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 April: Commit to radical, shocking forgiving and giving as an act of worship and celebration.

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 6, Saturday, 7 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=josh+5%2C+6%3B+prov+7%3B+psalm+40>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 7 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 5:13, 14 -- "Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?' 'Neither,' he replied, 'but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.' Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, 'What message does my Lord[d] have for his servant?'"

- "Neither" ("No" in some translations) is not what you would have expected the commander of the army of the LORD to say just prior to Joshua's attack on Jericho. Why was the commander there, and why did he say what he said? Perhaps, in part, he was there to remind Joshua and the Jews that this great moment was not about them and what they wanted in life, but rather about God's purposes and His glory. The victory belongs to God as does all the glory. We all have a tendency to be self-centered and to judge circumstances and other people with an egocentric perspective. We also have a predisposition to interpret God's words and God's activity myopically, always asking, "What does this mean for me and my life?" We like to place ourselves at the center of the universe, and interpret the 'goodness' or 'godliness' of a particular situation based upon how it impacts our lives. It is hard for us to accept that God's goodness may require that which we desire least, that which seems most "evil" to us. Relationships, including our relationship with God, can become transactional, loving the gifts more than

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the giver. Our good deeds can come from a desire to be rewarded rather than a desire to serve the LORD out of love. Our prayers can become, "Lord give me what I want," rather than, "Thy will be done.... Hallowed be thy Name." Why did God deliver Jericho into Joshua's hands? "... that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." (Ex 9:16) Our command is to love God with all that we are and to glorify Him on earth, though this might cost us all that we have on this earth. As someone once said, the person who has everything on earth plus Jesus has nothing more than the person who has Jesus – nothing else matters. "I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. (Psalm 40:10) Joshua had two major decision points before Him – How would he act going into battle, and how would he act coming out of battle? What would he do in crisis, and what would he do in victory? The Commander of the Army of the LORD put the crisis and the victory into right perspective – there was nothing to fear, and there was nothing about which to boast but God. How would you act if God gave you success beyond your wildest imagination? Would God get all the honor and glory?

2. Joshua 5:14, 15 – "And he said, 'No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, 'What does my lord say to his servant?' And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so." I currently believe this is a "Christophany," an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament ((distinct from a theophany – other forms of the presence of God on earth). Why? While angels are God's messengers, this is no ordinary angel, but the Commander of the Lord's Army, and what is significant here is that Joshua is not rebuked for worshipping Him. Angels never allow someone to worship them, and angel worship is specifically forbidden in the Bible. (Rev 22:8, 9; Romans 1:25; Matthew 4:8-10) There are arguably other Christophanies in the Old Testament, distinct from visits by angelic messengers. Today, Jesus speaks to us through the Holy Spirit within us, using the word of God as His primary instrument.

3. Joshua 6:3 -- "You shall march around the city...." God's ways are not our ways. He will have you accomplish impossible tasks in impossible ways to reveal Himself to the world rather than your talents. Again, it is never about us. It is always about Him. Our mission on earth is to glorify Him not to glorify ourselves. Check yourself every time you use the personal pronouns of "I" and "me" to ensure you are not drifting into the role of kingship rather than ambassadorship.

4. Proverbs 7:6-7 -- "For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths." God wants you to learn from the mistakes of others. As the Founding Fathers said, God's truth is "self-evident." It is not hard to see the consequences of rebellion against the Lordship of Jesus if you have eyes to see.

5. Proverbs 7:10 -- "And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart." How you dress reveals much about your character. Your clothing is a public display that always makes a statement, whether intentional or not. In everything you do, do it for God's glory, including getting dressed to meet the world as God's messenger.

6. Psalm 40:3-- "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD." A real relationship with God changes your perspective on everything and changes your attitude. A changed life gets everyone's attention and brings glory to God.

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7. Psalm 40:6-8 -- "In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." God doesn't want your empty sacrifices; He wants your loyalty, love, and obedience. Become a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1)

8. Psalm 40:9, 10 -- "I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation." God expects you to proclaim His salvation to everyone. How many times a day do you proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ to those with whom you come in contact? How many conversion experiences have you witnessed this week?

9. Psalm 40:16 -- "May those who love your salvation say continually, 'Great is the Lord!'" It is an amazing and incredibly powerful thing when God saves a person and the Holy Spirit transforms them. That person is "a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17). God gives them a new heart -- "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26)." Having received the unmerited gift of grace from God through faith in Jesus Christ, that person is truly humbled, gracious, and joyful to the point of being uncontrollably merry (Psalm 40:16, 17). Bought with the price of the blood of Jesus, that person is no longer a slave to sin but rather a servant of Christ putting off the "works of the flesh" (see Galatians 5:19-21 below) and displaying the "fruit of the Spirit" (see Galatians 5:22-23 below). That person is not just "religious;" that person walks with the Lord in continual, natural worship and obedience, delighting in God's word which is written on their hearts (Psalm 40:6-8; also see 2 Corinthians 3:3 below). The saved simply cannot shut up about their love relationship with Almighty God who they can now call "Abba", "Daddy" -- "I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation (Psalm 40:9, 10)." Though this person faces the same life challenges as others, their confidence in their God, their persistent joy, their strength and courage, and God's provision in their life stands out like a beacon in the darkness. The power of God in that person's life will be so remarkably evident and real that "many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord (Psalm 40:3)." How is the awesome power of Almighty God revealed in your life?

- Galatians 5:19-21 -- Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Galatians 5:22-23 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- 2 Corinthians 3:3 -- And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

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- 1 Peter 2:9 -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

- Matthew 5:14 -- You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

10. Psalm 40:16-- "May those who love your salvation say continually, 'Great is the LORD!'" How much you proclaim God's salvation reveals how much you really love Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 April: Today, endeavor not to see things from your own perspective but rather from God's perspective. Don't judge things as "good" or "bad" based upon how they make you feel or from your very limited ability to understand the whole picture. Remember Romans 8:28 – "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." If you are faithfully serving in the "army of the Lord [or Marines]" (Joshua 5:14), it is ALL good.

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 5, Friday, 6 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=josh+3%2C+4%3B+prov+6%3B+Mark+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 6 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 3:7 -- "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you." God validates His leaders by working miraculously through their lives.

2. Joshua 3:15, 16 -- "...and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away." God expects you to step out in faith, then He will respond miraculously to your faith. God will use your fiery-furnace, loin's-den, Red-sea, Jordan-river experiences to reveal Himself to you and to others in a way that leaves no reasonable doubt that it was Him at work. Unbelievers will always try to find 'natural' explanations for God's supernatural acts. Countless theories have been promulgated on how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, how Manna was produced, how power came from the Ark of the Covenant, how Jesus rose from the dead, etc. The truth of God has always been self-evident. How has it been revealed in your life?

3. Joshua 4:6 -- "When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?...' " The first thing the Israelites did when they entered the Promised Land was set up a monument to the Lord so that generations would never forget what God had done. How will you memorialize God's blessings in your life for generations to come?

4. Joshua 4:8 -- "And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded." God's plan involves God's people diligently and faithfully obeying God's appointed leaders.

5. Proverbs 6:6-11 -- Laziness, idleness, and failure to work reveal a lack of godly wisdom and only lead to poverty.

6. Proverbs 6:13-15 -- People you should stay away from are easy to spot in most cases.

7. Proverbs 6:17-19 -- God judges you by how you treat others.

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8. Proverbs 6:24-35 – You cannot completely escape adultery’s destruction.
9. Proverbs 6:7, 8 -- "Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest." External discipline is no substitute for internal discipline. You must be willing to do what others aren't willing to do in order to fulfill your purpose in life. No one can live your life for you, and no one is responsible for your life but you.
10. Proverbs 6:16 -- "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him...." Do you know the seven things that God hates and considers an abomination?
11. Proverbs 6:19 -- "...one who sows discord among brothers." If you cause discord, you are committing an abomination before the Lord.
12. Proverbs 6:23 -- "For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life." God's word is your guide. How deeply are you studying it, and how closely are you following it? Take a moment and re-read Psalm 119 – "... I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.... In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.... Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.... Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.... The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.... I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...." (119:11, 14-16, 18, 24, 72, 99, 105)
13. Proverbs 6:30, 31 -- "People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold." Contrary to popular belief, there is never an excuse for doing the wrong thing. The application of justice includes room for mercy and grace, but all are held accountable for their actions.
14. Mark 14:5 – “For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” John adds an important detail to this story: “He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.” (John 12:6) Self-righteousness is motivated by selfishness.
15. Mark 14:19 – “They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, ‘Is it I?’” Deep down, the disciples knew their hearts were deceitful and weak.
16. Mark 14:27 -- And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away.” Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt knowing that all of His closest friends would betray Him when he needed them the most? From the Scriptures, Jesus had been prepared for this betrayal (“for it is written”), and Jesus knew His disciples better than they knew themselves; but nonetheless, their unfaithfulness undoubtedly hurt Jesus more than we can imagine. Though one by one they all proclaimed, “Surely not I,” even Peter failed Jesus miserably. Note by the way that before the infamous rooster crows, Peter had already “fallen away” by failing to “keep watch” and by “following at a distance” (Mark 14:37, 54). Christian brothers and sisters, let’s take note: following at a distance is un-commitment that only lacks enough heat and pressure to become total betrayal. The silent or chameleon Christian is the one described by James and the Psalmist as double-minded, “unstable in all his ways,” and by Jesus as “lukewarm,” uncommitted, unsuitable, unprepared to stand the test (Psalm 119:113; James 1:8, 4:8; Revelation 3:16). What is truly amazing is

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that despite knowing that his disciples would all betray him, Jesus never quit on them or distanced himself from them. Rather, He humbly washed their feet! Concerning Judas, the most infamous betrayer who “having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it,” Jesus never kicked him out of the small, intimate group, never fired him from his role as treasurer, but rather continued to break bread with him as a close friend (John 12:6). Knowing their weakness, Jesus still took Peter, James, and John to Gethsemane. Would you take relationship advice from Jesus? Is this how you would treat your unfaithful friends? I think most Christians would call a person foolish if that person were to model Jesus’ behavior today. We would be quick to take Matthew 10:16 out of context “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” and we would justify putting up relational walls by quoting from theological sea lawyers who say, “Forgiveness is a gift, but trust is something you earn.” After all, God doesn’t want us to be doormats, right? By continuing to remain vulnerable to His unfaithful friends, Jesus wasn’t being naïve or foolish, nor was He engineering the fulfillment of the Scriptures, He was modeling true love as is described in 1 Corinthians 13:7, 8 – “It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” When Jesus told the disciples to forgive their brothers “not seven times, but seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:22),” He understood that this implied a level of sustained vulnerability that would potentially enable continued mistreatment but that would also allow for continued closeness in relationship and the display of Christ-like love which involves selfless sacrifice. Jesus understood that the closest relationship would often hurt the most. There is a famous story about the childhood of Thomas Aquinas which highlights the trusting heart: His classmates, who mocked his trusting spirit, decided to play a joke on him. They all got together in the classroom and stared excitedly out the window. Thomas asks what they are looking at so intently. “Thomas, come quickly,” the students responded, “there are pigs—FLYING!” Thomas rushes to the window, only to be met by the uproarious laughter of his fellow students. As the laughter dies down, Thomas gently but potently exposes their sin by saying simply, “I would rather believe that pigs could fly than that my friends would lie to me.” By remaining loving (and trusting) to the disciples, Jesus exposed to them the truth of themselves that previously they could not see in themselves. His costly display of love to them convicted all but Judas to change their lives forever. How much different would their lives had been if Jesus demanded that they earn his trust and if Jesus kept up protective relational barriers between them and him until they did?

17. Mark 14:33 – Jesus knew Peter would deny Him, yet chose Him to go to Gethsemane.

18. Mark 14:35 -- “And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed....” Someone once reminded, “When you are winning the race, you are running alone.” Remaining faithful to God is often a lonely place – very few will remain. Noah obeyed God with tremendous sacrifice while the entire world around him remained oblivious to God, and Jesus said the situation would be the same at the End. Mark 14 is a powerful chapter that demonstrates the tremendous insensitivity people had for the heart of God and for the climactic events that God was preparing. At the most critical time, ultimately no one was in tune to the heart of Jesus. While Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, most were so indifferent to Jesus that they were unaware He was even in the garden; meanwhile, some like Judas were actually plotting against Jesus; the disciples were willing to join Jesus in the garden, and there was still the inner circle (Peter, James, John) who were ready to begin prayer with Jesus, but only for a short while. The disciples appear unaware of or unmoved by the deep anguish in the heart of Jesus and are disoriented to the tremendous events looming that would test them to their breaking points. Jesus knew that the decisive point of His ministry was at hand, that the legions of hell were marshalling their forces in an attempt to

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defeat Him. He knew that events soon to follow would be so intense, they would cause the disciples to do the unthinkable, deny the Son of God. In the Garden, Jesus told His disciples that He was deeply distressed, even to the point of death, yet at this pivotal moment in human history, the disciples were not moved enough to stay awake. They missed it! They missed out on the tremendous opportunity to serve their Lord and to minister to Him. They didn't have the eyes (heart) to see things from God's perspective; therefore, they simply slept. In the end, Jesus prayed alone. Do you have the eyes to see what is going on right now? Can you see the world through the eyes of Jesus? How far are you ready to go with Jesus? Are you ready to run alone if necessary?

19. Mark 14:38 – Prayer is the only prevention for temptation.

20. Mark 14:47, 67, 68 "But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.... and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you mean.'" The life of Peter is a great study of Christian courage. Was Peter a courageous man or not? Certainly, there are many examples of Peter demonstrating courage where others had none. Today, we read that at one point he was willing to take on the guards with a sword, risking his life (John 18:10 says Peter is the one who cut off the ear), but then Peter denies Jesus before a servant girl warming herself at the fire. Peter was known for courageous acts, but God had to show Peter that he lacked a true, Spirit-led heart of courage. Daniel Webster's original definition of courage: "that quality of mind which enables men to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits; valor; boldness; resolution." I think it is safe to say that Peter was a leader, a tough guy, and not afraid of a fight. At times, Peter certainly encountered difficulties with firmness (courage), but often that "courage" was misguided, out of place, short-lived, or simply not there at all. Peter took an ear but when he shouldn't have – Jesus' submission and surrender was more courageous than Peter's sword wielding. Matthew points out that "he sat with the guards to see the end (Matthew 26:58)," and because in that huddle, over the period of some hours, "he invoke[ed] a curse on himself and [swore], 'I do not know the man.'" (Matthew 26:74). So, Why the inconsistency in his courage? I would submit that it was not inconsistent with Peter's character, only inconsistent with God's will – it is this latter inconsistency that results in the poor quality of Peter's courage. Misplaced "courage" can be far more destructive than open cowardice. In fact, outwardly "courageous" acts may actually reveal an inward or moral cowardice, an unwillingness to NOT do the wrong thing for the right reasons due to risk of personal cost (often a cost of reputation). Peter's courage fell short when his heart was not aligned with the heart of God, when "self" overcame surrender to God. Peter would have to die to self to become the Peter that would preach with power and humble himself to take the Gospel to the Centurion and thus to the Gentiles." The issue is not with a willingness to act courageously, the issue is with the motives and the heart behind the display. When God told Joshua and the Israelites to be "strong and courageous" the strength and courage was to come from God, not self, and was to be aligned with God's will for His purposes. God always tied courage to obedience. Why did Peter deny Jesus at the moment of decision? I believe it wasn't that he didn't have the guts to die, I believe he didn't have the heart to die. Jesus remained faithful to Peter through Peter's infidelity and transformed Peter's heart to the point where Peter would later have the heart to be crucified upside down, not considering himself worthy to die as his Savior did.

21. Mark 14:49 -- Priests thought they had control when God really did.

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22. Mark 14:54 – Following at a distance is the same as not really being there. Many Christians like to keep a comfortable distance from where the action is, where God is actually working. This is not really following but rather spectating.

23. Mark 14:71 – “But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know this man of whom you speak.’” Our words often reveal our heart’s true condition. A profane mouth reveals a bitter spirit. “From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.” (James 3:10)

24. Mark 14:72 – Peter wept too late for the moment. But God wasn’t done with Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 April: Today, commit to not just be an observer to what God is doing around you but rather to be an active and obedient participant in what God is doing. Don't fall asleep when God has asked you to serve Him. Don't act prematurely when God has told you to wait. Don't deny Jesus or remain silent when God has given you the opportunity to proclaim Jesus. Don't follow Jesus at a distance, be about His business, today, at every moment, from this day forward. (see today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 4, Thursday, 5 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=josh+1%2C+2%3B+prov+5%3B+Mark+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 5 Apr 18:

1. Joshua 1:5, 6 -- “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:5, 6).” Moses, Joshua, and all the heroes of faith had one thing in common: they were all ordinary people with no real power of their own. Their power came from God, the Creator, the Source of all power. No other power can stand before the power of God. Their God is GOD, your God, who lives within you and who has given you the power and authority to make disciples throughout the world. Facing seemingly insurmountable odds, Joshua could be “strong and courageous” because he could rely totally on the power of the Creator who loved (loves) him immeasurably and promised to protect him. You too can step out with strength and courage. Your God IS GOD! When commissioning His disciples, Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me....” What does “all” mean? He then said, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” If the One with all authority is with you, who can be against you? Does the way you live your life each day reveal to a watching world the Mightiness of GOD?

2. Joshua 1:6-8 -- "Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go." God told Joshua what was going to happen: "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life." However, God gave specific instructions for Joshua to follow nonetheless. He commanded Joshua to obey the Book of the Law which was to be on his mind at all times." Why? So that he would be "prosperous and successful." But more importantly, "Have I not commanded you?" Finally, Rahab pointed out that everyone was watching what God was doing with and through His people. What does it mean to you when God commands you? Who is watching you? What are they learning about God from your life?

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3. Joshua 1:8 -- "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." God expects you to fully immerse yourself in God's word. All of our readings today point out the criticality of daily, dedicated Bible study, Scripture memory, and Bible application. It is key to our success, God's primary instrument for providing us strength in times of trouble, the message for our witness to others, and our primary means for understanding reality and truth. All of our readings point out that we cannot understand what is going on around us or what God would have us do apart from constant meditation on God's word. The World, the flesh, and the Devil are great deceivers. We cannot trust in our own understanding or wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-7), nor can we trust anyone else for understanding (Mark 13:12); things are not what they seem, and apart from being "on guard" with the knowledge of God's word, even the "elect" risk being deceived (Mark 13:9, 22) -- "Let the reader understand." (Mark 13:14). Only the wise men who truly knew and understood God's word knew where and when to worship the baby Jesus, and Jesus warns that only through the Bible will we be able to understand "the signs of the times." (Matthew 2; Matthew 16:3; Mark 13:14) Just as we cannot understand apart from God's word, we cannot and must not advise others apart from God's word; note that Jesus always responds to others from God's word; even today he quotes from Isaiah. How much can you quote from Isaiah? Most people my age could not quote any of the book of Isaiah from memory, but without thinking, they could recite the old McDonalds commercial -- "two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun" (McDonalds commercial from 1975) -- not at all helpful! The word of God is the "sword of the Spirit" God provides you for the battle of life, whether you find yourself on the offensive or defensive. (Ephesians 6:17) You must be a skilled swordsman to be effective. 2 Timothy 2:15 -- "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

4. Joshua 1:9 -- "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." We are commanded to be "strong and courageous" by God Almighty, not because of who we are or out of self-confidence but rather because of who our God is and from the confidence we have in Him. It takes great courage and strength to walk in faith and obedience in the face of uncertainty and when God's ways contradict human wisdom. The greater we know our God personally, the greater our confidence in Him. Strength and courage are conditions of the heart that come from genuine relationship with the Father. "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life (Proverbs 4:23)."

- 2 Timothy 2:15 -- Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

5. Joshua 2:8-11 -- "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings.... And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." God's power in your life will be your testimony to the world. Again, Rahab was convicted by the observable power of God in the lives of the people of God. By seeing what God had done for His people, Rahab was ready to say, "the Lord your God, He is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." What power do

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people see emanating from the church today? Is the work of God in your life so evident that it causes people around you to want to know God?

6. Proverbs 5:11-12 -- "And at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, 'How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!'" You will either endure the daily discomfort of self-discipline or the deep pain of regret. You will reap what you sow. You cannot make up for a lack of investment. However, as the Chinese proverb says, "The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago; the second best time to plant a tree is today." Today is a great day to start doing what you should have been doing. Don't worry about the past – it's over. Don't worry about tomorrow – it is out of your control. Today, is in your hands – make the most of it, joyfully, thankfully, energetically, courageously, and obediently. This is your best way to correct what has been done and promote a positive tomorrow.

7. Proverbs 5:15 -- "Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well." Much sin starts with dissatisfaction over the gifts God has given you. Be grateful and content with what God has given you, and do not compare your situation with that of others.

8. Proverbs 5:19 -- "Be intoxicated always in her love." The most important institution established by God on earth is the institution of marriage. Husbands and wives reveal their love for God mostly by how they love each other. The primary testimony and witness of a married Christian is their relationship with their spouse.

9. Proverbs 5:23 -- "He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray." True disciples of Christ are known for their discipline, because self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5), the natural product of a Spirit-filled person who loves Jesus above all. If you have a self-discipline problem in your life, search your heart, and pray that God will reveal to you what you cannot see in yourself that is quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit.

10. Mark 13:9 – "...and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them." The reality of end times gives greater opportunity for testimony.

11. Mark 13:10 – "And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." World evangelism precedes end times.

12. Mark 13:13 – End times call for endurance and perseverance.

13. Mark 13:13, 18 – Worry is never in order for end time – faith and prayer always are.

14. Mark 13:14 – "...let the reader understand...." Scripture is the only basis for understanding end time.

15. Mark 13:9-37 – God prepares us for end time. He tells you what you need to know so that you will recognize it when you see it and so that you can have confidence in your circumstances that God remains in control and is working all things together for His great purposes.

16. Mark 13:32 – Not even Jesus knew the dates of end time. If a preacher claims this knowledge, have nothing to do with him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 April: Today recommit to making Bible study and application your top daily priority, before exercise, before entertainment, even before eating. If you are having difficulty finding time for Bible study, make the commitment to eat nothing before you have

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studied your Bible. Proverbs 16:26 -- "A worker's appetite works for him; his mouth urges him on." (See today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 3, Wednesday, 4 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+33%2C+34%3B+prov+4%3B+Mark+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 4 Apr 18:

1. Deuteronomy 33:8-11 -- Obedience to God brings both responsibility and blessings.
2. Deuteronomy 33:24-29 -- God is ready to help you. He has given you a unique position in all the world as one He has saved and called to the mission of reconciliation.
3. Deuteronomy 34:4 -- God is faithful to the ways He has shown to His people whether they be realized as blessings or curses.
4. Deuteronomy 34:9 -- God prepares new leaders for His people. God expects you to obey the leaders He has placed in authority.
5. Proverbs 4:18, 19 -- "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble." Faithful Christians grow more Christ-like every day -- the change may be gradual but very apparent. Meanwhile the ungodly remain trapped in their sin. How has God changed you over the years? Some things to consider: How has your forgiving changed? How has your giving changed? How has your attitude and behavior towards your enemies changed? How has your disciple-making changed? How has your self-control changed? How has your peacefulness and thankfulness changed? Are you now a brighter light in the world, a more radiant beacon of God to others around you? Would those around you say that about you?
6. Proverbs 4:20-21, 23 -- "My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.... Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Key to life is protecting your heart from sin; critical to protecting your heart from sin is remaining in God's word and storing it up in your heart.
7. Mark 12:7-11 -- "'Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.... this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" How could a loving God let bad things happen to good people? Well, there was only ever one good person, Jesus, and God used His persecution to bring about our salvation. We judge 'good' and 'bad' based upon our perceptions of the situation. But from God's perspective, He is working all events for a greater good for those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose, and this should be marvelous in our eyes. The Lord will absolutely allow us to go through suffering, but as a loving Father who is preparing His children for great things. Parents hurt their infant children when they have them inoculated against deadly disease, and there is no way for them to explain the reason to their infant children. Yet, in pain, the infant children always reach out to their parents. We too, in suffering, must trust on our Father and reach out to Him.
8. Mark 12:17 -- "Jesus said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" -- All things are God's and in God's control; He allows government to control

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some things for a time, but never outside of His ultimate control. Jesus was challenged by others on His obedience and respect to the government. He then challenged others in their obedience and respect to God, the ultimate authority. If we had proper respect for God, governmental authority would not be required. Only through God's mercy and grace do governments even continue to exist, and only by God's ethical standard do they govern well. Yet, we are concerned, in practice, far more about obeying the government than obeying God, because the consequences of disobeying the government are more obvious to us – fines, imprisonment, even death. However, the consequences of disobeying God have an eternal impact. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28) When we disobey the government, we have something to worry about. When we disobey God, we have much, much more to be concerned about.

9. Mark 12:24 -- "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?" The Sadducees had two problems: they did not know the Scriptures (they were missing the point of what they diligently studied), and they did not know the power of God. You cannot understand God's Word if you don't know God's Word which requires continual study. But you also cannot understand God's Word without the context of Jesus and the power and counsel of the Holy Spirit, which is only available to those who are born again, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." The whole Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ, only revealed through Jesus. The goal of the Bible is our "knowing" of God, our unity with Him (see John 17). Without life in Jesus a person is spiritually dead and cannot understand the things of God. There are some who know the content of the Scriptures inside and out yet do not know the power of God. They study the Scriptures like a text book, a history book, a self-help book, or a philosophy book with the goal of living a better life or understanding more "about" God. They miss the ultimate goal of truly "knowing" God, walking with Him, following Him, becoming one with Him. These 'scholars' miss the blessings of eternal life that come from knowing Jesus – "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3) There are also others who feel that they are very 'spiritual' or close to God yet lack desire to study the Scriptures, God's word. But how we feel about God's word is a direct reflection of how we truly feel about God. John 1 says, Jesus is the embodiment of the word of God. The Psalmist describes an intense hunger and thirst for God's word which cannot be quenched – a passion driven by an intense passion for God. Jesus told His disciples to consume God's word with greater import than food for the body. And the Bible tells us that through God's word, we are enabled to follow God. Knowledge of the "message" is, of course, essential to the messenger, or Ambassador. Again, in our readings today, Jesus counters challengers through his mastery of God's word. Proverbs 1 reminds us that God's word is for both the "simple" and the "wise," the young and the old. (Proverbs 1:1-7) Complacency in Bible study is an issue of the heart. One of the natural results of a relationship with God is a natural thirst for His Word. The Bible is not a self-help book designed to equip you to achieve your personal goals in life. The Bible is a guide to drawing closer, day-by-day to Jesus. I pray that we will have a greater and greater passion for God's word and that it will equip us to experience the true power of God in our lives as we draw closer and closer to Jesus Christ.

10. Mark 12:25 -- "Jesus said to them, 'Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?'" You cannot truly understand the Scriptures unless you have received the Holy Spirit.

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11. Mark 12:28-31 -- "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." One thing I observe is that, whether they admit it or not, everyone picks their teachers in life. Everyone picks people they have chosen to trust (for whatever reasons) to help guide them through life, to help form their personal world view or paradigm about the meaning and purpose of life. Often, people pick teachers who say in sophisticated ways what they want to hear. Observe who people quote or reference in their comments on life issues. Aren't you blessed! Your teacher is God! God has given you the Holy Spirit and His word to reveal the Truth. If you began your month in His word, you have heard from Moses, Solomon, and Jesus as they taught truth as received directly from the Father. You certainly can't do better than that! What did you learn from them today through the counsel of the Holy Spirit? Moses reminded us how truly blessed we are that our Eternal Father, the Creator, the Ruler of All, loves us and is our refuge (Deuteronomy 33:27-29). Because God loves us, He gave us His word as our source of instruction as our King (Deuteronomy 33:3-4). In His love, God will personally teach us through His word, and we are blessed when we obey Him (33:8-11). Solomon explains that if we diligently search God's word with all of our heart and seek to walk in it, we will "then... understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God," true wisdom which can only come from God, not men. Solomon reminds us that, in His love, God has given you His directions for "every good path." Jesus explains that we must know the word of God, but we cannot understand God's word apart from the power of God which comes from a genuine love relationship with Him (Mark 12:24, 29-31). In fact, the key to everything is loving God with all that we are and loving others as an outpouring of our love for God. Our love must be without limits (Deuteronomy 33:9, Mark 12:43, 44). Jesus explains that, in a supreme act of love, God sent His Son, but sadly for some, this loving solution will become a cause for final destruction (Mark 12:6-9). God's judgment is certain. In our love, we must pray for people to find a love relationship with Him before it is too late, and we must be fully committed to the Great Commission.

12. Mark 12:38-40 -- False religion lifts up self and mistreats others for personal gain. Be wary of any "teacher" that seeks personal recognition or honor. Watch out for those who use the personal pronouns "I" or "me" a lot.

13. Mark 12:42, 43 -- Love knows no limits.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 April: Work on you discipline today. Disciples of Jesus are willing to do, in fact are impassioned to do, what mere believers in Jesus aren't willing to do. True disciples of Jesus are able to do what others aren't able to do because they are empowered by the Holy Spirit with self-control. Pray that God will reveal to you where you are limiting the power of the Holy Spirit in your life do to self-centeredness. (Mark 12:24)

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 2, Tuesday, 3 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+31%2C+32%3B+prov+3%3B+Mark+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 3 Apr 18:

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1. Deuteronomy 31:3 – “The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them.” When the Lord sends you, He will bring the victory. Caution: His victory might not be your idea of victory.
2. Deuteronomy 31:5 – “...according to the whole commandment that I have commanded you.” God expects obedience in every area of life. How many times now has the Bible repeated this point?
3. Deuteronomy 31:6 – “Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.” Strength and courage come from knowing and trusting God.
4. Deuteronomy 31:9-11 – “Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests... you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.” In Old Testament times, God’s word was given to the priests, and they were charged with teaching it to the people and administering God’s laws. The Bible says that now, all Christians are priests, charged with knowing God’s word, living by God’s word, proclaiming God’s word, and teaching God’s word. We should endeavor to be experts on God’s word and the embodiment of God’s word.
5. Deuteronomy 31:12-13 – “Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.” God wanted everyone to be instructed on God’s word, including visiting strangers, but particularly the small children. God desires that children learn to obey and honor God as soon as possible. God has given parents the responsibility to make sure children know and obey His expectations so they may serve Him and Love Him.
6. Deuteronomy 31:16 – “Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them.” God knows your temptation to make things a higher priority and influence in your life than Him, idols that cause you to break God’s commands, to stray away from Him, and to quench His Spirit in your life. Whenever we sin, it is because we have dethroned God in our hearts, at least for a moment – we still want Him as Savior, but we reject Him as Lord, committing cosmic treason. The Bible calls us spiritual whores at that point, worthy of stoning. If only we could see our sins the way God sees them, we would truly be “amazed by grace,” and start living accordingly.
7. Deuteronomy 31:20 – Prosperity can lead to complacency, dissatisfaction with God and departure from Him to substitutes for God -- idols.
8. Deuteronomy 31:23 – Knowing you will often fail Him, God still fulfills His promises.
9. Deuteronomy 31:26 – God’s word witnesses against you when you depart from Him.
10. Deuteronomy 31:21, 29 – Departing from God brings evil, not prosperity.
11. Deuteronomy 32:6 – God does not receive from you the treatment He deserves.
12. Deuteronomy 32:6, 15, 18 – You exist only because God loves you and bestows His unmerited grace upon you.

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13. Deuteronomy 32:27 – God’s work is done so you and those who do not worship Him may recognize Him at work.

14. Deuteronomy 32:30 – God allows the punishment that comes to you.

15. Deuteronomy 32:47 -- “For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.” For so many, the Bible is just empty words. But for the Christian, the Bible is the word of life which teaches the fear of the Lord which in turn produces wisdom (Proverbs 2:2-6), but most importantly, greater unity with Him. God uses His word to transform your heart (Proverbs 2:10) and to guide you along the right path in life (Proverbs 2:13-15). God’s word should be more valuable than silver, and its insights should excite you more than would finding a hidden treasure. Do you feel that excitement?

16. Deuteronomy 32:47 -- “They are not just idle words for you—they are your life.” Moses had come to the end of his service as leader of the people of Israel and to the end of his life. He gathered all the people to the edge of the Promised Land to give them his final words of wisdom as they prepared to embark upon their long-awaited historic conquest without him. It is impossible to imagine the emotion he must have felt at this moment. He had spent his whole life preparing to lead or leading his people, building them into a mighty nation. He had watched an entire generation perish in the desert through the process. He had given his all to his people; he had a genuine heart for his people, and there is no way to measure how deeply he cared for his people. So, from all of his experience and with all of his love, what were the final words Moses wanted to leave with his people -- “Be strong and courageous,” and “be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life.” Of course this is the same message repeated throughout the Book of Deuteronomy -- “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).” Jesus reiterated the importance of God’s word by reciting Deuteronomy 8:3 -- “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).’” Of course, Jesus modelled dedication to the study and practice of God’s word. I believe that our nation, our world, desperately needs to see God’s people return to God’s word. The Defenders Reading Plan, and associated website and Facebook Group, was created for the sole purpose encouraging Christians to do just that. What a blessing that people are reading the Bible together and sharing with each other from across to globe! For those reading along this year, let me congratulate all of you who finished ¼ of this year’s readings. “They are not just idle words for you....”

- Thoughts from Henry T. Blackaby on Deuteronomy 32:47 -- "It's puzzling that so many Christians try to live the Christian life without reading their Bible, except for sporadic perusals of God's Word, seeking a pithy thought for the day. The Word of God is not merely a source of helpful suggestions, preventative warnings, or inspirational thoughts: It is life itself! God gathered the children of Israel at the edge of the Promised Land to review their pilgrimage with Him. They had spent forty years in a desert because their parents had not trusted God's word. Their parents died without seeing the Promised Land because they had not believed God's word. Even the revered Moses was soon to leave them because he had not

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shown proper reverence for God's word. Many of them knew those who had been put to death as a consequence of their disobedience to God's word. Over the years God's word had become the most important thing in the life of the Israelites. God commanded His people to bind His words on their hearts, to teach them diligently to their children, and to regularly discuss them in their homes (Deuteronomy 6:4–9). So essential was His word that it was to hold a prominent place in the daily lives of His people. Our reverence for God's Word is revealed not only by what we say but also by what we do. Spending more time reading and studying the words of people rather than the Word of God, reveals our hearts' condition. To blatantly disregard God's Word is to reject life itself. To obey God's Word is the surest way to experience all that God has in store for us." (Henry T. Blackaby)

17. Proverbs 3:3, 4 -- "Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man." Both God and man value love and faithfulness. Love and faithfulness go hand-in-hand. Are you known for your love and faithfulness? Have you remained faithful before God and man?

18. Proverbs 3:5 -- "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Trusting in the Lord will require you to go against your own judgment.

19. Proverbs 3:11, 12 -- "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Accept God's discipline with trustful thanksgiving.

20. Proverbs 3:27 -- "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it." If you can meet someone's need, meet it -- trust God to meet your future needs. It takes faith to give.

21. Mark 11:1-10 -- Christ revealed His Kingship by obeying Scripture, not by appealing to popular demand.

22. Mark 11:15-17 -- "And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons." There is a time for everything -- a time for peace and a time for war. What determines the right response, what determines the validity of a person's behavior, is God's will. Fear and pride get in the way of righteousness. We like to think of Jesus as always peaceful, but in many places throughout the Bible, He is very confrontational, and this temple scene is the most well-known example of Jesus' righteous anger. Jesus was at the center of God's will. Avoiding conflict is often motivated by self-interest and fear. Jonathan Edwards said that there were two places in which we should never yield to others -- if integrity is at stake, or if truth is at stake. Yet, Christians today often prefer to yield in these areas in order to avoid conflict; there is often a false humility attached to this pacifism, but in truth they are motivated by fear and pride (I'm above this). Jesus was certainly not afraid to challenge the well-established, culturally accepted, corrupt practices of the day, even those that had been tacitly sanctioned by all other religious leaders. How about you?

23. Mark 11:18 -- "And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching." Human religion, motivated by fear, leads us to hostility towards God's plan.

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24. Mark 11:25 -- "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Do you think Jesus meant this literally? How does this relate to The Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us of our sins, as we forgive others who sin against us?"

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 April: Before you pray to God, thanking Him for the unmerited grace that you have received and asking for His unmerited blessings in your life, give unmerited grace and blessings to those in your life who have somehow offended you. Forgive everyone unconditionally as you are far less worthy of justice than Jesus who gave up His rights to be justified that you would receive everlasting life. While you were still sinning, Christ died for you. Forgive, forgive, forgive. Don't wait another moment. Forgive, and do it personally, face to face if possible. (Mark 11:25)

DBRP- WEEK 14, Day 1, Monday, 2 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+29%2C+30%3B+prov+2%3B+Mark+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 2 Apr 18:

1. Deuteronomy 29:25 – “Then people will say, ‘It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers...” God will reveal Himself to the world through your life either in a positive way as you obey Him or in a negative way as you disobey Him. God saves through grace, not because of our deeds; however, God holds us accountable to obedience on earth and will not be mocked. We are called to be Ambassadors of Christ on earth and demonstrate His will and authority to others. He will not tolerate someone misrepresenting Him before the world.

2. Deuteronomy 29:29 -- “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Many people spend much time, energy, and effort worrying about what God’s word doesn’t explicitly tell us rather than focusing on merely obeying God’s unambiguous commands. Much worry over mysteries is often an excuse for failing to simply submit. As the old hymn says, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. But we never can prove the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay; for the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey.” Have you ever prayed to God to tell you what to do in a particular situation only to hear no clear response? Have you ever asked God to reveal to you what He was doing in your life only to get no clear response? Have you ever asked, “God, what do you want me to do?” What do you do when He doesn’t provide a specific answer? When you are unsure of what specifically God wants you to do, continue in what God has clearly told you to do through His written word; remain in God’s word and in prayer; seek godly counsel from respected Christians, and make the best decision you can. Perhaps the big decision your struggling over doesn’t really matter so much – God will take you where you need to go in either direction. There is much God doesn’t intend to reveal to us for His purposes, but there is so much, much more that He has already revealed in the Bible by which He intends for us to live. When we are faithful with the little things, He will give us more. Most of the real issues of life aren’t about whether you took job A or job B but rather how faithful you were to God wherever you ended up. Often our quest for answers is the product of a desire to live by sight and not by faith. We want God to tell us exactly what He is doing because, really, we don’t trust Him. We like to be in control, and we don’t like the uncertainty that comes with not really believing God is in complete control. Faith, Hope, and Love -- Faith is believing, trusting, and obeying God now; and hope is trusting God in the Future. Faith and Hope are the product and proof of love. Will you remain faithfully obedient and joyful during God’s silence?

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Isn't it true that during exams the teacher remains silent? Can you walk one day at a time responding faithfully to whatever God places in front of you? When there are no apparent answers, will you hold fast to Him? Finally, it is not where God is taking you that matters most, it is the journey along the way. God's purpose for you is not some big accomplishment in the future, it is oneness with Him right now. If your only goal and pursuit is to be one with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are accomplishing your life purpose.

-Ecclesiastes 12:13 -- The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

3. Deuteronomy 30:2 – “Return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.” God's call is not just for individuals but for families. God wants to restore families and to bring them back together. God does not desire families to be scattered. Family is the building block of society and the primary schoolhouse for discipleship. Today's society makes it hard for families to stay united, but God has a heart for family, and His plan has always been generational. “And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.” (Malachi 4:6)

4. Deuteronomy 30:5 – “And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.” God's plan is that parents leave inheritance to godly children who build upon it for generations.

5. Deuteronomy 30:11-14 -- “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.” Again, you do not need to search for answers to great mysteries, and you don't need the confirmation of miraculous signs. Simply obey God's word, and great truths will be revealed to you more and more each day. God has given you the power of the Holy Spirit and His word. He is with you. You need nothing else. Simply obey.

6. Deuteronomy 30:11 – “For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.” Comments from Henry T. Blackaby -- The Christian life is not difficult. The same Christ who lived a perfect, obedient, and sinless life stands prepared to live it again through you (Gal. 2:20). God's will is not hard to discern. He has given us the Scriptures, which reveal His will, and He has placed His Holy Spirit within us to guide us to His perfect will in every situation (John 16:13). Our greatest challenge will be to wholly commit our lives to follow God's will obediently as He reveals it. Moses gathered the Israelites around Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim before they were to enter the Promised Land. There, God described what they had to do in order to obey Him. God gave detailed instructions so there was no mistaking what was expected of them. Then God asked them to make a choice. If they chose to disobey His commands, they would face His wrath. If they chose to obey, they would receive His blessing. God's Word comes to you in the same way. It is not too complex to understand. You don't have to struggle to discern God's will about adultery or forgiveness or honesty. God's word is perfectly clear. The question is, how will you respond? Nowhere in Scripture did God excuse disobedience because His instructions were too vague or complex. Condemnation came because

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they knew exactly what God wanted them to do, yet they chose not to do it! God, through His Holy Spirit, will always give you sufficient revelation and strength to take the next step with Him. If you are uncertain about what God is asking of you, make sure that you are obeying all that you do know, and through your obedience, God's next instruction will become clear. (Henry T. Blackaby)

7. Proverbs 2 -- "If you accept my words.... Then you will understand.... (Proverbs 2:1, 9)." In Proverbs 2, God establishes the conditions under which we can grow in our fear of the Lord, knowledge of God and true wisdom (Proverbs 2:5, 6) – this is a good chapter upon which to spend time meditating:

- First, Proverbs 2 says we must "accept" God's words and commands; many have a hard time with this because God's word says what we don't want to hear (though in our hearts we know it is true), and we don't want to be commanded to let go of sins which are so pleasurable at the moment. (Hebrews 11:25) Often, we go through all sorts of mental gymnastics and justification matrices in an attempt to make God's word fit our behavior ("Did God really say...?"). Psalm 119:160 reminds us: "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal."

- Next we must "store up" God's commands within us (Proverbs 2:1). We must read God's word, diligently study God's word, and commit to memory God's commands. I am humbled when I consider the countless hours I have spent studying the teachings of men as compared with how much time I have spent studying the Bible. Never before has the Bible been so accessible to us. Study and research materials that were once only available to scholars are now at your fingertips. As Christ's Ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) and as royal priests (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6), we have an obligation to be well versed in the Bible so that we can "correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)," and so that we will be prepared "to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have (1 Peter 3:15)."

- Next we must "[apply] our heart to understanding... call out for insight... cry aloud for understanding." Study the word of God humbly from your heart and pray that the Holy Spirit will further reveal truth to you (John 14:26; 1 John 2:27; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16). Study and prayer are inseparable – "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him (James 1:5)."

- Proverbs goes on to say that, after studying God's word and applying God's word to our hearts, we must then apply God's word to our lives – we must put God's word into action when we step out into the world. We must "walk with God (Genesis 5:22, 6:9; Micah 6:8)" in the word which is a "lamp unto our feet (Psalm 119:105)." Not only does obedience to God's word keep us "under the spout where God's blessings are pouring out," as described in verses 2:7, 8, but it is the practice of God's word that brings true knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (Proverbs 2:9, 10). To use a simple sports analogy, you can read all you want about football, you can watch a million games and memorize a million statistics; but until you have played the game, until you have received your share of scrapes and bruises, victories and defeats, you don't really understand football, and you don't really appreciate football. Proverbs points out that when you put God's word to practice, "wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul (Proverbs 2:10)." When we walk with God, we grow closer to Him, and we learn to love Him more and more.

- When we walk in God's ways, we develop discretion or sagacity (Proverbs 2:11) – the ability to accurately predict consequences without having to experience them. An old adage says, "Good

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judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment.” Well, God’s word can give you good judgment that prevents bad experiences. To reiterate, “Godly wisdom is understanding what you haven’t experienced.” Regardless, when we genuinely, humbly and introspectively seek to obey God’s word, we learn from our successes and from our failures as the practical realities of truth are revealed to us. Wisdom and discretion, developed along our walk with God, will guard us against unneeded pain and suffering – that’s a good thing (Proverbs 2:11).

- Finally, Proverbs 2:20-22 tells us that if we walk in the light of God’s word, we will be walking in good company. God’s word becomes a natural filter to relationships. Not many will be interested in the narrow path, but those that are will encourage and strengthen one another along the way.

-- Matthew 7:14 -- But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

-- 1 Corinthians 15:33 -- Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

-- Proverbs 27:17 -- As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

8. Mark 10:2 -- “What did Moses command you?” Jesus starts His teaching with God’s commands.

9. Mark 10:6-9 – “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Jesus reconfirms the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman. God defines marriage, not the government or popular opinion.

10. Mark 10:11, 12 – “And he said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’” If we are ever going to see real revival in the church, we are going to have to have corporate repentance over the church’s rejection of God’s commands concerning sex outside of marriage and divorce.

11. Mark 10:15 – “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” Children accept their total dependence on their parents and don’t doubt the provision from their parents.

12. Mark 10:21, 22 – “‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” Following Jesus requires total commitment and total dependence. Possessions will never provide the joy and security found in Jesus. We were made for God. Without God, life is pointless.

13. Mark 10:26, 27 -- “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” Deuteronomy 29:19 -- “When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, ‘I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way.’ This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry.” It is impossible for man to earn salvation through obedience to the law. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the faith we do have also comes from God, not from ourselves. However, God calls us to obedience as an act of love and worship; to glorify God before a watching world, and so that our joy in the Lord might be complete. Disobedience does not threaten our salvation

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but does have destructive consequences. It hurts us and others, hinders our fellowship with the Lord, and robs us of our joy and peace.

14. Mark 10:43-45 – “But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Do you really believe this? Surrendering all to Jesus, total commitment to Jesus means surrendering all to those around you, becoming a slave before people, rejecting all claims to position and rights. Are you willing to truly live this way in the name of Jesus? Are you willing to empty yourself?

15. Mark 10:51 – “And Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’” Jesus knows what you need and want but expects you to ask in faith.

16. Mark 10:52 – “And Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.” Genuine faith leads to both healing and following. Jesus gave the man the option to go where he wanted, and the man chose to follow Jesus. Though you are saved by grace, you still have to make a choice about how you will respond to your salvation. Will you go your own way or follow Jesus on “the” way?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 April: Today, resolve not to worry about the past or the future. Love, trust, and obey God today, and trust God with the future. Live today wholeheartedly for the Lord. Walk in unity with Jesus today, and seek to draw others closer to Him. If you have truly committed all that you think, say, and do to the Lord, you have nothing to worry about; even your mistakes will be used by God for your good (Romans 8:28). Your purpose in life is to be one with God and to help others be one with God too. Accomplish your life purpose today with excitement and joy.

Extra credit: Practice being a true servant or slave to everyone around you today. Put everyone else ahead of yourself today. Do not claim the benefits of title or position; do not seek your own recognition and accept no praise for yourself. Consider none of your possessions your own. Do not seek to defend your “rightness” before others, do not seek to defend yourself or your honor. See what happens. (Mark 10:43-45)

DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 7, Sunday, 1 Apr 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+27%2C+28%3B+prov+1%3B+psalm+38%2C+39>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 1 Apr 18:

1. Deuteronomy 27:1 -- “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today.” Partial obedience is disobedience. Jesus, who quoted Deuteronomy more than any other book of the Bible, commanded us in Matt 28 to teach others to obey “all” that He commanded. We Christians need to do some deeper thinking about obedience, a word that carries much baggage for us. For some, the word obedience is a killjoy; it conjures up notions of legalism, judgmentalism, guilt, shame, and confinement. Many view obedience as antonymous to grace, but this misunderstanding is based on a false assumption that the purpose of obedience is to earn God’s love (which is impossible by definition) rather than to display God’s love, to live out God’s love, and to unite with God in love. The foundation of “all” of God’s commands is love. The first and greatest commandment is love, and the others are practices of love. Love is required to obey, and obedience is required to love – “Love [comes] from a pure heart and a

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good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5) If we seek to obey the practices of love from anything other than a heart of love (motivated by selfish desire rather than selflessness), we remain disobedient, failing to obey the commandment of love. Jesus called this hypocritical (the word hypocrite means actor), pretending to be loving. Nonetheless, our practices of love, though often poorly motivated, can produce positive external effects on others and can (with the counsel of the Holy Spirit) produce positive internal results, conditioning our hearts to a more genuine love. So, in practice, we often obey out of a sense of duty (“I don’t really want to, but I know I am supposed to.”) while seeking to obey out of genuine love. Certainly, if we waited for a perfect heart to obey, we wouldn’t obey much at all; and that is where God wants us to walk in His grace, not a grace-based living that takes comfort in hopeless disobedience or in dutiful works of obedience, but a grace-based living that celebrates the righteousness we have in Christ, which enables us to freely and fearlessly pursue lives of righteousness and genuine love. Ephesian 4:23 and Romans 12:2 reminds us that our behavior starts with our thoughts. What we choose to focus our attention on will guide our thoughts. The key to sanctification is not focusing more on ourselves (identifying our weaknesses and seeking greater will-power) but rather focusing more on Jesus. The more we appreciate the love of Christ, the more naturally love will flow from us Him and to others (Him and others always goes hand-in-hand). Fix your eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2)

2. Deuteronomy 27:6 -- "You shall build an altar to the LORD your God of uncut stones." The altar focused all attention on the works of God rather than the works of man. There was no human pride attached to the sacrifice or to worship.

3. Deuteronomy 27:9-10 -- “Keep silence and hear,... you have become the people of the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today.” Talk less; obey more. “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6)

4. Deuteronomy 27:12-13 -- “When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.” The mountains and the tribes selected for the proclamation of blessings or curses are intentional. Concerning the mountains, some have suggested that when the people faced Mount Gerizim, which was very green, they faced Jerusalem, but when they faced Mount Ebal, which was without vegetation or bald, they turned their backs on Jerusalem – a physical contrast representing the consequences of good and evil. Concerning the selected tribes, there have been many suggestions. Those on Gerizim, the mount of blessing, are children of Jacob’s lawful wives, Leah and Rachel (Gen 35:23-26). Reuben and Zebulun (children of Leah) are the exceptions— Reuben was cursed because he had sexual relations with Bilhah, his father’s concubine (Gen 35:22; 1 Chron 5:1). It is still unclear to me as to why Zebulun makes the list of cursers.

5. Deuteronomy 27:15-27 -- Life and obedience to God is all about relationships.

6. Deuteronomy 28 is one of the most gruesome chapters in the entire Bible, describing in horrific detail the physical manifestation of God’s wrath inflicted on a nation that rejected Him as God. One cannot help but see the ominous warning for our country today. However, if from these warnings we start searching for political solutions for our nation’s ailments, we have seriously missed the point. Individual repentance and collective revival are the only hope for our nation. Our mission is the Great Commission – making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey. If the church fails at its mission, no

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politician or policy, no financial system or military can save us. Note, repentance and revival happen among God's people. The problem is not that sinners are sinning; the problem is the light of the church has dimmed in its infidelity.

7. Deuteronomy 28:9, 10 -- "The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself... if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you." God's people obey Him and are recognized by unbelievers because of their obedience.

8. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 -- God will be glorified by your life in a positive way, through your obedience, or in a negative way, through your disobedience. Either way, the truth of His holiness and righteousness will be revealed to the world. Choose obedience and its subsequent blessings.

- "If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting."
(Deuteronomy 28:58, 59)

9. Proverbs 1:5 -- "Let the wise hear and increase in learning." Developing wisdom is a life-long endeavor involving daily study of God's word. Those who truly want wisdom are willing to do what the unwise (or fools) aren't willing to do.

- Thoughts from A. W. Tozer on Proverbs 1:5 -- "When a very young minister, I asked the famous holiness preacher, Joseph H. Smith, whether he would recommend that I read widely in the secular field. He replied, 'Young man, a bee can find nectar in the weed as well as in the flower.' I took his advice (or, to be frank, I sought confirmation of my own instincts rather than advice) and I am not sorry that I did. John Wesley told the young ministers of the Wesleyan Societies to read or get out of the ministry, and he himself read science and history with a book propped against his saddle pommel as he rode from one engagement to another. Andy Dolbow, the American Indian preacher of considerable note, was a man of little education, but I once heard him exhort his hearers to improve their minds for the honor of God. 'When you are chopping wood,' he explained, 'and you have a dull axe you must work all the harder to cut the log. A sharp axe makes easy work. So sharpen your axe all you can.'" (Tozer, *The Size of the Soul*, 33.)

10. Proverbs 1:8 -- "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching." God intended for children to be raised by a father and a mother. This is not always possible, but we must make every effort to promote and protect the sanctity of marriage and the holiness of the home, which is the schoolhouse for character development -- "Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth." (Malachi 2:15)

11. Proverbs 1:28, 29 -- "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD." There is a point of no return where change is no longer possible. Only God knows the point of no return, but we should heed God's warning and not presume upon God's patience.

12. Psalm 38:3 -- "There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin." Sin affects your health.

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13. Psalm 38:11 -- "My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off." Sin affects your relationships.

14. Psalm 38:13, 14 -- "But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like a mute man who does not open his mouth. I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes." Sin hinders your ability to hear God and to pray effectively.

15. Psalm 39:1-3 -- "I said, 'I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence.' I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse. My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue:" It is extremely hard to control your emotions and hold your tongue. You will not be able (or willing) to do it from a worldly perspective.

16. Psalm 39:4 -- "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!" Life is too short to be bitter.

17. Psalm 39:8 -- "Deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the scorn of the fool!" Understanding your own sinfulness and dependency on grace will help you control your temper and impatience with others.

18. Psalm 39:9 -- "I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it." Understanding that God knows what is happening and remains in complete control will help you control your emotions.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 April: "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!" (Psalm 39:4) Today, prayerfully take an account of your life. Psalm 90 says, The years of our life.... are soon gone, and we fly away.... So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:10-12) So, start by counting your days, estimating the number of days you have left on earth, assuming the best case. Write down how you will serve and glorify God in your remaining days. Don't worry about what you haven't done to date, focus on what you are going to do. Based on the average life expectancy of a male in America, I have about 10,220 days remaining (assuming no untimely death). There is not time to waste doing things God never asked me to do.

DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 6, Saturday, 31 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+25%2C+26%3B+prov+31%3B+psalm+37>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 31 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 25:3 – "Forty stripes may be given him, but not more, lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be degraded in your sight." Luther said the Law serves us today as a curb, a mirror, and a guide – "First, the Law helps to control violent outbursts of sin and keeps order in the world (a curb). Second, the Law accuses us and shows us our sin [and total reliance on God's grace] (a mirror). Third, the Law teaches us Christians what we should and should not do to live a God-pleasing life (a guide). The power to live according to the Law comes from the Gospel." In Deuteronomy 25:3, the law of forty stripes is intended to provide restraint and to prevent inappropriate overreaction fueled by unbridled emotion. The law also seeks to preserve the dignity of people, even guilty people. And the law maintains mercy in justice, reflecting the character of God. This law specifically applies to the punishment of whipping, but the principle of restraint and compassion applies universally. The letter

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of the law was no more than forty lashes, but the intent was to prevent cruelty, to preserve human dignity, and to preserve merciful justice. However, hard-hearted people, who had lost sight of the intent of the law, learned how to stick to the letter of the law while still being cruel and merciless by making more destructive whips. The flagellum, used to scourge Jesus, was a whip with several (at least three) thongs or strands, each perhaps as much as three feet long, and the strands were weighted with lead balls or pieces of bone. Many did not survive scourging with this instrument. The letter of the law is not enough – it cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit to change the heart. We need the power of the Holy Spirit which uses the law, God's word, to convict our hearts and to coach us along the way to develop an increasingly Christ-like heart, increasingly united with Him in genuine love and purpose. Apart from the Holy Spirit, the heart is wicked beyond imagination and will always find a way to do evil despite the law. The heart of a man's problem is the problem with his heart.

2. Deuteronomy 25:11, 12 – Throughout the Old Testament, there are very strict laws to protect the production and reproduction capacities of both people and animals. God protects livelihood and future growth.

3. Deuteronomy 25:16 – "...all who act dishonestly, are an abomination to the Lord your God." Dishonesty is an abomination to the Lord. Do we take dishonesty that seriously?

4. Deuteronomy 26:2-9 – God wants us to put worship first, worship which professes God publicly and often recounts the history of salvation.

5. Deuteronomy 26:13 – "I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them." The tithe honors God by giving Him the first and best, and it is given to Him by giving it to others in need. Remember, we show our love for God primarily through obedience to His commands, and His greatest commandment is love – we love God by loving others. If you don't love the brother you can see, you cannot love the God who you can't see (1 John 4:20)

6. Deuteronomy 26:17 – To profess God as your God is to commit yourself to obey Him as your Lord (and Savior). The demons believe in Jesus, but they don't follow Him – they know He exists and who He is, but they don't love Him. Do you have a saving faith that desires to love, trust, and obey? Do you have a faith that desires to truly "know" Jesus (to become one with Him) as your life ambition?

7. Proverbs 31:1 -- "An oracle that his mother taught him..." A wise mother desperately wants her son to find a wise, godly wife. A wise mother carefully instructs her children on God's plan for marriage.

8. Proverbs 31:6-7 – "Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more." Various forms of escapism are for the weak and not appropriate for a Christian who faces the responsibilities and opportunities God has set before them with courage and strength. Some turn to drink, others turn to food, still others turn to entertainment, and there are many other ways people seek to avoid responsibility. Christians seek wholehearted devotion, practicing the disciplines of discipleship.

9. Psalm 37:1 -- "Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers (Psalm 37:1)!" Psalms 37 is an acrostic Psalm with verses for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it is written as the verses of music. This indicates to me that God inspired the Psalmist to write this Psalm in such a way

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that it could easily be remembered and recited by God's people. Why? Because God knew His people would face many trials and times when it would seem like evil was prevailing. Today, God's people need to sing the song of Psalm 37. Do not fret and do not be influenced by evil doers who seem to be winning the culture war. Trust in God and become more faithful to Him than ever (Psalm 37:3). Delight in the Lord; make your heart's desire Him, and He will give to you Himself – you will have joy regardless the chaos around you (Psalm 37:4). As you draw closer to God while the world moves farther away from Him, you will be a shining light in the darkness (Psalm 37:6). Don't get upset, fret, or get angry because that will only cause you to act foolishly and wrong. Rather, have faith in God and wait patiently on Him – He is in control (Psalm 37:8). What power do the wicked have over God? None! (Psalm 37:12-15). Remaining faithful during these times might cost us some worldly comforts, but our comfort is in the Lord (Psalm 37:16). If we remain faithful in the midst of the unfaithful, the Lord will sustain us and our families through the inevitable trials (Psalm 37:24, 25). Again, when the world turns towards evil, we need to intentionally turn away from it and draw closer to the Lord – we need to do good. (Psalm 37:27) We must walk more and more by the word of God which we have on our hearts, and we must communicate to the world only what God's word says (Psalm 37:30, 31). God knows that you will be hated for standing for the truth and that the wicked will use the law to persecute you. However, God will not abandon you, and we must remember that our justice is in the hands of the Lord, not men (Psalm 37:32, 33; see also Proverbs 29:26, 27). In conclusion, the Psalmist reminds us again – "Wait for the Lord and keep his way (Psalm 37:34). Don't fret! Walk with God in delight, joy, and confidence as described in Psalm 23. Be a beacon of light to the world around you. Light always overpowers darkness.

10. Psalm 37:3, 4 – "Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." If you truly trust in the Lord you will obey Him; contentment and fulfillment come when all you want out of life is Him.

11. Psalm 37:7 – "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way." A lack of faith often causes us to do too much, to act prematurely, to over-react, or to do things God never intended.

12. Psalm 37:8 – "Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil." Don't chase the poisonous snakes that bite you; just let it go, and let God handle it. Whatever was taken from you, God can replace ten-fold. Again, "Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil." Focusing on what the evil are doing will only tempt us to sin. Focus rather on what God has called us to do, one day at a time with what God has given you. Trust and delight in the Lord today and serve Him wholeheartedly. Don't get upset. "Turn away from evil and do good.... Wait for the Lord and keep his way." Remember, "The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is [our] stronghold in the time of trouble;" our hope is not in governments, institutions, or economies.

14. Psalm 37:21 – "The righteous is generous and gives." Your righteousness is revealed, in part, by your generosity. It takes faith to give, particularly when you have little for yourself. If you are not generous, you have a faith problem, a problem with loving God and trusting that He will truly provide for your needs.

15. Psalm 37:23, 24 -- "The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand." Let God be your guide by obeying Him unconditionally.

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16. Psalm 37:25, 26 – “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.” Once again, giving is an act of faith, believing that God will provide for your future so you don’t have to hoard today. Mother Theresa said that she never saw anyone go into poverty from giving too much. Trust God and give. See what happens.

17. Psalm 37:34 – “Wait for the LORD and keep his way,” – The command to “wait” is repeated several times today. This is patient, faithful obedience that perseveres in times of hardship. In times of crises, the world says, “Don’t just stand there; do something!” God says, “Don’t just do something, stand there and wait for the Lord to lead and then follow Him one step at a time.” In Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, “See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” (Eccl 7:29) We Christians are far too busy doing things, often in the Name of the Lord, that God never intended us to do. So many other Bible verses speak to this point. Don’t be consumed by the worries of the world. “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.” (Psalm 37:25)

18. Psalm 37:39, 40 – “The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.” Perhaps these verses should be committed to memory so that we can recite them to ourselves and others over and over again every day in order to help us fight the constant temptation to seek refuge in ourselves, in others, or in things.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 31 April: Today, let God’s word be your curb, mirror and guide. Show your love for God today by being obedient beyond the mere letter of the law, with a heart of genuine, sacrificial love. Love God by loving others. Remember, the law establishes rules of fairness (an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth), but Christians, having received unmerited grace, live above and beyond rules of fairness – we no longer demand fairness for ourselves. We wash the feet of those you would betray us to death (see John 13 and 14). Just as God’s love for us does not depend on our faithfulness, so our love for others is unconditional – it is not a fair exchange but rather a sacrificial gift. Trust God by making yourself vulnerable in giving and in grace. Watch God work in your loving obedience.

DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 5, Friday, 30 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+23%2C+24%3B+prov+30%3B+mark+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 30 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 23:2 -- “No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD.” A few points for consideration from this verse:

- The Old Testament Commands give us specific requirements/restrictions from God as well as enduring principles from God that reflect His character. Some of the commands are “Old Covenant,” meaning that, if one is in the New Covenant of Christ, they are fulfilled in Christ (not abolished but fulfilled). By the Law, a person born of an unholy union is not allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord, nor are his descendants. This restriction may have applied to both the assembly of worship and to marriage. However, the New Testament tells us, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

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Jesus did not abolish the Law for us, He fulfilled it. (Matthew 5:17) Through Jesus, we can now enter the most holy places. (Hebrews 10:19) However, God's commands also give us enduring principles that reflect God's holiness and remain relevant to the church today:

- Principle: Respect for God's holiness take precedence over respect for the desires of people. For example, throughout the Bible, God places restrictions on who can serve in certain positions of leadership, and He also establishes restrictions and requirements on how they should serve. God also establishes His standards for worship. Exclusion from position or from certain ways of doing things does not imply a lack of love from God or individual worth in God's eyes. Many people take exception to these principled restrictions and reject them, often calling them obsolete or case specific. Those who reject God's enduring standards create complex arguments explaining why those canons don't apply to them, but a close examination of motive will reveal that, ultimately, they want to do what they want to do and want to approach God on their own terms – deny self is not part of the calculus. Ultimately, God will not honor a misrepresentation of His character. If you don't meet the biblical standard for becoming a deacon, for example, don't let that hinder your relationship with God, your relationship with others, or your willingness to serve God in other capacities within the church body. Serve with humble thankfulness within your capacity. Churches today debate on which commands in the Bible are enduring ethical laws, civil laws (obsolete or still relevant), or obsolete ceremonial laws. However, the Bible is very clear, if we have to deny ourselves certain freedoms in order to keep others from stumbling, we should.

- As we continue to study the Laws of the Old Testament, it might be valuable to consider the thoughts of the late R.C. Sproul concerning which laws apply:

-- "To this day, the question of the role of the law of God in the Christian life provokes much debate and discussion....

-- The law, in its first use, reveals the character of God, and that's valuable to any believer at any time. But as the law reveals the character of God, it provides a mirror to reflect to us our unholiness against the ultimate standard of righteousness. In that regard, the law serves as a schoolmaster to drive us to Christ.... The law remain[s] valuable to the Christian... because the law constantly drives us to the gospel....

-- Second, the law functions as a restraint against sin.... Paul says in Romans 7 that in a sense the law prompts people to sin—the more of the law unregenerate people see, the more inclined they are to want to break it. Yet despite that tendency of the law, there still is a general salutary benefit for the world to have the restraints upon us that the law gives. Its warnings and threats restrain people from being as bad as they could be, and so civil order is preserved.

-- Third, and most important, is that the law reveals to us what is pleasing to God. Technically speaking, Christians are not under the old covenant and its stipulations. Yet, at the same time, we are called to imitate Christ and to live as people who seek to please the living God (Eph. 5:10; Col. 1:9–12). So, although in one sense I'm not covenantally obligated to the law or under the curse of the law, I put that out the front door and I go around the back door and I say, "Oh Lord, I want to live a life that is pleasing to You, and like the Old Testament psalmist, I can say, 'Oh how I love Thy law.'" I can meditate on the law day and night because it reveals to me what is pleasing to God.

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-- Let me give you a personal example. Several years ago, I was speaking in Rye, N.Y., at a conference on the holiness of God. After one of the sessions, the sponsors of the conference invited me to someone's house afterward for prayer and refreshments. When I arrived at the house, there were about twenty-five people in the parlor praying to their dead relatives. To say I was shocked would be an understatement. I said, "Wait a minute. What is this? We're not allowed to do this. Don't you know that God prohibits this, and that it's an abomination in His sight and it pollutes the whole land and provokes His judgment?" And what was their immediate response? "That's the Old Testament." I said, "Yes, but what has changed to make a practice that God regarded as a capital offense during one economy of redemptive history now something He delights in?" And they didn't have a whole lot to say because from the New Testament it is evident that God is as against idolatry now as He was then.

-- Of course, as we read Scripture, we see that there are some parts of the law that no longer apply to new covenant believers, at least not in the same way that they did to old covenant believers. We make a distinction between moral laws, civil laws, and ceremonial laws such as the dietary laws and physical circumcision. That's helpful because there's a certain sense in which practicing some of the laws from the Old Testament as Christians would actually be blasphemy. Paul stresses in Galatians, for example, that if we were to require circumcision, we would be sinning. Now, the distinction between moral, civil, and ceremonial laws is helpful, but for the old covenant Jew, it was somewhat artificial. That's because it was a matter of the utmost moral consequences whether they kept the ceremonial laws. It was a moral issue for Daniel and his friends not to eat as the Babylonians did (Dan. 1). But the distinction between the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws means that there's a bedrock body of righteous laws that God gives to His covenant people that have abiding significance and relevance before and after the coming of Christ.

-- During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, theologians said that God legislates to Israel and to the new covenant church on two distinct bases: on the basis of divine natural law and on the basis of divine purpose. In this case, the theologians did not mean the *lex naturalis*, the law that is revealed in nature and in the conscience. By "natural law," they meant those laws that are rooted and grounded in God's own character. For God to abrogate these laws would be to do violence to His own person. For example, if God in the old covenant said, "You shall have no other gods before Me," but now He says, "It's OK for you to have other gods and to be involved in idolatry," God would be doing violence to His own holy character. Statutes legislated on the basis of this natural law will be enforced at all times.

-- On the other hand, there is legislation made on the basis of the divine purpose in redemption, such as the dietary laws, that when their purpose is fulfilled, God can abrogate without doing violence to His own character. I think that's a helpful distinction. It doesn't answer every question, but it helps us discern which laws continue so that we can know what is pleasing to God.

2. Deuteronomy 23:5, 6 – "But the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever." People may try to curse you, but God can turn curses into blessings. You don't depend on the favor of people, you depend in the favor of God – never forget that.

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3. Deuteronomy 23:6 -- "You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever." God does not seek peace with everyone.
4. Deuteronomy 23:7 -- "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land." God expects His people to be leaders in reconciliation, to be kind and conciliatory in difficult relationships. The Israelites were continually treated harshly by both the Egyptians and the Edomites, but God called His people to seek reconciliation.
5. Deuteronomy 23:9 -- "When you are encamped against your enemies, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing." Your holiness impacts your outcomes.
6. Deuteronomy 23:12-14 -- "You shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out to it. And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement. Because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you." Many are quick to point out that the adage, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," is not found in the Bible; however, the principles of cleanliness and order have practical value and also show deference to the holiness of God. God desires His people to be clean and organized, demonstrating godly order and holiness in all that we do. You can learn a lot about someone's character by looking at how they live, how they keep their things, and how they take care of themselves. God is a God of order.
7. Deuteronomy 23:19 -- "You shall not charge interest on loans to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest. You may charge a foreigner interest." Christians don't lend money to other Christians with interest, period. Christians are called to give openly to other Christians, taking care of their every need. You might be withdrawing inside as you read this because it defies common sense. Check your heart and your faith in God's provision.
8. Deuteronomy 23:24 -- "If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your bag." God expects Christians to show generosity to others and also to not take advantage of another's hospitality. Today, many people have so much stuff, not only can they not easily fit it all in their garages and basements, they are renting storage sheds to hold the rest. This is not godly behavior.
9. Deuteronomy 24:5 -- "When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be liable for any other public duty. He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken." God is greatly concerned about the welfare of families and sees marriage as a national security issue.
10. Deuteronomy 24:6 -- "No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge." God forbids taking away another person's livelihood.
11. Deuteronomy 24:10, 11 -- "When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to collect his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you." God expects you to respect the dignity of others and honor their personal sanctuary.

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12. Proverbs 30:1-3 – “The man declares, I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.” Life outside of a genuine relationship with God and a life lived outside of His guidance will wear you out. Like so many before and after him, Agur discovers this late in his days. Now he is starting to gain wisdom. The more you know, the more you know what you don’t know. Socrates said, “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” Proverbs says, the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, understanding our total reliance on Him.

13. Proverbs 30:4 – “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!” Too many people reject the word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit, preferring instead to seek wisdom from their own understanding, rejecting the guidance of the One who created all things and who is the actual source of all wisdom – how incredibly foolish! Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, follow His leadership as Lord, and He will make your paths straight.

14. Proverbs 30:6 – “Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Many cults and false leaders add to God’s word.

15. Proverbs 30:7-9 – “Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” Agur understood the limits of his own integrity and character. So, he prayed to God for strength of integrity. Wisely, Agur understood that the most important thing in life was the quality of his character before the Lord. Reputation is what others say about you, but character is what God knows to be true about you. With what sins are struggling? Are these issues at the center of your prayer life? The things that hinder your relationship with God (sin) should be your greatest prayer concern. Remember, self-control, the power to do what you ought, is a fruit of the Spirit, not of the intellect. For the most part, people know what they should do; they just fail to do it because the sinful desires within them (the flesh) has not been surrendered to the Holy Spirit. Pray for God to reveal the truth of you and to strengthen your faith, hope, and love that you would be “one” with God in thought, word, and deed. This was Jesus’ prayer for you before His crucifixion. (see John 17)

16. Proverbs 30:10 – “Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.” Be very careful what you think and say about a fellow Christian. You don’t know what God is doing with them and within them. We are quick to see the faults of others, but we cannot know from where they have come and to where they are going. In God’s economy, He may view them as worthier to be praised than you. For example, the one who grew up in a good environment might act better than the one who grew up in a bad environment, but the latter might still have a more receptive heart for the Lord than the former.

17. Proverbs 30:11-14 – “There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth. There are those—how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift! There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.” Once again, the Bible reminds us that the character is formed in the home. The way people treat their parents is how they will treat others. The respect they have for their parents reflects the respect they have for God. If parents

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allow their children to speak disrespectfully to them, they will likely grow to be disrespectful, unloving people. The power of the Holy Spirit can heal old wounds and change old habits that were forged during childhood, but it will also take much effort on the part of the person who learned the bad habits.

18. Mark 9:2 -- "And he was transfigured before them." Peter, James, and John were given a brief glimpse of a spiritual reality or realm that was always there but not discernible with the normal human senses.

19. Mark 9:3 -- "...and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them." Color is caused by the absorption of certain wavelengths of light by a substance. Nothing could absorb the brilliance of Jesus.

20. Mark 9:24 -- "I believe; help my unbelief!" Jesus can help you with your unbelief if that is what you really want and you ask Him.

21. Mark 9:30, 31 -- "They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples." Jesus prioritized His trusted disciples over the crowds.

22. Mark 9:35, 29 -- "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.... This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." Few Christians actually accept and live out this teaching. Being led by the Spirit rather than the flesh and denying self is a daily effort that only comes through a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus. It must be empowered by the Spirit, through unity with the Spirit. Ultimately, what is Spiritual is not obtained through the physical. Our greatest battle is against the flesh, and "this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." However, prayer often seems to be our last resort – we say, "All we can do now is pray." However, Jesus says that prayer is absolutely vital, a 'first thing.' A primary indicator that we are not living by the Spirit is selfishness which is marked by pride, boastfulness, greed, envy, rudeness, self-seeking, anger, slothfulness, etc. Also, a lack of prayer is indicative of a distant relationship with God. Flesh-led selfishness promotes fear, disunity, and isolation (from God and from others). (Mark 9:32, 34) It causes us to 'hide in the garden' from both God and others. It causes us to focus on earthly kingdoms rather than the Kingdom of God. Today, in Mark 9, the disciples immediately demonstrate why they were powerless to drive out demons (though Jesus had given the authority to do so) by arguing about who among them would be the greatest and then by criticizing someone who was not part of their group – they were allowing themselves to be guided by the flesh rather than by the Spirit. Though they were walking with Jesus as believers, they, ultimately, remained focused on self. Pray!

23. Mark 9:38, 39 -- "'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him....'" God, not people, validates the faith and works of people. People have a tendency to compete over the favor of God like children compete for the parent's attention, contrary to God's desires.

24. Mark 9:42-50 -- God takes sin very, very seriously. Do you?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 March: Make a conscious effort to place everyone above yourself, to be the true servant of all. Also, take a hard look at your prayer life. The vitality of your prayer life is an indicator of how much you are prioritizing your relationship with God and walking in the Spirit. It reveals what you think has the most power in your life and what you truly value most. Consider dedicating one full, uninterrupted hour to prayer in solitude today. (Mark 9:29, Mark 9:35)

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DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 4, Thursday, 29 Mar 2018

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 29 Mar 18:

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+21%2C+22%3B+prov+29%3B+mark+8>

Observations from today's readings, Thursday, 29 March 2017:

1. Deuteronomy 21:10-14 – Captives were spared from death in war, submitting to terms of surrender that were designed to ultimately integrate them into the society without them having a negative impact on the culture. Even captives were given certain rights, protections, and comforts, such as the right to mourn the deaths of their loved ones after battle. God did not allow captives to be dehumanized.
2. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 – God expects parents to hold their children accountable to the law. God expects parents to take the lead in demanding civil justice, preferring right and wrong over familial loyalties.
3. Deuteronomy 22:1-4 – “You shall not see your brother’s ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother.” God expects you to go out of your way to help another Christian when you see a need, at your own expense, expecting nothing in return. You cannot ignore the needs of others and still claim loyalty to Jesus.
4. Deuteronomy 22:5 – “A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.” God expects people to maintain identity markers for male and female and prohibits transvestitism. To be clear, it is an “abomination to the Lord.”
5. Deuteronomy 22:6 – “If you come across a bird’s nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young.” God wants you to protect production capacity while consuming – show enough restraint to avoid killing geese that lay golden eggs. In verses such as this one, God is commanding a specific action while also teaching a general principle by which to live.
6. Deuteronomy 22:8 – “When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.” God expects you to go out of your way and use your own resources to ensure that others are not hurt by what you do.
7. Deuteronomy 22:9-11 – “You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole yield be forfeited, the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard. You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together.” God wanted to instill habits of holiness in all that His people did.
8. Deuteronomy 22:14 – God knows the human tendency to blame and condemn others in order to avoid social responsibility.
9. Deuteronomy 22:16 – “And the father of the young woman shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man to marry, and he hates her.’” Parents have a responsibility to protect the purity of their children. The behavior of children affects the honor of the parents.

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10. Deuteronomy 22:18 – “Then the elders of that city shall take the man and whip him.” Those who would publicly humiliate others were to be publicly humiliated. A major theme throughout the Bible is God often punishes by treating people the way you treat others.

11. Deuteronomy 22:21 – “...they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father’s house.” God takes fornication far more seriously than society does. As Christ’s Ambassador, how do you address fornication? Why did John the Baptist lose his head? Are you willing to speak out against socially accepted sin and to proclaim the need for repentance and faith in Jesus for salvation?

12. Comments on Deuteronomy 22:21b from Henry T. Blackaby: “So you shall put away the evil from among you.” It is a dangerous and costly mistake not to take temptation seriously. The sad testimony of many who have succumbed to sin’s enticements is that they thought they were strong enough to remain in the midst of temptation and resist it. God requires that His people remove evil from their midst (Deut. 21:21). One way to do this is to remove anything in your environment that may tempt you to sin. When wickedness surrounds you, you are in danger of becoming anesthetized to its destructive potential. Never assume that you are immune to temptation. Do not underestimate the craftiness of the evil one. God does not tolerate evil, for evil cost the death of His Son. Sin causes untold pain and destruction to everyone it touches. Treating evil lightly shows foolish disregard for God’s redemptive work. An honest evaluation of your life will reveal temptations that you should remove, such as some forms of entertainment or ungodly relationships. When God convicts you of evil in your midst, remove it.

13. Proverbs 29:5 – “A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.” The Bible strongly condemns flattery.

14. Proverbs 29:11 – “A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.” God will test your temper and self-control to test your wisdom. Again, God doesn’t test for His benefit but for yours. He knows your heart; you don’t.

15. Proverbs 29:18 – “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” You must study and follow God’s law in order to build your self-control.

16. Proverbs 29:25 – “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” In a particular situation, you will either be influenced by God or by man, depending on who you fear the most.

17. Mark 8:3 – Do you desire God’s word more than eating?

18. Mark 8:6 – Jesus allows us to participate in His miraculous works so that we can experience Him first-hand.

19. Mark 8:11, 12 – Most who demand evidence of Jesus don’t really want evidence but merely seek to justify their own rebellion. More evidence wouldn’t change a thing because the barrier is within their hearts, not their minds.

20. Mark 8:29 -- “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” This is the defining question of any person’s life. See Matthew 10:34; Matthew 25:31-33; Luke 12:49-53; and Acts 4:12.

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21. Mark 8:33-38 – “You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” One of the biggest mistakes we make, one of the most dangerous things we do, is interpret God’s word and will from a self-centered perspective. This incites Jesus’ most emphatic rebuke, and He calls it satanic. We cannot truly walk with Jesus until we deny self.

22. Mark 8:34 -- “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” In the above verse, Jesus describes the continuing actions or endeavors that mark the “way of the disciple” or the “way of the cross”: deny self, take up the cross, follow Jesus -

-- Deny Self: Denying self is far more than self-denial -- depriving yourself or denigrating yourself. Denying self involves setting your mind on the things of God rather than the things of man and walking on a revealed path for His purposes rather than by our own understanding for our own purposes. Denying self is a continuous, ongoing, inward act. Only you and God know if your being is centered on Jesus or focused on self. The opposite of the discipleship way is putting self before God – that is what Satan does; and when we do it, we are essentially following the devil’s lead as Peter discovered when Jesus rebuked him, “Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns (Mark 8:33).” Peter was likely focused on the prospect of his personal loss and his personal pain that would be caused by Jesus’ death, and Jesus’ death did not fit the plan for victory that Peter had envisioned. His worldly thinking was in opposition to the plan of God, hence one of Jesus’ most emphatic rebukes. Denying self is to “have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5).”

-- Take Up The Cross: This is much, much more than simply patiently enduring trials or bearing up under affliction. It is not about what is happening to us in the world but rather it is about accepting who we are in Christ. Taking up the cross is accepting and proclaiming our new identity in Christ saying, “I am in Him, and He is in me.” It is about identifying and uniting with the Crucified One, not just outwardly with our mouths but inwardly in our hearts and minds with all that is within us. It is the personal recognition that we not only died with Christ but were also made alive with Christ to live our lives solely for God (Romans 6:8, 10). We joyfully take on the name of Christ, and in union with Jesus, we willingly choose the Father’s destiny for our lives regardless the personal cost. As Paul described: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).” Taking up the cross in relationships is not just turning the other cheek, displaying grace, returning good for evil, it is doing so with a heartfelt goal of reconciliation for the offender, with genuine love for your “enemy,” who, through the love of Christ, we no longer see as others would.

-- Follow Jesus: This is an inward act before it is an outward one. It is not just about conforming our outward behavior to God’s standards (something Jesus tried to explain to the Pharisees), but continually and humbly and personally responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and minds. This is not about rote religious rituals or traditions. This is your one-on-one discipleship with Jesus where you personally respond to him, where you remain connected to the Vine. Only you and God know if, in your inmost being, you are truly following Jesus. This is a relationship; it’s not a program, it’s the person of Jesus. This is about “abiding” in Jesus and obeying his commands out of genuine love for Him – “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4, 5).

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In our natural minds, we tend to define and reduce the “way of the disciple” based on the physical, “persevere through the trials of life and do good things.” However, “The Way” deals with the inside, the spirit, the heart, your authentic self. “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).” Pray that God will give you the heart of a disciple.

* Note: Christianity was often referred to as “The Way”. (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14; 24:22).

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 March: Today, really focus on denying self rather than just self-denial. Seek genuine “oneness” with Jesus, in heart, mind, and soul. Seek to step outside of self to see things as God sees them. Seek only His will, not yours, and endeavor to follow Him, not out of a sense of duty, but genuine love. The key is receiving His love and letting it flow through you rather than trying to work harder to create your own love. (Mark 8:33-38)

DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 3, Wednesday, 28 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+19%2C+20%3B+pro+28%3B+Mark+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 28 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 19:9 – “...provided you are careful to keep all this commandment, which I command you today, by loving the Lord your God and by walking ever in his ways....” God wants you to love Him. You show your love by obeying Him.
2. Deuteronomy 19:11 – “But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there, and hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die.” Notice that cities of refuge were not sanctuary cities for murderers.
3. Deuteronomy 19:14 – “You shall not move your neighbor’s landmark, which the men of old have set, in the inheritance that you will hold in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.” God established clear rules for protecting property rights. Property rights protect a person’s ability to produce and to transfer productive ability to descendants. God strictly protects the livelihood of the family. Note the seventh commandment protects marriage (you shall not commit adultery), and the eight commandment protects property (you shall not steal). People can steal, and governments can steal; God will hold both accountable.
4. Deuteronomy 19:15 – “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.” As was discussed yesterday, one witness is not enough. Today, in many cases, all it takes is for one person to accuse another in order to ruin the career and reputation of the accused. This is not Biblical.
5. Deuteronomy 20:1 – “When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” God knows His people will have to fight battles. God expects His people to have courage in Him.
6. Deuteronomy 20:1-4 – God has proven His presence and power in the past and will do so again.

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7. Deuteronomy 20:17,18 – “...but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.” God has no tolerance for those who would lead His people astray, whether they are believers or unbelievers (see chapter 13)

8. Deuteronomy 20:18 – Worship that imitates pagan worship or involves pagan substitutes for God is a chief sin.

9. Deuteronomy 20:19-20 – ““When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.” Resources are not inherently good or evil and can be used for either good purposes or bad ones. God wants His people to use resources formerly used to support evil to support good for the future. The same resources that supply bad people can also supply good people. God’s people can destroy institutions or take them over. Why not take them over for God’s glory?

10. Proverbs 28:5 – “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.” Understanding grows with proximity to Jesus.

11. Proverbs 28:7 – “The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.” With understanding comes obedience; obedience is self-control. Gluttony is a lack of self-control, revealing a disobedient heart which reveals a relationship problem.

12. Proverbs 28:13 – “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Be radically but gently honest with yourself and with others. It can be very painful at first but is instantly freeing and opens the door for radical integrity. Someone once said, “Never say anything you wouldn’t want to see published in the paper.” Christians should be an open book with no fear of open publication.

13. Proverbs 28:26 – “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” Why would anyone trust in their own understanding and reject God’s unchanging word?

14. Proverbs 28: 27 – “Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.” Do you believe this? It takes radical faith to give radically. Today, personally and tangibly give to the poor, not just via internet, a third party, or an organization, but with your own hands and directly to someone in need. Do this in the name of Jesus Christ.

15. Mark 7:5-13 – The Bible leads you to self-examination and self-correction, not a critical spirit towards others. We only address the sins of others with a legitimate heart of reconciliation. If your aim is something else, best to keep your mouth shut as you will not be Christ’s good ambassador.

16. Mark 7:6, 7; see also Isaiah 29 -- ““This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”” When the Pharisees criticized Jesus’ disciples for failing to wash their hands before eating, Jesus called them hypocrites (fakers or actors) and referenced the above verse from Isaiah. It wasn’t that Jesus didn’t

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understand the value of cleanliness or care about hygiene; the elaborate hand washing ritual practiced by the Pharisees was not about cleanliness, it was a traditional symbol of holiness and spiritual purity. Jesus was not challenging the cleanliness of the Pharisees, he was challenging their holiness and the condition of their hearts. Jesus said that the Pharisees were pretending to serve God in their religious practices but in actuality were serving self; they were inspired by selfishness rather than love and compassion, and their defense of law and traditions was not about glorifying God but rather about glorifying self. They were more interested in demonstrating self-righteousness than in proclaiming the righteousness of God. Even the “good” things the Pharisees did in the name of God they did for the wrong reasons. Christians must continually examine their hearts to ensure that their motivations are truly pure and Christ-centered rather than self-centered – we all tend to drift towards selfishness. Even our religious practices can be motivated by self-interest rather than love for God and others. A simple question to ask yourself – “Why do I do what I do?” I pray that more and more, our motivation will be Christ. Jesus quoted Isaiah 29 when he rebuked the Pharisees; below is the conclusion of Isaiah 29 which should give us hope:

- “In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off.... Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale. For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction (Isaiah 29:18-24).”

17. Mark 7:8-13 – The Bible trumps church tradition.

18. Mark 7:14-23 – “Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” (Mark 7:20-23)

- As mentioned previously, based on many Bible verses such as Ephesians 2:1-3 and 1 John 2:16 (provided below), church tradition teaches about three enemies of the soul, what has been called the trinity of temptation – the world, the flesh, and the devil (mundus, caro, et diabolus). Today, Jesus confirms that the greatest threat of the three is “the flesh” because the other two are external threats, while “the flesh” is “inside the wire” or an “insider threat”. This is the traitor within. This is where we become the problem, where we now have responsibility for the temptation. When we are tempted externally by the world and the devil, we may not have sinned; but when we start tempting ourselves, we are now guilty of thought sins. Jesus remained without sin when He was tempted externally by Satan in the desert but was not tempted internally, within His heart. The issue is not your circumstances, your environment, or your past; the issue is your heart. Your heart is what God searches, tests, and convicts. Oftentimes, when we are tempted internally, we seek to blame the person or thing that tempted us externally -- “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12) This is like when my kids say, “The lamp broke,” vice “I broke the lamp.” This deflection ignores to heart of the problem – your heart. Have you ever said something like, “You make me so

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angry!" Does someone have more power over you than the Holy Spirit? One of the fruits of the Spirit is the power of self-control. Proverbs says, "Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.... A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." (Proverbs 25:26, 28) We would benefit from spending more time considering our own hearts.

- Ephesians 2:1-3 -- And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- 1 John 2:16 -- For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life[a]—is not from the Father but is from the world.

19. Mark 7:21 – External acts begin with internal thoughts and values.

20. Mark 7:27 – "And he said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'" Jesus sought to teach Israel their mission before expanding the mission outward.

21. Mark 7:29, 32 – Jesus responded to faith wherever He found it.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day): 28 Mar -- Make the effort today to, literally, take note of your thought life: journal the conditions under which you were tempted internally, when your thoughts did not mirror the heart of Jesus, when you became angry, bitter, jealous, greedy, selfish, lustful, prideful, impatient, unkind, envious, boastful, defensive, worrisome, etc. At the end of the day, review your journal and prayerfully consider the condition of your heart. References from today's readings: Reference from today's readings: "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mark 7:21-23)

DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 2, Tuesday, 27 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+17%2C+18%3B+prov+27%3B+mark+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 27 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 17:1 -- "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God." The level of your sacrifice for God reveals how much you value God. A real sacrifice costs you something you care about. A gift that is highly valued by the giver displays genuine love.

- Comments on today's readings by Henry T. Blackaby: Deuteronomy 17:1 – "God's love moved Him to sacrifice that which meant the most to Him—His only Son. Our response, if we truly understand His love for us, is the desire to give back to God that which means the most to us. The Old Testament reveals that God set forth high standards for the sacrifices He required of His people. A worthy sacrifice had to cost the people something. As their hearts shifted away from God, the people began struggling to give God costly offerings. They would bring blind, lame, and sick animals, assuming God could not tell the

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difference (Mal. 1:8). God saw what they were doing and declared their offerings to be in vain (Mal. 1:10). Throughout the Old Testament period, God was setting the stage for the ultimate, perfect, and sinless sacrifice of His Son for the sins of humanity. The offerings we give back to God reveal our hearts' condition. A heart that overflows with gratitude for God's love will respond in selfless devotion. If we are unwilling to sacrifice our time, our possessions, our money, or our energy, we indicate that we do not love God as He desires. God takes delight in the person who gives to Him cheerfully out of a loving heart, a person who understands that God is the source of everything he has and who knows that God will more than compensate for whatever is sacrificed for Him (2 Cor. 9:8). If you struggle in giving your best offerings to God, pause and reflect on what God sacrificed for you. Trust Him and give Him the best that you have because you love Him with all your heart.

2. Deuteronomy 17:7 – “The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.” Jesus used this law to exonerate the woman caught in adultery in John 8 – “He who is without sin, cast the first stone.” Jesus was asked to judge a ‘kangaroo court’, a mob-led trial with no real evidence and with a pre-determined outcome. Though caught in the act of adultery, the woman stood accused alone – where was the other adulterer? Jesus called for the “two or three witnesses” (Deut 19:15; Numbers 35:30; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; John 8:17; 1 John 5:7) who observed the act of adultery to cast the first stones, knowing as likely would everyone else, that whoever through the first stone would have condemned themselves to stoning as a false witness. Jesus was not making light of adultery or excusing sin as some have suggested. In fact, Jesus ends His conversation with the woman to “sin no more.” How would things be different in our legal system today if criminal allegations required at least two witnesses, and the witnesses faced the penalty of the accused if found to be perjuring?

3. Deuteronomy 17:11 – “According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left.” God knows we have a tendency to obey the laws and legal decisions we like and to disobey the ones we don't like. We are called to obey all of the law, unless a law demands disobedience to God who is the Source of all justice. God also knows that any human system for handling disputes or complicated decisions between stakeholders is not perfect, and He expects his people to accept the outcome of the decision-making process.

4. Deuteronomy 17:16, 17 – “Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.” God does not want leaders to get rich from their positions of leadership. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 gives further instruction on the matter: “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.” God wants leaders who are not selfishly motivated but rather motivated by love for Him and for others. True leadership comes a great personal expense. Don't you wish we had more politicians and civic leaders today who selflessly led with their eyes affixed on Jesus? Solomon, ignored these commands and permanently divided Israel. As our nation gets more and more divided, our leaders seem

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to get wealthier and wealthier. And as for our most well-known religious leaders, look online to see their net worth.

- I assume kings are pretty busy, busier than me. Yet God expected them to read/study their personal copy of God's word every day of their lives, being careful to OBEY every bit of it. People who lived in centuries past, had no more time than us, they just had fewer options for their time. We must make the choice to read, study, and obey God's word every day of our lives. God's word is a lamp unto our feet. (read all of Psalm 119) How different would our leaders be today if they were committed to reading, understanding, and obeying God's Word? What impact would they have on the Nation and the world?

5. Deuteronomy 18:2 – “They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.” The Bible says that we are all priests; so, we claim no inheritance on earth, but the Lord is our inheritance.

6. Deuteronomy 18:18-20 – “And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.” True prophets only speak the word of God given by God. False prophets speak presumptuous words that God never intended.

7. Proverbs 27:1 – “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” Make today count. You cannot do anything about the past, and you have no idea what tomorrow may bring. Today is your opportunity to trust God, obey God, and glorify God, one decision at a time. Today is your mission field. If you are faithful with just today, God will show you a future for which you never would have planned. Just one faithful moment today could change the course of your life forever. If God puts something on your heart, act on it today; don't wait until tomorrow. And don't worry about tomorrow either. God is in control of tomorrow. Faith is trusting God today; hope is trusting God with tomorrow; and love is our goal, our motivation, and our vocation (which means calling).

- Luke 9:62 -- Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

- 1 Corinthians 9:10 -- Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

- Hebrews 3:13, 15 -- But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.... As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

- Luke 5:26 -- And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”

- Luke 12:28 -- But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

- Proverbs 3:28 -- Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.

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- Matthew 6:34 -- "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

- James 4:13, 14 -- Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

- Ephesians 5:16 – [make] the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

- Colossians 4:5 -- Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

8. Proverbs 27:5, 6 -- It is unloving not to rebuke someone who needs it.

9. Proverbs 27:7, 8 -- "One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home." A person starving for love is more susceptible to sin.

10. Proverbs 27:4 -- "Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" Jealousy is worse than anger. Jealousy despises another not because of an offense but because of blessings they have received. Jealousy is purely an internal temptation that reveals an ungrateful heart. Jealousy is outwardly directed at a person but inwardly directed at God who gave someone else something He didn't give the jealous person, which makes the jealous person resentful. Jealousy reveals a deep relationship problem a person has with God. Treating people poorly out of jealousy only makes the problem worse.

11. Proverbs 27:18 -- "Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored." If your boss is wrong, and you can protect him from his mistakes, you will only benefit from it. Yes, there is a concern about enabling bad behavior, but with wisdom, your influence can change a leader over time. Most change takes a long time, but consequences for bad behavior are immediate and can have devastating consequences. Much of leadership from the bottom up is about damage control while influencing by example and subtle counsel.

12. Mark 6:7 – "And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits." God sends His people out under His authority and power. That includes you.

13. Mark 6:12 – "So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent." The salvation message starts with the demand for repentance. Here's a message you don't hear preached much these days -- repent. It has become unsophisticated to preach about sin and the wrath of God, causing many to wonder why people need a savior. Even from the pulpits, we hear the message that people don't need a savior, they need a psychologist, and Jesus merely provides us the example of how to live or how to 'save' ourselves from the consequences of bad behavior. Too many have turned the Bible into a supernatural self-help book rather than a message of reconciliation with God through Jesus. We might still hear someone ask, "Are you saved?", but saved from what, from the consequences of our bad behavior? No, saved from the wrath of The Almighty, Holy, Just God – Saved from God by God, through faith in His grace, not our good deeds. We are not communicating clearly that we need salvation from the wrath of God and that we are incapable of saving ourselves. John the Baptist lost his head, ultimately, because he condemned adultery. Remember when preachers once condemned adultery and

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other sexual sins, not merely because of the obvious consequences of such behavior but because of its offense to a Holy God? Perhaps part of our problem is that we have lost the art of condemning the sin without condemning the sinner, of pointing past the sin to the Savior. Are you proclaiming to people that they must repent, not to turn from bad behavior but to turn to Jesus?

14. Mark 6:18 – “For John had been saying to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.’” As stated above, John lost his life because He challenged adultery in a corrupt society with corrupt leaders. His words were offensive and negative, but his aim was positive, reconciliation. Today, John the Baptist would have been labelled a hater. But if you truly love God and others, you must hate sin and speak out against it, again, not to make more agreeable sinners, but rather to promote reconciliation with God through Jesus. “O you who love the Lord, hate evil!” (Psalm 97:10)

15. Mark 6:26 -- “And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word.” Pride, lust, power, and rash decision-making drove Herod to hideous sin he did not intend. The Bible says that Herod gladly heard God’s word through John the Baptist and “feared John,” but nonetheless beheaded him (Mark 6:20). The Bible points out that Herod “was exceedingly sorry,” but sorrow is not the same as repentance. Herod demonstrated “worldly grief” rather than “godly sorrow.” Godly sorrow leads to repentance and reconciliation with Jesus: John the Baptist’s message was one of repentance – “In those days John the Baptist came... saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near (Matthew 3:1, 2).’” Jesus began his public ministry with a call to repentance – “Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near (Matthew 4:17);’” and Jesus sent his disciples with a call to repentance in our readings today – “They went out and preached that the people should repent (Mark 6:12).” Repentance comes from “godly sorrow” (genuine, spirit convicted sorrow) and involves the decision (followed by action) to seek the forgiveness of God, to turn away from sin, and to do the will of God, to “walk” with Him. Repentance involves 180-out decisive change with tangible results, the “fruit of repentance.” (Matthew 3:8) Both worldly grief and godly sorrow are deeply felt but produce opposite results. Consider the difference between the sorrow felt by Judas and the sorrow felt by Peter, both of whom betrayed Jesus. Peter returned to Jesus with a strong reaffirmation of his love for Jesus (John 21:15-17) and a truly changed life. Even to the point of torturous death, Peter never denied Christ again. Conversely, Judas carried his worldly grief to his suicidal death, refusing to turn to God for restoration. Many live in pain, misery, regret, and perhaps bitterness over mistakes that they have made in life and perhaps continue to make. However, God does not want us to live in worldly grief that leads to death, but rather God wants us to respond to the godly sorrow that comes from the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent, live in obedience by the grace of God, and have life to its fullest with godly joy.

- 2 Corinthians 7:10 -- For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

16. Mark 6:27, 28 – “And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.” Jesus commended John for being the most honorable and faithful of His day, yet John was not spared a brutal, seemingly dishonoring death. Jesus’ most faithful are most hated by the world. They receive no honor on earth but unimaginable reward in Heaven.

17. Mark 6:31 -- “And he said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.’” God knows the importance of rest and spiritual renewal for His servants.

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18. Comments on Mark 6:45-52 from Oswald Chambers: -- "And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side...." We are apt to imagine that if Jesus Christ constrains us, and we obey Him, He will lead us to great success. We must never put our dreams of success as God's purpose for us; His purpose may be exactly the opposite. We have an idea that God is leading us to a particular end, a desired goal; He is not. The question of getting to a particular end is a mere incident. What we call the process, God calls the end. What is my dream of God's purpose? His purpose is that I depend on Him and on His power now. If I can stay in the middle of the turmoil calm and unperplexed, that is the end of the purpose of God. God is not working towards a particular finish; His end is the process - that I see Him walking on the waves, no shore in sight, no success, no goal, just the absolute certainty that it is all right because I see Him walking on the sea. It is the process, not the end, which is glorifying to God. God's training is for now, not presently. His purpose is for this minute, not for something in the future. We have nothing to do with the afterwards of obedience; we get wrong when we think of the afterwards. What men call training and preparation, God calls the end. God's end is to enable me to see that He can walk on the chaos of my life just now. If we have a further end in view, we do not pay sufficient attention to the immediate present: if we realize that obedience is the end, then each moment as it comes is precious.

19. Mark 6:53-56 – "When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was." Remember, Jesus told the man He had cleansed of demons (chapter 5) that he could not go with Jesus but must stay and testify to others. Now Jesus returns to huge crowds. Do crowds want to know Jesus because of your testimony? Your salvation is a personal experience, but it is intended to also be very public, your witness to the world of the power of the Gospel. Read John 14-17 – Jesus wants you know Him and make Him known – the two endeavors are inseparable and symbiotic.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day): 27 Mar -- Tell others about the need of repentance today. References from today's readings: Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.... So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. (Mark 6:12)

DBRP- WEEK 13, Day 1, Monday, 26 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=deut+15%2C+16%3B+prov+26%3B+mark+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 26 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 15:1, 2 – "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the Lord's release has been proclaimed." God's system is designed to keep people from getting into long-term debt and to keep people from profiting on the debts of others. In case you missed it from yesterday's readings, God did not want His people to profit from the debts of others. The seventh year is also a reminder of the freedom of the debt of sin we receive through Jesus.

2. Deuteronomy 15:3, 4 – "Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release. But there will be no poor among you; for the Lord will bless you in the land that

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the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess.” God gave His people permission to charge interest to non-believers but not to take advantage of them or to let them get in over their heads. By allowing this, God was essentially allowing His people to control more and more of the ungodly world. National power is often measured in D.I.M.E – Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economics. Economics is the most powerful weapon. God intended for His people to grow powerful economically but never through unfair or inhumane ways. Debt slowly robs people of their resources. Essentially, by allowing His people to charge debt to foreigners, He was enabling His people to “subdue” more and more of the earth; by forbidding them to be in debt or to charge debt among the believers, He was protecting them from loss of economic power. More on this below:

3. Deuteronomy 15:6 -- “For the Lord your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.” God commanded His people to cancel all debts among other believers every seven years (and in other verses He forbids any interest on debt among fellow believers), but He also says, “of a foreigner you may exact it.” God understands and teaches His people that “the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender (Proverbs 22:7).” He did not intend for His people to be in debt or enslaved by the world but to depend on each other to take care of each other’s needs that “there will be no poor among you (Deuteronomy 15:4).” So, when you need money you don’t have for a major expenditure where do you go? Do you go to the church for an interest free loan or do you go to a bank or credit agency owned by a secular institution or a worldly kingdom? God’s commands for economics were designed for His people to be the most powerful ‘Kingdom’ on the planet, a nation among the nations for His glory. Is that what we are? Or have we unfunded the work of the church by surrendering income to worldly kingdoms through debt? It has been reported that churches in America spend more money on building debt than they do on missionaries.

4. Deuteronomy 15:7, 8 -- “If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.” God expects you to give you fellow Christians in need, whatever they need. The Bible warns not to harden your heart. Most people harden their hearts when they tell themselves that the poor brother doesn’t deserve help because their plight is their own fault. No one deserves grace. Give grace as God has given you.

5. Deuteronomy 15:9-12 -- “Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’” You have no excuse for not helping the poor. Not helping the poor is a sin. God judges your heart. Interestingly, we just read that God had a plan to prevent any of His people from being poor (Deut 15:4), yet we read that, despite His plan, there would still always be poor. Why? Is it because God’s plan was flawed? No, it is because God’s people were disobedient and didn’t follow the plan. In many cases, people likely caused their own poverty through irresponsible living. Nonetheless, God expected (and expects) His people to give generously to the poor, not coming up with justifications not to – “It’s their fault.... If I help them, they will just do it again.” Remember, no one deserves a gift,

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and gifts are never earned or reclaimed by the giver. Aren't we glad Jesus didn't just pay for the sins of those who were "worth it," or who were sure not to fail again?

6. Deuteronomy 15:14 – "As the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him." How you give to others reveals how appreciative you are of how God has blessed you. How you give to others reveals your true level of confidence in God's provision. How you give to others reveals your love and compassion. "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

7. Deuteronomy 16:12 – Worship remembers poverty.

8. Deuteronomy 16:13-15 -- "You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days.... You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose, because the Lord your God will bless you...." During the time of the feast, each Israelite family was supposed to construct a booth (a temporary shelter), or sukkah, and live in it for a week (Leviticus 23:42-43). This week served many purposes: it reminded the people how God had provided for them when they had nothing; it reminded them that if they had nothing again, God would provide for them; it reminded them that their joy did not depend on their many possessions; it reminded them that life is often more joyful and memorable when they live simply; it brought everyone together into greater fellowship; it focused their thinking on the Lord; it sustained their collective skills to camp and to survive and to live in austerity; and it strengthened community. Christians would benefit from reviving this annual community camping feast.

9. Deuteronomy 16:16, 17 -- "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you." Three times a year, ALL of God's people came together in one place for huge feasts for worship, fellowship, and praise to celebrate the redemption and salvation God provided. Everyone contributed to these feasts. These events lasted for days, and all work stopped. They were joyful celebrations, and aliens were invited to participate (Deuteronomy 16:14). What a powerful display of unity under the LORD-ship of God and to each other as fellow believers; what a powerful witness to the watching world. Does your church do anything like this? Does your church have such a powerful sense of community?

10. Deuteronomy 16:18-19 -- "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice." How do you settle disputes with other believers? Do you go to the church leadership or do you go to the secular court system? "When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers (1 Corinthians 6:1-8)!" Is

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your church prepared to handle disputes between members, and do the members of your church trust and accept the authority of the leadership of your church to settle disputes or would they rather go to Judge Judy?

- From what you have read today, how closely do churches today reflect what God intended for His people? What role do you personally play in strengthening your community church?

11. Proverbs 26:7 – “Like a lame man’s legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” Knowing God’s word is not the same as understanding God’s word. The Bible says that the fool can’t understand God’s word (Psalm 92:6). Fools are those who do not really seek the fear of the Lord or true wisdom (Proverbs 1:7); they are scoffers, arrogant and prideful (Proverbs 1:22; 21:24); they are self-righteous and wise in their own eyes. (Pro 12:15; 18:2; 28:26) Many fools are well-versed in the Bible but lack wisdom and only cause division vice reconciliation.

12. Proverbs 26:7 -- “Like a lame man’s legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” The majority of Proverbs 26 deals with knowledge poorly applied. Our problem is often not knowing what to do, our problem is not doing what we know. Having the word of God and not doing the word of God (for whatever excuse we use) is like having food in your hands but refusing to put it in your mouth. Jesus said that He is the Bread of Life. He tells us to deny self, take up the cross and follow Him. Proverbs says, to have that knowledge and continue to pursue our own agendas in life is to feast on a daily meal of vomit (Proverbs 26:11)

13. Proverbs 26:7-9 – “Like a lame man’s legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools. Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool. Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” If you are living your life foolishly, God cannot use you as His messenger.

14. Proverbs 26:13-16 – God despises both foolishness and laziness.

15. Proverbs 26:28 – “A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” Lying and flattery are both forms of deception for selfish, self-centered purposes. Flattery selfishly tells people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. Flattery comes with a hidden agenda. It is deceptive and destructive.

16. Mark 5:14 – “The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened.” The herdsmen were witnesses who personally experienced the power of God and, therefore, could not help but tell everyone. Witnesses testify to what they have personally experienced, not simply what they have heard about. The herdsmen’s story would have been hard to believe, but they were not worried about what others might say. Witnessing is only hard when the experience isn’t real, personal, and powerful.

17. Mark 5:18-20 -- “As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him but said to him, ‘Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.’ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.” Salvation is not just so we can enjoy Jesus for the rest of our days; it is so we can glorify God before others, fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives of glorifying Him.

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18. Mark 5:23-35 -- "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." And he went with him.... And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years.... and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.... And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.' While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?'" In context with what we have read in the Old Testament, this is an especially amazing account. Jesus, a rabbi, was called to the home of Jarius to save his dying daughter. Along the way he was touched by a bleeding woman. After her act of faith, the woman was afraid, likely, in part, because she had just made the Rabbi unclean (preventing him from entering anyone's home according to the Law). This would have placed Jesus in a predicament as he journeyed to Jarius' home (and I suspect the crowd was none too pleased with the woman); however, along the way, Jarius' daughter dies (a corpse is also unclean). Jesus could now enter house without risk of rendering the house unclean (it was already unclean) and without concern of choosing to become unclean (the woman has already made him unclean). Now Jesus could enter the home without breaking the law. Interesting.

19. Mark 5:30 -- "And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him." The Levitical Laws forbade a bleeding woman from touching a Rabbi. While one could speculate that these laws were largely symbolic or for medical reasons, here we can see that there is also a spiritual implication we cannot understand (power had gone out from him).

20. Mark 5:37 -- "And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James." Among the 12, Jesus had an inner circle of three. These three had greater opportunity to see the wonders of Jesus. Are you fulfilling the Great Commission of making disciples? Who are your three and twelve? Are you one of the three and twelve of a more senior Christian who is personally discipling you?

21. Mark 5:43 -- "And he... told them to give her something to eat." Jesus is concerned with your most basic needs.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 26 March: Plan a week-long camping trip with your family and Christian friends to fellowship and to worship together. Consider making it an annual tradition. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15)

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 7, Sunday, 25 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+25%3B+psalm+35%2C+36>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 25 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 13:1-4 -- "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder... and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' ... you shall not listen.... For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him." Today, more than any other time in history, people are being

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bombarded with "evidence" to counter the word of God, all false evidence, but enough to lead many astray. Are you firm in your faith?

2. Deuteronomy 13:4, 5 -- "You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.... So you shall purge the evil from your midst." Obedience to God means removing those things in your life that dishonor Him. Does your entertainment honor God? Does what you read, watch, and listen to strengthen your purity or hinder it? Are your best friends Christ followers working with you to glorify God? "Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty you will be built up, if you remove injustice far from your tents, if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver. For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways. For when they are humbled you say, 'It is because of pride'; but he saves the lowly. He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands." Make God your absolute treasure; purge the evil from your life; and live as a powerful Christian. (Job 22:21-30)

3. Deuteronomy 13:11 -- "And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you." Punishment is not just for the person being punished but also for others in order that they may learn and not do the same thing the one who was punished did. Part of wisdom is understanding what you haven't experienced -- learning from observing consequences (good and bad) in the lives of others. The accounts in the Bible were provided that we might gain wisdom -- "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." (1 Corinthians 10:11) But note, that ultimately, the Bible is not just pointing us to instructions for better living but to the One "on whom" all outcomes rest, "on whom" we have faith and hope. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4) The whole Bible points to Jesus.

4. Deuteronomy 14:2 -- "The LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." Are you still amazed by grace? Do you understand the incredible thing God has done for you and the great fortune you have that so many others don't have?

5. Deuteronomy 14:3 -- "You shall not eat any abomination." There are many theories for why God told His people not to eat the certain animals and foods He told them not to eat. Some talk about health reasons; some think because the pagans ate these foods, God used dietary laws as a way to separate His people from other people, to keep them focused on their holiness. Likely these reasons are both true, along with other reasons, some we might never understand. Safe to say, we should never put anything in our bodies that does not honor God or that hurts the body. We should take care of our temples as an act of worship and demonstrate thanksgiving and the character of God in the way we eat. Many Christians know the way they eat is unhealthy, yet they do it anyway. For other Christians, "proper" nutrition has become an idol. This too is an abomination. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31)

6. Deuteronomy 14:23 -- "And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of

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your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always." The tithe facilitated an environment where the people ate together and all were fed together, resulting in fellowship, camaraderie, unity, and charity. How often does your church feast together?

7. Deuteronomy 14:23 -- "...that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always." God's commands are intended to teach you how to love and respect Him as God.

8. Deuteronomy 14:24-26 -- "And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the Lord your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the Lord your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the Lord your God chooses and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household." Money was created to be a substitute for goods in order to facilitate trade across great distances. God's word has much to say about the sin of manipulating the value of currency because it essentially robs people of their goods; currency manipulation is a form of stealing, and the people most affected are the poor. Jesus flipped the tables and drove out the moneychangers in the Temple because they were manipulating the currency and stealing from the poor and from the church. God forbade his people from earning wealth on the interest applied to money and loans because it is money for nothing and a way to take advantage of others. (Deut 23:19; Proverbs 28:8; Psalm 15:5; Ezek 18:12, 13; Deut 23:20; Leviticus 25:36-37; Nehemiah 5:7; etc) All personal finance advice today encourages people to "make your money make money" by lending it to others with interest, rather than merely selling or trading the fruit of your honest labor at fair market value. This is a trap. This is why bankers are so rich and the poor are so poor. Abraham's plan for retirement was much different than the rich fool's plan condemned by Jesus in Luke 12. Abraham built an industry (sheep) that would continue to produce in order to sustain him in his unproductive years (which were few). The rich fool's plan was to hoard resources in order to have something to live off of in his unproductive years. The rich fool's plan looks a lot like most retirement plans today. God's plan for his people is not to hoard golden eggs but to raise geese that lay golden eggs. (Proverbs 27:23-30)

9. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 -- "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do." The tithe is intended, in part, to provide for those in need. Today, most give less than 3% of their income, and charity has largely been turned over to the government and to private secular organizations. God intended a far different plan.

10. Proverbs 25:4 -- "Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel." Does your holiness render you usable by God for special assignments?

11. Proverbs 25:26 -- "Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked." How much pollution do you want in your drinking water? How much sin does God want in your life?

12. Proverbs 25:28 -- "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." A lack of self-control leaves you defenseless.

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13. Proverbs 25:6, 7 – “Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, ‘Come up here,’ than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.” Don’t be a self-promoter. Let your reputation speak for itself. Margaret Thatcher once said, “Power is like being a lady... if you have to tell people you are, you aren’t.” What you are should be so apparent that you don’t have to promote it artificially. Some people become great at writing resumes, conducting job interviews, collective awards, accreditations, etc, all to get important positions, but they are only “empty suits” who overpromise and underdeliver. Of course politicians are known for doing what it takes to get elected and then failing to be all that they said they would be or failing to do all that they said they would do. Proverbs 25:14 says, “Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.” Instead, Christians should let their actions, rather than their words, earn them an invitation to the party and a seat at the table. Do whatever you do so well that everyone demands more.

14. Proverbs 25:9 – “Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another’s secret.” God gives very specific instructions for conflict resolution that is often ignored by Christians who should be experts on conflict resolution because we have been given by God the ministry of reconciliation. In this verse, God tells us to first seek to handle matters with others 1-on-1 and privately, not sharing the issues with others. Is that what you do?

15. Proverbs 25:15 – “With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.” Patience is very powerful. Instant gains are usually quickly lost. Things that matter take time. Patience is the first virtue mentioned in the Great Love Verse, 1 Cor 13:4 – “Love is patient and kind....”

16. Proverbs 25:26 – “Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.” Jesus is the Pure, Live Giving, Living Water. Always let His pure water flow through you to others by remaining faithfully obedient and pure.

17. Psalm 35:10 -- "All my bones shall say, 'O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?'" The Lord reveals Himself in our lives by doing what we cannot do for ourselves. Trusting in God is trusting beyond ourselves, relying on the character and strength of God rather than our own. Do you have the faith to do that?

18. Psalm 36:11 -- "Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away." The psalmist's fear was his own tendency towards pride and arrogance that opened the door to temptation and sin. So, the psalmist prayed for protection from arrogance. Are you praying likewise?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 March: Today, figure out what percentage of your income you gave specifically in the name of Jesus, tithes, gifts, alms, etc. last year. Was it 10% or more? (Deuteronomy 14:22-29) Consider what your level of giving reveals about your heart and your faith.

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 6, Saturday, 24 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+24%3B+psalm+34>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 24 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 11:1, 2, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18, 26-28 -- “You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. And consider today.., consider the discipline of the Lord your God.... You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today.... And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Lord

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your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.... Take care lest your heart be deceived... the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you.... You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.... See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am

commanding you today.” We are saved by faith, not by works. Yet, God still demands obedience, still disciplines, still holds His people accountable for their actions, and still allows the natural consequences of sin to occur. His Name remains Holy. God does not desire for us to suffer the consequences of disobedience, and so He gives us clear warning. “Take care lest your heart be deceived.” Do you want to experience blessings or curses in life? In John 17, before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed for our “oneness” with Him. Sin hinders that oneness, it quenches the Spirit, grieves the Spirit, and gets us out of step with the Spirit. Our sin doesn’t separate us from the love of God, but it does rob us of the fullness of joy Jesus wants us to have in His love. God’s greatest commandment for us is love. Jesus said if you love Him, you will obey Him. 1 Timothy 1:5 says, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Love emanates from 1) a pure heart, 2) a good conscience, and 3) a sincere faith. Sin, all sin, is unloving. One last time: Deuteronomy 11:1 – “You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.” To love God is to obey Him.

2. Deuteronomy 11:8 – ““You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today.” Partial obedience is disobedience.

3. Deuteronomy 11:13 -- “And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season.” Most people today would consider it absurd for you to believe that natural occurrences or that seemingly random circumstances were actually orchestrated by God to bless or to punish, but the Bible says that God punishes nations with weather, foreign armies, corrupt governments, financial crisis, plaques, etc. The same God and made and controls the natural laws to reflect His character also made the moral laws to reflect His character and His requirements. Defying either set of laws has devastating consequences.

4. Deuteronomy 11:16, 18-20 – “Take care lest your heart be deceived.... You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” The word of God is our best defense against deception. Not only must we be continuously immersed in it, we must be careful to teach our children who are easily deceived and who need to be grounded in the word at an early age. God calls all Christians to think not just about the next generation but about many generations to come.

5. Deuteronomy 11:26 -- “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse.” Obedience is your choice, but consequences belong to God – you do not choose your consequences. Obey God and be blessed.

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6. Deuteronomy 12:19 – “Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.” The Levites were not given an inheritance of land that they would be fully dedicated to their roles of spiritual leadership. Therefore, they depended economically on the faithfulness of the people. We will read later, unfortunately, that the people do end up neglecting the Levites. Of course, God knew that would happen, but He called the Levites into their dependent positions nonetheless. God is faithful when no one else is. He calls us to reflect His character by making our fidelity unconditional too. Love others who don’t love you back. Forgive the unforgiving. Give to the ungrateful. Display the love and faithfulness of Jesus. It won’t be easy, but it will be joyous if you are motivated by love.

7. Deuteronomy 12:2-3 – God wants you to remove every obstacle to total devotion to Him.

8. Deuteronomy 12:10-11 – God wants to give you rest and joy which comes from obediently following Him.

9. Deuteronomy 12:30 – Victories bring new temptations. Be careful not to become prideful. God has a plan to remove all pride from your life. Notice in the Bible that God allows people to fail in their strength areas in order to humble them, to help them see their total dependence on God’s grace. Abraham was known for his faith, but he lied about his wife being his sister and had Ishmael with Hagar. Moses was the humblest man of his day, but his pride and anger kept him out of the Promised Land. David was known for his integrity, but then Bathsheba. Solomon was known for his wisdom, but he destroyed the kingdom and ended his day writing of his woes in Ecclesiastes. Peter, known for his courage, denied Jesus three times. You get the point. Our best will never be good enough. God will tear down our pride idols so that we can learn to rest in Him and Him alone.

10. Deuteronomy 12:29, 30 – “When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, take care that you be not ensnared to follow them.” Christians, living as ambassadors for Christ in a foreign land, must be very, very careful not to conform to the morals and habits of society. In most matters, the faithful Christian will stand in stark contrast to the general population, as a bright light. But the unfaithful Christian will look and act like the world around them.

11. Proverbs 24:1 -- “Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them, for their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble.” Be very careful who you admire, who you seek to emulate, who you partner with, and who you befriend. Don’t let personality, popularity, prestige, talent, or skill blind you to the character flaws in others. If Jesus isn’t the center of their life and their priority, they will lead you astray. How many times have you heard a Christian say about an ungodly friend, “...but (s)he is really nice.”? “Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” (1 Cor 15:33) 1 Timothy 1:5 says, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” A person with an impure heart, a guilty conscience and an insincere faith cannot love you as you would desire, no matter how fun or interesting they are to be around for a time.

12. Proverbs 24:5 -- “A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might.” Intellectual strength is greater than physical strength; emotional strength is greater than intellectual and physical strength; and spiritual strength is greater than them all.

13. Proverbs 24:10 -- “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” Strength is developed over time when you don’t need it but revealed when you do need it. If you didn’t invest in your strength

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during peace, you won't have it when you need it in crisis. When your faith is tested, then you will reveal how much you have invested in personal spiritual development.

14. Proverbs 24:11, 12 -- "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" God has given you the responsibility to intervene in the lives of those around you to help keep them from the destructiveness of sin. If you do nothing, God will hold you accountable.

15. Proverbs 24:16 -- "...for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity." The righteous fall too, but their response glorifies God by revealing His strength in them.

16. Proverbs 24:17, 18 -- "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him." If want those who in some way offend you to "get what's coming to them," you have lost sight of the grace you have received and have made the Cross a small thing; you have denied your mission of reconciliation; and you have placed yourself in opposition to God.

17. Proverbs 24:19 -- "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked." From the beginning of the Bible through the end, God warns us not to be concerned by or enamored with the ungodly -- treat people with the respect that they deserve, but fear and respect God first and foremost.

18. Proverbs 24:21, 22 -- "My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?" God expects you to obey the law, unless that law would cause you to disobey Him.

19. Proverbs 24:24, 25 -- "Whoever says to the wicked, 'You are in the right,' will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations, but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them." Do not compromise the truth simply to get along with others. Be willing to rebuke those who are wrong.

20. Proverbs 24:26 -- "Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips." The loving thing to do is to tell the truth in love -- this is "true love".

21. Proverbs 24:27 -- "Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house." A biblical principle is to do the hard thing first. Always do what you have to do before what you want to do. This is a good rule to live by and helps avoid procrastination. Have you ever considered procrastination is unbiblical?

22. Proverbs 24:29 -- "Do not say, 'I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.'" Leave your personal justice to God. Be a minister of mercy and grace. As the recipient of mercy and grace, you have no right to do otherwise. Civic justice is another matter.

23. Proverbs 24:32 -- "Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction." Be wise enough to learn from the mistakes of others rather than having to learn the hard way from your own bad decisions. Wisdom, in part, is understanding what you haven't personally experienced.

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24. Psalm 34:1 – “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Try doing this today and every day, regardless your apparent circumstances. Rejoice in the Lord is a command. As someone once said, “It is impossible to play a sad song on a banjo.” It is really hard to be miserable or to make other miserable if you are constantly, vocally praising God.

25. Psalm 34:3 – “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!” God wants you to worship in relationship, with other like-minded Christians, again, every day and continually.

26. Psalm 34:4, 5 – “I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.” You must seek the Lord from your heart to get the answers for which you are seeking, and when you experience the Lord, you will live life with an obvious joy. If you are not radiant, there is a reason.

27. Psalm 34:13, 14 – “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” Following God and remaining close to God includes changing what you look at, what you think, what you say, and what you do.

28. Psalm 34:15-17 – “The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.” God does play favorites.

29. Psalm 34:18 – “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Relationship with God requires constant humility.

30. Psalm 34:19-22 – “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.... Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.” Everyone goes through life’s afflictions, but God delivers and saves the Christian while all who reject Jesus are ultimately destroyed and condemned.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 March: Consider what remains in your life that might be limiting your total devotion to God and eliminate it. Remove the idols from your life. (Deuteronomy 12)

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 5, Friday, 23 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+23%3B+mark+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 23 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 9:1, 2 -- God's purpose doesn't include many easy tasks. Are you ready to be challenged for God's glory?

2. Deuteronomy 9:2 – “Who can stand before the sons of Anak?” Anak and his sons were Nephilim (Numbers 13:33), giant, ungodly people. “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.” (Genesis 6:4) Goliath, who was from Gath (one of the towns of the Anakim – see Joshua 11:21, 22) might have been one of the Nephilim. The Nephilim had been feared throughout history, but God warned His people to not fear what everyone

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else had feared throughout the generations. What seemingly reasonable but limiting fears have been passed down to you, from generation to generation? If you remain in God's will, you have nothing to fear. The apparent size of your 'giants' are irrelevant.

3. Deuteronomy 9:3 -- You can do anything God tells you to do because He will empower you. It is when you are operating outside His will that you have reason to be concerned.

4. Deuteronomy 9:4-6 -- We deserve none of God's blessings and can take no credit for our successes. We can only rejoice in and proclaim God's mercy and grace.

5. Deuteronomy 9:20, 25, 26 -- "And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.... So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights, because the Lord had said he would destroy you. And I prayed to the Lord, 'O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'" Aaron and the Israelites made Moses' life miserable due to their stubborn sinfulness, and they incited Moses to sin enough to keep him out of the Promised Land, yet Moses never stopped praying for them and interceding on their behalf before God. Is that what you do for those who make your life hard, those who never seem to change? Who have you continued to pray for over the last 40 years?

6. Deuteronomy 10:12, 13 -- "What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?" Love and daily obedience go hand-in-hand.

7. Deuteronomy 10:15, 16 -- "Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn." The meritless love God has shown you should compel you to love and obedience. Surrender to God's love.

8. Deuteronomy 10:19 -- "Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." With a grateful heart, love others the way God has loved you.

9. Deuteronomy 10:21 -- "He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen." Is the reality of God in your life so great that He is your praise? Is Jesus what you are excited about and talking about most?

10. Proverbs 23:4 -- "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist." Acquiring too much wealth can be a sign of a lack of faith in God's future provision and only leads to needless suffering. Acquiring excessive wealth is also evidence that a person has failed to meet God's commandments of love and has failed to understand their God-given mission in life:

- Luke 12:13-21 -- And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is

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required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

11. Proverbs 23:4 -- "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist." The first test for God's people was whether or not they would honor the Sabbath.

12. Proverbs 23:10, 11 -- "Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you." Jesus protects the weak. When people work against the weak, they are challenging Jesus.

13. Proverbs 23:13, 14 -- "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol." God disciplines you to keep you from destruction. Be grateful for His discipline.

14. Proverbs 23:22 -- "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." God's plan is for a man and woman, a father and mother, to raise up godly children. A man and a woman each represent different attributes of God. They are made intentionally different. Together, as one, they provide balanced life direction to the next generation.

15. Mark 4: 10 -- "And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables." Get alone with Jesus so He can teach you.

16. Mark 4:11, 12 -- " And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that 'they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.'" Only through the Holy Spirit can you truly understand the word of God. Humans cannot naturally understand the Kingdom. They need God's revelation.

17. Mark 4:18-21 -- "'And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.' And he said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?'" I pray that the worries of the world won't keep us from keeping "the main thing the main thing," won't cause us to neglect the Great Commission, won't cause us to get distracted and miss our life's purpose. I pray that we won't put our lamp under a basket for sake of career or sociability. I pray that every one of us will bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. If the world around us is very dark, it might be that our light is not very bright.

18. Mark 4:41 -- "And they were filled with great fear." Nothing was more fearful to the disciples than the power of Jesus. If you don't have a healthy fear (respect and awe) of the Lord, it is because you haven't experienced Him as you ought. Walk with Jesus by abiding in His word, and watch Him work in a way that overwhelms you.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 March: Dedicate one hour today to solitude with Jesus. (Mark 4:10)

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 4, Thursday, 22 Mar 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+22%3B+mark+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 22 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 7:2 -- "...you must devote them to complete destruction." God does not compromise with sin. When God forgives you and frees you from sin, He expects you to completely remove that sin from your life; this involves removing, as much as possible, those things in your life that would tempt you to sin. You might actually need to turn that TV off. You might have to choose Christian friends. You might have to limit your social media viewing. You might have to change habits in your life that you know are destructive. None of it is hard to do, but sometimes your divided heart makes these things seem impossible. The jelly doughnut doesn't cause you to break your diet; it is the desire within you that does. Until you get better control of your desires, don't bring home the jelly doughnut. When you get control of your desires, you no longer want to bring home the jelly doughnut.
2. Deuteronomy 7:3, 4 -- "You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly." The purpose of marriage is to raise up godly children. (Malachi 2:15) Since a person's primary purpose in life is to know Jesus (be one with Him) and make Him known (John 17), since the marriage is intended to represent to the world Christ's love for His church, since God calls a man and woman to be "one" in marriage, and since the marriage is to serve as God's primary institution for discipleship of the next generation, a Christian must marry a person who will partner with them wholeheartedly, in mutual support, to know Jesus, make Him known, and to raise up godly children.
3. Deuteronomy 7:6-8 -- "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you." God chose you to be holy, not because of who you were but because He loves you. So, in response to His unmerited love, be holy.
4. Deuteronomy 7:9, 8:6, 8:11 -- "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God.... So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.... Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes." Notice how much emphasis the Bible places on the criticality of obeying God's commands, a mandate repeated over and over again. God knows our weaknesses and gives us clear guidance and direction, along with the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. We give in to temptation and sin when our "Yes" is bigger than our "No", when the thing in front of us is bigger, more real, more powerful in our minds than the awesome reality and power of God. At the moment of decision, we make God small, insignificant, irrelevant, distant, or non-existent. We dethrone the LORD and worship the idol of our passions. For at least a moment, we forget God. The last "fruit of the Spirit" is self-control which comes from the reality of Christ in our lives. The power of self-control comes from truly knowing that the Lord our God IS God, from truly knowing Jesus, by glorifying (magnifying) Him in our hearts, by making Jesus bigger than any temptation or idol out there. We must walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh, practicing the presence of God. We must truly understand the implications of having the Spirit within us, of being the Temple of God. You are holy ground. God's love is not determined by our obedience, but our obedience reveals our love for Him. God knows we are not perfected in love, and gives us His commands, in part, to reveal to us

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(not to Him – He already knows) where our hearts are still not right. God's commands are intended to draw you closer to Him, not further away. Grace enables us to fail forward, always confident in God's unchanging love for us.

5. Deuteronomy 7:13 -- "He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you." Blessings are the natural result of obedience to God.

6. Deuteronomy 7:21 -- "You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God." One of the most, if not the most, repeated commands in the Bible is, "Don't be afraid." Fear is the opposite of faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

7. Deuteronomy 7:22 -- "The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you." The challenges you are experiencing are there for a bigger reason you cannot understand, working together for good (Romans 8:28). Trust God's plan through personal crisis. When life gets hard, get closer to Jesus, and keep your spiritual eyes open. God is doing something big in your life.

8. Deuteronomy 7:25 -- "The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire." God does not respect other religions, nor should you. Yes, we treat people with respect, and respect a person's right to have a viewpoint, but we don't respect false claims. We should always treat everyone with love, but that doesn't mean we placate false narratives from false gospels. If you truly love someone, you must speak the truth to them in love.

9. Deuteronomy 8:2 -- "And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not." God uses challenges to test your heart, not that He doesn't know your heart (He knows it through and through) but so that the truth of your heart would be revealed to you. When faced with challenges, examine your heart from the integrity of your behavior. Do you act less loving when you are stressed? Do you become more selfish when resources seem limited? God wants you to see the truth of you so that you can grow to be more like Jesus and closer to Him. You cannot fix what you refuse to see; honesty with self and with others (humility) is the first step to change.

10. Deuteronomy 8:3 -- "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." With grace, God gives you Holy Spirit power that you did not have before to empower change. When we see the truth of our sin, we can rejoice knowing that we are no longer trapped by our sin, that God gives us the power to change, supernatural power, far beyond mere will power. Ultimately, you cannot change yourself. Though you must work to change, it is the Holy Spirit within you that enables change.

11. Deuteronomy 8:5 -- "Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you." Often, God is using circumstances to discipline you, to show you something you refused to see merely through reading, understanding, and applying His clear word. For example, if you simply

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refuse to obey God's clear command to forgive unconditionally, He may place you in a situation where you need unconditional forgiveness.

12. Deuteronomy 8:11-13 -- "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied." Christians are tested through hard times, but perhaps tested even more through easy times. We can turn blessings into curses through complacency and disobedience. Do you pray to God more during hard times than good times? Do you grow closer to God through hard times than good times? If so, perhaps God needs to keep you in difficult circumstances for you to accomplish your life purpose of knowing Jesus and being one with Him. If you want good times, be reliable in good times.

13. Deuteronomy 8:17, 18 -- "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day." A very common mistake made by Christians is growing prideful in God's blessings. When you succeed, don't think it is because of how great you are. Don't take any credit for your accomplishments -- always point to Jesus.

14. Proverbs 22:7 -- "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender." God does not want His people to be enslaved by debt.

15. Proverbs 22:9 -- "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor." God blesses the giver -- it's a promise.

16. Proverbs 22:9, 16 -- How many times does the Bible tell you to take care of the needy?

17. Proverbs 22:11 -- Gracious speech is the mark of a pure heart.

18. Proverbs 22:26 -- Avoid getting entangled in commitments to the ungodly. Don't make promises you cannot keep.

19. Mark 3:4 -- "And he said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent." Since you have just read in Deuteronomy (the book most quoted by Jesus) about the Sabbath, you understand that the intent of the Sabbath was to stop work to acknowledge in faith that God was the provider. It was not intended for a day to stop serving others or ministering to their needs. A day of not working for self gives you even more time to simply love God and others.

20. Mark 3:14 -- "And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach." We are not called to simply know Jesus, we are also called to make Him known to others.

21. Mark 3:30 -- "And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'" Does your family think you are crazy because of your love and fidelity to Jesus? Are you a Jesus fan or a Jesus fanatic?

22. Mark 3:33-35 -- "'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother

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and sister and mother.” The real children of God are the ones who do the will of God, who remain faithful and obedient in thought, word, and deed. What you think, desire, and do reveals who you really are. Anyone can say they are a Christian, but God knows the heart, and actions reveal the truth of the heart.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 March: Today, clean house. Eliminate from your life the things that are unholy or impure -- the things that might misrepresent God's character and truth or that might tempt you to sin. Set the conditions in your life for fidelity and holiness. If you are like most today, you will have to change your habits of entertainment. (Deuteronomy 7:2)

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 3, Wednesday, 21 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+21%3B+mark+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 21 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 5:1 -- "And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.'" Hear them, learn them, and then carefully do them. Some don't hear; some don't learn; and some don't do. Your job on earth is to first, obey by doing what you have heard and learned. Solomon's conclusion from life sums it up: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Salvation is not through the Law but through faith. In fact, the Law reveals our need for grace. However, the Law nonetheless reflects the character of God, and we glorify God in obedience. Whereas obedience was once motivated by a sense of fear or duty, it should more and more be motivated by genuine love for the Lord.

- Psalm 119:30 -- I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.

- Psalm 119:60 -- I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.

- John 14:15 -- "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

- John 14:31 -- But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

- 1 John 5:3 -- For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

- John 3:36 -- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- Luke 6:46 -- "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

- Acts 5:29 -- But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

- 1 John 3:24 -- Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

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- James 1:22-25 -- But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

2. Deuteronomy 5:2 – “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today.” God’s commands are for you, and He will hold you accountable. It is personal, between Him and you. None of God’s commands are outdated. He met you where you were, and now He expects you to obey. This is not about salvation but about sanctification. You are God’s child. Children are supposed to grow and mature. Parents discipline their children in order to mature them. Better to have discipline than to need to be disciplined. Obedience is a product of love. We are not perfected in love or obedience, but this should be our pursuit.

3. Deuteronomy 5:2, 3 -- "The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today." Faith is not passed down from one generation to the next, nor is relationship. Faith, hope, love, and obedience is a personal matter. God speaks to you personally, and you must choose how you will respond.

4. Deuteronomy 5:7, 6:5 -- “You shall have no other gods before me.... You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” All other commandments rest on this foundation: Love God completely and let nothing hinder that total love. Obeying all the other commands from the wrong heart or wrong motives is still disobedience and, perhaps, a more dangerous form of disobedience than obvious sin because these “deeds” breed pride and convince the practitioner their self-righteousness has made them truly united with God. God is love; unity can only come through love, not mere deeds. So, you didn’t lie, cheat, or steal – why? What was the motivation? Was it fear of punishment? Was it to get some sort of blessing or reward? Was it to be honorable before men, to have a good reputation? Was it to make your family proud? Was it merely out of a sense of obligation? These are defiled sacrifices at the altar (Malachi 1:6-14), certainly nothing to brag about. Fortunately, the perfect sacrifice was provided for us so that we do not have to humiliate ourselves with our pathetic offerings, so that we can have intimate relationship with “Daddy” despite our wicked hearts. Now we are free to grow into love without fear. Certainly, we must strive with all of our might to obey all of God’s commands, but those commands must be truly on our hearts rather than just in our minds and in our actions. As long as our goal is blessings rather than the One who blesses, we are missing the mark (sinning). If there were no reward at all but merely the sufferings of Job to look forward to, would you still love and obey God just the same? Humbling to consider. “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” (Deuteronomy 6:6)

5. Deuteronomy 5:8 -- “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” The Glory of God is unfathomable. The moment we think we can shape or mold God from our perceptions or imagination, we have committed an unthinkable act of presumption, have greatly insulted the Almighty, and having greatly limited God in our minds. Subconsciously, we begin to focus on the image we have created of God rather than the True Almighty in all His Wonder. As innocent as it might seem, the carved image is our feeble attempt to bring God down to our level, to worship Him on our terms. Have you

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missed the fact that when people attempt to paint or carve images of God, the created object usually looks like the artist? Someone once said, "In the beginning, God created man, and man has been trying to create God ever since. You may never have created an image of God, but also be careful not to limit God from the perspective of your own understanding, by what you have personally experienced, or by what you can see, touch, smell, taste, or hear. The created thing can never completely understand that which created it. God is Spirit and must be worshiped in Spirit. God's commands protect His character from the deceptive thoughts of people.

6. Deuteronomy 5:8 – "I the Lord your God am a jealous God." God's character does not change. Oprah Winfrey made headlines when she said that she stopped believing in God when she read this verse. She doesn't (or didn't) understand that God knows that He is what we ultimately need for total joy and peace; He is the source of love; He is the source of order; He is the source of justice. In love and justice, He cannot tolerate anything that would further drive what He loves away from Him. God's jealousy is not like man's jealousy. God's jealousy is perfectly loving and just, and only seeks our very best interest. Be very grateful your God is a jealous God.

7. Deuteronomy 5:11 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." Similar to Deuteronomy 5:8, this verse warns that we must never make light of God, to speak of Him in a casual sense. The thought of God's Holiness and Majesty should leave us undone, totally overwhelmed. To use the Name of God carelessly is to depreciate the LORD. Do you understand who you are talking about?

8. Deuteronomy 5:12, 15 -- "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.... You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." Much like tithes, offerings, and gifts, the Sabbath makes no sense from the human perspective -- a whole day of being totally unproductive. Imagine how the Israelites must have felt about the Sabbath day while living in the desert where food and water was hard to acquire. When God commanded the Sabbath, he reminded His people of His provision. The Sabbath day is a weekly choice to acknowledge that God is in control, not us; that our survival and success depends on Him, not on our own efforts; that we trust Him rather than in our own abilities. It is more than a day off from work, it is an act of faith and a proclamation of faith before the world. Deuteronomy 5:14, 15 -- "...that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm." God knows that you need rest and that you need to be reminded that your provision comes from Him, not from your efforts. He also knows that He has to make you rest through a command. Also, He expects you to enable others to rest. So, you taking the Sabbath means that others will too. If no one went to restaurants on Sunday, restaurant employees would be forced to take that day off. Also, everyone would know that God was the source of that rest. Some believe that the Sabbath is no longer something God expects because Jesus "fulfilled" the Law. However, I would be willing to bet that you are not getting your rest, allowing others to get their rest, or glorifying God as well as you could if everyone knew you didn't work on Sunday.

-- Nehemiah 13:19-20 -- "As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day. Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or

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twice. But I warned them and said to them, "Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath. Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love." What a powerful international testimony. Israel was the cross-roads of trade within the global region. When the Israelites honored the Sabbath, all trade stopped. Everyone knew why – God's people were honoring God.

9. Deuteronomy 5:16 -- "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." The most important earthly institution established by God is the family, and God has given special responsibility and authority to family. The purpose of marriage is to raise up Godly children (Malachi 2:15), and God has built His Kingdom on earth from families. God also said that the marriage is the earthly model of Christ's love for the church. God intends for both parents and children to learn about obedience to authority through the family. The family is the school house for character development. A person who doesn't respect and honor their parents (despite their imperfections) is a dishonorable person.

10. Deuteronomy 5:17-21 -- "You shall not murder. And you shall not commit adultery. And you shall not steal. And you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. And you shall not covet your neighbor's wife." The majority of the Ten Commandments (six of ten) deal with how we treat others. We love God primarily through loving others. Christians should be masters of love. Jesus said that if you love Him, you will obey His commandments, and His primary commandment is to love others. How you treat others reveals how much you really love God.

11. Deuteronomy 5:29 -- "Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!" Religious moments in your life will not bring you joy, peace, and fulfillment. We cannot simply court God, we must be married to Him and totally faithful to Him. The Bible describes disobedience as spiritual adultery.

12. Deuteronomy 5:32, 33 -- "You shall be careful therefore to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess." Salvation is a free gift from God that cannot be earned, but it must be taken and then used to obey Him. Obedience is our opportunity to experience the joy of God. God only wants the very best for you, but you must do what He says to have the very best. This is not hard to understand. Why throw away God's gifts for you through disobedience?

13. Deuteronomy 6:2 -- "...that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you." Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." We learn to fear the Lord and to know Him by obeying His commands, even if we don't understand the "why" behind them and even if we have not yet obtained the wholehearted desire to follow them. Obedience shapes your character to learn to love and appreciate God. Obedience also protects you from what you don't yet understand. As we grow in love more and more, obedience goes from being easier and easier to being something we truly want to do from the heart, regardless of how hard or easy it is. When we are truly motivated by love, we no longer need to be commanded to do what God wants because it is what

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we want; the Law does not end; it is just no longer needed to keep us on path. Jesus did not abolish the Law; He just fulfilled it. It wasn't an issue for Him because He was one with the Father.

14. Deuteronomy 6:4-8 -- "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." All that you are must be focused on loving and serving God in them moment. Parents must model this and discuss this with their children continuously. How focused are you on Jesus today, loving Him, serving Him, and proclaiming Him in all that you do?

15. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 -- "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." You must love God to obey Him, but your love for Him grows as you work to obey Him. When you obey out of a sense of duty, you learn to obey out of love. You must teach kids to learn how to love God by teaching them to first obey. Disciples learn discipline. Disciple your children first.

16. Deuteronomy 6:16, 17 -- "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you." Don't take God's grace for granted and be complacent in your fidelity. You have been forgiven that you might be renewed to a right relationship with God, not so that you could continue to disgrace the Name of Christ through bad behavior.

17. Proverbs 21:1 -- "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." God uses all leaders for His purposes, to bless or discipline people. If you don't like your leadership, ask yourself why God allowed them to lead.

18. Proverbs 21:17 -- "Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." Too many Christians are in debt, have no savings, fail to tithe, and fail to give generously to others because they buy things they should never buy in the pursuit of comfort, entertainment, and prestige.

19. Proverbs 21:30 -- "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord." Our society is full of all sorts of secular humanist theories that purport to explain and offer solutions to mankind's problems. However, without Jesus as the solution, they are all just complicated lies, false gospels, anti-Christ. Some Christians have been tempted to merge these theories into Christian doctrine, replacing clean living water with muddy water trampled by men. Others have tried to turn the Bible into a self-help book that competes with these other theories. However, the goal of the Bible is not earthly comfort or success. The goal is knowing Jesus and being one with the Father and the Son. (see John 17)

20. Mark 2:10, 11 -- "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.'" The purpose of healing, charity, and ministry is not mainly to take care of temporary temporal needs but rather to proclaim the Gospel in authority. Don't just help people with their immediate needs. Address their eternal spiritual needs by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus.

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21. Mark 2:15 – “And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.” Many seek to justify their continued sin by saying that Jesus hung out with sinners. However, Jesus was not just hanging out with sinners, He was fellowshiping the repentant sinners that had committed to following Him. There is a big difference.

22. Mark 2:27, 28 – “And he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.’” Again, God knows we need the Sabbath.

23. Mark 2:9 -- “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?” Even unbelievers, for selfish reasons, can preach the gospel from a knowledge of the Bible, but the power of God revealed in the life of the messenger validates the messenger and confirms the Truth of God.

24. Mark 2:20 -- “The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.” Jesus anticipated the church would fast until his return. Is fasting a part of your prayer life?

25. Mark 2:23, 24 -- “One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’” How do you treat other people when you are famished? How do you treat people who criticize you when you are starving, really tired, sick, pressured, or when you are just having a really tough day? Jesus and his disciples were so hungry, having invested everything they had in service to others, that they were plucking heads of grain to eat -- a lot of work for very little food, something poor people would do. It was that moment that the Pharisees, who lived luxurious lives in their lack of service to others, criticized Jesus and His disciples. How would you have responded? Jesus, the embodiment of love, responds calmly with God's word, seeking to teach and positively influence his attackers. Jesus modelled conflict management for us.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 March: Treat the Pharisees in your life as Jesus did -- See comments above on Mark 2:23, 24

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 2, Tuesday, 20 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+20%3B+mark+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 20 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 3:18, 19 – “All your men of valor shall cross over armed before your brothers, the people of Israel. Only your wives, your little ones, and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall remain in the cities that I have given you....” God’s plan did not use women and children for battle. Not only were they more vulnerable, they were the source of future generations.

2. Deuteronomy 3:21, 22 – “Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings. So will the Lord do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. You shall not fear them, for it is the Lord your God who fights for you.” How can you have fear if God Almighty is with you, doing the fighting for you? It takes faith to believe in what we cannot see and completely understand. We do not have ‘blind faith.’ Our trust and hope are based upon what God has already done and continues to do. He has always proven Himself faithful.

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3. Deuteronomy 3:24 – “O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand.” Do you have this sort of excited expectation of what God is going to do next in your life?

4. Deuteronomy 3:28 – “But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.” God called Moses to prepare his replacement. Are you preparing the next generation to fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission in the next generation?

5. Deuteronomy 4:5 – “See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.” Moses only taught what God had commanded him, nothing more and nothing less. He taught the people to obey. Jesus has given us the Great Commission – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) Obedience has always been central to God’s plan for His people. Is that what you are teaching others?

6. Deuteronomy 4:9 – “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children.” Fidelity not only requires great personal diligence but also a commitment to teach the next generation.

7. Deuteronomy 4:15 -- “Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire.” Living spiritually is not ‘natural’, it is ‘supernatural’, it is beyond the natural and beyond our six senses. We are called to be led by the Spirit, not our own understanding. However, we have a tendency to hang onto the natural, physical world and our own knowledge. We have a tendency to define God in a way that makes sense to us rather than conforming our senses to the ultimate reality of Him. We must be very careful not to plot our own course while telling ourselves that course is where God is leading us. We must be careful not to find an idol (a substitute for God) that seems to meet our temporal needs.

8. Deuteronomy 4:19 – “And beware lest you.... be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.” Your idols will control you. Following idols makes you unspiritual, just like all the unbelievers.

9. Deuteronomy 4:30 – “When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice.” God’s plan involves allowing you to learn from your own mistakes. You have to learn to choose Him and to be faithful to Him, casting out all substitutes.

10. Deuteronomy 4:35 – “To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him. Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you.” God gave you His commands, knows you will disobey them, and will discipline you that you will grow in Christ-like character. Do not despise the Lord’s discipline.

11. Proverbs 20:3 – “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.” You only dishonor God and yourself (His ambassador) when you fight with others. A Christian should never quarrel. If you fight with others, you are seeing your own selfishness and self-centeredness being revealed. It is hard to defend yourself when you are dead, dead to self, crucified with Christ. Don’t

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convince yourself that you are only expressing “righteous anger,” unless you get absolutely nothing out of winning, and only Jesus is glorified.

12. Proverbs 20:4 – “The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.” Everything that matters in life is subject to the Principle of the Farm—you reap what you sow. You don’t get stronger, wiser, richer, more skilled, and more Christ-like unless you are willing to work hard every day for a future harvest. People always overestimate what they can do in a day and underestimate what they can do in a lifetime. Spend every day working your personal life farm in order of priority. If you aren’t first investing in Bible study and prayer, your priorities are out of order, and you will not end with the harvest you desired. There are no shortcuts on a farm.

13. Proverbs 20:11 -- “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” Eventually, your actions will reveal what you really believe about God and how much you really love Him.

14. Proverbs 20:16 -- “Take a man’s garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for foreigners.” God wants us to protect others from themselves when we can.

15. Mark 1:8 – “I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” God’s people are those who have the Holy Spirit.

16. Mark 1:12 – “The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.” The Spirit knows you will be tested, but the Spirit does not leave you alone in temptation.

17. Mark 1:17, 18 -- “‘Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” We all have a choice to make: will we surrender our careers and lives to follow Him, or will we continue to seek what pagans pursue hoping that God will bless us while we subordinate His Kingdom agenda for the American dream? In Acts 28, we read that Paul worked in order support the spreading of the Gospel, sacrificing all in the process. We cannot serve both God and self. It’s time to leave the nets and follow. Surrendering your careers and live to the Lord does not mean to stop working and living. After all, God gave Adam a job before God gave him a helpmate; and then they worked together. There wasn’t a problem until Adam and Eve started working and living for self rather than for God. You were created to work for and glorify God in partnership with others, to love God in love relationship with others. In most cases throughout the Bible, when God called people to work for Him, to join Him in what He was doing, those people had to stop doing what they were doing in order to join Him and serve Him. Are you willing to go where God leads?

18. Mark 1:18 – “And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” Obedience is instantaneous. Jesus will call you out of your comfort zone, away from the plan you had for your life. You must be ready to “go” immediately, no looking back. The word immediately is used nine times in Mark 1.

19. Mark 1:23, 24 – “And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?’” Sometimes the demons are more responsive to Jesus than we are. James says that the demons believe in Jesus and “shudder”, do you?

20. Mark 1:31 – “...she began to serve them.” A genuine encounter with God leads to service.

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21. Mark 1:35 – “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” For a while it became very popular for people to wear bracelets, shirts, and other clothing items with the acronym, “WWJD,” which stood for, “What would Jesus do?” The general idea was this message would be a visible reminder to help people stop and think at a point of decision, helping them choose to act more like Jesus rather than the way they normally would. The intent was good, but unfortunately, the visible reminder cannot make up for what should have been done before the point of decision. What would Jesus do? He would consistently, throughout his whole life, rise up early in the morning, while it is still dark, to pray. Is that what you habitually do? Do you want to experience Christian power without Christian disciplines? Let Jesus counsel you. Remember the Principle of the Farm mentioned above. What you do at the moment will be the product of what you did consistently before the moment. As Proverbs 24:10 says, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” You will not trust the Jesus you don’t know that well. You will not obey the Jesus you don’t really trust. Dedicate the “first fruits” of your day to growing in your love and trust in Jesus so that you will be ready to obey when the time comes, and it is coming – today.

22. Mark 1:38 -- “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” Jesus did not lead small group in a comfortable living room with snacks and comfortable conversation about biblical ideas. He led them into the streets, one day at a time, and showed them how to spread the word. What do you do in your small group? How many people has your group ministered to, led to Christ, disciple?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 March: Don’t hesitate to preach the Gospel to others while you minister to their needs. Tell people about Jesus today. (Mark 1)

DBRP- WEEK 12, Day 1, Monday, 19 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Deut+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+19%3B+acts+28>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 19 Mar 18:

1. Deuteronomy 1:3 – “Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them.” Moses led the people by leading them in obedience to all of God’s commandments. This is what God called us to do in Matthew 28 (...teaching them to obey....). Are you fulfilling your calling on this earth? Your first leadership responsibility is leading yourself (which is actually following Jesus wholeheartedly); your next leadership responsibility is to your family, then within your church, then within your community and place of employment. Make sure you keep your priorities in order.

2. Deuteronomy 1:8 -- "See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore he would give to your fathers...." Faith and obedience involve claiming God's promises.

3. Deuteronomy 1:11 – “May the Lord, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as he has promised you!” God’s first command to His people was to “be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth.” God wants His people to grow in numbers and godly influence within the world. Healthy churches grow in both numbers and in holiness, and healthy churches have a dramatic impact on their communities and nation. Healthy churches are built from healthy families. The church must disciple its members to be strong followers of Jesus, strong leaders within their families, strong church members, and strong community leaders.

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4. Deuteronomy 1:12-15 – “How can I bear by myself the weight and burden of you and your strife? Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.’... So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes.” Churches must organize for growth around a hierarchy of faithful leaders, down to small teams.

5. Deuteronomy 1:16, 17 -- “And I charged your judges at that time: Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God.” Justice is defined by God and applies to all equally. God’s justice supersedes all bias or preference.

6. Deuteronomy 1:17; Acts 28:30, 31 -- “You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s.... He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” I fear that the church has largely lost its voice, having surrendered much of its authority to execute its Great Commission. The average Christian now lacks the competence, confidence, and/or conviction to boldly proclaim Christ in the community. The world has told us that it is inappropriate and offensive to speak about Jesus in public, so we don’t much. We don’t want to cause problems that could threaten our comfort and security. In our political correctness, we have become offensive to no one but God. God not only gave us the Great Commission -- go into our respective communities and make disciples (disciplined followers of Christ), baptize them, and teach them to obey all the Jesus commanded (not some, but “all”) -- He also gave us the authority in His Name and the power (He is with us and in us). The daily priority for a Christian, the measure of a day’s success, should be the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the teaching of Jesus while serving as Christ’s Ambassador. Work merely provides the means to support the teaching so that the spreading the Gospel can be at our own expense. However, when work becomes the end rather than the ways and means, we lose sight of our actual mission. Too many Christians today are focused on productivity rather than effectiveness, replacing the Gospel for the American Dream. There are basically four motivations behind all that we do: fear, greed, duty, and finally love. The least honorable motivations are fear and greed; the greatest is love. Too often, we are motivated by fear over love – fear of failure, fear of men, fear of punishment. We need to return to our mission of reconciliation, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit. What I find most striking today is that as the church rapidly recedes and surrenders ground, while most Christians rarely use the name “Jesus Christ” in public, most Christians still feel that they are doing well.

7. Deuteronomy 1:26 -- “But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God.” Courage is a choice not to be controlled by fear. Courage is the choice to live by faith rather than fear, to trust God at His word regardless of outward appearances. If a person chooses to surrender to fear, that is their choice. Fear is not an excuse for disobedience.

8. Deuteronomy 1:27 – “And you murmured in your tents and said, ‘Because the Lord hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.’” Your fear, greed, anger, and ungratefulness reveal what you really think of God and about God. Courage, forgiveness, generosity, and contentment are the product of trust, faith, hope, and love.

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9. Deuteronomy 1:30, 31 – “The Lord your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.” Have you trusted the Lord enough to experience Him fight for you and carry you? Has that experience increased your faith and obedience? You have to trust Him to experience His power in your life, and that experience should only increase your trust that you can experience even more.
10. Deuteronomy 1:36 -- "He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly." You cannot follow God partially -- it's all or nothing.
11. Deuteronomy 1:37 -- "Because of you the Lord became angry with me also and said, 'You shall not enter it, either.'" Even Moses, like Adam, had trouble accepting full responsibility for his own sin. No one can cause you to sin. You must acknowledge sin and accept full responsibility for your sin in order to grow spiritually and closer to Jesus day by day. This is the humility that comes before honor.
12. Deuteronomy 1:43 -- "So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the Lord's command, and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country." Arrogance can lead you to do what God never wanted to do. Just because you claim it is for Him doesn't mean He asked you to do it. If He is not behind it, it is meaningless and doomed.
13. Deuteronomy 1:45 -- "You came back and wept before the Lord, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you." God knows the difference between true repentance and mere sorrow over being punished. Are you sorry because you suffered or sorry because you let your Lord down?
14. Deuteronomy 2:4 -- "They will be afraid of you. So be very careful." Fear can be a very dangerous thing in relationships, and the Christian must be the bigger person and rise above it, understanding potential fear induced responses from others.
15. Deuteronomy 2:7 -- "These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing." Trust in The Lord to make up for what others don't do for you.
16. Deuteronomy 2:19 -- "I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession." Remember that God is also caring for others, not just you. Be careful not to resent or covet God's gifts to others He hasn't given you.
17. Deuteronomy 2:30 -- "But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand." God may allow conflict in your life for His purposes. He will not always reveal to you what He is doing, but often it is not mostly about you.
18. Proverbs 19:1 – “Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.” Satan is the father of lies. When your words are crooked or deceptive, you become an ambassador for Satan rather than Jesus.
19. Proverbs 19:2 – “Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.” You must have a plan for success, and you must have a plan for peace. “...those who plan peace have joy.” (Proverbs 12:20)

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20. Proverbs 19:3 – “When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD.” Don’t blame God for the consequences of your actions.

21. Proverbs 19:11 – “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” Do you respond to offenses in an honorable and glorifying way?

22. Proverbs 19:16 – “Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die.” God’s grace will not always protect you from the consequences of your actions. God expects you to obey, particularly after having already received forgiveness.

23. Proverbs 19:21 – “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.” If your plan is not God’s plan, you are wasting your time and effort. Apart from the counsel of the Holy Spirit, you can do nothing of value.

24. Proverbs 19:22 – “What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar.” Did you catch the only thing that is really desired of you? Did you catch that lies are always unloving and counter to your life purpose?

25. Acts 28:2 -- “The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.” Christians don’t have a monopoly on hospitality. Don’t let the unbeliever outdo your kindness.

26. Acts 28:4 -- “Justice has not allowed him to live.” Even unbelievers have a sense of eternal justice. However, they don’t understand that justice can only come from God, the only Just One, the source of all justice and wisdom.

27. Acts 28:11 -- “After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead.” God can use ungodly resources and systems to spread the Gospel. Paul was not overly offended by these figureheads because he knew they meant nothing at all. Pay no regard and give no credit to idols and superstitions. Remember, all power and authority on earth has been given to Jesus by the Father. That means that Satan has none.

28. Acts 28:14 -- “There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days.” God wants you to seek out fellow believers wherever you go. God wants you to care for and support fellow believers.

29. Acts 28:23 -- “From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.” How hard are you willing to try to convince others about Jesus?

30. Acts 28:24 -- “And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.” Some will believe and some won’t. You are not called to do the sifting, just the preaching.

“Cross” Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 March: Go out of your way to find and fellowship with other Christian believers today. (Acts 28:14, 15)

DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 7, Sunday, 18 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+35%2C+36%3B+proverbs+18%3B+psalm+32%2C+33>

Observations from today’s readings and today’s S-WOD, Tuesday, 18 Mar 18:

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1. Numbers 35:2, 3 – “And you shall give to the Levites pasturelands around the cities. The cities shall be theirs to dwell in, and their pasturelands shall be for their cattle and for their livestock and for all their beasts.” The Levites were provided with enough cattle, flocks, livestock, land, and crops to be self-reliant. They had priestly duties, but they still had to work their land and cattle.
2. Numbers 35:12 – “The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment.” God was concerned about protecting the accused from revenge and ensuring that they received a fair trial. Cities of refuge were not intended to protect people from justice but rather to ensure justice. Those who went to cities of refuge were still held accountable.
3. Numbers 35:16 -- “But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death.” Murderers could not flee to cities of refuge.
4. Numbers 35:17 – “And if he struck him down with a stone tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death.” God does not treat one murder different from another. Murder is murder and the same capital punishment applies.
5. Numbers 35:18 – “The murderer shall be put to death.” In God’s eyes, there is just and unjust killing. Murderers are to be held accountable with the penalty of death.
6. Numbers 35:20, 21 – “And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died, or in enmity struck him down with his hand, so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer.” God forbids someone punishing someone else out of emotion or for selfish purposes. The goal must be godly justice, not revenge. God used avengers of blood to represent the interests of the victim in order to protect the victim from acting out of vengeance. The avenger of blood was protected by the law and had the authority to put the criminal to death.
7. Numbers 35:28 -- “...after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.” The death of the Priest brought restoration and freedom to the accused. The high priest was a model of Christ: and so, this release was a shadow of our freedom and redemption by the death of Christ.
8. Numbers 36:7 – “The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.” God’s laws protected the property and production capacity of families for generations.
9. Numbers 36:10 – “The daughters of Zelophehad did as the Lord commanded.” The daughters of Zelophehad were strong women, but most importantly, they were faithful and obedient.
10. Proverbs 18:1 – “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” God intended you for community and for strong, mutually supportive relationships.
11. Proverbs 18:4 – “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.” Everyone has an opinion, but very few are worth hearing. People are talking all the time, without much genuine thought behind their words. Words of wisdom are very rare. And now, technology has given everyone a global voice. In two days, we put out more information than the rest of human history combined. Technology has also enabled advanced techniques for information

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manipulation, weaponized information. So, in these deep waters of words, it is even more important for you to go to the bubbling brook of God's word.

12. Proverbs 18:9 – “Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.” When people don't do their jobs well, it makes everything harder for everyone else. In how many different ways have you seen this play out? Christians should be diligent in all that they do.

13. Proverbs 18:13 – “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” Our greatest commandment is love. One of the primary ways we show our love for others is in how we communicate with them. God gives very specific instructions on how we should communicate with others, and He says He will hold us all accountable for how we communicate. This verse is one such example. God is telling you, that not only is it shameful for you to ever interrupt someone, it is shameful to really not listen empathetically before responding. If you find yourself already crafting your response before the other person is done talking, you are not really listening and are being foolish. One helpful technique is to summarize back to the person what you heard them say and to ask them to clarify their feelings behind their statement before you respond with your viewpoint. Try doing this every time and see what happens. Also, remember that if you are an Ambassador for Christ, you have no personal opinion, you only represent the position of Jesus. Take self out of the equation.

14. Proverbs 18:18 – “The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders.” See Numbers 33:54 – The lot eliminates perceptions of unfairness or biases by removing the human element from the decision-making process. In this “game of chance,” God remains in complete control.

15. Psalm 32:1-5 – “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.” Christians should never live with the burden of guilt. You can never “cover” your “iniquity,” but through Jesus, your “sin is covered.” 1 John 1:9 tells you, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” There is no higher authority than God. When He has forgiven you, there is no condemnation.

16. Psalm 32:6, 7 – “Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.” These verses come after the ones on the importance of confession (and repentance). Offer prayer “at a time when (God) may be found.” Often people pray to God for salvation from the consequences of their sin, without a contrite, repentant heart and confession of the sin that caused their crisis. God will not be found bailing out the unrepentant sinner. Many times, God does not seem to answer prayers because we ask with the wrong heart and motive. “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:6, 7)

17. Psalm 32:8-11 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds

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the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" God made man in His image – a spiritual image. He gave man spirituality that He didn't give animals, and ability to understand the will of God. When you are led by the Spirit, you will obey God with joy. When you disobey God, you not only betray God, you also deny your human endowment and become like an animal. God will use a bit, a bridle, a spur, and a whip to keep you moving on course. Why not obey and avoid all that needless pain?

18. Psalm 33:5-8 -- "For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!" God's spiritual laws are as real and relevant as God's natural laws (even more real and relevant). An attempt to operate outside God's natural laws will have obvious and predictable consequences; attempts to operate outside of God's spiritual laws also has obvious and predictable consequences. Conversely, just as people can harness the power of nature to accomplish amazing things, so can people thrive under God's spiritual laws. Perhaps through scrapes and bruises you have learned to respect the Law of Gravity. Perhaps through emotional scrapes and bruises God has taught you to respect His spiritual laws too. Today's readings in Proverbs and Psalm speaks repeatedly on the consequences of sinning against God who establishes the order of things as well as on the blessings that come from living in harmony with God's word. The Bible really wants us to get the point.

19. Psalm 33:10-22 -- The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds. The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you." Personal security and national security depend on fear of the Lord. God will hold all nations and all people accountable to His word.

20. Psalm 33:17, 18 -- "The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love." Be very careful not to place your hope in anything but God. Everything and everyone on this earth is perishable, unpredictable, questionable, movable, unreliable, etc. Only God is steadfast and wholly (Holy) reliable.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day): 18 Mar -- Listen, listen intently to others before speaking. Listen not just to collect the facts or information being imparted but to seek to understand the underlying feelings and needs behind what is being said. Listen empathetically with a genuine desire to bring peace and reconciliation, all before you begin organizing in your mind how you will respond. Just listen in love. References from today's readings: Proverbs 18:13 -- "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."

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DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 6, Saturday, 17 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+33%2C+34%3B+proverbs+17%3B+psalm+31>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 17 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 33:2 – “Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the Lord.” God wanted Moses to keep a historic record of what He did for His people so that generations would know.
2. Numbers 33:3 – “...the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians....” God will use your life to reveal Himself to others.
3. Numbers 33:54 – “You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit.” Casting lots is God’s way of removing human biases or perceptions of human biases from decisions that impact the interests of many people. If two or more people want the same thing, casting lots can quickly settle the matter without generating hard feelings between the stakeholders. God ensured everyone was treated fairly in land apportionment by casting lots and by ensuring that everyone got a fair amount based upon the size of their clans.
4. Numbers 33:55, 56 – “But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. And I will do to you as I thought to do to them.” God knew how easily His people could be tempted by the ungodly. Who or what tempts you to compromise your fidelity and purity?
5. Numbers 34:23, 24 – “Of the people of Joseph: of the tribe of the people of Manasseh a chief, Hanniel the son of Ephod. And of the tribe of the people of Ephraim a chief, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan.” Joseph’s family became two tribes. He was doubly blessed.
6. Proverbs 17:1 – “Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.” This has application to national politics. We are so wealthy as a nation and yet so divided. This is a reality of human nature, revealed in homes and in nations and throughout the Bible. When people are doing well, they tend to forget God, become self-centered and selfish, and cause strife with others. Often, God doesn’t give people comfort and security because He knows it will ruin their character.
7. Proverbs 17:2 – “A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.” Salvation came to the Gentiles. “...through their (Jews) trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.”
8. Proverbs 17:3 – “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.” God puts you through hard times to make you more precious.
9. Proverbs 17:5 – “Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.” If you show contempt for others, you are convicting yourself. Your heart is not right with God, and you are failing to accomplish your life’s mission of reconciliation. 1 Corinthians 5:17-20 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has

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come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

10. Proverbs 17:9 – "Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends." Our primary command is to love. Do you cover over offenses?

11. Proverbs 17:27 – "Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." How you handle contention reveals to true level of your knowledge and understanding.

12. Psalm 31:1 – "In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!" The message of the Gospel is that we are saved by the righteous on Jesus (God), not our own righteousness, which is not righteous at all. A simple way to think of the meaning of righteousness is to think of it as being 'right with God,' to be reconciled, to have all matters or debts settled. Jesus paid our debts on the cross and made us eternally right with God, righteous. Of our own account, we are unworthy. Jesus made us worthy.

13. Psalm 31:5 – "Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God." Redeem means to buy back, or to make something that was once bad good again. Note that the Psalmist says, God does the redeeming. Again, Jesus made us righteous, redeemed. God is faithful though we are not faithful, our salvation rests securely on His unconditional love for us, not on our imperfect, always failing love for Him. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

14. Psalm 31:7, 8 – "I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place." Bible verses like this are here to remind us to rejoice when we don't feel like it, during hard times; to remind us that God's love for us is unconditional, enduring, everlasting, and overpowering. God is the Creator. God is Sovereign and Almighty, and God is love. When the God who made and controls everything and who is love loves you, what does that say about what you are going through? God is loving you through your challenges, drawing you closer to His love, and using your circumstances for an ultimate good that exceeds your wildest imaginations. "...you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy..." Sometimes you might be tempted to think God has abandoned you, turned you over to your circumstances. No, He will never leave you or forsake you. Trust in Him.

15. Psalm 31:6 – "I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord." The more you love God, the more you hate what He hates.

16. Psalm 31:9 – "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress." Distress is inevitable in this broken world. But when hard times come, we should draw closer to the Lord who will guide, protect, comfort, and love us through them. Philippians 4:4-7 – "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

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17. Psalm 31:12 – “I have been forgotten like one who is dead.” Your friends might abandon you, like the disciples abandoned Jesus during his darkest hour, but God will never abandon you.

18. Psalm 31:14, 15 – “But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand....” You can rest easy knowing your times are in God’s hands. Jesus rested in the boat while the disciples panicked in the great storm, fearing death. Jesus knew who was in control. We just read about how Paul remained confident through a shipwreck because he knew who was in control. Jesus said, “Peace I give you.” Rest easy, be confident, rejoice. Your God has you in the palm of His hand. He is in complete control and loves you immeasurably.

19. Psalm 31:24 – “Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!” The strength of your courage is dependent upon your actual faith in God. Faith makes you courageous.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 March: Be at peace today. Demonstrate peace today. Explain your peace through Jesus today to anyone who asks why you are so different. (Psalm 31)

DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 5, Friday, 16 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+31%2C+32%3B+proverbs+16%3B+acts+27>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 16 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 31:15, 16 – “Moses said to them, ‘Have you let all the women live? Behold, these, on Balaam’s advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.’” God’s commands for total annihilation of Israel’s enemies in the Bible seem extreme and heartless, but God knew these totally corrupt foreign cultures would negatively influence His people (at a time when the nation was very vulnerable) and threaten their holiness. While we tend to value the temporal life above all else, God values the eternal lives of all generations. Only God could justly and lovingly give such a command. We get offended when God, who is completely sovereign, holy, righteous, and loving, does not show mercy. We sometimes lose sight of mankind’s depravity and guilt before God (and the destructiveness of sin upon generations) and ask how a loving God could allow certain people to die, instead of asking why a just and holy God allows anyone to live at all. We tend to think mercy and grace is something He owes us, and when we don’t receive mercy or grace, we think Him to be unjust. Justice is us getting what we deserve; mercy is us not getting what we deserve; and grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. It is God’s prerogative, in His righteousness, to provide mercy – not giving someone what they deserve. When He doesn’t give mercy, He remains Just and Righteous.

2. Numbers 32:13 – “And the Lord’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone.” God’s people could not go the next level until they were purified of unfaithful people. Special assignments require special people. God is Holy; His ambassadors must in turn be holy.

3. Proverbs 16:1 -- "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." What matters is not what you want to do but rather what God wants you to do. You can plan to do your own thing, but you might find yourself working against God, despite how good you think your intentions are.

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4. Proverbs 16:2 -- "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit." It is very tempting for us to tell ourselves that our plan is also God's plan for us in order to validate inwardly self-centered motives. Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you where your motives are not really God-centered. Be careful that when you say, "God has put on my heart to [do x or y]," He really has and you are not just convincing yourself you heard what you wanted to hear from God when you really didn't.

5. Proverbs 16:21 -- "The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." Wise Christians know how to use gentle, gracious words to persuade others rather than arguing with them.

6. Proverbs 16:32 -- "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." God designed His people to be a "kingdom of priests... [to] reign on the earth (Exodus 19, 6; Revelation 5:10)." However, before a ruler is worthy to rule anything else, he must be able to rule over self. In fact, it is an inability to rule self that disqualified God's people for positions of leadership within His Kingdom throughout the Bible. To have and maintain the right to lead in the Kingdom, one must first demonstrate sustained personal self-control, discipline, obedience, holiness. The Kingdom of God submits to the authority and will of the King ("thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven). Our first responsibility is to submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ in our own lives and then model that life to others. Jesus modeled obedience for us and then told us that if we truly loved Him, we would obey him completely; He then commanded, from our position of total obedience, "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Clearly, self-control is not accomplished of our own power but through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Key though is to recognize that Christians already have been equipped with that power. Now we have the responsibility to live by the Spirit rather than selfishness (deny self), pick up our crosses (see ourselves as crucified with Christ), and choose to truly follow Jesus rather than asking Jesus to follow us (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23). The problem we have with self-control is that we have not yet fully committed to live for God rather than self. However, we were created with the specific purpose of serving and loving God; apart from our purpose, our lives are meaningless and dead. Isn't it time to choose to serve the Lord wholeheartedly and "rule our spirits" for His glory?

- Galatians 2:20 -- I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- 2 Timothy 2:11, 12 -- The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him

- Numbers 32:11, 12 -- Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob— not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly.

7. Acts 27:9-12 -- "Paul advised them, saying, 'Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.' But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said." Led by the Spirit, God's

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people will often contradict experts and the majority. God knows more than the experienced majority. The majority is often wrong.

8. Acts 27:21 – When God’s faithful servant speaks, you should listen.

9. Acts 27:21-26 – God’s purpose is guaranteed.

10. Acts 27:25 – “So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.” Paul had a very unique witness because of his evident receptivity to God’s word and because of His absolute confidence in it. Do you? Paul also became the leader in crisis, despite his lack of technical competence, because of his godly courage. When the façade of man’s control is removed, the one who truly knows the One who is in control is the only person who can lead. Paul said to them, “Take heart,” much like Jesus said to the disciples in John 14 before Jesus’ arrest, when Jesus knew the disciples would lose heart in their circumstances. If God is on your side, you have nothing to worry about.

11. Acts 27:31, 32 – “Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.’ Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it go.” The passengers and the crew on the ship had to decide whether to trust their experienced instincts or the man of God. This was a life or death decision, and one person’s decision would affect them all.

12. Acts 27:35 – “And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.” When everyone else was in complete despair, Paul gave thanks to God, an incredible testimony to everyone else. Again, this reminds me of Jesus sleeping in the boat during the storm when the disciples feared for their lives. A faith that demonstrates peaceful trust through all circumstances is a powerful thing. At some point, we will all come to a time when all appears lost, at least on our death beds. What sort of faith will we reveal?

13. Acts 27:37 – “We were in all 276 persons in the ship.” The author knew exactly how many were on the ship. A Christian leader keeps accountability of everyone – every single person is precious in the eyes of God. Are you keeping account of everyone God has placed in your life?

14. Acts 27:42 – “The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan.” A soldier would be executed for losing a prisoner. The centurion was ready to risk his life to save this Jew. What an impact Paul had on this natural enemy of the Jews and in such a short time. The power of God tears down all social barriers.

15. Acts 27:43 – God uses relationships to save Paul. God often uses ungodly people to support His people.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 March: Today, demonstrate thankfulness under all circumstances in order to glorify God before others. (Acts 27:35)

DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 4, Thursday, 15 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+29%2C+30%3B+proverbs+15%3B+acts+26>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 15 Mar 18:

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1. Numbers 29 – A whole month dedicated to worshipping the Lord. Can you imagine? Four times in this chapter, God says, “You shall not do any work.” How incredibly unproductive in the world’s view of economy. Today, we don’t take this much time to worship corporately (perhaps we should), but certainly, just taking one day of rest each week seems to most unreasonable. Don’t we have too much to do? And is it really reasonable to give dedicated time each day to pray and to study God’s word? Does it make practical sense to tithe? Time and money are our most precious commodities. Dedicating both to the Lord is an act of faith, and it is a personal and public statement that reminds us that our provision, security, and success depend on the Lord, not our efforts. It is an act of trust. God had his people do this every year because, though we have belief, we also have unbelief and need to be reminded.

2. Numbers 29:12 – “.... you shall keep a feast to the Lord seven days.” During the Feast of Booths, all the Israelites essentially camped out for a whole week, with each day being dedicated to worship. In Israel, they would all, the entire nation, leave their homes and live in huts. In the cities they even had to put these huts, booths, on their rooftops. Can you imagine? Each year this was a reminder to the people of God’s provision and salvation in the desert; it reminded the people that even if they lost everything, God would still be there for them and see them through; it brought all the people together for a week of fellowship, away from work and distractions; it taught them that their joy did not depend on the comforts of life; and practically, it kept them proficient at camping, in the event they were ever required to live on the land again. It has been said that nothing brings a family together quite like camping. Perhaps, Christians should revive the Feast of Booths. What if your entire church spent a week each year camping together, seven days away from distractions in worship and fellowship?

3. Numbers 30:1, 2 -- "Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the people of Israel, saying, 'This is what the Lord has commanded. If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.'" God takes your promises to Him very seriously.

4. Numbers 30:5 -- "But if her father opposes her on the day that he hears of it, no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. And the Lord will forgive her, because her father opposed her." Parents have authority over their children in God's eyes along with a responsibility to protect them and guide them. Parents will be held accountable by God.

5. Numbers 30:8 -- "But if, on the day that her husband comes to hear of it, he opposes her, then he makes void her vow that was on her, and the thoughtless utterance of her lips by which she bound herself. And the Lord will forgive her." In a marriage, promises made to God are a joint decision -- "The two shall become one."

6. Proverbs 15:1, 18 -- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.... A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." Christians should be masters at bringing peace into every situation, at being able to de-escalate conflict and to promote unity. Look at every conflict or potential conflict as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ. Challenge yourself to be a peacemaker at all times and critique yourself with each event.

7. Proverbs 15:4 -- "A gentle tongue is a tree of life." Do your words refresh others and make them feel more alive?

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8. Proverbs 15:7 -- "The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools." Are people smarter after talking with you?

9. Proverbs 15:8, 9, 29 -- "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who pursues righteousness.... The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." Your true worship is loving others. No amount of Sunday services can make up for an unloving heart and unloving behavior. Yes, God forgives the repentant person, but with genuine repentance comes a changed heart and changed behavior.

10. Proverbs 15:16 -- "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it." Life fulfillment comes from your relationship with God, not from your possessions or personal accomplishments.

11. Proverbs 15:16 -- "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it." Be thankful for what God has given you, and be faithful with it. In fidelity, He will give you more.

12. Proverbs 15:18 -- "The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway." Lazy people seek a life of ease, not realizing that they are actually making their lives much, much more difficult.

13. Proverbs 15:27 -- "To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!" Wisdom includes not just knowing what to say but also when and how to say it. A sense of timing is critical to relationships.

14. Acts 26:9 -- "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth." When Paul was still called Saul, he was a Pharisee among Pharisees. He had been trained by the most respected teachers and had committed his whole life to serving God faithfully. He diligently studied God's word, worshipped day and night, and led efforts to keep the faith pure. It is safe to say that he was genuine in his convictions. In all his human efforts to be righteous, he got it wrong: "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It was his personal encounter and subsequent relationship with Jesus that changed everything. Jesus opened the eyes of Paul's heart to see the same word in a completely different way. Jesus once said to the Pharisees, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Mark 12:24)?" Paul (Saul) was well versed in the Bible but did not know the "power of God" which comes through rebirth through saving faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said the Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)." Many people know the words of the Bible inside and out but don't know the power of God. Likewise, many born again Christians are stuck in spiritual infancy because they don't know God's word. God's intent for his people is to know the Shepherd and the Shepherd's voice.

15. Acts 26:12 -- "I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests." Paul was once commissioned under the authority of the chief priests, but now acted under the power and authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 28 that we are also commissioned under His authority to make disciples of all nations.

16. Acts 26:16-18 -- "I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen... to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and

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from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." God's witnesses testify to what they have personally experienced with God, not simply what they have heard about. God's revelations to you are not for you alone but that others might believe from your testimony. God's purpose for your life is for you to be His instrument to bring others to Him.

17. Acts 26:19, 20 – "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared... to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God." Salvation requires repentance. To communicate anything else is to directly disobey God and to work against the Gospel.

18. Acts 26:22, 23 – "I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." Paul, an Ambassador of Christ had only one message. You also are called to proclaim one message. How are you doing?

19. Acts 26:29 -- "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am." Paul's life focus was bringing others to Jesus Christ. What is your life focus? God gave you your purpose: "Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18) Have you accepted your mission yet?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 March: Follow Paul's example and proclaim Jesus to others today. (Acts 26)

DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 3, Wednesday, 14 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+27%2C+28%3B+proverbs+14%3B+acts+25>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 14 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 27:1, 2 -- "The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the chiefs and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting...." Zelophehad raised strong daughters, mentioned by name in the Bible, who not only knew how to stand up for themselves and their family but who changed national policy permanently.

2. Numbers 27:3 – All people sin. The result of sin is death.

3. Numbers 27:5-7 -- "Moses brought their case before the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, 'The daughters of Zelophehad are right.'" Moses turned to God for answers to tough questions. What do you do?

4. Numbers 27:4-11 – God honors the rights of women even in a male-dominated society.

5. Numbers 27:5-11 -- God's laws support the protection of families and protects their inheritances.

6. Numbers 27:14 -- "... because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes." Don't let the bad behavior of others influence you to stoop down to their level and sin. Moses lost his temper and acted foolishly, losing his moral authority to lead. As a result, he did not enter the Promised Land (in his

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physical life). Stay above the fray. Remain holy because God is Holy, and you are an Ambassador for Christ.

7. Numbers 27:15-17 -- "Moses said to the LORD, 'May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.'" Moses had the heart of a true leader. He had just been told by the Lord that it was his time to die -- he would not lead his people into the Promised Land. Moses' immediate concern was for the people and their welfare. How hard is it to find leadership like that?

8. Numbers 27:17 – God is looking for ministers who will be shepherds.

9. Numbers 27:18 -- Numbers 27:18 -- "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him." Joshua was God's choice to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land; Moses didn't choose Joshua, God did. Joshua was uniquely qualified for the job. First, he was filled with the Spirit. True leaders are led by the Spirit and lead by the Spirit. His name means, "The Lord is Salvation," and is the Hebrew version of "Jesus." For 40 years he served as Moses' faithful aide, and was one of the two spies (Caleb the other) that encouraged the Israelites to enter the Promised Land in faith, despite the strength of their enemies. He served the Lord wholeheartedly and was a great example of character and competence. A nation needs mighty, faithful leaders such as Joshua. Of whom do you know who is a Joshua leader today?

10. Numbers 27:20 – "You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey." Moral authority to lead comes from a leader's pursuit of obedience to God and his intent to teach others how to obey God.

11. Numbers 28:1-15 – God wants ministers who will help people find His atonement.

12. Proverbs 14:2, 7 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him.... Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge." Godly people have no partnership with the world.

13. Proverbs 14:4, 23 -- "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox... In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty." To accomplish our purpose, we are going to have to get dirty, get out of our comfort zones, take risks, and work very hard, consistently for a long time, not requiring instant payoffs to stay motivated. To be successful, we have to be willing to do what the unsuccessful are not willing to do. We are going to have to be willing to sacrifice pleasure for purpose, for a time. This requires perseverance, a critical character trait for Christians. As Psalms say today, "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 31:24)

14. Proverbs 14:5, 25 -- "A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies.... A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful." Lying is cosmic treason for an Ambassador of Christ. There are obvious lies and less obvious lies. When you point people to a "truth" other than Jesus, such as modern ethics, morals, or common sense, you are lying far worse than when you misrepresent yourself or a situation.

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15. Proverbs 14:12 -- "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." Follow the instruction of God's word through the Holy Spirit rather than your own intellect.

16. Proverbs 14:26 -- "In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge." If we are walking with the Lord, we can walk confidently into the battles and through the storms of life. One thing to notice in the Bible is that God rarely keeps His people from the battles and storms but rather guides and protects them through the battles and storms, revealing Himself to His people and the watching world in the process. God didn't keep Noah from the flood but through it. Today we read in the Old Testament that God's people had to face the Midianites and in the New Testament that Paul had to endure terrible storms and catastrophe on the high seas. Yet, in both cases, God worked miraculously to bring glory to Himself through His servants. No Israelites were lost in the battle against the Midianites, and as God had promised, no one died when Paul's ship was destroyed. In both cases, God was glorified before a watching world, and the faith of God's people was only strengthened for greater challenges ahead. In his prayer to the Father, Jesus said, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one (John 17:15)." It is in the battle and storms of life that we bring glory to God when the watching world sees the power of God working through our lives making all the difference.

17. Acts 25:19 – Paul was guilty only of belief in Jesus' resurrection. Who could witness against you on such a charge.

18. Acts 25:22 – Paul had created such a stir that important people wanted to hear him testify. What have you done to create enough interest that people want to hear your testimony?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 March: Leave no doubt about what, rather who you are about – share Jesus as your top priority. Get people talking. (Acts 25:19-22)

DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 2, Tuesday, 13 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+13%3B+acts+24>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 13 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 25:1-3 -- "While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab.... So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor." When God's people partner with the world, God view this as whoredom. Syncretism is perhaps the biggest threat to the church today. Have you partnered with the world in any way? Do you see this compromise as God sees it?

2. Numbers 25:7, 8 -- "When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped." God expects His people to take a stand against sin within the church.

3. Numbers 25:10-11 -- "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.'" Perhaps no sin is addressed more in the Bible than sexual sin. Perhaps nothing is more destructive to a person, a people, or a nation

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than sexual sin. From the very beginning (Genesis) God placed His standards on sexual activity to be between one man and one woman in one life-long marriage. Marriage is a spiritual union, far beyond the physical, and reveals not only the love we have for our spouse, but also the love we have for God. Marriages are meant to emulate the love Christ has for his Church, and are intended to raise godly children. God takes sexual sins VERY seriously, calling them abominations, despite the fact that our society rejoices in them. Today, to commit adultery is to “have an affair.” To “whore around” is to be sexually free. Acceptance of homosexuality is “enlightened tolerance.” Today’s OT readings offer a shocking story of how seriously God takes sexual sin. In case it is lost in translation, God honors Phinehas’ commitment after Phinehas, seeing a man taking a Moabite woman into his tent to have sex, enters into the tent and runs a spear through both of them while they were having sex. While this may seem like a cruel act, consider how much pain and suffering you have seen over your lifetime directly caused by sex outside of marriage – divorce, abortion, STDs, crimes of passion, destroyed families, child abuse, pornography, sexual assault, etc. Now that our Nation has dissolved most historic standards related to sexual conduct, where do you think our nation is going – to a better condition? I pray that more Christians will be bold enough to stand up for God’s standards on sex and marriage, regardless of what the “culture of death” says is the “enlightened” answer.

4. Numbers 25:11 -- “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy.” God’s people care about what God cares about and hate what God hates.

5. Numbers 25:11 -- “...he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.” A very famous pop culture celebrity once said that she stopped being a Christian when she read that God was a jealous God. There is an ungodly jealousy and a godly jealousy. There is a selfish jealousy and an unselfish, righteous, loving jealousy. Both forms of jealousy are motivated by a desire to protect or defend. Selfish jealousy is akin to envy and greed and promotes suspicion, distrust, resentment, hostility, degradation, tension, and discord. Godly jealousy zealously protects out of love. God knows that the hope of His people is Him, and He cannot tolerate anything that might get in the way of His people and Himself. Phinehas was commended for His jealousy because he was jealous with God's jealousy, not his own jealousy. Phinehas was protecting the people from destruction, not seeking his own self-interest. It is very rare that people are jealous with God's jealousy. Don't confuse godly jealousy with envy.

6. Proverbs 13:3 – “Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.” As Christ’s Ambassador, only say what Jesus would say. If you find yourself wanting to express your own thoughts, to speak your mind rather than the mind of Christ, best to keep your mouth shut. Just say nothing. If your words don’t encourage someone to draw nearer to Jesus, you are actually working against Jesus.

7. Proverbs 13:17 – “A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing.” If you are a faithful witness, your words will only bring healing. If you speak hurting words, you are committing cosmic treason against Jesus. Do you take your words that seriously?

8. Proverbs 13:20 – “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Your best friends should be wise, wholehearted Christians who are helping you become closer to Jesus every day. If this doesn’t describe your closest companions, you are compromising your sanctification.

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9. Proverbs 13:23, 25 – “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.... The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.” Godly people plan to leave an inheritance for generations, in part by not living greedy, excessive lives in the present. Most of America is upside down with more debt than savings, largely because they are not satisfied to live simply and frugally. Americas are the richest people in the world, but usually have nothing to show for it in the end. The mindset now from most parents seems to be that their responsibility is to get the kids out of the house so they can take care of themselves; therefore, their kids go into debt to make “make ends meet” – it becomes a vicious cycle. God’s people should not be in debt to the world.

10. Acts 24:2 -- “Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation....” Christians may betray God and God's people by seeking earthly peace through compromise rather than eternal peace through fidelity to Jesus. Today, the church is largely silent on social issues because they don't want to cause trouble with the ungodly.

11. Acts 24:5 – “For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” Paul upset the peace to bring ultimate peace through Jesus. When Paul spoke the truth, he caused trouble not only for himself but also for all other Christians, much like Moses caused trouble in Egypt for the Israelites. Not only Paul but the whole Christian church stood on trial. Paul demonstrated great moral courage through his faith, hope, love, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

12. Acts 24:6 -- “He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.” The ungodly are not compelled by truth and justice, though they claim to be. In the end, the ungodly will do whatever they think it takes to get what they want. Jesus promised that His followers would face persecution from the ungodly because the ungodly, content and comfortable in the darkness, will not bear the light of truth and will be compelled to extinguish it.

13. Acts 24:10 -- “I cheerfully make my defense.” Christians disagree without being disagreeable, always demonstrating humility in their boldness. And Christians rejoice in the opportunity to share Jesus, regardless to personal cost.

14. Acts 24:14 – You must choose: There is only one true religion, one true path to God, Jesus. This ‘unacceptable, close-minded, primitive, uneducated belief’ is the Gospel, the truth, the Good News. Are you prepared to be a fool for Jesus?

15. Acts 24:15 -- “...there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.” The Good News is the answer to Bad News, all are sinners who will face final judgment before the LORD. You hardly hear this message anymore, even out of the church. Salvation requires repentance from sin.

16. Acts 24:16 – “So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.” Maintaining a clear conscience is an act of discipleship and sanctification that takes work, striving to walk in fidelity and obedience while continually confessing your sins to God and to others.

17. Acts 24:18-20 -- “While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when

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I stood before the council...." Paul understood the law of the land and was ready to use it in his defense. Christians today need to be ready to do the same.

18. Acts 24:25 -- "And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment...." In light of the coming judgment, all should be incentivized to seek righteousness and self-control. Felix had good reason to be "alarmed": "None is righteous, no, not one," and apart from salvation through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, willpower cannot free someone from the slavery of sin. (Romans 3:10; Romans 6:18) Only Christ can free us from sin. Like love, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, not something man-made. Ironically, control of self requires surrender of 'control', submitting control to Christ -- "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) Only through submission can we resist the devil. Only through our connection to the vine does the branch have any life. Apart from the vine, that branch has no chance. If you lack self-control, check your submission.

19. Acts 24:25 -- "Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.'" Many respond to the Gospel by choosing not to decide, but this is still a choice. You may be ignored or discounted, but you are called to proclaim, not to convince. Speak the truth in love, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 13 March: Clear your conscience by confessing your sins and by seeking forgiveness. Make restitutions when required. (Act 24:16)

DBRP- WEEK 11, Day 1, Monday, 12 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+12%3B+acts+23>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 12 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 23:5 -- "And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth." Balaam's job was to proclaim God's word, not his own thoughts or opinions. The same applies to us today.

2. Numbers 23:9, 24 -- "Behold him; behold, a people dwelling alone, and not counting itself among the nations...! Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up and as a lion it lifts itself; it does not lie down until it has devoured the prey and drunk the blood of the slain." (Numbers 23:9, 24) We are a nation among the nations. We are the true "nation under God." No nation can overcome the Kingdom of God. "And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion (Genesis 1:28)."

3. Numbers 23:11, 12 -- "And Balak said to Balaam, 'What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have done nothing but bless them.' And he answered and said, "Must I not take care to speak what the Lord puts in my mouth?" Balak wanted Balaam to work for him, but Balaam could only work for God. As an ambassador or Christ, for whom are you working?

4. Numbers 23:27 -- "And Balak said to Balaam, 'Come now, I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there.'" Changing your environment or your approach does not change God's will for you. God's plan stands. Denying God's will is futile.

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5. Numbers 24:17 – "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth." Balaam is given a glimpse of Jesus. Jesus is the goal of all God's Revelation.

6. Proverbs 12:1 -- "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." Do not hate the Lord's reproof -- that is just stupid.

7. Proverbs 12:2 -- "A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of evil devices he condemns." Is this hard to understand? Even under grace, God cannot tolerate your sin. He will deal with it, in love but with firmness.

8. Proverbs 12:5 -- "The thoughts of the righteous are just." The Holy Spirit uses God's word to transform your mind so that just thoughts produce righteous deeds, evidence of your faith.

9. Proverbs 12:10 -- "The mercy of the wicked is cruel." Your ability to be merciful is in direct proportion to your closeness to Jesus. The more you genuinely appreciate the mercies of God, the more you will be merciful. The more you are connected to Jesus (the Vine), the more you will embody mercy and the more mercy will flow through you to others.

10. Proverbs 12:11 -- "Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense." God is Author of both the natural laws and the moral laws. One theme that is constantly repeated in the Bible is, "You reap what you sow." God's natural and moral laws are simple and produce obvious results. We complicate things and do pointless things when we attempt to work around God's laws. Don't waste your time, energy, and efforts by doing things God never intended.

11. Proverbs 12:16 -- "The prudent ignores an insult." Did you get that? Ignore insults and be prudent.

12. Proverbs 12:18 -- "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Are all of your words healing? Remember your role as Christ's Ambassador and your message of reconciliation. Every word that comes from your mouth should draw people closer to Jesus, not farther away.

13. Proverbs 12:20 -- "Those who plan peace have joy." You have to have a plan for peace.

14. Proverbs 12:25 -- "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." You can help take a load off of others by giving them a good word to ease their anxiety.

15. Proverbs 12:26-28 -- "One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.... In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death." A good leader guides people to where they need to go. They know the way and show the way. The Bible says that Jesus IS the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Good leaders lead people to Jesus. Leading people anywhere else is to lead them astray, wickedness. So, all those secular gurus out there are, in fact, wicked.

16. Acts 23:1 – Paul was true to the revelation he knew both as a Jew and as a believer in Christ.

17. Acts 23:3 – The high priest violated the rules of a fair trial as he condemned Paul before the evidence was given.

18. Acts 23:5 – Paul respected the office, not the person.

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19. Acts 23:17-35 – Paul had gained the trust of the officer in charge.

20. Acts 23:16 – “Now the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.” God can put the right people in the right place at the right time to assist you.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 March: Today, do not offer your own advice or opinions on a matter but only speak as an Ambassador for Jesus Christ. What does God’s word say? If you are not certain, say nothing. (See today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 7, Sunday, 11 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+11%3B+psalm+29%2C+30>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 11 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 21:2 – God is the only one who can defeat your enemies.
2. Numbers 21:4-5 – Constant unbelief and complaining angers God.
3. Numbers 21:7 – God wants leaders who pray for a troubled people.
4. Numbers 21:9 – John 3:14-15 shows you need to look to the lifted-up Jesus.
5. Numbers 21:10-35 – Finally Israel followed God without complaining. God does not lead you through safe paths but through paths where you can experience Him and His deliverance.
6. Numbers 22:5 – Balaam was a prophet from Moab who was also used by God.
7. Numbers 22:18 -- Balaam could not go against the word of God, no matter what the outcome.
8. Numbers 22:27 – “When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam.” We may be totally unaware of the spiritual reality around us, with less spiritual awareness than an animal.
9. Numbers 22:29 – “And Balaam said to the donkey...” Perhaps what is even more amazing than the donkey speaking is Balaam answering and gets into a conversation with the donkey.
10. Numbers 22:32, 33 -- "And the angel of the Lord said to him, ‘Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live.’” The Lord was angry with Balaam because he was on a "reckless" path. On this reckless path, Balaam's donkey was more aware of the presence of the angel of the LORD than was Balaam. When God opens Balaam's eyes, Balaam recognizes that it was his sin that had blinded him (v34). Balaam is on his way to confront the leadership of an unbelieving kingdom and has now been shown his sinfulness, blindness, and unpreparedness for such a task. So, how is he to proceed forward? “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” When Balaam meets Balak the king, he says to him, “But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.” I think we can learn something from this: As we confront the sinful culture in our sinful condition, we must be avoid pursuing that mission recklessly; do not quench or grieve the Holy Spirit, and be prepared to answer every man from the Word of God, not from worldly opinion or tradition. As messengers of God, we must know God's Word and be prepared to apply God's Word to our daily interactions. The Bible reminds us that we cannot trust our own understanding and must live by the

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Word of God which we meditate on all day long every day. How well do we know and understand God's Word? Are you prepared to share God's Word with others?

- "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

11. Numbers 22:34 – "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me." Being unaware of God's presence leads to sin.

12. Numbers 22:38 – "I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak." Again, God's prophet and Christ's Ambassador has no commission, power, right, or authority to speak anything other than the words that God puts into his mouth. Jesus said, "For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak." (John 12:49) Likewise, Jesus did nothing apart from what God commanded -- "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.... I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 5:19, 30) A person cannot serve two masters, both God and self. If an Ambassador mixes the interests and messages of two competing parties, that Ambassador becomes wholly unreliable and unworthy of the position. If Balaam, motivated by self-interest, had spoken a single word against the Israelites, he would have been cursed by God (see Gen 12:1-3). Proverbs says the God hates perverted speech, words contrary to God's will (Proverbs 8:13). Christ's Ambassador must never speak words that God hates, words He did not put into the Ambassador's mouth. Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak." (Matthew 12:36) The Ambassador must consider very seriously the great responsibility he has been given to represent God before people. If you don't know what God would say, say nothing. The world could use a lot less chatter anyway. As Proverbs say, "The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook." (Proverbs 18:4)

- The "angel of the Lord" stopped Balaam from going down a "perverse" path, perhaps one of comprising God's word. In 2 Timothy 4:2-4 we are reminded to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. More and more, God's commands conflict with the values of our society. Many will ask you to endorse the sinful practices of this world in the name of "tolerance." Will you reply with the word of God or go down a perverse path?

13. Proverbs 11:1 – "A false balance is an abomination to the LORD." God abhors unfairness.

14. Proverbs 11:6 – "The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust." Lust is a prison to those taken captive by it.

15. Proverbs 11:11 – "By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown." Wicked messages and popular opinion can destroy society. Proverbs warns against it.

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16. Proverbs 11:24, 25 – “One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.” God gives richly to those who give freely.

17. Psalm 30:5 – “Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.” Your trials won’t last forever.

18. Psalm 30:6, 7 – “As for me, I said in my prosperity, ‘I shall never be moved.’ By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.” God will give you challenges to remind you of your total dependence on Him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 March: Say whatever God convicts you to say today, in accordance with His word and His love. Avoid saying anything that isn’t inspired by the Holy Spirit. Remember, you are Christ’s Ambassador, speaking for Him, not yourself. Ambassadors cannot represent themselves but only the KING. (Numbers 22:38)

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 6, Saturday, 10 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+10%3B+psalm+28>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 10 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 19:12 -- “And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.’” There wasn’t any water for the Israelites, and they were turning against Moses and Aaron; but God told Moses that He would bring water out of the rock for the people. If you recall, this wasn’t the first time that God allowed this miracle to be performed through Moses; the first time was in Numbers 17 – the accounts from Numbers 17 and Numbers 19 are almost identical, with one major exception, in today’s readings, Moses takes partial credit for the work of the Lord – “shall we bring water for you out of this rock (Numbers 19:20)?” God shares His glory with no one, and His response to Moses makes that clear -- “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them (Numbers 19:20).” Our purpose is to glorify God, not ourselves. Fear of man, selfishness, and lack of faith in God’s provision often causes us to seek reverence or honor from others as a defense mechanism or for self-gratification. We take pride in the gifts, talents and opportunities that God alone gave us, failing to uphold Him as Holy. When we are secure in God’s love, we have no need to be justified by others. When we act out of insecurity or pride, we dishonor the LORD. I pray that I won’t worry about what others think about me but rather about what others think about God when they observe His works in my life.

2. Numbers 20:2 -- “Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.” Based on many Bible verses such as Ephesians 2:1-3 and 1 John 2:16 (provided below), church tradition teaches the three enemies of the soul or the “trinity of temptation” – the world, the flesh, and the devil (mundus, caro, et diabolus). Arguably the greatest threat of the three is “the flesh” because the other two are external threats while “the flesh” is “inside the wire” or an “insider threat.” This is the traitor within. This is where we become the problem and where we now have responsibility for the temptation. When we are tempted externally by the world and the devil, we have not yet sinned; but when we start tempting ourselves, we are now guilty of

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thought sins. In the wilderness for 40 days, hungry and thirsty, Jesus was tempted externally by the devil, but not internally. In His hunger, He did not sin in His heart. Contrarily, when the Israelites in the desert became thirsty (tempted by the lack of external provisions), their internal temptations caused them to sin and turn against God and Moses. How you act under pressure reveals what is really in your heart. Jesus was led by the Spirit. The Israelites were led by the flesh. Such as in Proverbs 7, the Bible gives us many practical steps to help us fight the insider threat -- specifically, remaining saturated in God's word and physically avoiding sinful environments. However, we are dead without the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love and self-control (Ephesians 5). The saved in Christ have the Spirit, but as mentioned previously, we often "grieve" the Spirit; "quench" the Spirit; and get out of step with the Spirit. Fortunately, we are justified through Christ as we seek to become more and more compelled by the love of Christ. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:14-19) Leave no room in your "bottle" for sin by being filled fully with the Spirit -- "Being filled with the fullness of God is like a bottle in the ocean. You take the cork out of the bottle and sink it in the ocean, and you have the bottle completely full of ocean. The bottle is in the ocean, and the ocean is in the bottle. The ocean contains the bottle, but the bottle contains only a little bit of the ocean. So it is with the Christian." (Tozer) 1 John 2:16, 17 – "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life[a]—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

3. Numbers 20:10 -- "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" It is hard to understand what happened at Meribath. Moses struck the rock first time in Exodus 17 – no problem. This time, however, it cost him entry into the Promised Land. What happened? True, Moses was not supposed to strike the rock this time but rather "speak" to it. True, Moses seems to lose His temper. However, it would appear to me that the key issue was that Moses gave himself credit for the miracle of the water rather than God – "shall WE bring water...." God said this to Moses -- "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold ME as HOLY in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them (Numbers 20:12)." It is unthinkable for God's servant to share glory with God. One thing we do know is that God can see past our actions and words to understand what is in our hearts. Clearly, God saw something in Moses that was not trustworthy enough to keep Moses in leadership. God held Moses accountable, though Moses was forgiven and actually did make it to the Promised Land -- "And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus (Mark 9:4)." While Moses was forgiven, he had forfeited his right to lead. Christians have a hard time understanding the difference between forgiveness and accountability. Also, I believe that at this point in the journey, God was more interested in the greater refinement of Moses than in Moses reaching a temporal goal. God's standard for Moses was much, much higher than His standard for everyone else, because Moses was at a different place in his relationship with God than anyone else, and God intended to take Moses to the next level by exposing Moses' hidden pride that He would understand His total reliance on the love and grace of God. Eternal life is not found in accomplishment but rather in "Knowing the Father and the One He has sent, Jesus." (John 17:3) God causes us to fail in the areas of strength we tend to rely on and take pride in. Moses was the humblest man of his time, and

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he had to fail through pride to understand the sufficiency of God's grace. Abraham was known for his faith, yet time and time again, God had to expose his lack of faith. David was known for his integrity; so God had to humble him through Bathsheba. Solomon was the wisest man of his day, and God had to bring him to the place where he would see that his wisdom and unapparelled accomplishment was ultimately "meaningless." Peter was courageous, yet he had to fail through cowardice, denying Christ three times in order to come to a place where he truly was ready to die for Him. Righteous Saul had to facilitate the stoning of Stephen to eventually understand, "'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Where might you still be trying to share glory with God in your pride and efforts? What personal 'strengths' will God have to expose as idols in your life, that you may learn to understand the total sufficiency of God's grace?

4. Numbers 20:11 – "Water came out abundantly." Despite their sin, God still provided for His people.

5. Numbers 20:14-21 – God's people still face many obstacles. People will treat you unfairly, and God won't stop it or tell you why He is allowing it to happen. You must trust God while being treated unfairly by others. Move on. Let God deal with them. Romans 8:28 tells us that God allows and uses all adversity for the greater good and ultimate goal of drawing us closer to Him while glorifying Himself through it all.

6. Proverbs 10:22 – "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." Whatever we achieve outside of God's will only causes unwanted sorrow in the long run. God gives blessings without sorrows, but in our lack of faith, we add sorrows. God promised Abraham a son, yet in his lack of faith, Abraham chose to have Ishmael in his own way, cause generations of sorrow. God promised Jacob the inheritance, yet in a lack of faith, Jacob tried to steal it, causing generations of sorrow. Don't add sorrow to God's blessings through fearful, prideful disobedience.

7. Proverbs 10:25 – "When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever." Everyone goes through the storm, but only the righteous make it through, because the righteous (right with God) have placed ALL of their hope in the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus said it this way -- "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27)

8. Psalm 28:3 – You cannot tell what is really in a person's hearts simply by what they say. People disguise selfishness with pleasing words. People also disguise pain with happy words, fear with confident words, and guilt with prideful, self-righteous words. None of us know the heart of another person – God does. Our commanded response to all is to offer the message of reconciliation.

9. Psalm 28:8 -- "The Lord is the strength of his people." If the Lord is your strength, what could possibly stand against you?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 March: Be sure to give God ALL the glory today. Take credit for nothing; give God credit and public praise for all that He has done in your life.

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 5, Friday, 9 Mar 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+9%3B+acts+22>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 9 Mar 18:

**** Important contextual verses before reading from Numbers this morning:

** Hebrews 6:20 – “Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” (see all of Hebrews 6 and 7 for the Priesthood of Christ)

** Exodus 19:6 – “...you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

** 1 Peter 2:5 – “...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

** 1 Peter 2:9 -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

** Romans 15:15, 16 – “...because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God....”

** Revelation 1:5, 6 -- Jesus Christ.... loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

** Revelation 5:10 – “...you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

** Revelation 20:6 – “...they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”

1. Numbers 17:3 -- "For there shall be one staff for the head of each fathers' house." The building block of the nation was the family. Family leadership set the foundation for generations.

2. Numbers 17:5 – “The staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout.” God chooses His leaders, not men. People may attempt to lift up leaders of their own choosing, but in the end, they will accomplish nothing good.

3. Numbers 17:5, 8 -- ““And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout’.... On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.” If God is in it; it will grow, unnaturally, miraculously. If God did not commission it, all labor is in vain: Psalm 127:1 – “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” Authority and power come from Christ and is given to those who have been appointed by Him to do His work on earth. If you are a true Christian, that authority and power has been given to you to accomplish the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. (see Matthew 28:18-20) The word "key" in the Bible (as well as in earthly tradition) symbolizes both access and authority. Jesus was given by the Father, the "key of the house of David" (Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7), and the keys of Death and Hades," (Revelation 1:18) and Jesus has given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" to His disciples (Matthew 16:19). With this special access and authority comes great responsibility on earth.

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4. Numbers 17:10 -- "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumbings against me, lest they die.'" The evidence of the power of God in the life of a true disciple, priest, ambassador for Christ is a sign for the rebellious in order to lead them away from death.

5. Numbers 18:1 -- "You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood." The priests had a sacred responsibility to keep holiness. To maintain their personal holiness and the holiness of the "church." To emphasize a point in literature, the Jews would repeat a word. For example, when Jesus said, "Verily, verily I say unto you...." He was saying, "Though everything I say is true and worth your attention, this is really, really true and important." There is only one attribute of God repeated three times: "Holy, Holy, Holy." As the priests of this age, we must not lose sight of the Holiness of God or the demand for our holiness.

6. Numbers 18:5 -- "And you shall keep guard over the sanctuary and over the altar, that there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel." Priests have a responsibility to protect people from their own sinful nature.

7. Numbers 18:6 -- "And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the Lord, to do the service of the tent of meeting." Priests are a gift to the people which is given to the Lord for service.

8. Numbers 18:8 -- "Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, 'Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due.'" The priests lived off of the gifts and tithes given by the people to the Lord. The gifts and tithes were also used to create a storehouse to meet the needs of the people and the work of the "church". (Nehemiah 10:38, 13:12; Malachi 3:10)

9. Numbers 18:20 -- God's priests had nothing but God which is really everything. We are God's priests.

10. Numbers 18:32 -- "And you shall bear no sin by reason of it, when you have contributed the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, lest you die." Priests are strictly warned not to misuse the gifts and tithes.

11. Proverbs 9:1, 2 -- Wisdom is characterized by structure and order.

12. Proverbs 9:6 -- Wisdom involves leaving your old ways.

13. Proverbs 9:9 -- "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." Wise people are open and receptive to instruction.

14. Proverbs 9:14 -- "She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town." Folly is characterized by presumptuous pride and arrogance.

15. Acts 22:3 -- "...being zealous for God..." Bible knowledge is misapplied and dangerous without the love of Christ compelling you, both in your understanding and in your execution. This is why Paul said that if you have all the power in the world but don't have love, you have nothing. This is why Proverbs tells you, "Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." (Proverbs 26:9)

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16. Acts 22:4-7 -- "I persecuted this Way to the death... I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'" Paul's testimony started with a confession of his sinfulness and total depravity. Paul's message was clear, "I was a worthless sinner saved by God through Jesus Christ, not because of anything that I had done or because of who I had become, but merely because of God's mercy and grace." Isn't that our message too? But yet we still have a tendency to act prideful in our own 'righteousness,' wanting others to think highly of us. We hide our sins from others because we don't want others to see who we really are. Not Paul, he wanted everyone to know exactly how unworthy he was so that the grace of God and the glory of Jesus Christ could be magnified before men, rather than Paul. Paul wanted all attention, honor, glory, and praise to go to Jesus, and he wanted all other sinners like him to know that it is faith in Jesus Christ that saves, not good works done on earth. Do you want people to see goodness in you or greatness in God?

17. Acts 22:7 -- 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' When someone persecutes a Christian, they are really persecuting Jesus.

18. Acts 22:8 -- 'Who are you, Lord?' Jesus reveals Himself to whomever He pleases for His purposes. God's chosen people are often the most unlikely candidates in our eyes. Paul (Saul) was not seeking Jesus when called but, rather was at war with Him. This persecutor of Christians would have been difficult to receive in a congregation after his conversion. Is there someone you could not embrace if they stepped inside your church this Sunday? (More on this point below)

19. Acts 22:7, 8 -- God's work left no choice for Paul but to believe in Jesus.

20. Acts 22:10 -- 'What shall I do, Lord?' When Jesus is really revealed to you, you are ready to serve Him, your old priorities are no longer priorities at all.

21. Acts 22:10 -- "Go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do." God expects you to be obedient one step at a time without being told what happens next. Our obedience is not conditional upon the outcome. When God says step, we step, without knowing why. Asking God for a sign or revelation of the future is usually an indicator of a lack of faith and trust in Him. It can be a form of disrespectful disobedience -- "Lord, if you really want me to do what you have said, prove it."

22. Acts 22:13 -- 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' God's plan involves us working with other brothers in our spiritual development. God forces us into relationships because relationship is where we learn how to love.

23. Acts 22:15 -- "For you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard." A witness testifies to what he has seen and heard personally, not second-hand. Tell people your personal story about Jesus Christ.

24. Acts 22:19, 20 -- "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.'" Paul did not choose God, God chose Paul while he was actively persecuting the Body of Christ -- "And [Ananias] said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth (Acts 22:14).'" Perhaps no one was more surprised by this appointment than Paul himself -- "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being

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shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him (Acts 22:19, 20).” Paul learned that “one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God (Romans 5:7-9).” God forgave and appointed Paul, this most unlikely servant; now Paul had to forgive himself and accept his appointment; those he had previously sinned against had to forgive Paul and accept his appointment too. Can you imagine if you were Stephen’s brother? How would you have acted if Paul came to preach in your church? The Bible says, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 2:5:18).” To resist forgiveness (both in the giving and the receiving) is to deny our ministry. Paul had to accept grace which is hard to do – “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).” Paul trust God and changed the world for God’s glory (joyfully surrendering his life in the process). What about you? Will you accept grace and walk in grace? Will you step out in faith to commit your life to the Lord? “And now why do you wait...? Go, for I will send you.... (Acts 22:16, 21)”

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 March: “For you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.” (Acts 22:15) Again, a witness testifies to what they have seen and heard personally, not second-hand. Today, tell people your personal story about Jesus Christ, how He saved you, and what He has done in your life.

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 4, Thursday, 8 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+8%3B+acts+21>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 8 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 15:2 – “When you come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving you...” God’s fulfilled promise was never in question or threatened by the faults of the people. It wasn’t “if” but “when.”
2. Numbers 15:22-23 – God’s word remains the standard that defines sin.
3. Numbers 15:29 --- God’s seeks to unify His people.
4. Numbers 16:1-12 – People depart from God when they demand a “higher” work than He gives them.
5. Numbers 16:4-5 -- “You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?” When Moses heard it, he fell on his face, and he said to Korah and all his company, ‘In the morning the Lord will show who is his, and who is holy, and will bring him near to him. The one whom he chooses he will bring near to him.’” Again, we must be very careful not to project our own sinful motives onto others, judging their actions from the context of our own sinful motivations. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram judged Moses as ‘self-seeking’ because they were self-seeking -- they projected their own faults on him. They evaluated Moses’ actions based upon how they made decisions, selfishly. They automatically assumed

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that Moses had to be lifting himself up and empowering himself for personal gain, because that's what they would have done and were, in fact, now doing in their challenge. As is so often the case, they were calling their selfishness spiritual – "all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them." In their selfish defensiveness, they caused a problem that should not have occurred and incited others to disunity. We often assume the worse in people because we see them from our own frailties. We are often ungracious to other sinners because in them we see our own sin and feel threatened. In our relationships, we often take things as personal attacks when, in fact, the behavior of others may have nothing to do with us. We must stop and remember the attributes of love: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." Seek first to understand before being understood. Before we judge another person and their behavior, before we search our Bibles for verses to prove their sins, perhaps we should seek to humbly understand what motivates them to do what they are doing, getting to the heart of the problem. Remember, we are called to a mission of reconciliation.

- At the heart of this conflict was that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were not getting what they wanted quickly enough (because of their own failures) and blamed the leadership – "Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards (Numbers 16:14)." James had this to say, "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people!" How many times have selfish passions divided churches, families, friends? Our hearts are deceptive, and we are all susceptible to self-centered, passion-based sin. Best, therefore, to be overly gracious and let God recover what you think you may have lost in the process.

-- "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.... Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:3, 9-21)."

6. Numbers 28:1-15 – God wants ministers who will help people find His atonement.

7. Proverbs 8:13 – "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." Love requires hate -- hatred of evil, pride, arrogance, and deception. If you love flowers, you must hate weeds.

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8. Proverbs 8:17 -- "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." Obtaining wisdom is not a casual endeavor, something that falls into place over time or happens naturally. The pursuit of wisdom requires diligence. This is the way of the disciple.

9. Proverbs 8:33, 34 -- "Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors." The wise dig deeply into God's word daily, hear God's word, and diligently obey it.

10. Proverbs 8:36 -- "...but he who fails to find me injures himself." There are natural and very predictable consequences of disobeying God's word, whether it is out of ignorance for defiance. God has given us His word, so ignorance is usually negligence. Why injure yourself? Diligent study God's word and obey it.

11. Acts 21:4 – “And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days.” God intends for His people to seek out and prefer one another. Arriving to a new town, Paul found other Christians, and they took him in and cared for him. This is the way God intended Christians to be. On travel, do you seek out local Christian fellowship? Do you welcome and support Christian travelers?

12. Acts 21:4, 14 -- “And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.... And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’” Through the Spirit, the disciples told Paul not to go to Jerusalem, two separate groups, two separate times. Yet, Paul would not be swayed, eventually resulting in his death. Both Paul and the disciples had access to the Holy Spirit. Why wouldn’t Paul listen to the community of believers? Why would God warn Paul had He not wanted Paul to change course? The Bible doesn’t state whether Paul was right or wrong in going to Jerusalem, and much debate continues in the church today on the matter. While avoiding speculation, we can take away a few clear points: God uses a community of believers to reveal more truth than an individual can obtain on his own. God often uses more than one believer to confirm a word. God calls us to “test the spirits.” God may warn you in order to prepare you rather than to hinder you. God’s plan for your life is ultimately between you and God. Others might provide sound counsel, but you must decide. Finally, if you are wholeheartedly committed to serving God with your life, He will honor your decisions and use you to glorify Himself.

13. Acts 21:8, 9 – “Philip the evangelist... had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.” Young girls were prophets in a time when young girls were not expected to speak in public. The Holy Spirit breaks down common social barriers. What impact can an evangelistic father have on his daughters?

14. Acts 21:29 – When you are mad at someone, it is easy to misinterpret their actions and to assume the worst. One of the greatest biblical stories to drive home this point is found in 2 Samuel 10, where David’s attempted act of kindness towards another king is misinterpreted as a trick, resulting in the needless deaths of tens of thousands of people.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 March: Give people the benefit of the doubt today. Don’t make assumptions about the motives behind their actions. Seek to truly understand them and their perspectives. Begin with a cooperative spirit. (Numbers 16:13; Acts 21:29)

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 3, Wednesday, 7 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+7%3B+acts+20>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 7 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 13:1, 9 -- "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.... Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." God had given the Israelites the land of Canaan so His people would dominate and control the most strategic piece of terrain in the region for His glory. However, the people sinned and rebelled by failing to trust God and face the enemy. They failed to act because they were afraid. Due to their lack of faith and lack of action, the Canaanites would control the crossroads of international trade and cultural influence for another 40+ years, and the Jews would continue to wander the desert. Arguably, we have largely ceded control of society's major institutions of influence (schools, media, government, art, entertainment, science, etc) to unbelievers due to fear and rebellion against the King who called His people to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth -- to make disciples among all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey. "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"
2. Numbers 13:2 – God made the promise before He demanded a commitment.
3. Numbers 13:21-25 – God’s people follow God’s instructions.
4. Numbers 13:25 – God protected the spies.
5. Numbers 13:26-33 – Carrying out God’s mission is not enough if you do not learn faith in it.
6. Numbers 13:28-33 – God wants you to look at what He can do, not what the enemy can do.
7. Numbers 14:1, 4 -- "Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night.... And they said to one another, 'Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.'" Jesus gave us the Great Commission – "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19, 20)." Will you obey the Lord fully and wholeheartedly? Or will you be like so many others who see the enormity of the challenge, the risk, and the personal sacrifice required and then reject God’s call, choosing comfort and conformity to the world instead? There really isn’t any middle ground (see Matthew 7:21; Matthew 12:30; Luke 6:46; Luke 11:23; Revelation 3:16). You will either step out in faith, regardless of apparent circumstances, or you won’t. You will either be wholehearted or double-minded. Partial obedience is disobedience. God’s path leads to the Promised Land. The world’s path leads to death in the desert or a return to slavery in Egypt. How will you respond to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? Paul is a model for us all: "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:24-27)." Paul committed his all to the proclamation of the gospel, recognizing that, as a "priest" for God, he would be held accountable to God for how well he performed his duties. If you are a Christian, you are also considered by God to be one of His priests – "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his

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marvelous light (1 Peter 2:5, 9).” Are you known by all as a wholehearted priest? Do you consider the measure of your life success how well you fulfilled the Great Commission? What will be the motive behind your actions today?

- James 1:6-8; 4:8 -- The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.... Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

8. Numbers 14:8-9 – Victory depends on God’s will, not human power.

9. Numbers 14:9 – “Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land.” Fear of man rather than fear of God leads to rebellion.

10. Numbers 14:10 – God’s presence protects His faithful people.

11. Numbers 14:11-12 – Rebellion makes God angry.

12. Numbers 14:13-16 – God protects His reputation.

13. Numbers 14:19 – “Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.” Moses continued to intercede for the people though they continually turned against Him. Is there someone for whom you have stopped praying?

14. Numbers 14:20-38 -- A lack of faith can cause you to miss out on God’s blessings for you.

15. Numbers 14:24 -- “But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.” Of all the original Israelites that left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb would enter into the Promised Land because they fully committed with all of their hearts to follow the Lord and to trust Him in all circumstances. When we don’t follow the Lord unconditionally, we are rebelling against the Lord by definition -- the Lord must in fact lord over our lives completely. Our lives must be lived in full submission and surrender to the Almighty King. God forgave those who refused to follow His lead into the Promised Land, but He also disciplined them for their behavior -- “The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty (Numbers 14:18).... none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers (14:22, 23).” Disobedience robs us of the fullness of joy we should receive in Christ. Jesus said, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15:10, 11).” Live joyfully in obedience today.

16. Numbers 14:25 – God still shows His work to His people even when He must discipline them.

17. Numbers 14:27-37 – God’s forbearance with sin has its limits.

18. Numbers 14:39 – God’s discipline brings mourning.

19. Numbers 14:40-41 – God does not always forego punishment when people repent.

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20. Numbers 14:42 – You must see God’s work today.

21. Proverbs 7:2, 3 -- "...keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart." God's word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, changes what you care about (heart), what you think about or gaze upon (eyes), and what you choose to do (fingers). There are three levels of motivation: fear (the lowest form of motivation), duty (works), and love (the greatest form of motivation). At first, we might obey God because we are scared not to obey; then we might obey God because we know we should; but as we grow, we begin to obey God because we truly desire to, because of our love. Despite how you might feel, obey, and grow. Note that these verses introduce a warning against adultery. There are many books out there on how to affair-proof your marriage. What does the Bible say?

22. Acts 20:21 – "...repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and faith go together and are continuous.

23. Acts 20:24 – "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." Are you ready to give your life for the Gospel?

24. Acts 20:26-27 – "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." We only fail if we fail to proclaim the Gospel.

25. Acts 20:28 – "Care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." We must not forget that God cared enough for others to give His life for them – we love Him when we love them.

26. Acts 20:32 – Ministers need to feed on God’s word.

27. Acts 20:36 – Prayer had a central place in Paul’s ministry. How is prayer prioritized in your life and ministry? BTW, if you think you don’t have a ministry, re-read 2 Corinthians 5:18 – "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." For whose reconciliation with God are you fervently praying?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 March: Do not fear the enemy. Trust God enough to boldly proclaim the Gospel of His Son Jesus.

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 2, Tuesday, 6 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+6%3B+acts+19>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 6 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 11:1 – "And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled..." God had miraculously freed, saved, and sustained His people, but they complained nonetheless. How does God view our ungratefulness? Psalm 50:23 – "The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me."

2. Numbers 11:2 – "Then the people cried out to Moses." Leaders look out for the welfare of their followers even when they don’t deserve it. Leaders intercede in prayer for their followers before God.

3. Numbers 11:4, Acts 19:32 – "Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, 'Oh that we had meat to eat!'.... Now some cried out one

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thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.” The rabble instigated ungodly behavior among the people. The rabble was controlled by cravings and self-centeredness. Christians run the risk of being caught up and consumed by the worries of the world, influenced more by the unbelieving community (the rabble) than by the presence of God in their lives. This is particularly true as media captivates our attention and drives the social discourse. We worry all day long about a million issues across the globe, from nuclear proliferation to local domestic issues, but we can’t see the suffering person two cubicles down from our work station. Bird flu (2006), Ebola (2014), global warming (current), how were/are all these “global crisis” relevant to the person next door whose life is falling apart? Did you get whipped up into a frenzy during the last political season? Politicians are not our main problem, nor are the various forms of ‘Canaanites’ in the world. Our problem is our infidelity to what God has commanded His people to be and to do. Consider the issues of the day during Jesus’ time under Roman occupation. The political, social, and economic situation was certainly worse for the original believers than it is for us. While many wanted Jesus to lead a political uprising and conquer using the ‘weapons of the world’, what did Jesus focus His attention on? What did He talk about? What did He do? His battle plan, His strategy was the Sermon on the Mount. His approach was to remain “one” with the Father and to draw those with whom He had personal relationships into greater unity with the Father, with Him, and with each other. Global change, revolution, starts with personal change (repentance, transformation, sanctification – vertical relationship and vertical love) and then horizontal relational change (forgiveness, reconciliation, and love). Perhaps one of the best things you could do today is go on a media fast, and intentionally stop talking about what everyone else is talking about. Focus on Jesus, and share Him with those around you. The most revolutionary thing you could do today in order to change the world is represent or ‘re-present’ Christ today in the place that God has put you, in the relationships He has given you. The worldly powers are absolutely no match against the power of God in the lives of the faithful. Where evil prevails is where we have failed to display and project God’s power due to our own infidelity. Our answers are not of this world.

- God’s people are guided by the Spirit, not by passions, cravings, and worldly desires. The “rabble” are those who are not living by the Spirit but rather are driven by self-interest and self-gratification. In today’s readings, the rabble complained about not having meat to eat, but God said that their real issue was that they had “rejected the Lord who [was] among [them].” These are the sort of people described by Paul in Philippians 3:19 – “Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” Both in Numbers and in Philippians, we are dealing with people on the inside – people within the congregation who aren’t really seeking God but rather the gifts of God. They are no better than Demetrius, the silversmith for the shrines of Artemis, who incited the riot in Ephesus on behalf of “great goddess Artemis,” not really for the sake of Artemis but because, “there is danger... that this trade of ours may come into disrepute.” The real danger is when the “rabble” starts to influence the rest of the church as occurred with the Israelites in the desert. Paul also warned against this. Proverbs warns us, “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil (Proverbs 4:14).” Proverbs says that the key is to hold fast to the word of God, obey the commands of God, and “Keep your heart with all vigilance.” Many today who call themselves Christians have rejected the word of God in order to accommodate their own desires. Of this rabble the Bible says, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).” In response, the Bible tells us to “preach the word;

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be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2), and to have nothing to do with those who pursue false teachings (1 Timothy 4:7, 2 Timothy 2:23, Titus 3:10).

- These weak-willed rabble preferred comfort over freedom and God's provision. They were ready to return to slavery for the sake of a piece of meat. Don't they remind you of Esau who was willing to sell his inheritance for a bowl of soup? Don't they remind you of so many today who want to be spoon fed by the government? The above verses remind me of a quote from Samuel Adams: "If ye love wealth greater than liberty, the tranquility of servitude greater than the animating contest for freedom, go home from us in peace. We seek not your counsel, nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you; and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen." How often as Christians do we surrender the best of what God had to offer for instant gratification. How often are we tempted to return to the slavery of sin for fleeting pleasure. Better to suffer with God than to take comfort without Him. Walk in freedom and in truth today.

4. Numbers 11:21-23 -- "Is the Lord's hand shortened?" No problem is too big for God. God will do the impossible in order to glorify Himself.

5. Numbers 12:3, 7 -- "Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.... He is faithful in all my house." God's chosen leader was most known for meekness, humility and faithfulness. For what are you most known?

6. Numbers 12:8 -- "With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord." Moses' fidelity enabled a very special relationship with God. The Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit, but the Bible warns that we can "quench" the Spirit, "grieve" the Spirit, and get out of "step" with the Spirit through sin -- "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh...." (Galatians 5:17) Sin hinders your unity with God and your ability to hear His word in clarity. The Bible says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." (James 4:8) Nearness to God is not a matter of time and space, but rather a matter of love, displayed in fidelity and obedience. - Draw nearer to Jesus today and hear His voice more clearly -- "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

7. Numbers 12:13 -- "And Moses cried to the Lord, 'O God, please heal her—please.'" Moses prayed fervently for those who opposed him. Do you?

8. Proverbs 6:6-11 -- Self-disciplined people diligently do what needs to be done without needing any external motivation or immediate payoff.

9. Proverbs 6:9 -- "How long will you lie there, O sluggard?" There are many forms of procrastination. One form is to think about doing something for eternity. Successful people spend most of their time, 70-90% in execution, learning as they go. You learn the most by doing. It is important to read and think, but this too can be a form of procrastination. We often overthink it. Read God's word and then do it. You don't really understand it until you have experienced it.

10. Proverbs 6:16 -- "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him...." As a servant of Christ, you should know what God hates, and you should hate these things too.

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11. Acts 19:15 – “And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” There is no secondhand spirituality. No one else can develop Christian maturity on your behalf. A strong Christian heritage is an asset, but it cannot take the place of your own vibrant, growing relationship with Christ. Paul had a powerful walk with God. God used him so mightily that extraordinary miracles occurred through his life. Cloths that touched Paul were taken to the sick, and the sick were healed (Acts 19:10-12). Evil spirits were cast out. Paul’s preaching and teaching were instrumental in building a strong church in Ephesus. Paul’s ministry was so impressive, in fact, that others tried to duplicate it. Seven sons of the chief priest, Sceva, attempted to cast out demons the way Paul did. They confronted an evil spirit and attempted to exorcise it “by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” These men were trying to use a spiritual power that Paul had acquired after years of walking closely with his Lord. They could imitate Paul’s words, but they could not duplicate the power that was his through his personal relationship with God. The evil spirit retorted, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” The demon then viciously attacked them and humiliated them. The evil spirits were fearfully aware of Jesus (James 2:19); they were familiar with Paul’s influence over the powers of darkness. But the demons had no knowledge of the seven sons of Sceva. You can duplicate the words and deeds of a spiritually mature Christian, but you cannot inherit his or her walk with God. Christian maturity takes effort; it comes over time. If you ignore the place of prayer and if you neglect your relationship with Christ, you will not grow in your faith. Imitating the faith of others will not give you victory. Only as you nurture your own relationship with Jesus will your life be filled with spiritual maturity and power. (Henry T. Blackaby)

12. Acts 19:18-20 – Revival came when people repented and confessed their sins in the church.

13. Acts 19:20 – “So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.” Paul’s world worshiped idols. No idol was more revered in Ephesus than the goddess Diana. The great statue was housed in a magnificent temple and was recognized as one of the wonders of the world. An idol-making industry, providing a livelihood for many people, developed in Ephesus to support the widespread idolatry of the day. Paul did not go to Ephesus to condemn those worshiping idols but to unashamedly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. As Paul shared the truths of God, and as people were set free from their sins, idol worship began to decline. The contrast between stone carvings and God’s power to change lives became obvious. The righteous lives of the Christians stood in stark contrast to the hedonistic practices of the idol worshipers. The victorious Christian witness was so compelling that the economy of the entire city was thrown into upheaval as idolatry diminished in favor of Christianity. An idol is anything that diverts our devotion from God. Our society is as idolatrous as Paul’s was. Rather than worshiping statues, we choose possessions, pleasures, or careers as our gods and pour our time, finances, and energy into these things. Each of us is called, as Paul was, to live a victorious, joyful, and purposeful Christian life in the midst of an idolatrous society. We do not have to seek out and condemn today’s idols. Rather, as we live out our Christianity, enjoying the abundant life God gives, our lives will discredit the idols around us. We may face opposition and hostility from those who are angered at the contrast between our God and theirs. People do not like to have their idols dethroned! Yet as we uphold Christ, others will see a difference and be drawn to Him and the life that He offers. (Henry T. Blackaby)

14. Acts 19:23-41 – Revival stirred up opposition among unbelievers.

15. Acts 19:26 – Revival came when God alone was recognized as God.

16. Acts 19:27 – Revival threatened all other religions.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 March: Today pray for your enemies and those who treat you unfairly. (Numbers 12:13)

DBRP- WEEK 10, Day 1, Monday, 5 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+5%3B+acts+18>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 5 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 9:8 -- "And Moses said to them, 'Wait, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you.'" How do you make decisions? Yesterday, Psalm 27 concluded with these words: "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" Today, we read that Moses waited for revelation from the Lord to make decisions rather than simply trusting in his own reason and judgment. We read of the Israelites: "At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out (Numbers 9:23)." In Proverbs we are reminded, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5)." Finally, today in Acts we read that Paul was guided by visions from God (Acts 18:9). Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise (John 5:19)." It is very hard to wait on the Lord. However, the Bible demonstrates time and time again that to walk with the Lord, we must give Him the lead. We see that throughout the Bible, God's people get in huge trouble when they don't wait for the Lord – remember Abraham and Jacob? God promised Abraham children and Jacob the inheritance, but they both grew impatient and took matters into their own hands – we are still suffering today for their sins. It takes great faith to wait on the Lord. Because God's timing is not our timing, and it often feels like we are being indecisive or doing nothing. However, in reality we are deciding to do the most important thing: trust in the Lord. The world says, "Don't just stand there; do something!" God says, "Don't just do something; stand there, and wait for my word." It is impossible for us to know the path God has in store for us – His thoughts and ways are infinitely removed from ours. And God seldom reveals where He is taking you when He says, "Go." Also, God will usually tell you to go where you had never intended in order for you to do things that are impossible (of your own strength). Again, it takes great faith to wait and to walk only when and where God tells you to. However, to walk in our own understanding is to walk away from the blessings God intends for us. But what does waiting on the Lord look like in practical, daily decision-making? After all, God will not likely to tell you what job to take, what car to buy, or whether or not to go on that trip through a vision. It starts with humbly turning to God for wisdom (knowledge rightly applied); then, remaining prayerfully immersed in God's word, which will give you godly perspective on circumstances; remaining obedient to God's word, regardless the apparent cost of fidelity – not cutting corners for expediency's sake; seeking the counsel of mature Christians, always remembering to "test the spirits," for consistency with God's written word; and making the most faithful decisions you can while trusting God with what you didn't understand. Faith is trusting God enough to obey Him in the present; and hope is trusting God with the future. Love, God's love for you, ensures that even your failures cannot thwart God's perfect will for you in your life. Who has the lead in your life?

2. Numbers 9:10, 11 – God made special provision for those who could not worship on schedule.

3. Numbers 9:14 – God is available to everyone.

4. Numbers 9:15-16 – God intends to be in the midst of His people.

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5. Numbers 9:20-23 – “Sometimes the cloud was a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the command of the Lord they remained in camp; then according to the command of the Lord they set out.... Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time, that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, abiding there, the people of Israel remained in camp and did not set out, but when it lifted, they set out. At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out. They kept the charge of the Lord, at the command of the Lord by Moses.” God determines the timing, and we are called to obey. We wait when God says wait, and we move when God says move, all according to His timing. It is impossible for us to understand God’s timing, and we should not get overly concerned about understanding His plan for us. We should focus on obedience today, trusting God with the future. We can plan for the future, and the Bible says we should, but our plan is only as good as its alignment with God’s plan. Delayed obedience is disobedience. When God calls you to obey His word, do not hesitate! Conversely, don’t get ahead of God, as discussed above.

6. Numbers 10:8, 9 – “The trumpets shall be to you for a perpetual statute throughout your generations. And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.” God’s plan is that all of God’s people would be ready to respond to the call to support one another through adversity. How well is the global church today working together to protect the global body from adversaries?

7. Numbers 10:12 – “...and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai.” Millions of God’s people moved in a very organized fashion, based upon the plan that they had established under God’s direction. The church cannot function with unity of effort and action if it doesn’t have a plan to do so, if every person doesn’t understand their specific duties and responsibilities as part of the larger whole.

8. Numbers 10:31 – “And he said, ‘Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us.’” The people followed the cloud of the Lord, but God also used Moses’ father-in-law to instruct the people in some specifics. God leads us in many ways, often through other godly people who have knowledge and skills that we do not have. God intentionally made us relational, to rely on Him and others.

9. Proverbs 5:22 – “The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.” Do not let sin ensnare you!

10. Acts 18:2, 3, 18-26 – Priscilla and Aquila apparently became bi-vocational missionaries, and Paul joined them for a time. Priscilla and Aquila had a big impact on the early church as a husband/wife business/ministry team.

11. Acts 18:2, 3 – “And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.” Paul worked to finance his ministry. His job was not his identity or life aim but merely a way to resource his real mission of spreading the Gospel.

12. Acts 18:4 – “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.” Paul was diligently faithful to his calling to reach all with the Gospel. Paul did use his work as an excuse for not fulfilling the Great Commission, nor did he use his ministry as an excuse for not working – he worked hard both in industry and ministry.

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13. Acts 18:5, 6 -- “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’” Paul dedicated himself to relentlessly testifying about Jesus from the word of God to anyone who would listen. He understood that he was responsible for preaching the Gospel, not for how others chose to respond to God’s word. Preach the truth of Jesus to anyone who will listen. Don’t worry about how they will respond – God knows. When someone comes to see you, hopefully they will find you “occupied with the word, testifying... that the Christ was Jesus.”

14. Acts 18:9 -- “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent.” Are you afraid to proclaim the Gospel? Do not be afraid or silent. If your message does not start and end with the person of Jesus Christ, your message is NOT the Gospel. It is impossible to reconcile others to Jesus if you don’t tell them about Jesus, not just vague notions of goodness or sentimental thoughts of God – Jesus Christ! When Jesus gave us the Great Commission, he did so under all authority and promised that He would be with us always and that we would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. He has appointed us as His Ambassadors. Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent. God is with you; what else matters?

15. Acts 18:9, 10 -- “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you.” When Jesus gave us the Great Commission, he did so under all authority and promised that He would be with us always and that we would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. He has appointed us as His Ambassadors. Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent. God is with you; what else matters?

16. Acts 18:26 – “He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Apollos was a powerful preacher who still needed spiritual mentorship, both Priscilla and Aquila (husband and wife) took him under their wing, encouraging him and supporting him. They disciplined him. Who is disciplining you, and who are you disciplining? Note that Priscilla and Aquila corrected him in private, not damaging his pride or reputation. They also encouraged him and supported him. Too often Christians fail to instruct one another graciously and tactfully.

17. Acts 18:27 – “When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed.” Only through the grace of God can anyone believe. People believe through the grace of God, not through our efforts, though God uses us as His instruments in the process. God calls us to proclaim the Gospel to all, but only the Holy Spirit can convict a heart.

18. Acts 18:28 – “he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.” All of the Scriptures, OT and NT, proclaim Jesus; the Gospel is Jesus; we are Jesus’ Ambassadors entrusted with the Gospel. Are you ready to publicly proclaim Jesus Christ using the Bible as your guide?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 March: Commit today to your true life’s mission as a Christian – proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and advancing the Kingdom of God one heart at a time. Consider your earthly job, not as your purpose in life, but rather as the means to accomplish your purpose, the method of resourcing your Ambassadorship. When people ask what you do, tell them you are an Ambassador of Jesus Christ. If your ‘profession’ hinders your witness, find another profession, even if it is just making tents. (Acts 18)

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DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 7, Sunday, 4 Mar 2018

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 4 Mar 18:

<https://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+4%3B+psalm+26%2C+27>

1. Numbers 7:6-9 -- "Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service. And four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because they were charged with the service of the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulder." Moses distributed the resources among the Levites according to the work and responsibilities of the Levites: Gershon received two carts and four oxen to support their work of transporting the fabrics of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:25-26). However, Merari received four carts and eight oxen because they had the job of transporting the boards and framework of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:31-32). Kohath received no carts or oxen because they were instructed to carry the holy furniture of the tabernacle on their shoulders (Numbers 4:4). Had Kohath received a cart they did not need for their service to God, it might have been a temptation for them to disobey God's instructions to them. So, Moses did not give them one. God has given what you need to serve Him in the assignments He has for you. There is no sense in comparing your "carts and oxen" with anyone else's sin. God has a different purpose for each of us. And, don't expect God to give you what you don't need that you might be tempted to cut corners.

2. Numbers 7:12-88 – These were large, generous offerings, but each tribal leader's offering was exactly the same, and the Bible makes that clear by restating the offering from each leader. This exact accounting prevented any special honor being attributed to any tribal leader. Repeating the offering in detail over and over with each leader also demonstrates that, though identical, God recognizes each offering individually and specifically, without favoritism. A group of faithful people are honored by God corporately and also individually.

3. Numbers 8:8, 12 – Ministers are sinners too who need atonement.

4. Numbers 8:13 – God sees ministers as an offering to Him – see Romans 12:1.

5. Proverbs 4:7 – "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." The beginning of wisdom is to understand that you don't have it. Socrates said, "Wisdom is knowing you know nothing." The moment you think you have achieved wisdom, you have stopped growing in wisdom and have begun to drift away from it, like a boat on the ocean that has lost power. God is the source of all wisdom. To grow in wisdom is to grow closer to Him, more obedient to Him, more responsive to His Spirit. Our pursuit of "knowing Jesus" and growing in wisdom is never-ending. When you are far from an object, it may appear very small; but the closer you get the bigger it becomes and the smaller you feel. As we grow closer to God, He only gets bigger from our perspective, and we only get smaller, driving us to greater and greater humility. Humility and wisdom go hand-in-hand. The wisest people are the humblest people, not the most prideful. Many take great pride in their education, their professional status, their degrees, titles, etc. But not only are these things not wisdom, they threaten your humility and your potential ability to obtain wisdom. The world is full of smart people but very lacking in wise people.

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6. Proverbs 4:18 – “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.” We were made righteous (right with God) through the blood of Jesus Christ the moment we were born again, but we grow into that righteousness for the rest of our lives, the light in us shining brighter and brighter every day.

7. Proverbs 4:19 – “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” Jesus said it like this on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

8. Psalm 26:1-3 -- “Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.” Psalm 26 is fascinating, coming from David who murdered a great warrior to cover up David’s adulterous relationship with the warrior’s wife. Scholars speculate as to whether Psalm 26 was written pre-Bathsheba or post-Bathsheba, but perhaps it doesn’t matter for our consideration of these powerful, inspired verses:

- David understood he was a sinner before Bathsheba. However, David confidently walked in “[his] integrity but in “[God’s] faithfulness,” with his eyes fixed on God’s “steadfast love.” David is not asking God to vindicate him on his personal righteousness, but rather to vindicate him on his faith in God and heart for God. David loves God and seeks to live a life of loving obedience, but David knows that his integrity is limited. David knows his love and fidelity are imperfect but trusts in God’s perfect love and fidelity, in God’s grace.

- “Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind.” David was a man after God’s own heart; he wanted a pure heart for God. David understood that his heart was deceptive and God would need to reveal to David the hidden sin in his heart. Perhaps, this is where God allowed Bathsheba to enter into the picture. It is painful when God exposes the truth of you, but the pain does not compare to the “immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:7)

- In Psalm 26:4-8, David describes his integrity in action. Personal holiness was important to David because he loved God and knew it was important to God. David avoided the company of sinners (26:4, 5), remained innocent, frequented church, and constantly proclaimed his faith (26:6-8) because his focus was on pleasing the Lord, not on pleasing others or gratifying self. In Psalm 27, David reveals the source of his motivation for holiness: “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.... I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (27:4, 13)!” David’s actions revealed the bent of his heart. Why do you do what you do? What is your motivation? Is it to “look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living?”

- Still, David knew his integrity wasn’t enough – “But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me.” He relied on God’s grace and redemption. To David vindication (the word he started this psalm with) and redemption go hand-in-hand.

9. Psalm 27:1 -- “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Fear is a lack of perspective of who God is and what He has done for you. It takes the right perspective on God to have the right perspective on life’s trials. What then shall we say to these things? “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but

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gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:31-39).” How does the love of God change everything in your life?

10. Psalm 27:14 – “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” Waiting for the Lord takes strength and courage, but it is essential.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 March: Once again, wait on the Lord today. Seek God’s guidance before acting. Don’t get wrapped up in business, activities, even good deeds, but seek to only do or say what God tells you to do our say. (Psalm 27:14)

DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 6, Saturday, 3 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+3%3B+psalm+25>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 3 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 5:3 – “You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.” God is in the midst of His people and does not distinguish between race, gender, or ethnicity.

2. Numbers 5:4 – God expects immediate obedience to the work He gives His people.

3. Numbers 5:6, 7 -- “Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong.” Sin is against God, and God takes it very seriously, even if you didn’t realize you were sinning when you were doing it. God commands His people to not only confess their sins to those who they have offended, but he also expects them to make restitution as much as possible. Jesus reiterated this responsibility: “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23, 24).” Unresolved sin between you and others affects your worship. Some have suggested that restitution is not required because sins are ultimately committed against God, and we are under grace; however, this is not Jesus’ teaching. In fact, Jesus says that we are to confess and make restitution immediately, urgently. In Luke 19, Zacchaeus offers a great example of immediate confession and restitution regardless the personal cost. The problem with confessing sins to others is that they are generally not as forgiving as God (Psalm 25 speaks eloquently to the grace and mercy God offers the repentant sinner). However, we are to trust God to work on the heart of the offended. Trust God with the consequences. Delay is disobedience. Today is the day to settle matters “as far as it depends on you.”

- Romans 12:18 -- If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

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4. Numbers 5:11-31 – To deal with jealousy issues and hidden sins, God included oaths given to the priest with visual symbolism to solidify the commitment. The adultery test essentially turned an unresolvable matter over to God. The ceremony described signified the accused's oath to God before the priest.

5. Numbers 6 – Remember this chapter when you read about Samson in the future – he was intended to be a Nazarite.

6. Numbers 6:1-21 – God calls certain people to a special commitment which demands extraordinary devotion and focus. Abstinence from strong drink ensured the person under vow would not lose self-control and unintentionally do something to break the vow. Breaking the vow required atonement from God.

7. Numbers 6:4-26 – Peace is a wholeness and completeness of life (not the absence of life challenges) which comes from closeness to God.

8. Proverbs 3:1 -- "Let your heart keep my commandments." Obey God starts with the heart and is not just about activities.

9. Proverbs 3:5 -- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Faith is an issue of trust, and you won't trust who you do not know. Jesus said, knowing Him was "eternal life." (See John 17) Your faith is evidence of your relationship with Jesus. Obedience to God is evidence of your faith and love.

10. Proverbs 3:7 -- "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil." Faith means that you have to do what doesn't make sense to you at the time, simply because God commanded it.

11. Proverbs 3:9, 10 -- "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine." Abraham gave the tithe before the written Law, and Jesus commended tithing in the New Testament. Tithing comes with a promise. It is an act of faith that often doesn't seem to make sense from a human perspective.

12. Proverbs 3:11, 12 -- "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Faith trusts the Lord through discipline, understanding that His discipline, though painful, is an act of love.

13. Proverbs 3:19 -- "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth...." God made the natural laws and the ethical laws that govern all creation. He holds us accountable to both. There are basic principles for living that hold true because God made them. If you choose to disobey either His natural laws or His ethical laws, you will suffer needlessly. For example, if you don't take care of your physical body, you will suffer needlessly; if you don't live by love, you will suffer needlessly. Though God gives us grace, He also holds us accountable for the word He has given us, particularly since He has given us access to the Holy Spirit for supernatural strength and self-control.

14. Psalm 25:2 – "O my God, in you I trust." Really? Obey Him then. Proclaim Him! Surrender all the Him!

15. Psalm 25:3 – "Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame." Waiting is one of the hardest things to do. God's promises are not on our timeline. Are you willing to wait and continue to obey day-

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by-day without apparent results? Consider the Bible stories you have already read about those who waited and were blessed and those who couldn't wait anymore and were cursed.

16. Psalm 25:27 – “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!” We count on God's goodness, not ours.

17. Psalm 25:9 – “He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.” Humility is the prerequisite as discussed previously.

16. Psalm 25:15 – “My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.” Focus is everything. With focus comes power. A 50-watt lightbulb can barely light up a room, but 50-watt lasers are used to cut through bone in medical surgery. The difference is focus. To live a powerful, purposeful life, focus all of your energy on Jesus.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 March: Focus all of your energy today on obeying Jesus and serving Him. Make the most of every opportunity today to proclaim Jesus to others. Strive to view everything around you from Jesus's perspective. Walk with Him today, and wait for His lead. Don't just get busy with all sorts of activities today. Wait for the Holy Spirit to guide you. (See today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 5, Friday, 2 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+2%3B+acts+17>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 2 Mar 18:

1. Numbers 3:12 -- “Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine.” The priests of God are living sacrifices, their earthly lives are essentially over as they devote everything to God – “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1) “You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5)

2. Numbers 3:25 – Guard duty was an act of worship. All that we do should be an act of worship before the Lord, dedicated to Him and His purposes, motivated by love for Him rather than motivated by fear, pride, or obligation.

3. Proverbs 2:6 -- “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Who are you listening to?

4. Proverbs 2:10 – “Wisdom will come into your heart.” God's word will change your heart.

5. Acts 17:1-3 -- True preaching focuses on the person of Jesus Christ.

6. Acts 17:11, 12 -- “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” The Bereans were nobler than the rest because they did not just accept the teachings of Paul, despite his credentials, but rather diligently studied the word of God for themselves, testing Paul's teachings by going to the source.

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This is a model for us. As a “kingdom of priests,” we should all strive to be Biblical scholars. One of the primary challenges we face in the church today is that most Christians are biblically illiterate despite the incredible access we enjoy to the Bible and to study resources. Ironically, many Christians are being “taught” the Bible by agenda-driven humanists through universities, television, and other media. Many other Christians simply rely on their pastors to feed them the word. While we all need strong pastors and teachers, they are no substitutes for personal, diligent Bible study. We should be like the Bereans. Finally, note from today’s readings how while Paul taught the Bible and “reasoned with them from the Scriptures,” he was violently attacked by “some wicked men of the rabble” who were not interested in reasonable debate but rather were only interested in shutting down the dialogue with force if necessary. We will see the more and more today. Be bold and well-read.

7. Acts 17:23 – Most people are searching for God in some way.

8. Acts 17:27-28 – God makes it easy to find Him if you are looking.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 March: Whatever you are holding back from the Lord, surrender it today. (Numbers 3:12; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5)

DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 4, Thursday, 1 Mar 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=numbers+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+1%3B+acts+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 1 Mar 18:

1. Number 1:2, 2:2, 2:34 -- “Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male, head by head.... The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side.... According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they set out, each one in his clan, according to his fathers' house.” God built his nation on families with fathers leading their families and taking responsibility for their families. God started from scratch with Abram (Abraham) and slowly built from him 12 tribes, now 603,550 fighting men (not counting families and Levites). The nation organized in families, clans, and tribes, with the senior father (elder) maintaining responsibility for their tribe which would number in the tens of thousands (fighting men). What united the families, clans, and tribes was their faith and commitment to God. The “tent of meeting” was at the center and was where all business occurred. I believe this is a model for the Kingdom of God on earth. We need to rebuild families in the church, and Christian families should be united in effort and action by their faith and commitment to the Great Commandment and Great Commission. We need revival among fathers to return to positions of leadership within their homes, and we need to reestablish in them a sense of generational responsibility and accountability. How many men today lead their families with a vision of building a clan or tribe, organized to glorify God with great effect on earth?

- The family unit is the foundation of society, the place where character is established and competencies are taught from which culture and society is established. Strong families make a strong nation. Weak families make a weak nation. God's most important institution is marriage, from which strong families are established and character and competence are passed from generation to generation. As the family goes, so goes the nation.

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- Malachi 2:13-16 – “You cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, ‘Why does he not?’ Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did He not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. ‘For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.’”

2. Numbers 1:46 -- “All those listed were 603,550.” Throughout the Bible, we see that God expects His leaders to keep accountability of every person for which they have been given responsibility, to know their condition and to have a plan for them. Today, our readings deal with accountability of the warriors. In places like Ezra chapter 2, and Nehemiah chapter 7, the people of Israel are counted by families down to the individual. God cares about every person individually, knowing every hair on every person’s head. God has given us the mission of loving others, caring for them as He does. God has placed people in your family, in your church, in your community, in your life intentionally and has entrusted you to care for them. Do you have accountability of all the people God has intentionally placed in your life so that you could care for them? Are you fulfilling your responsibility for them? The Bible says that God has also placed you intentionally within a body of believers with each member of that body fulfilling a very specific role, much like the parts of a human body serve specific purposes and work in unison. But what does it mean when one part of a body is hurting and the rest of the body doesn’t feel that hurt? What would it mean if your foot was broken but you couldn’t feel it? That would be the symptom of a very serious, life threatening disease. But how often have we lost sensitivity to the pains of those who God has intentionally connected with us? What does that say about our condition? If you haven’t already done so, make a list of those God has intentionally placed in your life and make the commitment to begin praying for them weekly by name. Yes, your list will likely be in the hundreds and will take some serious thought. But start with an inside-out approach. Start with your immediate family, then your extended family, then your church family, your neighbors, your friends, etc. Keep accountability of your relationships, and as you commit to pray for people individually, you will begin to increase or revive your sensitivity to their needs, and you will grow in love for them.

3. Numbers 1:1-54 – God prepared His people for action rather than stagnation.

4. Proverbs 1:7, 28-31 -- “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.... Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.” True wisdom and knowledge are not obtainable apart from God, nor is self-control, which is fruit that is of the Spirit. The godless “seek” wisdom, knowledge, and self-control “diligently,” but it will elude them because they lack “fear of the LORD.” Therefore, they will condemn themselves by choice. People cannot create wisdom and knowledge; they can only be filled with it. The Bible says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:1-5) The Greek word used in these verses for “Word” is

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“Logos.” Concerning logos, R.C. Sproul says, the Greeks used this word to describe the cause of purpose and order in the universe, the source of logic:

-- “All attempts to translate the word Logos have suffered from some degree of inadequacy. No English word is able to capture the fullness of John’s Logos when he declared that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Attempts have been made by philosophers to translate Logos as logic, act, or deed—all of which are inadequate definitions.” Only through Christ can anyone be filled with wisdom, knowledge, and self-control. Christians are to reveal, reflect, and project wisdom in the world by virtue of their connection with Christ as “branches” connected to the “vine.” We should not cheapen logos by attempting to package it in a worldly fashion, by dumbing it down to make it more acceptable to the sinner. Logos is holy – “I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.” (Psalm 26:6, 7)

5. Proverbs 1:20 – “Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice.” Wisdom is available to anyone who really wants it, but wisdom starts with submitting to God.

6. Proverbs 1:23 – “If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you.” Receiving the Spirit starts with repentance.

7. Acts 16:1-3 – You might have to go the extra mile, do more than should reasonably be expected, even bending over backwards in order to maintain fellowship with others. Christians should always be ready to be the bigger person.

8. Acts 16:6-7, 9 – The Spirit’s means of communication is not always described. The Spirit speaks to different people in different ways. Don’t worry about how God is speaking to others. Just listen and pay attention to what God is doing in your life. Be patient. During the exam, the professor is silent. Often God will test you with silence to see if you will keep doing what He has already told you to do through His word. Trust and obey.

9. Acts 16:10-13 – Paul waited for a sure sense of God’s direction and then acted immediately. How many times have we already seen in the Bible the trouble that comes to those who refuse to wait on God? How many times have we also seen the trouble that comes to those who, when given direction from God, hesitate in obedience or partially obey? Remember, partial obedience is disobedience.

10. Acts 16:14 – “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” God must open a person’s heart for them to receive Jesus. You cannot open a person’s heart; you can only proclaim Christ to all and trust the Holy Spirit to handle the rest.

11. Acts 16:17 -- “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” Satan can speak the truth for evil purposes. So can people.

12. Acts 16:25 – “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Paul and Silas were placed in prison for a reason, and their joy captured the attention of the people God wanted to reach.

13. Acts 16:31 -- “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” Yes, it is that simple.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 March: Rejoice and publicly give thanks to God no matter what happens today; be prepared to answer those who ask the reason for your joy – the Gospel

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of Jesus Christ. (Acts 16:25-31) Take an accounting. God has given you the mission of love and reconciliation; the focus of your mission is people, specific people, and God cares dearly about every person He has placed in your life intentionally. Take the time today to make a list of all the people God has placed in your life intentionally for you to care for. Start with your family, then those within your church body, then within your community. Make the commitment to pray for everyone on that list by name at least once per week. References from today's readings: Numbers 1.

DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 3, Wednesday, 28 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+26%2C+27%3B+proverbs+28%3B+acts+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 28 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 26:17 – “I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.” All that matters in life is whether or not you are right with God. If God is with you, who can be against you? If God is against you, everything for you is cursed.
2. Leviticus 26:40-42 – God leaves room for forgiveness, which begins with humble repentance.
3. Leviticus 26:43 – God says you sin because you hate the teachings and expectations He has set before you.
4. Leviticus 26:45 – God keeps His commitments, 100%.
5. Leviticus 27:3-8 -- A shekel was believed to be the value of a worker for an entire month. Males were more expensive to dedicate than females, based not on their value or worth in the eyes of God, but rather on the person's ability to work in an agricultural society and on how many years that person could work. A male aged 20 - 60 was seen as someone who could perform the best labor, therefore resulting in the highest price. Those over 60 and under 20 could do some work, but not as much, generally speaking. Those 5 years old and under required the lowest payment, as they would have been unable to work much or at all. While they have different roles and responsibilities, men and women have equal value in the eyes of God (see Gen 1:27 and Galatians 3:28)
6. Leviticus 27:10 – Go will not accept substitutes.
7. Leviticus 27:12, 17 – God sets the value of the object, not markets based on shifting social values.
8. Leviticus 27:30 – Tithing is not optional.
9. Proverbs 28:27 -- “Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.” Did you notice how many verses in today's Proverbs readings deal with the stewardship of wealth? Consider them together:
 - Proverbs 28:3 -- A poor man who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.
 - Proverbs 28:6 -- Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.
 - Proverbs 28:7 -- The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.

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- Proverbs 28:8 -- Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.
- Proverbs 28:10 -- The blameless will have a goodly inheritance.
- Proverbs 28:11 -- A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out.
- Proverbs 28:16 -- A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.
- Proverbs 28:19 -- Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.
- Proverbs 28:20 -- A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.
- Proverbs 28:21 -- To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.
- Proverbs 28:22 -- A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him.
- Proverbs 28:24 -- Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, "That is no transgression," is a companion to a man who destroys.
- Proverbs 28:25 -- A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the LORD will be enriched.
- Proverbs 28:27 -- Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.
- Wealth and resources provide us with capacity to do good or evil. Of course God calls us to use whatever we have to do His will – it isn't intended simply for our comfort and pleasure. We should work hard and acquire wealth in a God-honoring way so that we have something to give as an instrument of love, which is our primary command. We should use our wealth as an instrument of worship. If we do, we will be blessed in the process. What we do with our money reveals the condition of our hearts. We must not act like we don't see the needs around us out of selfishness. We ALL live in excess. Start giving it away out of love right now. See if it doesn't instantly bring you more joy and peace. Don't let your possessions possess you.
- 10. Proverbs 28:9 – "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Sin affects our relationship with God and how He responds to us.
- 11. Acts 15:6 – "The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up...." A godly church congregation knows how to disagree in love, to disagree without being disagreeable. The effect of the Holy Spirit always draws people to unity not disunity.
- 12. Acts 15:1, 10 – "But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" No one can obey their way to salvation. Salvation is a gift from God which

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comes through faith in Jesus. In these verses, the brothers were saved, but legalists were telling them they weren't saved because they hadn't done the right deeds. God expects obedience but as a product of salvation rather than a requirement for salvation.

13. Acts 15:11 -- "Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." Interestingly, men from Judea were trying to make Gentiles earn their salvation at the same time God was offering salvation as a gift through Jesus -- "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith (Acts 15:8,9)." How do you think it made God feel when these men tried to exclude God's children from the family? In their defense, the Judeans were undoubtedly very concerned that the Gentiles would bring ungodly immorality into the body, causing disorder and destruction while misrepresenting the holy character of God. It is understandable that in that pagan culture with its vile practices, the Jews would be very resistant to join hands with the Gentiles. However, I think Paul makes a distinction between spiritual birth and spiritual maturity. We are "born" spiritually by grace through faith in Jesus Christ -- no process of human effort. We are born babies. Empowered by the Holy Spirit new believers are called to grow in spiritual maturity, being "perfected" in love. This is where church discipleship comes to play ("teaching them to obey"). This is a life-long endeavor that is impossible apart from the continual work of the Holy Spirit but also requires much human effort. The Judeans wanted the Gentiles to be born grown up already. Instead, Paul offers some very broad guidelines for the saved Gentiles for church membership so they can join the body and be disciplined further. Interestingly, everyone was expected to sustain from sexual immorality immediately.

14. Acts 15:12 -- "The assembly fell silent, and they listened." How many people actually, truly listen? So many disputes would end if people would only listen, and listen beyond the words to capture the true heart and motives behind the words. The word "listen" and the word "silent" are spelled with the same letters; perhaps that is not accidental.

15. Acts 15:19, 20 -- "Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood." The Apostles agreed upon how to deal with the new Christian who was just stepping out on the road of sanctification. This is not an all-inclusive list of Christian behavioral expectations but rather a place from which to start as the new believer draws closer to Jesus one day at a time. Note that what was considered obvious was abstaining from idolatry and sexual immorality. Verse 21 explains that the new Christians need teachers will walk with them over time, day-by-day and who are teach them more and more over continually -- this is discipleship/disciple-making. There remains and expectation of spiritual growth for all of us. Who is discipling you, and who are you discipling?

16. Acts 15:39-41 -- "And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches." Once again, Christians must know how to disagree without damaging relationships. In this case, Barnabas and Paul were at an impasse, so they cordially agreed to separate, and God used this separation to spread the Gospel even further. Note that this separation was not a

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“church split”, it was not an ungodly broken relationship. It was merely de-confliction with continued collaboration. They retained their relationship and unity of purpose. They will join together again later.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 28 Feb: Today, build and sustain (repair if needed) relationships that might be threatened by disagreements. Don't let disagreements hinder relationships. Disagree without being disagreeable. Stay on the mission Jesus gave you of reconciliation. Continue to speak the truth in love, but don't burden people with truths they cannot handle. With whom are you in disagreement? Make sure you are still cordial with that person. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:18) Also, see a need; meet the need. If you are aware of someone who has a need that you have the power to fill, just do it. References from today's readings: "Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse." (Proverbs 28:27)

DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 2, Tuesday, 27 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+24%2C+25%3B+proverbs+27%3B+acts+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 27 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 24:14 – “...let all who heard him lay their hands on his head.” Witnesses of a crime that carried the penalty of death had to participate in the execution of the convicted offender so the witness would feel the burden of responsibility for their testimony. The intent was to deter innocent blood being shed by false witnesses. If the witnesses proved false, they would be guilty of murder.
2. Leviticus 24:15-16 – Blasphemy is not forgiven.
3. Leviticus 24:16 – “Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death.” Blasphemy carried the same penalty as murder. Times certainly have changed.
4. Leviticus 24:16 – “The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.” God's laws applied to all.
5. Leviticus 24:17 -- “Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.” Those who protest capital punishment with signs that say, “Though shalt not kill,” seem to miss the OT penalty for murder.
6. Leviticus 24:17-21 – God's ways bring punishment equal to and corresponding with the crime.
7. Leviticus 25:2-11 – God protects the poor families' claims to land and freedom.
8. Leviticus 25:17 – “You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God.” Reverent worship of God changes the way you deal in business with other people.
9. Leviticus 25:23-28 – God's standards keep the land equally divided among the people with no one able to gain control and exploit others.
10. Leviticus 25:35 -- “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you.” God has a very high expectation of how we should treat the poor around us.
11. Leviticus 25:36-37 – “Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.” There

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are several verses in the Bible which state that God's people should not earn money from lending money with interest.

12. Proverbs 27:1 – “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” Be faithful with today. Be faithful one day at a time.

13. Proverbs 27:2 – “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” Do not allow praise from others to become a part of your motivation. It is a trap to start caring about what sort of praise you receive from others. Don't seek praise from anyone but God.

14. Proverbs 27:7 – “One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.” What you desire the most changes your perspective on everything else. When your heart's desire is Jesus, all the little things that once bothered you, concerned you, or influenced you seem to vanish. When you begin to take for granted all that God has provided you, He may give you times of need so that you once again appreciate the simple blessings of life.

15. Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” You are not designed to grow alone. God made you for relationship. Friends should make you better, not worse; they should draw you closer to Jesus, not further away. If you don't have friends like this, you need new friends.

16. Acts 14:2, 3 – “But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace.” In response to opposition God's people became bolder and more resolute.

17. Acts 14:5-7 – “When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled.... and there they continued to preach the gospel.” The disciples stayed until their lives were at peril and then fled but continued to spread the Gospel. Do you have that kind of commitment?

18. Acts 14:15 – “We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God.” Christians always point to Jesus Christ, giving Him all glory, not to themselves a particular denomination or church or to anything other than Jesus Christ.

19. Acts 14:19 – “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.” There are only two recorded stonings in the Bible: Stephen's, facilitated by Paul (Saul), and now Paul's. God treats you the way you treat others.

20. Acts 14:21, 22 – “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned... strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Christians go through tribulations for sake of the name of Jesus. If your proclamation of the Gospel has not caused you many tribulations, you might want to consider whether or not you are actually fulfilling your mission.

21. Acts 14:23 – “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Once again, Christian assignments are made through prayer and fasting.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 Feb: Don't let anyone stop you from boldly preaching the Gospel today, and if you take a beating, move on and keep preaching. (Acts 14)

DBRP- WEEK 9, Day 1, Monday, 26 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+22%2C+23%3B+proverbs+26%3B+acts+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 26 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 22:1-9 – God expected all His ministers to obey all purity laws and not function as a priest if they were for any reason unclean.
2. Leviticus 22:9, 31-33 -- “They shall therefore keep my charge, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby when they profane it: I am the Lord who sanctifies them.... So you shall keep my commandments and do them: I am the Lord. And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord.” God made it very clear to His people that He expected them to honor His Holiness and Sovereignty, and that disobedience was to profane His Holy Name. Half-hearted worship and followership are unacceptable to the Lord because it underemphasizes the “worthy-ship” (meaning of worship) of The Almighty (Leviticus 22:17-33). Jesus reiterates this point in the Book of Revelation: “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth (Revelation 3:16).” And as mentioned in Leviticus 22:32, God’s reputation is based on how His people represent Him to the world. In Old Testament times, God’s demands for reverence, holiness, and obedience were even greater on the priests for what should be obvious reasons. In the New Testament, all Christians are considered priests (1 Peter 2:5-9, Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10). Our New Testament readings today reaffirm God’s call to obedience – “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will (Acts 13:22).” Revival in the church requires repentance and a return to reverence, holiness, and obedience – none of this is an affront to grace but rather a validation.
3. Leviticus 22:14 – “And if anyone eats of a holy thing unintentionally, he shall add the fifth of its value to it and give the holy thing to the priest.” God’s plan for restitution is that you give back more than you took, even if your act was unintentional. This is a practice that applies to all relationships.
4. Leviticus 22:18 – God expects and invites aliens to worship Him.
5. Leviticus 22:19-20 – God expects His people to give him the first and the best, not the leftovers and unwanted of their offerings.
6. Leviticus 22:30-33 – Knowing who God is should change the way you give offerings to Him.
7. Leviticus 23:10 – Festivals are connected with work cycles and give opportunity to celebrate the fruits of one’s labor and share these fruits with God.
8. Leviticus 23:42, 43 – “You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” Living in booths reminded the people of their history experiencing God’s miraculous provision under seemingly impossible circumstances, and it reminded them that both their history and their future was in God’s hands. Living in booths for a week reminded God’s people that they didn’t need many comforts to experience the blessings of God; it

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brought the people closer together in supporting relationships, and it kept their camping skills up in preparation for crisis. Church communities today should consider annual celebration of the Feast of Booths.

9. Proverbs 26:3 – “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.” Some people live like animals. Those who are not led by the Spirit act merely like smarter animals. They will only respond to pain and pleasure.

10. Proverbs 26:4, 5 – “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” These verses apparently contradict each other, though we know they don’t. They are written together intentionally and likely mean we should seek to counter the foolishness of others, for their sake, while being very careful not to act foolish ourselves in the process. Don’t stoop to their level or parrot their behavior. Don’t lose sight of your mission of reconciliation, of bringing them closer to Jesus through your words and deeds. If your words, tone, mannerisms, and behavior aren’t leading them towards Jesus, you are being foolish too.

11. Proverbs 26:6 – “Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.” You are Christ’s messenger – don’t be foolish as mentioned above.

12. Proverbs 26:7 – “Like a lame man’s legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” Fools are prideful. You cannot approach God’s word with pride.

13. Proverbs 26:7 – “Like a lame man’s legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” Don’t be a lame messenger for Jesus by being foolish in your dealings with others.

14. Proverbs 26:9 – “Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” A foolish Christian can hurt people with God’s word.

15. Proverbs 26:11 – “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” When a Christian continues to repeat the sins for which he has been forgiven, it is putrid.

16. Proverbs 26:28 – “A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” Both lying and flattery are signs of an ungodly heart, both motivated by selfishness. Flattery is telling people what they want to hear for personal gain.

17. Acts 13:2 – The Holy Spirit’s call to Barnabas and Saul came out of fasting and prayer. God speaks in fasting and prayer – it is not a one-way conversation. If you do not have a strong prayer life, you cannot hear what God would have you hear.

18. Acts 13:5 – Preaching the Scriptures is an essential missions activity. You should strive to be an expert of God’s word.

19. Acts 13:22 – “He raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’” God is always looking for servants who will obey all that He commands. David was far from perfect and made huge mistakes, but he was humble in repentance and sought to grow past his sinfulness.

20. Acts 13:23, 29, 32-33 – All Scripture points to Jesus as Savior.

21. Acts 13:29-37 – The Bible had prepared God’s people for the Messiah’s death and resurrection.

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22. Acts 13:36 -- "David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep." What a great epitaph! David served the purpose of God, and then he died. What greater thing can be said of a person? Our motivation in life should be to serve God and God alone, to pursue God's purposes rather than selfish ambition, and to seek first the Kingdom. The more we truly know God and who He is, the more motivated we are to serve Him and to bring Him glory. If we drift or lose focus, it is a relationship problem. Leviticus 22:31-33 says, "So you shall keep my commandments and do them: I am the LORD. And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you... I am the LORD." We serve and obey God wholeheartedly, lovingly, faithfully, passionately, and joyfully because He is the LORD! We are not like the one spoken of in Proverbs who chases after earthly desires. (Proverbs 23) We don't "envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day." (Proverbs 23:17) Make today and every day thereafter your day of worship. Do all things for the glory of God. Deny self; take up your cross; follow Jesus. Don't worry about the rest.

23. Acts 13:39 – Religion, religious activities, or good deeds cannot save a person. Only through Jesus can there be salvation. Charity may ease a person's discomfort on earth, but only when you draw people towards Jesus do you satisfy their eternal need.

24. Acts 13:40 – To know what the Bible says is not the same as knowing what it means or responding as God expects. Biblical knowledge is not the same as godly wisdom. Wisdom comes from living God's word through the power of the Holy Spirit – true wisdom can come only from God. We do not have the capacity to create wisdom of ourselves.

25. Acts 13:44 -- "On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord." Paul and Barnabas (still honoring the Sabbath) spoke boldly before the synagogue about Jesus, taking their lives into their hands. They weren't worried about offending anyone, but neither did they force their message upon the Jews. They were invited to speak, and when they did speak, they held nothing back. The result was likely not what they expected – the next week, the whole city gathered to hear the Good News. Eventually, after successfully preaching the Gospel to the city, the disciples were persecuted and kicked out of town. However, "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52)" because they were faithful to glorify God without compromise. Are you boldly proclaiming the Gospel to those who ask? Are people seeking you out to hear about Jesus? How great would it be if you were given the opportunity to preach the Gospel before your whole town? Would you be ready?

26. Acts 13:46-47 – God's plan has always included both Jews and Gentiles. The world is always talking about race, gender, etc. God does not show favoritism along these social stratifications, and Christians should rise above this divisive conversation.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 Feb: Prepare yourself to be usable by God by starting the day in deep prayer, even fasting, and by committing to total, unconditional obedience. (Acts 13:2, 22)

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 7, Sunday, 25 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+20%2C+21%3B+proverbs+25%3B+psalm+23%2C+24>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 25 Feb 18:

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1. Leviticus 20:1-5 – God will punish both those who take the lives of innocent children as well as those who in any way ignore the taking of innocent life. What role are you playing in the fight against abortion?

2. Leviticus 20:6 -- “If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.” God does not think that horoscopes, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, or psychics are cute or fun. God equates having anything to do with these things to whoredom.

3. Leviticus 20:7, 26 -- “Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.... You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.” We are called to holiness because God is Holy, and we are His children and His ambassadors on earth (1 Peter 1:16). “Holy” is the only attribute ascribed to God in the Bible three times (the highest degree of emphasis), yet today’s body of believers seems to have taken holiness very lightly, casually, negligently. Version dependent, the word holy is used in the Bible 584 times (holiness another 25 times). I encourage you to do your own word search and review of holiness. While we are made holy through salvation in Christ, we are called by God to “be like God in true righteousness and holiness.... [to] perfect holiness out of reverence for God.... [to] live our lives in all godliness and holiness.... [to be] living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.... to control [our] own [bodies] in a way that is holy.... to live a holy life.... [to be] upright, holy, and disciplined.... [to be] holy blameless and pure.... [to be] a holy nation, a people belonging to God (all New Testament references).” Remember, you were baptized with the Holy Spirit, not the somewhat or occasionally holy spirit.

- Psalm 24:3-6 -- Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

- Revelation 22:11 -- Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.

4. Leviticus 20:10 -- “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” The most important earthly institution in the Bible is the family, marriage between one man and one woman for the express purpose of raising up godly children (Malachi 2:15). God strictly forbids sexual activity outside the marriage covenant, and His high standard is never relaxed throughout God’s word for anyone. Sexual sin is like a deadly plague in society which is born from pure selfishness and spreads across the land wreaking havoc and death. Consider the impact of sexual sin in America, resulting in abortion, divorce, single-parent families, exploitation, sexual abuse, emotional illnesses, communicable diseases, crimes of passion, etc. Left unchecked, sexual sin will destroy a nation, one family at a time.

5. Leviticus 20:13 – “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.” Society has now largely accepted the abomination of homosexuality. The remainder of the sexual sins in Leviticus 20 will also soon be publicly acceptable. Will you remain silent in the face of these sins around you or will you

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proclaim the need of repentance and salvation through Jesus Christ as John the Baptist did before Herod?

6. Leviticus 21:17-22 -- “If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death.... whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.” Many opposed to the death penalty will cite the Sixth Commandment in King James English, “Thou shalt not kill” as their reasoning (See Exodus 20). However, they fail to notice the penalty of death that comes with breaking this commandment. A better translation is “You shall not murder.” The authority for the death penalty was given by God and applied equally to all – “I am the Lord your God.” In fact murder wasn’t the only crime that warranted the death penalty in the Old Testament; so did blasphemy. It is interesting and timely that our OT readings describe the conditions required and the process for stoning, while the NT readings describe the stoning of Paul (as mentioned previously, the only other stoning in the NT was when Paul held the coats for Stephen’s stoning). The command in Leviticus was, “All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him (Leviticus 24:13)” – placing a burden of responsibility on the witnesses for the death. Notice that it doesn’t appear that anyone placed hands on Paul who, of course, wasn’t truly guilty. In the case where Jesus saved the alleged adulterer from getting stoned, you may have noticed that then too, the accusers were guilty of not following the Levitical law for stoning (no guilty man present, no evidence, etc). To follow God’s Laws, we must know God’s Laws.

Matthew 22:29 -- Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.

7. Proverbs 25:7, 8 -- "What your eyes have seen do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?" Don't be too quick to judge.

8. Proverbs 25:9 -- "Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret." Settle matters one-on-one, quietly in order to preserve the dignity of both parties and to protect the relationship.

9. Proverbs 25:14 -- "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give." Don't make promises you don't intend to keep.

10. Proverbs 25:26-28 -- “Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked. It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one’s own glory. A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” Much of Proverbs 25 is about that last fruit of the Spirit, self-control – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:22-24) The gift of the Holy Spirit does not remove the need or requirement for self-control but rather empowers us to have self-control. Self-control is our God-given ability to overcome temptation, one of our endowments that separate us from the animal kingdom, our defense against the destructiveness of sin. The Spirit has empowered us with the ability of self-control; we must choose to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh, to keep in step with the Spirit and not to quench the Spirit. This is our choice. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) But we are not yet perfected and experience the same frustrations Paul

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did – “For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” (Romans 7:15) So, the Bible remains a lamp to our feet to help protect us from our weak areas as we strive to build up our walls of self-control, as we live out the role of Nehemiah in our own lives, protecting our hearts. In dealing with self-control, today’s proverbs first warn us to avoid prideful self-promoting and self-justification. We are all too quick to take credit and to cast blame; we often do it without even thinking; this is ungodly. Proverbs next points out that prideful emotions cause us to sin in both word and deed. We lift ourselves up artificially and tear others down inappropriately, and we deny others the good we should have provided them. In so doing, we subvert our message from Christ. We misrepresent him as his ambassadors. Like a polluted well, we have nothing to offer those who thirst. The Bible tells us we must have self-control, internal discipline. Self-control goes hand-in-hand with love. Don’t take your lack of self-control lightly, and don’t act like you are powerless to overcome your areas of personal weakness. Strive to build up your strength where you know you are weak as an act of worship, as a sacrifice to God, to bring Him glory.

-- Self-control is a mark of maturity and vital to the development of greater maturity. Another word we use for self-control is discipline. But interestingly when the Bible uses the word "discipline" it is almost exclusively used to describe external discipline rather than internal discipline, or "self-control." God disciplines those He loves, but His desire is that we exercise self-control in maturity much like any parent would desire for their children. How is your self-control?

11. Psalm 23:1 – “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” If the Lord is truly your Shepherd, you shall not want because He will conform your desires to His will and make you satisfied with His provision.

12. Psalm 23:3 – “He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.” While we are made righteous solely through faith in Jesus Christ and not by our deeds, the Bible calls us to pursue righteousness in order to bring glory to God (Proverbs 15:9, 21:21; 1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 2:22). Fortunately, the Lord is our Shepherd who guides us in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. For His name’s sake means our righteousness is never for our glory but only for His. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:14).” Are you guided by the sound of your Shepherd’s voice?

13. Psalm 23:6 – “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” With God, even the ‘bad’ things that happen to us are ultimately good because God will use them for greater purposes we cannot even imagine. However, with the non-believer, even the ‘good’ things that happen to them will ultimately turn out to be curses because every step taken by the unbeliever is just one step closer to ultimate destruction.

14. Psalm 24:6 – “Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.” Seeking the Lord involves the pursuit of increasingly “clean hands and a pure heart.” It is like ascending a mountain, getting a little higher each day.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Feb: Today consider your wants. Where do your wants signal a lack of contentment with the provision of the Good Shepherd? (Psalm 23:1) Resolve today to keep all disagreements between you and the other party, never talking about them with others

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 6, Saturday, 24 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+17%2C18%3B+proverbs+24%3B+acts+8>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 24 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 18:3-5 -- "You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD." Christians live as strangers in foreign lands, and though we must respect the laws of the earthly kingdoms, we are ultimately subject to a higher authority, the KING, the LORD. What is 'legal' to others is not legal to Christians. Much like military personnel live by a different standard, so Christians live by a different standard than the non-believers -- "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." (2 Timothy 2:4) Christians must never confuse man's definitions of righteousness and justice with God's definitions. In today's readings from Leviticus, we see that God condemns abortion, adultery, homosexuality, and mysticism; these practices were considered abominable and detestable, and worthy of death. Of course, our society has 'legalized' all of these evils. Yet, God says to His people, "keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 18:30) God's standard is that if anyone within the body practices such things, "the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people." (Leviticus 18:29) Paul said, "Let him who has done this be removed from among you." (1 Corinthians 5) Romans, chapter one also tells us that we must never approve of these practices either, even under the banner of "choice." While we live by God's standard in an ungodly land, we also must not remain silent (silence is consent). Leviticus tells us: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:17) We must reason "frankly" with those outside of God's law, with love, treating them as we would want to be treated. We must serve as Ambassadors for Christ. We must not allow ourselves become influenced and defiled in the process; this is what happened to Lot's family. As we serve our tour of duty in a foreign land, we must also live very cautiously, knowing that sin defiles the land, leading to the destruction of the people. (Leviticus 18:27, 28) No nation, regardless of what they believe, will escape the consequences of disobedience to God's laws. Christians who live in ungodly lands are also subject to those consequences as Lot discovered.

2. Leviticus 18:22, 23 -- "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion." God gives specific rules concerning sexual activity. He forbids homosexuality, an abomination not far removed from having sex with an animal. The prohibition against homosexuality is repeated throughout the Bible. Our nation's laws have recently been changed to fully endorse homosexuality, but God's laws have not changed. Which will you support? Beyond national laws, if you oppose homosexuality, you will be labelled a bigot and a hater, a danger to society -- are you ready for that, or will you play it safe and remain silent? (See Romans 1)

3. Leviticus 18:26-30 -- "But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.... For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make

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yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.” God’s rules apply to everyone, whether or not they are believers.

4. Leviticus 19:17 -- “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.” Another version of the verse above is, “Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.” Proverbs says that we have been given God’s word so that we may “know what is right and true,” and that we “may give a true answer” to those around us (Proverbs 22:21). Again, God’s Laws apply to everyone on earth, whether they choose to worship God or not (Leviticus 18:24-30). We have an obligation before God to “testify to the truth.” If we fail to do so, we are a party to sin. The dictum of the law is “Silence is consent.” The sexual revolution in our nation, eluded to above, has been a slow erosion, resulting primarily from a disobedient church that has failed to remain holy and to be salt and light. The church has been more influenced than influencing as occurred in Nazi Germany. John the Baptist, who Jesus declared the “greatest man born of woman,” lost his head because he publicly challenged Herod’s adultery. Many Christians say, “What someone else chooses to do with their life is none of my business.” The Bible says otherwise. Note that in today’s readings, rebuking our neighbors is among a list of basic personal responsibilities dealing with righteous treatment of others for their benefit (see Leviticus 19:10-18). Compare this with Romans 13:9, 10 – “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.’ Sin always harms your neighbor (whether they are currently “happy” in their sin or not). Fulfillment of the law brings life to your neighbor. If you truly love others, you will speak out, with tact and humility, against all sin.

- John 18:37, 38 -- “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” “What is truth?” retorted Pilate.

5. Leviticus 19:18 – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” When God commands us to love others as we love ourselves, He reminds us that He is the Lord. In other words, you have better understand how serious it is to disobey this command and thus commit cosmic treason against the Almighty King.

6. Leviticus 19 – Here are some statutes from this chapter: No fortune telling (v26); some haircut practices were forbidden (likely those practiced by the pagans around them); no tattoos (v28); no prostitution (v29); no psychics (v31); honor and respect the elderly (v32); take care of strangers and travelers (v33, 34); no cheating.

7. Proverbs 24:3, 10, 27, 33, 34 -- “By wisdom a house is built.... If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.... Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.... A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.” Proverbs has much to say today about the discipline of the disciple. As we said earlier, success has two ingredients: good decisions and discipline. Wisdom lays the foundation for the house; then the house must be built. Good decisions place you on the right path, but discipline takes you, one step at a time, down the road to your intended destination. We can decide to follow Jesus, but then we must have the discipline to be his disciple and to follow him, one day at a time. Jesus warned that before a person decides to follow him, they should

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consider the cost. Most are familiar with the slogan, “What would Jesus do?” (WWJD). This is intended to serve as a reminder to Christians to make better decisions throughout the day, more like Jesus. “WWJD” is worn on bracelets, T-shirts, etc., to make that reminder more visible. But too often it only serves as a disappointing reminder when, at the point of decision, Christians still fail to act like

Jesus. Too often, only after a thoughtless response, does the Christian realize that their hearts were not ready to do what Jesus would have done. Part of the reason is because they did not do what Jesus did well before his public ministry. They did not spend a lifetime preparing for the point of decision. What would Jesus do? He would spend a lifetime in discipleship to the Father – countless hours in study, prayer, obedience, and ministry. He would memorize God’s word and meditate upon it, treating it as more important than food. He would get ‘lost’ in the Temple. He would take on the form of a servant and decide ahead of time to be obedient unto death. He would decide ahead of time to deny self and to go to Calvary. Too often, the Christian plays the role of Christ like an ‘actor’ (Greek word: hypocrite), rather than being transformed into the image of Christ. We can learn the rules and language of football, we can dress up like football players, we can act like football players, and we can even play football on weekends, but that will never make us ready for the Super Bowl. The church in America has neglected the importance of discipleship, leaving many Christians feeling disappointed, defeated, and disheartened. Too many churches generate emotional experiences and convince Christians that mighty oaks are grown in a day, pushing them out into the world ill equipped for battle. Like Proverbs says today, when we fail at the point of decision, it shows us the limits of our strength that was not built up day-by-day ahead of time. “Go to the ant,” disciple and consider its ways. Do not be complacent in your discipleship. Study to show yourself approved. (2 Timothy 2:15) Train hard before the battle.

8. Proverbs 24:11, 12 – “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Behold, we did not know this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” If you remain silent while those you know walk in darkness with knowledge of ‘The Way, The Truth, and The Life – Jesus, you will be held accountable by God.

9. Proverbs 24:19 – “Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked...” Let God worry about the wicked while you focus on being faithful to Him, regardless of apparent outcomes. God knows what is going on and will judge the hearts of all people.

10. Proverbs 24:29 – “Do not say, ‘I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.’” Do not chase after the poisonous snakes the bite you – the poison will just travel to your heart. Let God deal with those who offend you. Just continue to follow Jesus.

11. Proverbs 24:32 – “Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction.” God wants you to compare the actions of others to God’s word, consider the consequences of their actions, and learn from their actions, both good and bad.

12. Psalm 22: On the cross, Jesus recited Psalm 22:1 (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Psalm 22:12-18 is an incredible description of the Crucifixion. Psalm 22 is very exciting to read, an OT prophecy of Jesus’ work on the cross.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 Feb: Today, strongly consider your daily disciplines as a disciple. Are you knowing and making Jesus known more and more each and every day?

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Consider this week. Did you make the most of every opportunity to grow in Christ and to make disciples?

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 5, Friday, 23 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+15%2C16%3B+proverbs+23%3B+acts+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 23 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 16:3-6 – Those who led worship and the congregation needed atonement for sin – none were without sin.
2. Proverbs 23:1, 2 – “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you.... Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.” Don’t place your hope and trust in government, and don’t compromise your fidelity to God in order to appease worldly leaders or to remain in good standing with those of authority at the expense of obedience to The Authority. The Bible commands that we obey government but not when government tells you to disobey God.
3. Proverbs 23:4 – “Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.” Do not place your hope and trust in wealth and so neglect your relationship with God. If you cannot find time to study the Bible, pray, fellowship with your church, raise your family as disciples, minister to the needs of others, etc, because you are working so hard, you are doing something wrong.
4. Proverbs 23:17 – “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.” Obey and follow God; don’t just do what is popular.
5. Acts 12:1-3 -- “Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.” Today’s readings in Acts instruct us on the relationship between prayer and God’s will. Herod arrested both James and Peter. James was executed while Peter was miraculously freed. Surely the disciples were praying fervently for both James and Peter, but still James was executed. Was God somehow powerless to save James or somehow indifferent as to his fate? Of course not! Did God love Peter more than James? Of course not! James had been very close to Jesus. God commands us not to worry about anything but rather to pray about everything, and when we pray in God’s will He will always answer (Philippians 4:6; Jeremiah 33:3). However, sometimes His answer is “no” for reasons we cannot understand but for reasons that are for a greater good than we could not possibly imagine. The challenge for us, from our limited perspective, is to trust in God’s perfect love and faithfulness and to have faith in God’s Sovereignty regardless of apparent circumstances. This is hard. It was hard for John the Baptist when he was in prison. He undoubtedly questioned why Jesus didn’t miraculously free him from prison. After all, Jesus said that John was the greatest man he knew. Nonetheless, John was beheaded. Why? God did not say. Key is to pray with the understanding that, though you may not perceive it, your prayers are always answered by your perfectly loving Father – don’t doubt. After the death of Stephen, and now James, the disciples, though praying fervently, could not really believe that Peter, chained and heavily guarded, would be freed from prison. When Rhoda reported that Peter was at the door knocking, the disciples said, “You’re out of your mind.” Why were they “astonished” when they saw Peter? Hadn’t they been praying to the Sovereign Father? Why, in this case, did they assume the answer to their prayer would be “no”? It is possible to be a “person of prayer” and yet not have faith. This robs you of joy and confidence. How would your life be different if you completely trusted

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God with your prayers? Pray that God will increase your faith to pray more fervently and to trust unconditionally.

6. Acts 12:2 – “He killed James the brother of John with the sword.” God did not prevent the murder of James yet expected the disciples to remain confident in their faith.

7. Acts 12:15 -- “You are out of your mind.” The disciples prayed for miracles but did not really believe that God would answer their prayers in a miraculous way. How do you suppose the death of James affected the disciples’ hope? Is your faith so weak that you are surprised when your prayers are answered as you requested?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 Feb: Begin the habit of journaling your prayers, and start recording God’s answers to your prayers. Soon you will see the pattern of your prayer life.

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 4, Thursday, 22 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+14%2C15%3B+proverbs+22%3B+acts+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 22 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 14:1-20 – These verses symbolically point to the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

2. Proverbs 22:1 – “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” When someone mentions your name, what comes to mind for others? Remember, as a Christian, you bear the name of Christ. What do people think about Jesus when they think about His impact on your life?

3. Proverbs 22:3 -- “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” We have all heard the adage, “You’d have to be blind not to see what is going on.” Well, that is right. Society is blind to the reality of the inevitable consequences of their sin. Why? Because society chooses to be blind, preferring darkness over light. Remember, yesterday we read in Proverbs, “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.” (Proverbs 21:4) The prideful direct their attention to (or shine their light on) sin, ignoring the will of God, regardless of God’s warnings to them (wisdom cries out in the streets). “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” (John 3:19-21) Today’s Bible readings give stern warnings concerning things like abortion, sexual sin, and mysticism which today are celebrated; the consequences of this abandonment of God’s will are more than evident, yet society largely ignores them. The danger for the church is that we become influenced society rather than an influence. We must not lose our humility, holiness, purity, and fear of the LORD. Warriors know that a defense that is not offensive in nature is doomed. We cannot just circle the wagons. We must boldly and confidently speak truth and resist evil. We must remind the earthly powers that “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1) We must command the powers that would resist God, Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah

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(Psalm 24:7-10) “Fret not yourself because of evildoers.” (Psalm 37:1; Proverbs 24:19) “Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.” (Psalm 37:8) Stop worrying so much about the obvious evil we see around us and the earthly powers that work against us. They are nothing at all compared to the power of our God. Allow God’s will to be done in your life and spread that to others, advancing the Kingdom one heart at a time. The Bible says that we have been given “power” by the Holy Spirit. (Luke 24:49) The Greek word for power is *dunamis* (doo'-nam-is), from which we get the word “dynamite.” It means mighty, forceful, destructive, power that is obviously miraculous. Destructive? Yes! “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” (2 Corinthians 10:4) If the strongholds remain, it is only because we have not applied dynamite. Don’t focus on what the world is doing, focus on what God is doing. Be holy, pure, obedient, confident, love, bold, and powerful.

4. Proverbs 22:9 – “Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.” You will receive what you dish out. If you are giving, God will be giving to you.

5. Proverbs 22:10 – “Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.” A scoffer is someone who refuses to listen and learn, a person who is only interested in their own opinion and self-interest. Strife and quarreling come from scoffing. Christians should never cause strife or quarrel.

6. Proverbs 22:11 – “He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.” Christians should be known for gracious speech which comes from their pure hearts. Grace is giving people forgiveness and freedom that they don’t deserve. Grace does not seek to give them the just punishment they do deserve. Gracious speech responds to insults and harsh speech with love and blessings. See why Christians cannot quarrel? Rather than quarreling, Christians deny self, take up their cross, and follow Jesus.

7. Proverbs 22:15 – “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” Children naturally lack internal discipline (self-control) and require external discipline from loving parents. Parental discipline is God’s plan for maturity. Likewise, adults lack adequate discipline (self-control) and require the counsel of the Holy Spirit and the discipline of the Father in order to grow to maturity.

8. Proverbs 22:17-22 – God’s word is provided to help you to trust in the Lord and to keep you on track as you grow in your love for and trust in the Lord. God knows you are not perfected in love and gives you clear instructions until you are so united with God in love that you no longer need rules and regulations to do what is right.

9. Proverbs 22:24 – “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man.” Do you have a friend with a hot temper? Not good.

10. Acts 11:17 – “If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” God’s work isn’t limited by our rules or by our limited interpretation of His rules. We operate under the authority and power of Jesus Christ, not the authority and power of people.

11. Acts 11:20-21 – “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.” Jesus’ disciples preached the Gospel, despite

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being persecuted for it. Many believed and some didn't. We are likewise called to preach to many, some who will believe and some who won't. We cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 Feb: Don't assume someone won't accept the Gospel without trying. After prayer, tell someone about Jesus even if you doubt, they will believe. Have confidence. If they still refuse to believe after you have spoken to them, you have still planted a seed. Keep praying for them, and trust the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 3, Wednesday, 21 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+12%2C13%3B+proverbs+21%3B+acts+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 21 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 12 – The purification instructions in Leviticus 12 have symbolic purposes as well as practical medical benefits which modern medicine continues to discover thousands of years later (many yet to be realized). For example, concerning circumcision on the eighth day, “a newborn baby has peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the 2nd and 5th days of life. Hemorrhages at this time can be critical and may even produce serious damage to internal organs, especially to the brain, and cause death from shock and exsanguination. An important blood clotting element, vitamin K, is not formed in the normal amount until the 5th to the 7th day. The first safe day to perform circumcision would be the 8th day. A second element which is also necessary for the normal clotting of blood is prothrombin which is minimal in the first few days of the baby's life, but skyrockets to 110% of normal on the 8th day and then levels off to 100%. An 8-day-old baby has more available prothrombin than on any other day of its entire life.... Also, with a child, the sensation of pain begins with the head, and gradually moves down the body. By the eighth day, the pain sensation has not yet gone as far down as the genital area. So, really it is a painless operation for the child on the eighth day, any longer and it would be painful, and the blood will coagulate on the eighth day, so, it was the ideal day for circumcision.” As for the quarantine rules related to childbirth, one can research the many medical benefits. As for the increased time for the birth of female babies, a cynic might suggest that this is some sort of biased penalty. However, not only do women face different post-partum hormonal imbalances after the birth of a female child, survivability likely increased for female babies who benefited from increased isolation, and female babies promised future reproduction, arguably making their survival even more important. All this having been said, the key takeaway is that we cannot limit God's word to our very limited understanding.

2. Leviticus 12:8 – “And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.” God has a heart for the poor.

3. Leviticus 13 – Leprosy is a lot like sin: It seems to come from nowhere, is painless at first, grows slowly, sometimes seems to come and go, produces a numbness to its spreading, causes death to the affected areas, makes a person unclean and disgusting, and potentially spreads to others. Like leprosy, those with untreated sin are like walking dead. Like leprosy, sin leads to isolation and broken relationships. Unlike others, Jesus engaged the lepers, those with apparently no hope and shunned by others. Jesus loved them and healed them when other religious ‘leaders’ avoided them and ostracized them. In OT times, it was left to the priests to determine how to treat the leper. The Bible says that we are priests, able to discern the needs of those plagued with sin, and the Holy Spirit uses us to bring healing to others.

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4. Proverbs 21:1 – “The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.” God uses national leaders to bless or punish the people of a nation. The best way for a nation to ensure great leaders is to repent.

5. Proverbs 21:2 – “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.” Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to you how you are deceiving yourself. Popular psychology recognizes the importance of being self-aware or introspective, but secular social sciences fail to solve social problems because only the Holy Spirit can expose and change the heart.

6. Proverbs 21:3 – “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” Make your act of worship obedience to the Lord. Don't try to make up for disobedience by doing some act that God never asked you to do in the first place. Just obey in the circumstances God puts before you, one day at a time.

7. Proverbs 21:9, 19 – “It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.... It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.” A quarrelsome and fretful person, whether it be a wife, husband, relative, close friend, or a business partner, can make your life miserable. Understand that your attitudes, words, and actions can have a dramatic impact on others. Someone said that people are like elevators, either bringing you up or bringing you down. What sort of elevator person are you? Some people are great at lifting up people outside of their homes while tearing down people within their homes – they treat friends better than family. However, the Bible says that if you don't take care of your family, you are denying the faith. Do your friends like being with you more than your family does?

8. Proverbs 21:11 – “When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.” Do you require punishment or merely instruction to do what God commands? Someone once said that wisdom is understanding what you have never experienced. Wise people learn from God's word and from watching the truth of God's word play out in the lives of others. For example, God's word says, “Don't commit adultery.” You can trust and obey God's word, you can observe and see the destructive impact of adultery in the lives of others, or you can commit adultery and experience destruction for yourself. God gives you the ability and the freedom to choose. You own the responsibility, but God owns the accountability.

9. Proverbs 21:13 – “Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.” God often treats you the way you treat others. If you are praying to receive something from God that you are not willing to give to others, God sees through that, and you should not expect to receive that for which you are asking.

10. Proverbs 21:16 – “One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead.” People wander into death by paying attention to something other than the Good Shepherd.

11. Proverbs 21:17 – “Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.” Americans have cable, cell phones, nice cars, etc., but also have more debt than assets, less than a 2% savings rate, and they no longer tithe. Over half of US consumer debt is owned by China. What does God think about that?

12. Proverbs 21:24 -- “‘Scoffer’ is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.” The Bible uses the word “scoffer” 19 times. The word is mentioned in Proverbs 13 times. 2 Peter 3:3

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says that “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.” Scoffers are those who are too proud to humbly obey God. The Bible says that those people will increase.

13. Proverbs 21:26 – “All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back.” Christians overcome the cravings that destroy others by, in part, focusing on giving to others.

14. Acts 10:1, 2 -- “There was a man named Cornelius..., a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.” One of the primary character traits of a true disciple is generous giving to the poor and needy (‘alms’ are gifts to the poor, above the tithe). Remember, just yesterday we read that Tabatha “was full of good works and acts of charity.” (Acts 9:36) Charity is the evidence of righteousness used for both Job and the Proverbs 31 woman. It is the mark of genuine worship and love for God, and it separates the true disciple from the hypocrite (actor). The generous giver is blessed by God. Twice today, Cornelius’ giving is praised -- “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.... Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.” (Acts 10:4, Acts 10:31) The kind of giving the Bible talks about is radical, shocking giving (see verses below), hands “wide” open. The Christian sees the need and then meets the need. Cornelius was known by both God and the community as a generous giver. Are you? Is charity one of the primary character traits others would use to describe you? Do you give like Job? Challenge: give to the poor today in a way that is felt by you as a true sacrifice.

- Matthew 19:21 -- Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

- Deuteronomy 15:7-11 -- “If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’

- Job 31:16-23 -- “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow), if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, if his body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket. For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.

- Proverbs 19:17 -- Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

- Proverbs 22:9 -- Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

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- Proverbs 28:27 -- Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.
- Proverbs 31:20 -- She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.
- Ezekiel 16:49 -- Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.
- Deuteronomy 15:10-11 -- You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'
- Isaiah 58:10 -- If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.
- James 1:27 -- Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- 1 John 3:17 -- But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?
- Isaiah 25:4 -- For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall,
- Galatians 2:10 -- Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.
- Proverbs 14:21 -- Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.
- 2 Corinthians 9:7 -- Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- Luke 14:33 -- So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
- Matthew 5:42 -- Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.
- Leviticus 25:35 -- "If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you.
- Luke 3:11 -- And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."
- James 2:16-17 -- And one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

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15. Acts 10:2 – “...a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.” In addition to his radical giving, Cornelius’ devoutness was evidenced by his continual prayer. Is that what you are known for? Both Cornelius’ uncommon charity and his prayer life were favored by God (v4), rendering Cornelius especially usable by God. How is your prayer life?

16. Acts 10:9-6 – Peter’s special vision of revelation was received during his time of prayer.

17. Acts 10:15 -- “What God has made clean, do not call common.” Peter’s vision pertained to God’s acceptance of Gentiles, using dietary laws in a symbolic way. Peter’s vision may not have had direct implication to dietary laws.

18. Acts 10:25-29 – “When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.... And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.’” I don’t think our generation can fully appreciate the shocking significance of the events that occur in Acts 10: A Roman Centurion kneeling in reverence before a devout Messianic Jew who had agreed to enter his home despite Jewish law, all to mark the commencement of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. A Jew visiting a Centurion, and a Centurion bowing down to a Jew would have created a shocking, unthinkable scene in that day, challenging the deep-rooted beliefs and customs of all involved. However, the god-fearing men put God’s commands above all else and obeyed without hesitation, despite complete understanding. The power of God destroys all barriers. God does not celebrate diversity; He provides unity in Christ. God created the ‘universe’ – the combination of two words, unity and diversity. God brings different things and people in perfect order when He is as the center. This is not a “Coexist” moment where Cornelius and Peter make a public political statement of social tolerance or say, “I’m ok, and you’re ok.” No, this is two servants of God surrendering to the will of God for the glory of God. The message is “none of us are ok, apart from Christ;” however, “everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43).” Race, ethnicity, gender, social status, etc. are not virtues. But nothing of man is virtuous – no man can boast. “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

- 1 Corinthians 3:21 -- So let no one boast in men.

19. Acts 10:34, 35 -- “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” God shows no partiality; do you? In God’s economy, there are only two classes of people – saved and unsaved. Christians should reject all other social classifications or stratifications.

20. Acts 10:43 – “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” This is the Gospel we are called to preach. There is no other name by which a person may be saved but the name of Jesus.

21. Acts 10:47, 48 – ““Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then

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they asked him to remain for some days.” Baptism was immediate, and the church put no obstacles in the way of immediate baptism.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 Feb: Make today a special day of charity and prayer. Make your charity and prayer especially noteworthy today. (Acts 10)

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 2, Tuesday, 20 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+10%2C11%3B+proverbs+20%3B+acts+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 20 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 10:1, 2 – “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” Nadab and Abihu were given tremendous responsibility to lead communal worship and maintain God’s standards of holiness. God gave strict instructions for worship and demanded obedience. Nadab and Abihu dishonored God, and God held them accountable. If this appears to be an extreme punishment, it can only be because of a misunderstanding of the severity of treating the Almighty’s holiness with contempt.

- Nadab, Abihu, and Saul were extremely committed and active in religious service. They were all very influential religious leaders. They had all convinced themselves that they were righteous before the Lord. However, they were practicing the false religion described in Colossians 2:20-23, having "an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility...." Their prideful, misguided approaches to God dishonored God, led people astray, and only resulted in death and destruction. Jesus said, "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:19-24) Worship is the purpose for which Christians were made — and only the redeemed can worship the Father in spirit and in truth. True worship can only come from reliance on the Grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit within us. True worship must be grounded in and accountable to the Word of God. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Rom 12:1)."

2. Leviticus 10:3 – “Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’” And Aaron held his peace.” Aaron understood the significance of the sin committed by his son’s — he did not dare challenge God’s punishment.

3. Leviticus 11 – The world is full of ‘unclean’ people who do not know God, common people who know God, and holy people who lead worship; likewise, the Law designated unclean animals, clean animals, and animals worthy for sacrifice.

4. Proverbs 20:6 – “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” Fidelity is proof of love and one of the most valuable character traits. God seeks a rare commodity: a faithful individual.

- Genesis 24:49 -- Now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.

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- Numbers 12:6-8 -- And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"
- Deuteronomy 28:1 -- And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.
- Joshua 24:14 -- Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.
- 1 Samuel 2:9 -- He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.
- 1 Samuel 12:24 -- Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.
- Psalm 25:10 -- All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- Psalm 31:23 -- Love the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.
- Psalm 37:3 -- Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.
- Psalm 85:10 -- Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- Psalm 119:30 -- I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.
- Proverbs 3:3 -- Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.
- Proverbs 12:22 -- Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.
- Proverbs 16:6 -- By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.
- Proverbs 20:28 -- Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.
- Proverbs 28:20 -- A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.
- Matthew 23:23 -- Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.
- Matthew 25:21 -- His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'
- Luke 16:10 -- "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

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- Acts 11:23 -- When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,
- 1 Corinthians 4:2 -- Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.
- 1 Corinthians 4:17 -- That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.
- Galatians 5:22 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- Ephesians 1:1 -- Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:
- Colossians 1:2 -- To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 -- Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.
- 2 Timothy 2:2 -- and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- 2 Timothy 2:13 -- if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.
- Hebrews 3:5 -- Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant
- Revelation 2:10 -- Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- Revelation 17:14 -- They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”
- Revelation 19:11 -- Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.
- 5. Proverbs 20:11 – “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” What you do reveals what you really believe.
- 6. Proverbs 20:15 – “There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.” Few people truly speak wisdom, and truly wise people use words most sparingly.
- 7. Proverbs 20:30 – “Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts.” Some people can only learn the hard way.
- 8. Acts 9:1 – Saul used the church to persecute true followers of Jesus Christ.
- 9. Acts 9:4 -- “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” To persecute disciples of Jesus is to persecute Jesus himself.
- 10. Acts 9:6, 12, 15, 17-20 – God gave Saul directions on step at a time. You must be willing to be faithful, one step at a time, regardless of outcome. Many people are obsessed with knowing the future,

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mainly because they want something to believe in today. The Christian walks in faith, hope, and love (love being the greatest attribute). Faith trusts God today, hope trusts God with the future, and love is the source of that faith and hope, the reason for faith and hope. Those who genuinely know Him, trust Him and will obey without need of understanding the 'why'. Paul had powerfully experienced God. That was all the motivation He needed.

11. Acts 9:13 – Saul was praying when God spoke to Ananias.

12. Acts 9:13, 19 – God incorporated Saul into a church fellowship that feared him.

13. Acts 9:15, 16 – “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.’”

- Jesus chose Saul; Saul did not choose Jesus. Saul was the least likely candidate from man's perspective to carry the name of Jesus to both Jew and Gentile. Leadership in the Kingdom is not about power, pride, and prestige but rather about calling, humility, service, sacrifice, and suffering. In the Kingdom, leaders are not self-appointed but are chosen and equipped by God. Saul, the career Pharisee, the self-appointed leader, made himself an enemy of God in the name of God, relentlessly pursuing 'righteousness' without relationship with God or the authority of the LORD. God would teach Saul to suffer. God would transform the proud and ambitious Saul into the living sacrifice, Paul, who would be willing to say, “For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21:13) Are you ready to suffer and die?

- The account of Saul's (Paul's) conversion and calling shows us much about the ways of God. First, as mentioned above, God chose Paul while Paul was not seeking Jesus (Acts 9:1-7). In fact, Paul was “anti-Christ,” greatly feared among the believers. Next, God reveals to Saul that the persecution of believers is in fact persecution of Jesus directly (Acts 9:4). Notice that God does not reveal to Saul the “plan” but rather gives him instructions to follow one step at a time. He also makes proud Saul dependent on others rather than independent (Acts 9:6-9).” Immediately upon calling Saul, God began preparing the hearts of others to help Saul; in fact, it appears the God revealed to Ananias more about Saul's mission than He did to Saul (Acts 9:10-15). God gave Saul the mission of glorifying Him, and this mission would require great suffering (in which Paul would later rejoice, seeing suffering as an essential part of God's perfect plan). God surprised everyone by calling Saul, an infamous enemy of the church, to salvation and service. Many in the church could not accept what God was doing with the life of Saul. Meanwhile, Saul's former circles despised his conversion and wanted to kill him. However, God provided Saul with a small group of mentors and supporters. Notice that Paul, though still being mentored by the apostles, began preaching immediately, though most refused to accept his message. Paul's mission started as a struggle and only got more challenging with each day; yet Paul's joy and impact only grew. What, through the account of Saul's conversion and calling, is God revealing to you about your conversion and calling?

14. Acts 9:18 – “Then he rose and was baptized.” Just like the eunuch before him, Saul was baptized immediately.

15. Acts 9:20 – “And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’” Those who have truly experienced Jesus don't hesitate to proclaim Jesus even to the most skeptical.

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16. Acts 9:25 – “His disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.” God protected Saul through the efforts of people. God is in control, but we must act wisely in every situation.

17. Acts 9:29 – Revival included bold preaching in Jesus’ name that spread to other churches.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 Feb: Show your gratitude to Jesus by proclaiming His name to as many people as possible today.

DBRP- WEEK 8, Day 1, Monday, 19 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+8%2C9%3B+proverbs+19%3B+acts+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 19 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 8:4 – “And Moses did as the Lord commanded him....” God demands absolute obedience from His servants. Though we rely totally on grace, obedience remains essential.

2. Leviticus 8:1-36 – God’s servants are purified and reconciled before they begin their missions. God’s servants must be set apart, holy.

3. Leviticus 8:23, 24 – “And he killed it, and Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. Then he presented Aaron’s sons, and Moses put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet.” The bloody ceremony was to serve as a reminder for the priests to guard their hearts in service to the Lord, to guard their spiritual gates (eyes, ears, hands, and feet). Nothing should pass in and out that isn’t purified by the blood. As ambassadors for Christs, as priests, the reality of The Cross should determine what we allow into our hearts (what we choose to listen to and gaze upon) and what we allow to come out of our hearts (our words and our deeds). Do you need a visible reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice for you in order to keep you pure in what you choose to listen to, what you choose to say, what you choose to do, and where you choose to go?

4. Proverbs 19:2, 15, 20, 21, 24, 27 -- “Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.... Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.... Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.... The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.... Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.” As a basic principle, success in life is determined by two things: decisions and discipline. We need to make good decisions and then have the discipline to follow through. Effective decision-making gets you started down the right path; persistent, consistent discipline gets you to where you intended to go. Unfortunately, most people struggle with both decision-making and discipline, which is why success eludes so many. Proverbs offers wisdom for those desiring success. Concerning making good decisions, Proverbs points to three requirements: self-study, wise counsel, and alignment with God’s will, the latter, of course, being most critical. First when it comes to decision-making, you must ensure your choices honor and glorify God and do not in any way counter or detract from His word. God will never ask you to do something or bless any decision which goes against His word. If you find yourself saying things like, “I know the Bible says this, but....” You are going down the

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wrong path. Even a biblical decision can be poorly executed without knowledge, which is why the Bible tells us that all of our decisions should be guided by self-study and wise counsel. Note too that Proverbs reminds us that instruction must be continuous. We can never stop learning or accepting advice, even (or perhaps especially) in the areas in which we believe we have expertise. As soon as we think we have it figured out, we stray. Finally, there is no substitute for self-control and hard work rightly applied. Of course, success doesn't come from hard work alone; with bad decision-making, hard work will only get you to the wrong place faster. However, with sound decisions, only discipline and perseverance will get you what you are looking to achieve. The person who isn't toiled is spoiled, and a life of ease ruins a person. You can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you aren't willing to act upon it faithfully over time, it is useless to you. Success always involves sacrificing something good now for something great later. Success requires the pain of discipline now in order to avoid the pain of regret tomorrow. Successful people are those who are willing to sacrifice comfort where unsuccessful people aren't willing. And, all the things that matter most to us fall under the "principle of the farm": it takes persistent sacrifice over time to eventually get a harvest – you don't get a harvest overnight. Most disciplines must be maintained for a long time in order to get results eventually – this is the primary reason disciplines are hard; you don't get instant gratification or a quick payoff, and it takes faith and hope to invest in the future. It is the weak and lazy that constantly search for the 'get rich quick' schemes which is why the Bible warns against such thinking. Impatience always gets you into trouble – just ask Abraham, Jacob, Saul, etc. If success is eluding you in a particular area, check your decisions and your discipline.

5. Proverbs 19:3 -- "When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." Don't blame God.

6. Proverbs 19:4 -- "Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend." Truly loving people are those who will love others for love's sake, not for personal gain. Many people who claim to love don't really love the other but merely what the other can provide them, whether that other be another person or God. Do you love God or merely the blessings of God? If God promised you no blessings, would you love Him nonetheless? This is the question Satan asked of Job.

7. Proverbs 19:17 – "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." The word "lends" in this word is the ancient word "lâvâh" which also means to unite or entwine with. So, another way to read this is that when we are generous to the poor, we unite ourselves with God. This is the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17. And this unity, this fellowship with Jesus, actually costs us nothing because God will repay us for what we lend to the poor. You can't be that. But how often do Christians justify withholding from the poor? There are plenty of logical reasons why a person might not want to give to another person, but obedience to God and love will not always seem logical or reasonable. Let the Holy Spirit guide you, and when He puts it on your heart to give, then be generous.

8. Proverbs 19:21 -- "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." No matter how you justify your actions, if it is not what God wanted you to do, it is pointless. We were made to serve Him, not self.

9. Acts 8:1 – "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Before the gift of the Holy Spirit, the apostles abandoned Jesus when pressured; now the apostles refused to run for self-preservation.

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10. Acts 8:2 – “Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.” The devout responded to persecution completely differently than everyone else.

11. Acts 8:4 – “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.” God used the persecution of the church to rapidly spread the Gospel throughout the land. This reminds me of what Joseph said to his brothers: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives (Genesis 50:20).” We were created to fulfill God’s purposes and to glorify Him, and this will require that we go through trials and persecution. However, at the same time, God who IS love can only respond to His children in perfect love. What He has us go through for His glory is also what is the very best for us, though we cannot usually understand why. There is nothing that can happen to us that God does not allow, and as Romans 8:28 says, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” In your sufferings for Christ, God is doing a few things simultaneously: He is revealing Himself to you in a greater way; He is revealing Himself to the world through you; He is revealing you to yourself; and He is drawing you closer to Him and building your character to be more like that of Christ. Concerning Jesus, the Bible says, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered (Hebrews 5:8).” How is God teaching you obedience? Paul says, “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Romans 5:2-5). As God uses you for His purposes and builds your character, taking comfort in knowing that “because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:18).” And if you are suffering for the name of Christ, give thanks that you have been considered worthy for such a task and for the opportunity to share in this fellowship with Jesus; take on Paul’s attitude: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). But if you, after making an honest assessment, find that you are not really suffering persecution for Christ but rather the consequences of your own infidelity, take heart in knowing that “the Lord disciplines those he loves (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19), and nothing, not even you, can separate you from God’s perfect love (Romans 8:35-39). Repent and move forward with joy knowing that you live in a state of grace and God is raising you up as His wonderful child whom He loves completely.

12. Acts 8:5 -- “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.” According to the Bible, both Philip and Simon the magician “believed” in Jesus; however, Simon the magician’s belief had no power while through Philip, the Holy Spirit moved mightily. Clearly their beliefs were not the same. As James points out, “Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19). Simon the magician had the appearance of a true believer. He publicly proclaimed his faith in Jesus, he was baptized, and he was already on a mission trip with the “greats” of the faith. However, Peter points out that, though Simon “believed” that Jesus was the Son of God, Simon had not yet repented and was trapped in “bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” Ultimately, Simon the magician was focused on and living for self while Philip was focused on and living for Christ. Simon the magician was not really seeking a Lord and Savior, but rather a genie in a bottle. Simon was led by his earthly desires and by his own understanding, while Philip was led by the Spirit which is not discernable through human knowledge. The Holy Spirit uses the surrendered, obedient life. Notice that Philip, having just rocked the city of Samaria with powerful preaching and amazing miracles, refused to be distracted and remained completely responsive and obedient to the Holy Spirit. Rather than staying to cultivate this fruitful

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ministry in Samaria as would reasonably be expected, he did not hesitate to “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza,” a desert place. Certainly, no person would have advised Philip to leave success in the city for a desert journey with no defined purpose. However, Philip was not pursuing success from man’s perspective but rather obedience and fellowship with God. As Peter tells Simon, the fruitfulness of your faith depends in a large part upon “the intent of your heart.” Consider your heart. Why do you do what you do? What is the ultimate motivation behind your actions? Are you truly Christ-centered? Are you living obediently to the word God has plainly given? Are you receptive and obedient to convictions from the Holy Spirit? What has the Holy Spirit put on your heart to which you have yet to respond? Do not hesitate to “rise” and take the road the goes to the desert.

13. Acts 8:8 – “So there was much joy in that city.” Joy came from experiencing what only the Holy Spirit could do.

14. Acts 8:9 – “But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.” False teachers take the credit instead of directing it towards Jesus Christ.

15. Acts 8:11 – “...for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.” False teachers can amaze.

16. Acts 8:12 – “But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Philip preached Jesus Christ, never seeking to share glory with Jesus.

17. Acts 8:22 – “Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.” The Holy Spirit must change your heart. Even spreading the Gospel can be done with the wrong heart.

18. Acts 8:26, 27 – “And he rose and went.” Walking by the Spirit involves being obedient without understanding why. God will tell you to “go” without revealing His purpose or exact plan. God will arrange circumstances for His purposes; you need only obey with your eyes open for His activities in which He wants you to participate.

19. Acts 8:30-31 – “So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.” Only the Father can lead someone to the Son. We are merely His instruments to proclaim the truth when provided the opportunity.

20. Acts 8:35 – “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” God calls us to use the Scripture to tell people about Jesus, not just our own words and opinions. We need not add to God’s word to proclaim the Gospel, but we can also share our personal testimonies as first-hand witnesses of the Truth. Are you prepared to explain the path of salvation through the Bible and to share your personal testimony?

21. Acts 8:38 – “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” Philip baptized the eunuch as soon as the eunuch believed, nothing else was required.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Feb: Today, memorize the "Roman Road", and be prepared to use Scripture to proclaim the Gospel to all.

The "Romans" Road to the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

- The Problem of Sin:

-- Romans 3:23 -- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

- The Wages of Sin:

-- Romans 6:23a -- "For the wages of sin is death..."

- The Love of God:

-- Romans 5:8 -- "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

- The Free Gift of Salvation:

-- Romans 6:23b -- "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- Accepting the Free Gift:

-- Romans 10:9 & 13 -- "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.... For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 7, Sunday, 18 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+6%2C+7%3B+proverbs+18%3B+psalm+20%2C+21>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 18 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 6:2 -- "If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the Lord by deceiving his neighbor...." Sins against our neighbors are in fact breaches of faith against the Lord.

2. Leviticus 6:2-6 -- "If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving his neighbor.... He must make restitution in full... to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering... to the priest, that is, to the LORD, his guilt offering." We have forgiveness of our sins through Jesus, but we maintain a responsibility to make full restitution to those we have offended, even if they are not aware that we have deceived them in some way. This is hard, and Christians often neglect this responsibility, thereby living a lie. Moses relayed to the people that they had to both make restitution and provide a guilt offering to the Lord. Jesus said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matt 5:23)." I am reminded of the Prophet Samuel's farewell speech (1 Sam 12:1-4) when he says, "Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right." Today is a good day to "strive..." to clear your conscience "before God and man (Acts 24:15-17)." Let no debt remain but the debt of love (Romans 13:8).

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3. Leviticus 7:11-21 -- "This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the Lord...." God has always been delighted to receive special offerings from those whose hearts have been set apart to serve Him (Deut. 10:12-22). When worshipers under the old covenant wanted to present a special offering before the Lord, above and beyond what the Law required (Lev. 1-2; 4), a peace offering was brought to the sanctuary out of the overflow of the worshiper's heart. Freewill offerings were given in response to God's unexpected or unsought generosity. The peace offering was the only sacrifice worshipers could eat. Being at peace with God is a special occasion indeed and worthy of celebration with a great feast. For poor Israelites, this may have been the only time they ever ate meat. Moreover, strict cleanliness laws had to be followed regarding the eating of the sacrifice (vv. 19-21). Though at peace with the worshiper, our Creator remained holy and could still not tolerate any impurity in His presence.

4. Proverbs 18:1 -- "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." Individualism is often a sign of selfishness. There is no such thing as a faithful Christian loner. Our mission is all about relationships. Christians are people persons.

5. Proverbs 18:2 -- "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." Consider this verse in context with Proverbs 11:30 -- "...whoever captures souls is wise." Fools are driven, blinded, and deafened by pride. Wise people are humble, driven by love, and on a mission of reconciliation, reconciling others to God. Fools seek to win arguments. The wise seek to win souls. The wise listener doesn't just listen to understand another person's argument but rather listens to understand the other person, for what is in that person's heart. Don't let an issue become a distraction from Jesus. Don't just win the debate, draw the listener closer to Jesus. Be wise, not a fool.

6. Proverbs 18:9 -- "Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys." How many haven't suffered because somebody didn't do their job well? God expects his people to seek perfection in all that they do. We spend so much time, energy, and effort trying to fix what someone broke due to pure negligence, complacency, or laziness. Small, seemingly insignificant, decisions to cut corners or disregard fundamentals have a huge ripple effect that affects many and can become catastrophic. Truth be told, too much of your time is wasted also fixing what you broke because of your bad habits. For example, perhaps you don't put something away where it goes, then later you spend hours looking for it -- hours I could have used doing something productive, hours I will never get back. When we are not disciplined and diligent in our habits and practices, we pay a huge opportunity cost and destroy our productivity; this is a sin that I must work on daily. God is very interested in our attention to detail in all that we do. Our professionalism ultimately glorifies Him.

7. Psalm 20 is a worship service before battle. God's people at times have to fight for what is right.

8. Psalm 20:1 -- "May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you!" The day of trouble is inevitable, when your best abilities and the best abilities of others is not enough, when the illusion of control is stripped away, and our dependency upon God becomes indisputable. Hence the old military adage, "There are no atheists in foxholes."

9. Psalm 20:5; Psalm 21:1, 13 -- Faith in God in time of crisis leads to joy in god in victory.

10. Psalm 20:6; Psalm 21:1, 13 -- God answers your prayers.

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11. Psalm 20:7 – “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” No earthly power can make up for infidelity to God. In what do you place your trust?

12. Psalm 21:1 – “O Lord, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults!” When you truly know that God is in complete control, loves you perfectly, protects you with all of His power, and only allows what is best for you to happen, you have much about to rejoice and won’t have trouble exulting Jesus.

13. Psalm 21:2 – “You have given him his heart’s desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.” When your heart’s desire is Jesus, and when your requests are for God’s will to be done, God will always answer your prayers with, “Yes,” and give you your heart’s desire.

14. Psalm 21:7 – “For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.” Love enables the king to trust God, but love also enables the king to remain faithful, steadfast and immovable, to God’s commands when it is difficult to do so – “Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.” (Psalm 85:10)

15. Psalm 21:11 – God foils enemy plans.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Feb: Today, seek to be relationship focused rather than task focused. Rather than just getting stuff done, build and strengthen your relationships in the process, loving those around you more and more. Put people before projects. Remember, our life mission of love and reconciliation is all about relationships, not busywork. Don’t let the worries of the world hinder your relationships. (Proverbs 18:1)

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 6, Saturday, 17 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+4%2C+5%3B+proverbs+17%3B+psalm+19>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 17 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 4:1-3 – “If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the Lord’s commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them,.. bringing guilt on the people....” We are still responsible and held accountable for our unintentional sins which reveal our complacency and lack of total devotion to God. Obviously, unintentionality is a lack of intentionality which the dictionary describes as “the fact of being deliberate or purposive [or] the quality of mental states (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) that consists in their being directed toward some object or state of affairs.” God commanded that all of our thoughts, beliefs, desires, and hopes be directed towards Him. Anything else is sin, cosmic treason against the LORD. Note also that individual sin has corporate implications. No sins are committed in isolation; even the ones you think are secret will eventually impact those around you.

2. Leviticus 4:22 -- “When a leader sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that by the commandments of the Lord his God ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish, and shall lay his hand on the head of the goat and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the Lord; it is a sin offering.” God reminds leaders of their burden of responsibility and that, not only are they personally responsible for what they do and fail to do, their actions affect others. There are no excuses in leadership.

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3. Leviticus 5:5 – Old sins, even ones that were never revealed or that have been long forgotten by others, still need to be addressed. If at all possible, you must seek restitution and reconciliation with those against whom you have sinned. (review Exodus 22 on restitution)

4. God takes every sin seriously. The New Testament takes sin as seriously as does the OT – see Romans chapters 1-3.

5. Proverbs 17:2 -- “A wise servant will rule over a disgraceful son, and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.” This is an interesting verse when considered in context with how God responded to the unbelief of many Jews by opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles. As Romans 11:11 says, “Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.” Paul continues: “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” I believe that when “the full number of the Gentiles has come in,” the “Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10; see all of 2 Peter 3 to understand more on the topic). Who do you know and love that you want to see counted among that number? Have you told them about Jesus?

6. Proverbs 17:14 – “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.” Rarely do you ever really win an argument whether you are right or wrong. Just let it go and leave it to God to deal with whatever you have lost. When there is a conflict between you and someone else, the issue can become your idol (the focus rather than Jesus). Don’t let that issue cause you to lose sight of your goal of bringing that person closer to Jesus. If that person is focused on the issue or on you, they are not looking at Jesus. Is anything worth distracting you or someone else from Jesus?

7. Proverbs 17:27, 28 – “Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.” If there is any doubt, remain silent. Everybody has something to say, but most of it is not worth listening to and does not promote reconciliation or wisdom. “The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.” (Proverbs 18:4) The most important time to be silent is when you are feeling emotional (this is a warning of self-centeredness). Emotional words won’t be wise, godly words. You must first deny self and take up your cross. You must be compelled by the love of Christ to see that person as Jesus sees that person. As an ambassador for Christ, you are not allowed to represent yourself in that encounter; to do so would be to commit cosmic treason. Do not sin against the one who gave His life for you (though you didn’t deserve it) by seeking your own justification and glory from a position of self-righteousness. Leave justice to the Just One, and stay focused on the goal of reconciling people to Jesus.

8. Psalm 19:1 – “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” The truth of God is self-evident to those who choose to open their eyes to see it.

9. Psalm 19:1, 7, 9, 14 -- “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.... The law of the LORD is perfect.... the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.... O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

In his meditations, the psalmist marvels at how the Creator has revealed Himself through both His creation and His word, and the psalmist rejoices in the fact that God has provided his word that we

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might live life to its fullest, aligned with the perfect will of the Creator. The psalmist understands the futility of attempting to live life apart from God's revealed word -- "Who can discern his errors?" God created both principles (the rules of how life works) and ethics (the rules of justice, mercy, and grace), but mankind replaces principles and ethics with values (how we perceive life works) and morals (from the word "mores" -- what society accepts as good vice what is really good). Apart from God's word, we are inclined to follow our values and morals into destruction.

The Creation reflects the nature, character, and will of the Creator as do the natural laws to which all of Creation, including us, is subject. Many throughout history, in great futility, have attempted to function in opposition to the laws of nature; predictably, the results have been devastatingly the same. On the contrary, those who have sought greater understanding of the laws of nature and have endeavored to apply those laws to life's challenges have accomplished great scientific feats, greatly advancing things such as medicine and technology. Only the Creator can control Creation, and in fact, controlling nature is one of the primary ways God uses throughout the Bible to reveal Himself, doing something that clearly only God can do. He parts the seas, causes catastrophic storms and earthquakes, stops the sun and moon, puts eyes in men that had been born without eyes, brings the dead back to life, etc. Jesus' power over nature revealed Him to be the Son of God -- "And the men marveled, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?'" (Matthew 8:27)

Like the laws of nature, God's spiritual laws, His commands, His Word, His Law, reflect His perfect nature, character, will, righteousness and order. Jesus is the embodiment of the Word, and fellowship or unity with Jesus results in conformance to the word, God's spiritual laws. All of Creation is subject to His Word, His Law. Many throughout history, in great futility, have attempted to function in opposition to God's Word; predictably, the results have been devastatingly the same. On the contrary others have sought diligently to understand and live by God's word and have brought great glory to God and healing into the lives of many. Nonetheless, born into sin, we are subject to the Law and doomed for death, apart from the Grace of God, through the living Word that has power over death. Defiance of God's natural laws brings physical death, defiance of God's spiritual laws brings spiritual death. God alone has power over death -- "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:54) We are totally, TOTALLY dependent on God in the natural and spiritual. Our faith and hope are in Him; our love is our unity with Him which is manifested in obedience to His will, his commands. This unity will have predictable consequences in our lives.

We are saved by faith alone, and sanctified as we walk in God's word. The psalmist understands the importance of God's word, describing it as "perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, enduring, true, more desired than much fine gold, and sweeter than honey." Armed with God's word, the psalmist asks for God's assistance to live in accordance with the word, "blameless, and innocent of great transgression." Ultimately, the psalmist prays that, as he walks in the word, God will transform his heart to be one with God (Psalm 19:14). We don't obey God's word merely to be better people and to live better lives; we obey God's word that we might know Jesus more and more every day. How does your passion for God's word reflect your heart for God? Is the Holy Spirit using the word of God to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ?

10. Psalm 19:8-11 -- "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.... Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." Joy and success are found in obedience to God.

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11. Psalm 19:12-13 – “Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.” We must strive with all of our might for perfection but trust in grace through Jesus Christ along the way. Christians are ever-mindful of presumptuous sins, not using grace as an excuse for complacency concerning sin. The closer you get to God, the more seriously you take sin as God does. Also, never forget that it is impossible for us to see our own sins apart from the revelation and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Feb: Consider where you have allowed values (what people believe about how life works) and morals (what people accept as right or wrong) to distract you from God's principles (how life really works) and God's ethics (God's rules for justice, mercy, and grace). Seek to follow God's principles and ethics alone, which will always be different than mankind's values and morals.

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 5, Friday, 16 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+2%2C+3%3B+proverbs+16%3B+acts+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 16 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 2:4, 5 – “When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil.” Unleavened bread symbolized purity, and oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, wholly pure, and full of the Holy Spirit. (see Ephesians 5:2) Christians should strive to offer their lives to the Lord, pure and full of the Holy Spirit.

2. Leviticus 2:12, 13 – “As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the Lord, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.” We are the first fruits, not burnt in the fire, seasoned with salt. (see James 1:18)

3. Leviticus 3 – The peace offering was an offering of reconciliation that brought together in fellowship God, the Priests, and the people. This is a great symbol of the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17. (see also 1 John 1:3) Remember, your mission in life is reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19)

4. Leviticus 3:17 – The fat and the blood was dedicated to the Lord. God's people do not take what belongs to God. All glory belongs to God. Never try to share glory with God by giving yourself credit before others, by being an ambassador for yourself rather than an ambassador for Christ. You have been commissioned for one message, the Gospel; to proclaim one name, Jesus. Do not be a distraction for others by drawing attention to yourself rather than Jesus. Don't be a substitute for Salvation (through the blood of the sacrifice) by presenting yourself as a remedy. Don't try to receive the fragrant offering of praise from others. All praise must go to Him.

5. Proverbs 16:1 -- “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.... The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” From beginning the end, the message in Proverbs 16 is very clear: “The Lord works out everything for his own ends.” The LORD is KING, the LORD is Sovereign, the LORD is in complete control, and the LORD has a plan. When our plan is

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aligned, in synch, in accordance with and subordinated to His plan, life is good. We are on the “highway of the upright” (Proverbs 16:17). However, when we get off course, when we go our own way, life is painful. The problem is that our hearts are deceptive, and, guided by our own pride, ignorance, and emotion, we will always choose the wrong path (Proverbs 16:2, 9, 25). Unfortunately, when we choose the wrong path, we also lead others astray too (Proverbs 16:29). Therefore, we must “fear the Lord.... Commit to the Lord whatever [we] do.... Give heed to instruction.... [and] Trust in the Lord... (Proverbs 16:6, 7, 2, 20).” Ultimately, our desire to faithfully submit in obedience to the LORD should be motivated purely by selfless love rather than a self-centered desire for the blessings of God. However, today’s Proverbs and Psalms do remind us that obedience to the Lord leads to fullness of life on earth (Proverbs 16:31; Psalm 20:7; 21:7). Yet to be perfected in love, we all have mixed motives behind our “love and faithfulness” to God and to others – it is partly selfless, and partly selfish. God calls us to approach Him in obedience while He continues to work on our hearts.

6. Proverbs 16:2 – “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.” God’s word is used by the Holy Spirit to show us the truth of ourselves and our sinfulness that we won’t admit to ourselves.

7. Proverbs 16:6 – “By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.” Faithful obedience is the true measure of repentance and love.

8. Proverbs 16:7, 9 – God is fully aware of how others are treating you, and He allows to happen what He wants to happen to you.

9. Proverbs 16:17 – Your journey to spiritual maturity is fast when you choose to take the path far from evil.

10. Acts 7:1-53 – Pay close attention to Stephen’s example: When accused and attacked by others, he resisted the temptation to make himself the focus or to defend himself. Rather he turned the attention to Jesus, staying true to his mission of reconciliation. He used the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel and to call for repentance. Don’t allow people to make you the center of attention for good reasons or for bad reasons. Don’t allow yourself to be a distraction from Jesus. The moment you start defending yourself, you become the focus.

11. Acts 7:2 – “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia....” God takes the initiative and calls those who are not looking for Him. God also calls us to take the initiative and reach out to people who have not asked.

12. Acts 7:3 – “...and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’” Don’t expect God to tell you where He is leading you – just go and trust Him with the destination.

13. Acts 7:5 – “Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child.” Abraham called on a mission that would not be fulfilled in his lifetime on earth. Are you willing to receive a mission like that from God?

14. Acts 7:6 – “And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.” God called Abraham and his

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children on a mission that would require hard living all of their days. Are you willing to receive a mission from God like that? Can you see how faith is required to fulfill God's plan for your life?

15. Acts 7:6 – “And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’” Stephen mirrored the forgiveness Jesus modeled on the Cross.

16. Acts 7:10 – Wisdom is forged in adversity. There is no comfort in the growth zone, and there is no growth in the comfort zone.

17. Acts 7:25 – In service to the Lord, we have a tendency to do things in our way and on our own timing which always leads to sin and failure. We must be led by the Holy Spirit in all that we do.

18. Acts 7:35 – “Who made you a ruler and a judge?” As a priest on this earth, people will question your authority. Your authority and power come from Jesus (see Matthew 28)

19. Acts 7:40 – The Israelites desired the provision of God rather than God Himself. The Israelites saw the activities of God but did not love, know or trust God. Their religion was self-centered and void of real faith. When they no longer saw the activities of God in their lives, they fell away and sought what they wanted in some other way, creating a fake savior. Do you truly seek Jesus or just His blessings? If you had no apparent blessings, would Jesus be enough to sustain your joy and your confidence? When you don't see God working, do you look elsewhere for what you want?

20. Acts 7:42 -- “But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven.” In His mercy, God does not give us what our sinful heart's desire. In His mercy, God often disrupts our ‘Towers of Babel’. Often our ‘unanswered’ prayers are actually God's controls where He knows we lack self-control. Often, we need humbling circumstances to keep us humble. Perhaps, you don't have the ‘blessings’ you desire because they would actually be ‘curses’ in your hands. Perhaps you do not have what you want because God knows you cannot control your own passions. (James 4:3) Perhaps you require a thorn in the flesh to keep you dependent on God rather than falsely believing in your own self-sufficiency. But what if God did give you your “heart's desires?” How quickly would you “turn to Egypt?” (Acts 7:39) Often God disciplines by giving people what they want, by turning them over to their own desires. God's punishment described in today's readings was just that, giving the unfaithful what they wanted. Stephen's warning to his wrongful accusers was that they had not ‘circumcised their hearts.’ Their hearts were not cut and marked for God. The promise of the Bible is that if we truly delight in the LORD, he will give us our desire, and the “fountain of life” will turn us away from the snares of death. (Psalm 37:4; Proverbs 13:14) What does your heart truly desire? What do your actions reveal about your heart?

- Psalm 81:12 -- So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.

- Romans 1:24, 26 -- Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.... For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

- Psalm 37:4 -- Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

- Proverbs 6:25 -- Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;

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21. Acts 7:51 – “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.” Even facing a hostile crowd, Stephen did not hold back the truth or attempt to sugarcoat it.

22. Acts 7:51 – The Holy Spirit is available to God’s people but often resisted.

23. Acts 7:51-53 -- “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.” Stephen is described as “a man..., of good repute..., full of faith, wisdom..., grace..., power., and of the Holy Spirit. God worked through Stephen to do “great wonders and signs among the people.” However, when Stephen addresses the high priest after being wrongly accused by other Jews, he gives them both barrels, holding nothing back. How do you think these harsh words would be received in churches today? I think he would quickly be discounted as a closed minded, unloving, judgmental, fanatic. However, it would appear that God honored his zeal, and after He spoke these words, “he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” The crowd (those claiming to be followers of God) acted in accordance with their hearts and stoned Stephen under a facade of righteousness. Stephen responded in accordance with his heart -- “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” The harsh truth, not sugar coated, came from loving Stephen while the church sought to kill the messenger. Stephen, in a life-or-death situation, undoubtedly knew that his words would not be well received, but that did not hold him back. We likely would have counselled him to soften his words so that he “would not lose his witness.” However, Stephen was not focused on seeking the approval of men but rather to boldly testify to the truth. John the Baptist lost his head boldly speaking out against adultery. Jesus, who harshly criticized the religious leaders, had the same mentality about boldly speaking truth regardless the outcome:

- John 18:37, 38 -- 37 Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

24. Acts 7:56 -- “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Jesus stood to receive Stephen.

25. Acts 7:58 – God brings circumstances together for his purposes. God brought Saul to the stoning of Stephen for a purpose. God would use Stephen to convict the heart of the most unlikely apostle. You never know what God is doing in the life of the person who is persecuting you the most. Will you continue to pray honestly from your heart that your persecutor will become a mighty ambassador for Jesus?

26. Acts 7:58-60 -- "Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep." How Stephen died was an incredible testimony to his faith in Jesus Christ. How do you think his death affected Saul?

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27. Acts 7:60 – “And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’” Stephen mirrored the forgiveness Jesus modeled on the Cross.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Feb: Today, meditate upon the life of Stephen and pray that you might emulate his fidelity in service, in evangelism, and in forgiveness.

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 4, Thursday, 15 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=leviticus+1%3B+proverbs+15%3B+acts+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 15 Feb 18:

1. Leviticus 1:4, 5 – “He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Then he shall kill the bull before the Lord, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.” The guilty person showed personal responsibility and involvement by pressing a hand on the animal; this was a very powerful reminder of the destructiveness of sin as well as the need for atonement before God. The guilty person, the one responsible for sin, kills the animal. The priests would present the offering to the Lord on behalf of the sinner.

2. Proverbs 15:7, 28 -- “The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.... The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.” Our words are far more important than we think. “Proverbs alone uses the word ‘mouth’ 44 times, the word ‘tongue’ 19 times, the word ‘lips’ 33 times, the word ‘words’ 45 times, the word ‘speech’ 12 times, and the word ‘speak’ 7 times. Today’s Proverbs tell us that our words are a direct reflection of our hearts. We may not be willing to physically assault our enemies, but we are likely willing to call them fools. (Matthew 5:22) Of course, words can be very destructive. The most revealing words are our ‘careless’ words, what we say without really thinking. Have you ever had to apologize for words you let ‘slip’ out of your mouth? Did you say, “I didn’t really mean it.”? The truth is you were only saying what you were thinking based upon what was in your heart. When your guard was down you spoke the truth of your heart. Do you occasionally lash out at others and then say, “I’m not really an angry person”? Your words reveal otherwise. Do you occasionally allow profanity to slip out of your mouth? What does that say about the condition of your heart? What will come out of your mouth today? Will your words reveal the love of Christ to others? Will your words be a blessing? Will they bring healing and reconciliation? Will your words reflect the character and will of God? Jesus said, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.” (Matthew 12:36) A good disciple discipline is to hold yourself accountable at the end of each day for every word you spoke. Each evening, consider your interactions with others and what you said to them. Did you speak love?

3. Proverbs 15:19, 24 – Proverbs uses the word “path” 23 times. Everyone is on a path, but only those who enter the “Gate” of Jesus Christ, and follow Him as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” find eternal life. A leader who does not lead others to Christ is an anti-Christ, preaching hope in something else which is an idol. Jesus said that the path of Life is narrow, and few take it.

4. Proverbs 15:28 – Proverbs 15 uses the word “heart” eight times, and all of Proverbs uses the word “heart” 77 times. Beyond behavior, God judges the heart. You can do the right things with the wrong

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heart and fall short of the Greatest Commandment and the First Commandment of total love for God. We are not perfected in love, but this is our goal. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the truth of your heart.

5. Proverbs 15:31 -- "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise." Proverbs uses the word "listen" 16 times, hear 19 times, "ear" 14 times, and "receives" four times. So much of your growth and sanctification depends upon your ability and willingness to truly listen to God's word, from the heart, a heart that is humble and fully receptive. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts you, enlightens you, and empowers you through God's word.

6. Acts 6:1 – Cultural differences can cause division within the church. We must learn to accept the cultural differences within the body and take steps to build trust and confidence between groups.

7. Acts 6:1 – People will judge the truth of your faith by how you treat people who can offer you nothing in return, how you treat people who are often forgotten by society.

8. Acts 6:2 – God expects people to serve the church in accordance with their God-given abilities. Human nature tempts people to expect leaders to do everything instead of pitching in themselves and contributing in leadership. Have you noticed that in any organization, a very few people seem to do all the work? That should not be so in the body of Christ. "Everyone wants to change the world, but no one wants to help Mom do the dishes."

9. Acts 6:3 – "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty." All service to the kingdom is vital and requires far more than just a good reputation (though that is essential) – service requires faith, integrity, wisdom, and the power of the Holy Spirit. The smallest job in the church is a calling.

10. Acts 6:6 – The church body must pray for those in service.

11. Acts 6:7 – A healthy church body requires everyone doing their part. Healthy church bodies naturally grow, and the growth is not temporary.

12. Acts 6:8 – "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people." Don't miss this: God worked mightily through a faithful head waiter. Stephen was a faithful laborer who did miraculous things through the power of the Holy Spirit. God honors faithfulness, not titles, positions, degrees, or certificates. God is glorified and revealed when His power works through His humble servants, right where they are, to do what they could not possibly do under their own power.

13. Acts 6:8, 10, 15 -- "And Stephen, full of grace and power.... they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.... all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel." The reality of Christ in Stephen's life was truly powerful, evident to all, healing to many, threatening to some. Stephen's relationship with God filled him with the Spirit, grace, power, and great wisdom. Even Stephen's appearance reflected God's presence within him. Stephen's angelic face is reminiscent of the change in Moses' appearance after his direct encounter with God: Moses' face "shone because he had been talking with God." (Exodus 34:29) Our readings today about Moses reveal another key aspect of the Spirit-filled life – obedience. Eight times in Exodus 40, the Bible points out that, Moses did "all that the LORD commanded him;" not some of what the LORD commanded – "ALL". Obedience was the natural product of Moses' genuine relationship with God; his obedience 'shone' in

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his life longer than his face did. The life of the faithful witness (or martyr) is truly, undeniably powerful and impossible to ignore. It 'owns the room', but it is not at all about personal power but rather about the glorification, magnification of Christ. We are Ambassadors for Christ. What is an ambassador? The Greek word is 'presbeuō' which means "to act as a representative," or to 're-present', or 'present again.' So, when a faithful ambassador for Christ enters any environment, that person is presenting Christ. It should be as if Christ were actually there, only through the life of another. Our lives should reveal the power of Christ in an undeniable, transforming way. When people encounter you, are they struck by the power of Christ in your life? When you leave a room, are people left talking about you or about Jesus?

14. Acts 6:9, 10 – Faithful servants will definitely find themselves at odds with those who adhere to worldly ideas, even within the church such as these Greeks who were Jews that had obtained their freedom from Rome (a likely sign of compromise). Stephen did not hesitate to counter worldly ideas and to speak the truth in love; his boldness would cost him his earthly life, but he had eternal life and is memorialized in God's word forever.

15. Acts 6:11, 12 – "Then they secretly instigated men who said, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.' And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council." Listening to hearsay and gossip can lead you to sin terribly against others.

16. Acts 6:13 -- The truth is always countered with lies. Truthful people are always countered with false accusations, and there are always weak-willed people ready to believe those lies. In the end, there can be no fairness and justice among the ungodly. Justice comes from the Lord. Acknowledge the reality of the world in which you live, and trust God with your fate – you will not be disappointed.

17. Acts 6:15 – Under persecution, Stephen's light shone only brighter. What do people see in you when you are treated unfairly, when you see everything coming apart around you?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 Feb: Today, carefully consider how you might be treating people differently because of cultural differences or because of what you have heard about them that may not actually be true. Consider how you might be misinterpreting the motives of others because of personality or cultural differences. Start with grace, and seek to see past the superficial. God's people are called to totally disregard the labels and stratifications the world seeks to place upon people. (Proverbs 11:6; Acts 6:1-12; see also Romans 10:12)

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 3, Wednesday, 14 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+39%2C+40%3B+proverbs+14%3B+acts+5>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 14 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 39 repeatedly points out that the work was done precisely the way God had shown Moses. Those who seek the Lord must approach Him with obedience, honoring His Sovereignty and holiness. Disobedience is universal treason. A follower of Jesus must also strive to know the Bible through and through. You should be an expert on God's word, not only in knowledge but also in application which is wisdom (knowledge rightly applied).

2. Exodus 39:43 -- "And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, so had they done it. Then Moses blessed them." The theme that jumps out to me from our

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readings today is 'accountability' – being answerable to God with the burden of responsibility for your actions. Eleven times in Exodus it is repeated that the people completed all the work, with excruciating attention to detail, "as the LORD had commanded Moses." And all of the resources used in the building of the Tabernacle and in the crafting of the instruments for worship were carefully accounted for. (Exodus 28:21-39) God's commands to Moses, the overseers, and the craftsmen were very detailed and specific, to the point where many readers of the Old Testament have a hard time getting through these chapters. Far more detail is recounted of the construction of the place of worship than was recounted of the building of the ark, which literally kept mankind afloat on earth. Certainly we can appreciate how important it was for Noah to diligently follow the directions provided to him by God, but we see that God's expectations for how His people approached Him for worship were even more demanding, detailed and specific. More important than life is the honor of God's Holiness. When the work was done, Moses carefully inspected, holding everyone accountable to the commands of God. Obedience was not taken lightly at all but was expected. Perhaps Moses was the first to coin that old Marine Corps adage: "Expect neglect in what you don't inspect." God expected obedience and Moses, as a leader, inspected for obedience. Related to accountability, our readings from Proverbs speak of the "The fruit of the righteous," God's expectation of righteousness from His people. The word righteous is used 13 times in Proverbs 11 alone, and each time it is connected with the consequences of righteousness – reward, life, deliverance, good, flourishing, repayment, etc. The message is that our gracious God, who is quick to forgive, still holds us accountable for our behavior and rewards or disciplines accordingly. Finally, in Acts we read the shocking story of Ananias and Sapphira. Note to self: don't lie to the Holy Spirit! The Bible says that each of us will give an account of ourselves before God, and on the Day of Judgment, we will give an account for "every careless word" we speak. (Romans 14:12, Matthew 12:36) On the Day of Judgment we will all fall short of God's perfectly Holy standard and will rely solely on salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We will be saved by Grace and not by our works. Nevertheless, all of Creation remains subject to both God's natural laws and spiritual laws, and "the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness." (Isaiah 5:16) Though we rely on Grace, God's demand for love requires obedience, and to obedience (in His love) He holds us accountable and rewards and disciplines accordingly – "he rewards those who seek him.... Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." (Hebrews 11:6, Revelation 3:19) Though imperfect, we must strive for perfection, and that is what God expects – "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Philippians 3:12) Again, we are only perfected in Christ, but our act of worship on earth is to follow God's perfect law which begins and ends with love. As we read about how carefully and diligently the craftsmen built the Tabernacle, perhaps we should consider how diligently we honor God in obedience to His word and in love:

- 1 John 2:4-6 -- "Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

- 1 John 4:12-21 -- No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and

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to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

3. Exodus 40:15-33 – God sets apart ministers He calls for His service. God expects ministers to do what His word has told them to do.

4. Exodus 40:35 – When God's glory is present, humans cannot enter and look upon it. We have lost appreciation of the glory of God's presence.

5. Exodus 40:36 – We must follow God's lead in life.

6. Proverbs 14:1-4 – Your relationship with God determines if you will help or harm yourself.

7. Proverbs 14:5-7 – God knows people will reveal their character through their words. We were created, in part, to transfer spiritual truth into the physical world, to impact the world to God's glory, to "subdue" the earth by living out God's will and reconciling the world to Him. Our thoughts are within ourselves, but the first place we impact the world is in our words and deeds. Our words are powerful and create change (remember God created by speaking). Our words are often more powerful than our actions. They will either glorify God or dishonor Him; they will promote life or death, construction or destruction, peace or strife, love or hate. Our words will either lift up or tear down. They will promote unity or disunity. Every word matters, not only what you say, but how you say it. Your words reveal who you are really serving and how much you really love. Jesus said that we will be held accountable for "every careless word" we speak. (Matthew 12:26) What impact will you have on this world with your words? How will those around you think and feel after you speak?

8. Proverbs 14:8-15 – God does not want you to let outward appearances deceive you.

9. Proverbs 14:13 – Outward appearances and momentary emotions do not tell the whole story.

10. Proverbs 14:16-17 – No matter what happens, God wants you to stop and think before you act so you will act wisely.

11. Proverbs 14:31 – How you treat the poor reveals your relationship with God.

12. Proverbs 14:1-4 – Your relationship with God determines if you will help or harm yourself.

13. Acts 5:1-11 – It is not uncommon for people to make public oaths before God and then break them. To lie to God is a terrible thing, and the Bible warns repeatedly not to make oaths before God that you are not willing to keep. Jesus warned also not to make some words promises and other words questionable. All you commit to is a promise before God. (Eccl 5:4-6; Deut 23:21-23; Numbers 30:1-16)

14. Acts 5:29 -- "We must obey God rather than men." The Bible calls us to obey authority, but no one can command you to disobey God or to cease in your God-given mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all.

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15. Acts 5:32 – ‘And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.’ The obedient received the Holy Spirit. Though the Spirit is within all believers, the Bible says that you can “quench” the Spirit or get out of “step” with the Spirit in sin. Sin limits the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Don’t convince yourself that you are close to God while you are toying with sin.

- Again, today’s readings have much to say about the requirement for obedience, discipline, and surrender in a Christian’s life as well as about the tendency for us to slip into disobedience and about our need to guard against disobedience through the accountability of others. In the two chapters from Exodus today, the Bible repeats eleven times that that people obeyed “as the Lord had commanded Moses.” However, it also points out that Moses assigned Levites (working in groups) to account for every shekel and for every man-hour used for the construction of the tabernacle. Also, it says that Moses personally inspected all of the work before he blessed the people (Exodus 39:43). Christians understand the expectation for obedience and discipline but also understand the need for accountability. Proverbs 12:1 says, “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” While we should have internal discipline or self-discipline, sometimes we require external discipline or the reproof of others. Anyone who walks humbly appreciates accountability. If only Sapphira had held her husband Ananias accountable to honest disclosure of his property value. Notice that they were both held accountable by Peter. Yesterday we read that we are to “pursue righteousness,” and this involves growing in obedience and self-discipline. However, we are also called to have partners in accountability and to be honest about our own limitations. If you are attempting to walk alone, you are in big trouble. Have you ever cheated on a diet? Case in point.

- Romans 12:3 -- For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 -- Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?

16. Acts 5:39 – “...but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” To oppose God’s servant is to oppose God Himself. Jesus has transferred His authority and power to His disciples, He has given them the “keys to the Kingdom”. Jesus did not appear powerful to most though He is the Son of God. Disciples may also appear weak to mortals, but they have power beyond imagination while the Spirit works through them for God’s purposes.

17. Acts 5:40-42 – “When they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.” Proclaim Jesus unceasingly and rejoice if you are counted worthy to suffer for your evangelistic efforts.

- The Apostles had been called, above all else, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world, as have we. In this endeavor, they quickly found themselves at odds with the local governing officials (and church leaders) who considered their message to be a threat. The Apostles were commanded by God via an angelic messenger to “Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of

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this new life (Acts 5:20).” However, the high priest had given the Apostles strict orders “not to teach in this name (Acts 5:28).” The Apostles were placed in a dilemma where they had to choose between obedience to local authorities or obedience to Him. For the Apostles the decision was simple -- “We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)!” As a result of their civil disobedience and obedience to God, the Apostles were flogged, but they rejoiced knowing that God had considered them worthy enough to be entrusted with the challenge of persecution for the Truth. God commands Christians to respect and obey authority of human institutions which are in fact empowered by God (Romans 13), but not at the cost of their integrity as Christ’s Ambassadors. Christians are never given the license to sin, nor are they permitted to abandon the dictates of God in order to obey the orders of other human beings. As our Nation creates more and more laws that directly defy the Laws of God, more and more Christians will be placed in a corner where, despite having bent over backwards to be good citizens, they will have to choose between loyalty to government and loyalty to God. The more Christians fail to faithfully steward their legal, God-given influence over government through participation in the political process and through public discourse, the more inevitable persecution. Some will be counted as worthy to receive persecution, but we will all have to ask how much of that persecution can be attributed to our unwillingness to confront culture before the foundations of society were destroyed (Psalm 11:3).

- Matthew 5:10-12 -- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- 1 Peter 3:13-17 -- Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

- 1 Peter 4:12-19 -- Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Feb: Challenge yourself to proclaim Jesus boldly today. Share Jesus with a complete stranger today. The Apostles went house to house. No doubt they were rejected by many. Are you willing to face rejection in hopes that someone might believe and be saved? (Acts 5:40-42)

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 2, Tuesday, 13 Feb 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+37%2C+38%3B+proverbs+13%3B+acts+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 13 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 37:1-9 -- The Ark was the throne of footstool of God, located in the Most Holy Place, behind the veil, accessible only by the high priest, and then only once a year (on the Day of Atonement). Approaching the ark required the blood of atonement. The ark contained the Law, demonstrating God's Justice; it would eventually contain Aaron's rod, representing God's transfer of authority to His priests, His power provided to His priests, and His role as shepherd of His people; and it would eventually contain a jar of manna, demonstrating His miraculous provision for His people. Covering the Law and other articles was a lid called the mercy seat (see also Ex. 25:17–22). God knew that Israel would break His law but that He would be merciful and cover their law-breaking to guard those who truly loved Him from His wrath. Ultimately, this was achieved through the death of a substitute and the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat itself (Lev. 16). Dr. John MacArthur aptly comments that “blood from the sacrifices stood between God and the broken law of God.” “The blood and the mercy seat would foreshadow the final cleansing that would be achieved through the shed blood of Christ (Heb. 10:1–18). Because of this blood we can now meet with the Lord in worship just as the high priest used to meet with God before the ark of the covenant (review Ex. 25:22). Therefore, when we come into the Lord’s presence, we must strive to do so with reverence and awe, for in worship we are entering the great King’s heavenly throne room.” (Ligonier)

2. Exodus 38:24-29 – “All the gold that was used for the work... was twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels.... The silver... was a hundred talents and 1,775 shekels.... everyone who was listed in the records, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men.... The bronze that was offered was seventy talents and 2,400 shekels.” God’s ways are to account for every resource and every person. Does your church account for every person and every dollar?

3. Proverbs 13:2 – God’s people are designed in the physical form to translate the spiritual into the physical world. One of the first places spiritual realities become physical or are “created” physically is with words. First, ideas are spoken and then resonate in the physical world. God first created by speaking. Similarly, our words have an effect on the world. Our words will either produce good fruit or bad, and Jesus said that we will be held accountable for every word that comes out of our mouths. Today, take a close account of all the words you speak and what impact they have on your attitude and on others. What are your words creating? Are they uplifting, constructive, positive, and reconciling, or are they negative and counterproductive? Also, count your “I” and “Me” personal pronouns, checking for self-centeredness, self-edification, self-promotion, and self-righteousness.

4. Proverbs 13:10 – “By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom.” Another way to interpret this verse is, “Pride only breeds quarrels.” At the root of pride is comparison, comparing ourselves to other in an egotistical manner. It is very hard for some people to accept that others might know more than they in a particular area. It takes humility to admit weakness before others. How many truly humble people do you find quarrelling?

5. Proverbs 13:11 – “Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.” It takes great, consistent, daily discipline to make money grow little by little which is why most don’t get rich, and many of those who do quickly lose their wealth.

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6. Proverbs 13:13-15 -- "Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death. Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin." I like the way the NIV says the last verse above: "The way of the unfaithful is hard." Sin, all sin, is terrible and produces destructive consequences, ultimately death, in the physical and spiritual realms. Sin is counter to God (anti-Christ) and, of course, God takes sin very seriously. God has given us His word that we may live life to its fullest and grow in love. However, our sinful choices cause such pain and destruction. Sin makes us all victims and victimizers; there is no such thing as victimless sin; even sinful thoughts ultimately produce a harvest of pain. The sin offerings described in Leviticus 1 brutally displayed the destructiveness of sin. When the sinner offered the "male without defect" the sinner placed his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and the sinner slaughtered the perfect, innocent animal. The blood was then sprinkled against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The sin offering was intended to be a dramatic object lesson (using a physical object to teach deep truths). The sinner was given a very clear picture of the penalty for all sin, but the sinner was also given a prophetic picture of the atonement that would ultimately be provided through the Great "Male Without Defect," Jesus Christ. True repentance and saving faith in Jesus should simultaneously bring us great joy and peace but also great hatred for the sin that caused our Lord to suffer and that causes so much pain to others. It is impossible to love God without hating sin, and to make light of sin is to make light of the penalty that was paid for your sin (see Hebrews below). It is impossible to truly love others while remaining light hearted toward sin. One cannot help but wonder if there is such a thing as a "carnal Christian."

- Hebrews 10:26-31 -- For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

7. Proverbs 13:22 -- "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous." How many Christians today are planning for the prosperity of their children's children?

8. Acts 4:2 -- Talking about Jesus has annoyed people for thousands of years.

9. Acts 4:4 -- "But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand." Many will hate you because you talk about Jesus, but many will believe. Our job is not to do the work of the Holy Spirit; our job is simply to preach the Gospel to all, regardless of what they say they believe.

10. Acts 4:8-10 -- "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.' The Holy Spirit convicts you to talk about Jesus rather than just saying "God", which

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can mean all things to all people. God wants you to connect your good deeds to Jesus Christ. Good deeds open the door for the Gospel to be preached. Ambassadors for Christ take no credit for themselves and draw no attention to themselves. They always point to Jesus.

11. Acts 4:12 – “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” It’s Jesus people need, not ‘goodness’ or worldly versions of ‘godliness’. As an Ambassador for Jesus, you must proclaim His name. We are not ambassadors for moralism, common sense, or bright ideas. We are not commissioned to make people just feel better. We are called to reconcile others to Jesus Christ. If all you have done is make people feel more comfortable in their current condition or promote discord among the lost, you have fallen short of the Great Commission. Eternal life is knowing Jesus and unity with Jesus. The Bible is not a self-help book; rather, it is intended to guide us closer to Jesus.

12. Acts 4:13 – “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” There is no mistaking a life transformed by God! The disciples had been vain and fearful when Jesus enlisted them. James and John sought to outmaneuver their fellow disciples in order to gain the places of greatest honor next to Jesus (Mark 10:37). Over and over the disciples’ actions showed that they did not truly understand who Jesus was (John 6:7-9; Mark 6:49). Even after three years with Jesus, Peter was afraid to confess Christ before a young servant girl (Matt. 26:69-75). Anyone who knew these men would realize they were not the kind of people on which you build a worldwide kingdom. Yet something happened to them as they were with Jesus. The Holy Spirit transformed them, giving them new boldness and wisdom. Now they could perform miracles and preach fearlessly and persuasively to multitudes. Even their enemies noticed in their changed lives the same power they had witnessed in Jesus. Sometimes we desperately want others to believe that we have changed, that we are godlier, more devoted, more Spirit-controlled. It is not necessary, however, for those who have been truly transformed by Christ to convince others of the difference; the change will be obvious. Don’t become too introspective, always focusing on yourself and the small changes you see happening over time. As you walk with Jesus daily, let the witness of the changes taking place in you come from others and not from you. If you have to prove to someone that God has really changed you, He has not. Those around you will surely notice when your life has been transformed by your relationship with Jesus. (Henry T. Blackaby)

13. Acts 4:13 -- “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” Is the evidence that you are with Jesus astonishing to those who know you? Is your Christian life characterized by boldness which comes from your faith in and love for your Sovereign LORD? If your witness isn’t bold and astonishing, pray the prayer of the apostles: “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.... grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.” As with the original disciples, when God fills you with boldness and “great power”, He will also fill you with “great grace” towards others. (Acts 4:33) Above all else, you will be known for your powerful love which brings comfort and healing into the lives of others. Your love is your witness, the evidence of God to others. (1 John 3:10) Your love will be shocking, truly ‘out of this world’, a love that clearly could only come from God. (John 17:16) As a reflection of the love you received, the love you give to others will be very valuable because it is an undeserved gift that cost you everything.

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“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

14. Acts 4:18-20 – “So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ What will you do when your government, place of employment, club, or social group tells you to not speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus? Will you tell yourself you are still obeying Jesus in your silence?

15. Acts 4:29 – “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.” Are you praying to God to protect you in your boldness? Keep proclaiming Jesus, and trust God to protect you as He desires.

16. Acts 4:31 – “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” Prayer preceded the work of the Holy Spirit which empowered the disciples to proclaim the Gospel boldly. How is prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit empowering you?

17. Acts 4:32 – “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.” True love for Jesus inspires unity, not disunity, selflessness, not selfishness, generosity, not materialism, and radical giving rather than hoarding. Until you have genuine faith hope and love; until you trust God with today and with the future, you will not be willing to give freely.

18. Acts 4:34 – “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.” God has provided all the resources everyone needs. Human fear and greed causes need and poverty. Only Jesus can overcome greed.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 Feb: Tell three people about Jesus Christ today, and explain that “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) Pray to God for the boldness you lack and the protection only He can provide. (Acts 4:29)

DBRP- WEEK 7, Day 1, Monday, 12 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+35%2C+36%3B+proverbs+12%3B+acts+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 12 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 35:1-3 -- In the last nine chapters, the requirement to honor the Sabbath has been repeated at least 14 times.

2. Exodus 35:5 – “Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord’s contribution.” God is always looking for generous hearts to serve Him. Generosity is a demonstration of genuine faith. It takes faith to give abundantly, trusting in God’s provision.

3. Exodus 35:10 -- “Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded.” God wants people of all talents and skills to put their abilities towards His work rather than just using their God-given talents for themselves.

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4. Exodus 35:10, 21, 22, 29 -- "Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded.... And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart.... All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord." God's commands are obeyed only by willing hearts. What we choose to do reflects what we truly feel about God. God's commands are not difficult to understand or difficult to follow; the struggle is with the heart. As the old pastor says, "The heart of man's problem is the problem with man's heart."

5. Exodus 35:30-35 -- "See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel... and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer." God calls His servants, assigns them, inspires them, empowers them, and equips them with all that is required to fulfill the mission which is given by Him. God also calls His servants to teach others. Bezalel and Oholiab were Old Testament disciple-makers who not only used their talents, first and foremost to serve God, they also ensured that the work of the temple would expand beyond themselves through others in the congregation. There are levels of leadership we should all aspire to achieve:

1) Lead Self – this is actually learning more and more to be led by the Spirit, obtaining the last mentioned "fruit of the Spirit" which is self-control (or self-discipline); this is growing in unity with Jesus and following Jesus more and more in loving obedience; this is the foundation of all the other levels of leadership and is something that remains a life-long endeavor. Leadership is taking people where they need to go. True leadership points exclusively to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The person who has learned to "lead self" is the true "walking dead," having been crucified with Christ and no longer living, being controlled by the love of Christ. The moral authority to lead is found only in the authority of Jesus. We are only as much of a leader as we are a follower of Jesus. Confidence, personality, talent, skills, and abilities are no substitutes for faith, hope, love, and obedience to Jesus.

2) Prepare to Lead Others – This is developing the skills required of a disciple-maker; it is learning how to not only share your faith but also how to teach others how to walk in faith, to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

3) Leading Others – This is disciple-making; it is far more than just teaching: it is coaching and mentoring; walking with the person and practicing discipleship, evangelism, ministry, worship, and fellowship together. How much time did Jesus spend in the classroom with His disciples? How much time do football coaches spend reading books about football with their players? You don't really understand something until you live it. Leading others involves "getting dirty" together and sharing experiences together. Like a good Marine squad leader, the disciple-maker is on the front-lines with his team employing the steps of instruction: "Educate, demonstrate, replicate, evaluate, remediate," – "Here is why and how.... Now, watch me.... Now you try.... Let's examine what went well and what could have been better.... Let's try again, and again...." As Jethro taught Moses, as Jesus modelled, and as the

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military has practiced for thousands of years, a disciple-maker must focus their energies on no more than three to twelve people to be effective (usually focusing on one, then three, then 10-12).

4) Leading Subordinate Leaders – this is developing disciples into disciple-makers, taking them beyond merely leading self to preparing to lead others, leading others, and onward. This creates a powerful pyramid structure of leadership that employs the principle of multiplication.

5) Develop a Leadership Climate and Culture – this is about creating an iron-sharpens-iron environment among large groups of mutually supportive, interdependent disciple-makers. It is about influencing a shared expectation of growth and helping to facilitate that growth.

6) Leading Communal Change – this is about creating, equipping, supporting, and sustaining unity of effort and unity of action among many to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, to lead a growing movement of reconciliation with Jesus. Change implies a degree of permanence. We say that a person has changed when they are consistently different over time. Likewise, a community has changed when the difference is defining. Leading communal change is generational.

6. Ezekiel 36:1 -- “Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded.” Even artists have to constrain their creativity to the commandments of God. God tells us how we are to worship Him, what is acceptable to Him.

7. Exodus 36:4 – “The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done.” Have you ever been to a church where the Pastor, Reverend, or Priest said, “No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary”? I suspect not. However, today we read in both the Old and New Testaments where the people of God, of their own free will and without any pressure, gave in abundance. In both cases, the Israelites in the desert and in Rome had plenty of logical reasons not to give as, in both cases, their futures were (in the eyes of men) very uncertain. While we worry about a bad economy, they were right (from an earthly perspective) to be concerned for their very lives. Yet, they gave freely. Today, less than 4% of church members tithe (give 10% as commanded in the Bible), while most spend about 20-25% of their income paying off debt (much of which is owned by China and the nation of Islam), around 29% of their income on taxes, and about 20% of their income on transportation costs. Can you imagine the impact if Christians followed the Biblical principles of living debt free, sharing with one another, and tithing? What would happen if, tomorrow, 100% of the church tithed?

- Two experiences in my Christian walk significantly changed my perspective on church finances. One occurred in the early 90's when my Pastor stood before the church to explain why, despite supporting over 10,000 attendees, we still met in a giant tent instead of a building. He said that the church in America was spending more on building debt than to support missionaries, and he refused to go into debt to build a church. Today, he pastors in a huge, beautiful building, debt free. My second profound experience was in 2009-2011 when we attended a congregation that all worked together to construct their own church building (with the support of some builder missionaries – I did not know such people even existed). They took what was once a horse arena, moved it across the city, and transformed it into an amazingly beautiful church (quite large too). They did the vast majority of the work on their own. Mostly on Tuesdays and Thursdays the congregation would meet after normal working hours to build together, eat together and fellowship. This experience completely changed my perspective on, not only

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church finances but also on church fellowship. It is an incredibly powerful thing when the body works together to build the church. You can imagine the intense emotion that was felt during the first service conducted in the new building that everyone had built together through much blood, sweat, and tears. This was the most cohesive and committed church body of which I have ever been a part, and the culture of mutual support extended to all areas of life – they helped build each other's homes, shared necessities of life, and gave to each other generously; interestingly, most were barely middle class. That experience reminds me of what we read today in Exodus when everyone freely gave, not only of their resources, but also of their time and talents to construct the sanctuary. How does this relate to your church experiences?

8. Proverbs 12:18 – “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” Your words will either hurt or heal. Today, only speak healing words. (Proverbs 12:18)

9. Proverbs 12:22 – “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.” God takes lying very, very seriously.

10. Proverbs 12:25 – “Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.” Anxiety comes from a lack of trust and a lack of faith and hope in God -- a deep-seated belief that your consequences and your future depend solely upon you, along with the recognition that you really have no control over either your consequences or your future. The Sabbath rest, the tithe, forgiveness, and giving are rebellious acts against a self-centered perspective that teach you to trust in God and that end anxiety promote a heart of peace and rest.

11. Proverbs 12:26 – “One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.” The measure of leadership is to what degree the leader leads others towards righteousness, and we know that righteousness is only found in Jesus Christ.

12. Acts 3:2 – “And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.” The Bible talks about tithes, offerings, and alms. Tithing is required giving and is public (10%); offerings are above the tithe to the church and are generally anonymous (as described in Exodus today). Alms are acts of charity as described in Acts. God calls us to all forms of giving. All that we have is the Lords, but God wants us to consistently give 10% to the church, offerings above the tithe as led by the Spirit, and acts of charity where we see the opportunity to share the love of Christ. Among these, the tithe is probably most debated today by many who see this a part of the Old Covenant Law, made obsolete by Jesus. However, tithe is pre-covenant as observed by Abraham, the tithe was commended by Jesus, and the tithe has been used throughout church history as a storehouse for believers. The tithe is an act of faith and a public testimony. The tithe is revolutionary much like the Sabbath.

13. Acts 3:6 – “But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’” Christians should always do their charity in the name of Jesus Christ. God wants people to be more than more comfortable on this earth. He wants them to have the eternal life and peace of knowing Jesus. Don't let charity be a substitute for the Gospel.

14. Acts 3:12 – “Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?” Christians NEVER take credit our point to themselves but always point to Jesus.

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15. Acts 3:12, 13 -- "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus." The Israelites saw miraculous things occur in and the through the lives of the Apostles because they were witnessing, not what a handful of very talented, skilled, and committed men could do, but rather the power of God working through surrendered servants. God works through us to do what is impossible for us to do of our own abilities that He may be glorified, not so that we can receive success, good fortune, or the praise of men. It always takes great faith to do what God calls us to do because what He calls us to do is impossible for us to do unless His power enables the achievement. However, when we do step off in faith (into the Ark, into the Red Sea, into the rushing waters of the Jordan River, into the fiery furnace, into the lion's den, etc), not only is God glorified, but our faith and appreciation for God grows too. However, if we don't first start crawling in faith, start toddling in faith, we will not be able to walk like adults with God along the Way.

- The Apostles wanted absolutely no credit for the miracle that had occurred through them -- "Don't look at us, look at Jesus!" When they saw the crippled man with a need they said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." This is not charity work as we so often see it today, this was ministry -- service in the name of the Lord. While they compassionately desired to heal the man's infirmities, their ultimate concern was for his spiritual welfare. Never did they separate the healing from the Healer. Our mission on earth is to glorify God on earth, not governments, organizations, churches, or ourselves. How many times have you seen buildings (even church buildings) named after a person? How many times have you seen philanthropic organizations (even religiously based organizations) named after a person? How many times have you seen charities or charitable events named after a person? How many religious leaders can you think of who project their name far more than the name of Jesus Christ? How much time does the Christian community invest in charities and philanthropic work in the name of something or someone other than Jesus Christ?

- Will you acknowledge Jesus Christ before others today? Will you give all credit and attention to Jesus today? Often people will acknowledge "god" in crowds. Even the basest rock stars will get up at music award ceremonies and thank "god" for their success while simultaneously shocking crowds with their profane behavior. It is quite another thing to humbly, yet boldly, acknowledge "Jesus Christ" as Lord and Savior. That name, Jesus Christ, automatically changes the tone of any conversation. Will you proclaim his name today? Will you direct all attention away from yourself and point it towards Jesus?

- Isaiah 48:11 -- I will not yield my glory to another.

- Colossians 3:17 -- And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

16. Acts 3:14 -- "But you denied the Holy and Righteous One." The disciples did not sugar-coat the sinful condition and condemnation of those outside of Jesus. The Good News is good in contrast to the Bad News that we all deserve the wrath of God and eternal death.

17. Acts 3:19, 20 -- "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus." The message was and remains, "Repent... that your sins may be blotted out." Does your message to others start with "repent" as did the messages of John the Baptist, Jesus, and now the disciples?

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 Feb: In light of today's readings, consider your level of giving, the heart behind your giving, and the message of your giving. Do you give tithes, offerings, and alms? Do you point solely to Jesus Christ in your charity? Does your level of giving require great faith because of how much you are giving? It takes faith to please God, and it takes faith to give in a godly way.

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 7, Sunday, 11 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+33%2C+34%3B+proverbs+11%3B+psalm+17%2C+18>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 11 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 33:3 – “But I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.” God cannot partner with sin. Walking with God requires holiness. God forgives, but repentance is required. You must walk away from sin to walk with God.
2. Exodus 33:4 – “...they mourned....” Repentance comes from a truly mournful heart.
3. Exodus 33:7 -- "And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp." Moses understood and modeled the importance of getting alone with God. Where is your tent of meeting?
4. Exodus 33:11 – “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” Moses had a relationship with God others did not have. Moses’ most intimate relationship was with God, and they spoke to each other as friends. How is your relationship with God?
5. Exodus 33:13 -- "Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." The crowd just wanted the blessings of God, but Moses wanted to know the "ways" of God. He wanted to "know" God. He wanted a favored relationship with God. When you know God, all of life is a blessing. Because Moses desired God above all else, He understood the ways of God while others merely saw the activities of God.
6. Exodus 33:14 -- “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Rest comes when you walk with God. In the midst of a great storm, while the disciples feared imminent death, Jesus slept in the back of the boat. (Moses 8:24) Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) You can have rest in the midst of life’s storms, regardless of your circumstances, when you have the peace of Jesus that surpasses all understanding.
7. Exodus 33:15, 16 -- "And he said to him, 'If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight.'" Life accomplishment is meaningless if it isn't in partnership with God and doesn't fulfill His purpose for you. Apart from a genuine relationship with Jesus, walking with Him and serving Him, your life is meaningless regardless of what you accomplish. This is Solomon's point in Ecclesiastes.
8. Exodus 33:17 -- “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.” Don't just start doing things, even if you tell yourself what you have decided to do is "for God." First seek God, wait for His direction, and follow His direction.

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9. Exodus 34:3 -- "No one shall come up with you." Everyone must develop their own relationship with God.

10. Exodus 34:6, 7 -- "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." Pay attention to how God introduces Himself and defines who He is? He is Mercy, Grace, Love, and Faithfulness, but He is equally Justice. He forgives, but He also demands holiness and hold His followers accountable.

11. Exodus 34:10 -- "And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you." God wants to reveal Himself to others through the miraculous things He does in your life.

12. Exodus 34:11 -- "Observe what I command." God's direction for you starts with "Obey me."

13. Exodus 34:12 -- "Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst." Immediately after God commands obedience, He warns against being influenced by the unfaithful, knowing our tendency to compromise for others.

14. Exodus 34:13 -- "You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim." God tells you that you must make the commitment and the effort to remove temptations in your life.

15. Exodus 34:16 -- Your closest relationships must support your process of sanctification.

16. Exodus 34:21 -- "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest." Rest is required. Mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion makes you vulnerable to spiritual failure. The Sabbath rest has many practical benefits, but the main point is that it is an act of faith and a public, corporate testimony of that faith. Proverbs 3 tells us that we must trust God rather than our own understanding. From a human perspective, the Sabbath is counter-intuitive, particularly during times of extreme need. Tithing, another public and corporate command, is also counter-intuitive. Why would you work less and give away a tenth of what you have when you need so much? Remember, the Israelites were doing this in the desert while surrounded by enemies. The Sabbath command and the command to tithe are acts of commitment that say, "God is the Provider, not me.... God is in control of my future, not me.... God comes first in my life." Much like the Sabbath rest and tithing, forgiving and giving are also counter-intuitive commands, requiring faith to obey. As the Bible says, without faith, it is impossible to obey God.

17. Exodus 34:26 -- "The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God." Only bring your best to the Lord. What do you do with the first part of your day? How much of your time in a day is fully dedicated to God? How much of your daily labor is dedicated solely to God's serving and advancing the Kingdom? What would be a tithe of your time? First, let's look at your week: There are 168 hours in a week. If you fully rested on the Sabbath, you would have 144 hours remaining in the other six days. One tenth of 144 is 14.4, divided among six days is 2.4 or about 2.5 hours. Could you dedicate 2.5 hours a day to discipleship, evangelism, ministry, fellowship, and worship? If you took your sleeping hours out of the picture, your daily tithe of time would be 1.5 hours. Could you dedicate that? Interestingly, according to the NY Daily News, the average American spends five hours a day watching TV.

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18. Exodus 34:28 -- "So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water." Isolation and fasting can help your clarity and focus. The first step to following Jesus is getting self out of the way.

19. Exodus 34:29 -- "Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." People will see change in you that you can't even see in yourself.

20. Exodus 34:35 -- "And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him." Many people will not be ready for all you have to offer, and you might have to filter what is presented based upon the maturity of the audience. You are salt and light, but too much salt can be distasteful and unbearable, and too much light can be too painful to stand. Don't compromise the truth, but know your audience.

21. Proverbs 11:14 -- "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." Leaders must be able to see what everyone else can't see, say what is contrary to what everyone else is saying, and do what is contrary to what everyone else is doing. When you are winning the race, you are often running alone.

22. Proverbs 11:18 -- "...but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward." There are many ways to invest our lives, but none offers greater reward than devoting ourselves to the pursuit of righteousness. Every area of our lives should reflect the holiness of God that is ours by salvation: our thoughts, so that nothing we think about would be inappropriate for a child of God; our actions, so that our lives demonstrate that we serve a holy God; our integrity, so that we are above reproach in all our relationships. Are you taking God's righteousness in your life for granted? Righteousness is something you must allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Instead of sowing holy thoughts, are you allowing evil and sinful thoughts to grow in your mind? Are you allowing lust to grow unchecked within you? Does enmity, bitterness, jealousy, or unforgiveness remain in your life? Jesus said if we seek first God and His righteousness, everything else will follow (Matt. 6:33). There is great reward in sowing righteousness. What are you presently doing to plant holiness in your life? (1 Pet. 1:15). How are you putting righteousness in your mind so that your thoughts are holy? How are you cultivating righteousness in your relationships so that you maintain your integrity? Are you instilling righteousness in your activities so that your life is above reproach? If you want to harvest righteousness in your life tomorrow, you must plant seeds of righteousness today." (Henry T. Blackaby)

23. Proverbs 11:30 -- "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise." How many souls have you captured?

24. Psalm 17:1 -- "Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!" You must approach God honestly. Be totally open, honest, and transparent in your prayers.

25. Psalm 17:3 -- "I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress." Have you?

26. Psalm 17:4 -- "With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent." Carefully obeying God's word will keep you from the deceitfulness of men.

27. Psalm 17:10 -- "They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly." Humility breeds compassion; pride and arrogance foster callousness.

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28. Psalm 18:2 – “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge....” Do you feel completely safe and strong in the Lord? Do you take refuge in Him?

29. Psalm 18:22 -- "For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me." Jesus says in Matthew 28 that His disciples obey ALL the He commands.

30. Psalm 18:25 -- "With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless." The Bible says time and time again that God will treat you the way you treat others.

31. Psalm 18:28 -- "For it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness." Light to see can only come from God. The more you deviate from God's path, the worse your vision will be, and the worse your decisions will be.

32. Psalm 18:31 -- "For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?" How you respond to this question defines your life. It is your true perspective on God (not just what you verbalize about God) that defines your entire outlook on life and how you will respond to circumstances and to others. Does your life reveal that God is LORD? This is the heart of faith – “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) This is the foundation of all knowledge and wisdom (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7). This is our confidence (Proverbs 14:26, 27) The Fear of the Lord is proof of the Spirit of the LORD within us. It is our delight. (Isaiah 11:2, 3) Honoring God as LORD is our very purpose. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Yet too often we say, “Yes, God is LORD,” but then we forsake God in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Why? Because we have lost proper Fear of the LORD. (Jeremiah 2:19) Too often we honor God with our lips while our hearts are far from God. Too often we fear the world because, in our hearts, we have made God small. In the lesson of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus begins by pointing out that the foundation of everything we do rests on our acknowledgment and glorification of God as LORD – “hallowed be your name.” (Matthew 6:9) Jesus then continues to teach that it is our Fear of the LORD that drives us to obey God, trust Him one day at a time, and forgive others unconditionally. We lack obedience, trust, and forgiveness when we lose proper perspective of God as LORD, when we have trouble seeing Christ crucified on our behalf, when we have trouble seeing an empty cross in our hearts. Perhaps the most important question we should meditate upon this today is this: “For who is God, but the LORD?” (see also 2 Samuel 22:32)

- 2 Corinthians 7:1 -- Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

- 1 Peter 2:17 -- Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

33. Psalm 18:34 -- "He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze." God doesn't just educate -- He trains.

34. Psalm 18:46 -- "The LORD lives." We do not live by a philosophy or a theory of God, but rather by a real relationship with a living, personal God.

35. Psalm 18:49 -- "For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name." When you are in real fellowship with God, you cannot help but sing His praises to the world.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 Feb: Get alone with God today, and have true fellowship with Him. Meditate deeply upon God as LORD and what that means to your life. Dedicate

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some serious time this Sunday to this special time with God. Consider making the commitment to keep the Sabbath and to tithe your time.

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 6, Saturday, 10 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+31%2C+32%3B+proverbs+10%3B+psalm+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 10 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 30:20, 21 -- "When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations." God has always taken His own Holiness very seriously with and expectation that we remain holy as His servants. To the priest this is a matter of life and death. Holiness is the only attribute of God repeated in the Bible three times for highest emphasis -- "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8) Of course, the Spirit is a Holy Spirit. By definition, unity with the Spirit is unity in holiness. God does not allow holy things to be used in an unholy way -- "And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people." What is unholy cannot be accepted with the holy. Of course, this truth is revealed throughout the New Testament (see examples below). God compares our spiritual union with Him to a marriage and label our unfaithfulness with the world as adulterous. Whenever we choose sin with the world over faithfulness to God, we are committing spiritual adultery, but we don't see it that way -- "This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I have done no wrong.'" (Proverbs 30:20) Consider Proverbs 7 from the perspective of the adulterous sinner in a spiritual union with God; consider your sin from God's perspective. Of course, God's grace covers over our sin, but do we really intend to treat Him this way?

- Revelation 22:11 -- Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.

- 1 Peter 3:15 -- but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,

- 1 Peter 1:15, 16 -- but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

- 1 Peter 2:5 -- you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- 1 Peter 2:9 -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

- Hebrews 12:14 -- Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

- 2 Timothy 2:21 -- Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:4 -- that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,

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- 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 8 -- For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:26 -- Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

- 1 Timothy 2:8 -- I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

- Colossians 3:12 -- Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

- Ephesians 4:24 -- and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- Ephesians 4:30 -- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- Ephesians 5:27 -- so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

- 1 Corinthians 3:17 -- If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

- 1 Corinthians 6:19 -- Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

- Romans 12:1 -- I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

2. Exodus 31:1-6 -- Oholiab and Bezalel – God uses and empowers artists to glorify Him. Oholiab and Bezalel used their talents to serve God, and their names are written in eternity.

3. Exodus 31:3 – Only God's Spirit can empower someone to do God's work. God gives people the skills and knowledge to do His work, and beyond their natural abilities, He gives them supernatural abilities through the Spirit.

4. Exodus 31:2-4 -- "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship." The word integrity doesn't just mean truthfulness, it also means wholeness or holistic, integrated strength. For example, if a chair with all its parts has structural integrity, you can confidently put all of your weight on it without thinking twice. God wants you to be a person of two-fold integrity, both truthful and holistically strong in body, mind, and spirit; said another way, in MEPS – in mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual abilities. God gives you capacity in all your essential elements, but He also calls us to faithfully use and strengthen all are attributes for selfless service to Him -- "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." (Luke 10:27) Too often we neglect one, if not all, of these elements, sometimes overlooking that they are not only all essential, they are also all interdependent. If you neglect the body, for example, it will affect you mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. If you neglect your mental development, it will impact all of your other attributes, and the same interdependent relationships apply to your emotions and spirit. The

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whole you must be dedicated to God. Work to be excellent in all human attributes, and understand their interdependence.

5. Exodus 31:6 – “And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you.” We live out the Greatest Commandment by obeying all that God commands – “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Joshua 22:5) God gives you abilities to serve Him. You walk in two-fold integrity when the whole of you is honestly and faithfully serving Him in strength.

6. Exodus 31:13-16 -- “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you.... Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.’ How seriously does God feel about the Sabbath – “above all....” The Sabbath, beyond all of its MEPS benefits, is an act of holiness – it sets you apart from the rest of society. Notice also that the Sabbath is “a covenant forever”. What does forever mean?

7. Exodus 32:1 – “When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us.” Waiting upon the Lord to lead is an essential act of faith. If you are not being led by God, you are being led by an idol. We become idolatrous when we lose patience and act on our own volition rather than by the Spirit’s counsel.

8. Exodus 32:4 – Idolatry gives credit for God’s blessings to something or someone else other than God Himself. The most common form of adultery is pride, giving credit to self – “I did [this]; I did [that].” God will not share His glory with another.

9. Exodus 32:8 – “They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them.” Moses was called to lead a spiritually weak people with hardly any faith, no self-control, and no discipline. As the leader, Moses provided external discipline to those who lacked internal discipline. As soon as he wasn’t there, the people displayed their immaturity and infidelity. Leaders are the leaders for a reason. If God calls you to lead, you must not lose sight of the fact that those who you lead will not, by definition, measure up to your standard (more importantly to God’s standard) – that is why they need you to be an example of fidelity and strength. Leaders must have incredible patience – “If you can’t stand the smell of sheep, don’t be a shepherd.” If you are frustrated by their weakness and immaturity, you are revealing your own weakness and immaturity – you are revealing your own self-centeredness.

10. Exodus 32:11 – “But Moses implored the Lord his God.” Leaders engage in intercessory prayer for those they lead because they have a genuine heart for the sinner and truly desire their reconciliation with God.

11. Exodus 32:25 – “And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose....)” Aaron failed as a leader because he failed to be strong while others were weak. He surrendered his integrity due to fear and lost his moral authority to lead. Leaders know where to go and are willing to lead others there (literally or figuratively, tangibly or ethically). Leaders often have to take

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people where they don't want to go for all the right reasons – this takes moral courage. Aaron lacked the inner strength to lead, and his failure resulted in thousands of needless deaths. Had Moses been there, the people would not have gone astray because he would have given them external discipline, guidance, and direction. A leader must possess the strength needed by the led or they are not really the leader at all.

12. Proverbs 10:2 -- "Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death." The wicked may gain great treasure on earth but remain spiritually dead, missing the whole point of life on earth.

13. Proverbs 10:3 -- "The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked." Godly people are satisfied with what God has provided them, but the ungodly are never satisfied no matter how much they acquire for themselves and no matter how much they proclaim their happiness. Nothing on earth can fill a God-sized void in life.

14. Proverbs 10:4 -- "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." We were created by God to love Him but also to work for Him. We are spiritual, but we were also intentionally created physical and placed in a physical world to translate God's spiritual reality into the physical reality -- "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." God's first command was to "subdue the earth". To bring His order into a world of disorder. God provides, but He expects us to work in accordance with His will. His provision is not meant to accommodate our irresponsibility (though in mercy and grace He often does). God's "natural" principles still apply to us even though God empowers us with the "supernatural". Decisions have predictable consequences, and actions produce predictable results. A fundamental life principle for everyone is you will reap what you sow. If you want a result in life, you will have to work for it using the abilities God has given you. Christians are responsible, hard workers who pursue excellence in all things.

15. Proverbs 10:8 -- "The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin." Someone once pointed out that "listen" and "silent" are spelled with the same letters. Read God's word and receive. In prayer, don't just talk. Listen. Spend less time pondering over what you think and want and more time asking what God thinks and wants.

16. Proverbs 10:12 -- "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." The Greatest Commandment is love. Love and forgiveness are inseparable. Our mission is reconciliation. Forgiveness and reconciliation are inseparable. Resolve to bury all offenses. Cover them over with love and forgiveness.

17. Proverbs 10:18 -- "The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool." Don't hide your hatred, and don't spew your hatred -- just don't hate! Love!

18. Proverbs 10:22 -- "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." A person can be rich with sorrow, or rich without sorrow. When you are truly walking with Jesus, you are rich and joyful. Your richness and joy won't be measured by currency.

19. Proverbs 10:24 -- "What the wicked dreads will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted." The righteous want what God wants and live for what God wants. Therefore, when the righteous ask, they receive because they are only asking for what God wants. If you are frustrated with not getting what you want, you likely have a problem with your "wanter."

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20. Proverbs 10:25 -- "When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever." Everyone goes through the storms of life, but the outcomes are not the same.

21. Proverbs 10:28 -- "The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish." Hope is trusting God with the future. God will not disappoint. The wicked trust themselves with the future though they have no control over it. This results in a terrible existence.

22. Proverbs 10:29 -- "The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the blameless, but destruction to evildoers." Like the old analogy of the ship and the lighthouse, the lighthouse does not move for the ship but serves as a beacon of protection. A person will either be guided by the Light or destroyed on the unseen rocks of life.

23. Psalm 16:2 -- "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." When the Lord becomes all you want out of life, you will get what you want and live a fulfilled life.

24. Psalm 16:3 -- "As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." Christians love to be around other devoted Christians and seek them out.

25. Psalm 16:11 -- "In your presence there is fullness of joy." Joy in life depends on your closeness to God. Distance from God is not a matter of time/space but rather agreement, surrender, and obedience. Draw near to God by denying yourself, taking up your cross, and walking with Jesus Christ. This is where joy and eternal life are found. It is not enough to know 'about' Jesus; joy is knowing Jesus personally.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 Feb: Evaluate your MEPS integrity today and consider how you are using it to lead others to Jesus. Renew your commitment to love God holistically and to strengthen what is weak. (see today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 5, Friday, 9 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+29%2C+30%3B+pro+9%3B+acts+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 9 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 29:14 -- Sin offering makes the animal offered unclean so that it must be burned away from the holy presence.

2. Exodus 29:18 -- An offering totally burned up is a gift to God not shared by the worshipper.

3. Exodus 29:44-46 -- A people must be holy and thus committed to God and His work if God is to be present among them.

4. Exodus 30:20 -- God is serious about His ministers following His instructions.

5. Exodus 30:36 -- "It shall be most holy for you." Anything used where God is present must meet His standards of purity.

6. Exodus 30:37-38 -- God does not allow things used in His worship to be used in the normal life of this world.

7. Proverbs 9:1, 2 -- Wisdom is organized

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8. Proverbs 9:10 -- "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." Wisdom that is not founded on God, the Creator of Wisdom, is no wisdom at all.

9. Proverbs 9:13 -- Foolish people are loud, proud, lustful, and undisciplined.

10. Acts 2:6 -- "And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered...." Once again, the power of the Holy Spirit in your life is not intended just for you but that you might reach others. You have been empowered to go into the world and make disciples.

11. Acts 2:17 – The Spirit works in all genders and all age groups.

12. Acts 2:21 -- "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Gospel is for everyone. Calling upon the name of the Lord is more than just uttering words; it is turning to God in your heart.

13. Acts 2:28 -- "You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." Jesus said, "I am the way," or the "Path of Life." Knowing Jesus is eternal life (see John 17).

14. Acts 2:38 – God’s basic invitation is repentance. This leads to forgiveness and receiving the Spirit.

15. Acts 2:37-40 -- "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'" God’s call results in a “cut” heart, repentance, and a new life empowered by the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and for everyone around you. Spread the word.

16. Acts 2:40 -- “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’” God’s call results in a “cut” heart, repentance, and a new life empowered by the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you. “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

17. Acts 2:42-47 -- "And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.... And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Does this sound like your church?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 Feb 18: Today, devote yourself to “teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.”

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 4, Thursday, 8 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+27%2C+28%3B+pro+8%3B+acts+1>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 8 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 27 -- Notice how detailed God's instructions were, requiring very strict obedience. Some things God commands are very specific, and there is no room for interpretation. What would have happened if Noah didn't strictly obey God's instructions for building the ark? What happens when you don't strictly obey God's specific commands?
2. Exodus 28:2 -- "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty." Aaron's glory and honor came from his service to God. The garments were not intended to point to Aaron but rather to his position under God. God does not share glory and honor with people. All glory and honor go to Him. Never let anyone point to you rather than Jesus.
3. Exodus 28:3 -- "You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill." Through the Spirit, God gives skills to serve Him. Our skills were not intended to serve self.
4. Exodus 28:35 -- "And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the Holy Place before the Lord, and when he comes out, so that he does not die." Aaron could not be seen by the people while he performed his priestly role inside the Holy Place, but he could be heard. This likely served as a constant reminder to both Aaron and the people of the importance of his every move before God and on the behalf of the people. It likely also served as a reassurance to the people that Aaron was actively faithful before the Lord as their intermediary. Perhaps we should wear bells to remind us that we are always "before the face of God" (Coram Deo), that we should be "always faithful before the face of God" (Semper Fidelis Coram Deo) in our every deed, that our every action should be intentionally directed towards reconciliation -- bring others closer to Jesus, and that others should have constant evidence of our ministry to them before the Lord, confidence that we are always praying for them.
5. Proverbs 8:13 -- "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." If you love God, you must hate evil, pride, arrogance, and perverted speech. Don't hate the sinner; hate what is controlling them and what they represent.
6. Proverbs 8:14 -- "I have strength." Sinners are just weak.
7. Proverbs 8:17 -- "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." You will get what you are really looking for. What are you looking for in life?
8. Proverbs 8:34 -- "Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors." Spiritual growth requires daily, wholehearted diligence and includes watching and waiting.
9. Proverbs 8:35 -- "For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord." Finding Jesus and knowing Jesus is eternal life. (see John 17)
10. Acts 1:2 -- "...until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen." Christians received commands from Jesus daily through the Holy Spirit. Can you hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to you today?
11. Acts 1:4 -- "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father...." One of the hardest things to do is wait on the Lord and on His promises. Abram couldn't wait for God to provide the son He promised, and we are still feeling the pain

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of Abraham's sin. Jacob couldn't wait for the inheritance promised by God, and we are still feeling the pain of his sin today. Be very careful not to get ahead of God. Wait on Him to provide in His timing. Until then, focus on being faithful with what God has provided.

12. Acts 1:7 -- "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.'" How many times on a long car ride will the little kids say, "Are we there yet? When will we be there?" When they get more mature, they learn to wait patiently and make the most of the time. We spend too much time worrying about when God is going to do what He is going to do. The Bible is clear, the past is gone, and there is no sense mourning what could have been; the future is not in our control, and though we can plan to be prepared, we should not worry about it. The only thing we can influence is today. Today is where we must be faithful and make the most of every opportunity. Jesus said not to worry about tomorrow but make the most of today. Constantly speculating about the future can be a form of escapism, distracting you from the thing right in front of you. Faith is trusting God enough to obey Him today. Hope is trusting Him with the future. Walk in faith and hope. Obey today, and trust God with the future.

13. Acts 1:8 -- "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...." Do you want more Holy Spirit? Then be a witness and understand that power is not about you or for you -- it is about God, empowering you to make disciples.

14. Acts 1:11 -- "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." What are you staring at? Start serving God. Jesus will return on God's timing. Be ready today, and be faithful with today.

15. Acts 1:16 -- "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David." The Bible is God's word provided through Spirit-filled men.

16. Acts 1:24, 25 -- "And they prayed and said, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.'" Only God knows the true heart of a person. Knowing a person's heart is beyond our capability, but certainly not beyond God's capability. God can reveal another person's heart to us. How often do we ask God to do only what God can do when we are dealing with others? And what do we do when God doesn't reveal? For example, suppose we are choosing between two options. Which to choose? First, you must obey the moral will of God as it is revealed in Scripture. If Scripture prohibits one option, the decision is easy. Similarly, if one of the options in your choice causes you to neglect something God specifically commands you to do, you are required to make the choice that will allow you to fulfill your biblical obligation. We must also immediately go to the Lord in prayer. If there is no clear answer and there is time to wait, then wait -- don't rush an important decision. What if still no answer? Then, using God's word (revelation we already have), we should dig deeper to determine which option best conforms to God's commands and direction. If the options are equally Biblically supportable, we should then go with our wisdom or preference, seeking guidance from other wise counsellors. (Proverbs 15:22) If still undecided, then use any method, flip a coin -- God will honor your efforts to conform to His will and to choose with discretion. And if you still choose poorly, God will instruct you and guide you through the error.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Feb: Resolve not to worry about the past or the future but rather to simply be faithful with every decision and action today, making the most of every opportunity to draw others closer to Jesus in some way.

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 3, Wednesday, 7 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+25%2C+26%3B+pro+7%3B+matthew+28>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 7 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 25:9 – “Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.” Worshipping God starts with obedience to His every command. This is non-negotiable. The Bible provides many general principles for how to live, but it also provides very specific commands. Often, people will attempt to interpret the specific commands as general principles in order to give themselves some wiggle room for disobedience. On the contrary, sometimes people take verses intended to present general principles and make them specific commands. For example, when Jesus says to forgive your offending brother seventy-seven times in Matthew 18:22, He doesn't mean it literally, He means forgive your offending brother without limit. But when the Bible says a man should have only one wife, the Bible means one wife, it is not a general principle.
2. Exodus 25:30 – Bread does not imply that God needs food but serves as a reminder that God provides our every need, and our greatest need is His presence and His word. The Bread of Presence is a picture of Jesus, the Bread of Life -- “Whoever comes after me will never go hungry.” (John 6:35)
3. Exodus 25:31-37 – Lampstands indicate God is the source of light for His people and can deliver them from all darkness. God was very specific on how He wanted the Menorah to look. The Lampstand is shaped like an almond tree which was always the first tree to blossom and bear fruit in the spring (first fruits -- 1 Cor 15:20-23) and which was a symbol of the royal priesthood (God caused Aaron's rod to grow almonds overnight) -- the Bible says we are the priesthood. The Lampstand was always lit, 24/7-365. Jesus said, “I am the Vine, and you are the branches.” Jesus is the Light of the World and is always present, and in Him, we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). In Revelation 1:20, Jesus says the seven lampstands are the seven churches. The Lampstand points to Christ.
4. Exodus 25:38-26:16 – God’s provision is provided first that we might have the resources to worship and serve Him.
5. Proverbs 7:6, 7 – “I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense.” You can see the truth of God’s word at work in the lives of others and learn. Wisdom understands without need of personal experience.
6. Matthew 28:1-10 – God revealed Himself first to those who ministered faithfully to Him though their seemed to be no earthly benefit to their fidelity.
7. Matthew 28:8 – “So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.” When was the last time you were overcome with fearful joy having had a miraculous encounter with Jesus?
8. Matthew 28:10 – Resurrection news must be shared.

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9. Matthew 28:13 -- "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'" Unbelievers and false prophets are comfortable lying about Jesus in order to pursue their own selfish ambitions.

10. Matthew 28:17 -- "And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted." Many Christians worship in doubt, despite Jesus' miraculous activities.

11. Matthew 28:18 -- Christ in you gives you all power.

12. Matthew 28:18-20 -- "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" This is your mission. Your authority is directly from Jesus as is your power to execute the mission. Your mission is to "make disciples" not just believers. Disciples obey ALL of Jesus' commands. You are to teach others how to do that, and disciple-makers must lead by example. The emphasis of the Great Commission is not just on evangelism (which most mega-churches focus on) but primarily on discipleship (which most churches do very poorly). Evangelism is "the spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness." The word 'evangelism' comes from the Greek word "euaggelion" which means "to announce good news". But with the Great Commission, many churches are guilty of what some have called "The Great Omission", failing to teach obedience. Discipleship is a 'train the trainer' concept requiring instruction that is continuous, consistent, coherent, and life-long, ideally starting from childhood and continuing until 'separation from service' upon earth. Discipleship is not just about education; it is also about training -- learning not just the 'who, what, and why', but also the 'how'. Training involves demonstration, rehearsal, coaching and critiquing through basic competencies. Of course, Jesus modeled discipleship with the Apostles. He patterned the basic training model -- "Educate, demonstrate, replicate, evaluate, remediate." A Great Commission Church does not focus on its seating capacity but rather on its sending capacity. Powerful churches are disciple factories, creating people who are not only ready to 'go' but who are also ready to 'teach' as 'priests' and as 'ambassadors for Christ' -- disciples who are prepared to make disciples. Have you been properly disciplined by your church? How many disciples are you personally training right now? Are you walking with your students and following the model of "educate, demonstrate, replicate, evaluate, remediate?" Does your Bible study or small group actively practice 'doing' the word rather than just 'hearing' the word? What role are you playing in the Great Commission?

13. Matthew 28:20 -- God promises His presence and power to those who commit their life's service to His work.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 7 Feb: Resolve today to be a disciple-maker.
(Matthew 28:18-20)

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 2, Tuesday, 6 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+23%2C+24%3B+pro+6%3B+matthew+27>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 6 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 23:4-9 -- "You shall not pervert the justice...." God expects His people to impart justice impartially, being extra careful to protect the rights of the weak.

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2. Exodus 23:10-12 -- “For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest.” God has purposes for His Sabbath that we cannot understand. Resting or reducing productivity temporarily is counterintuitive, going against common sense. However, a careful scientific study of Sabbath rest will reveal that it produces far more productivity over time. More important than the practical value of obeying the Sabbath is the value of simply obeying God out of faith (trusting God now), hope (trusting God with the future), and love (making God your reason for everything). God’s word challenges common sense and takes faith to obey. Faith in God will never disappoint in the end.

3. Exodus 23:24 – “...you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces.” God does not respect other religions. We can respect another person’s right to believe what they want, but we cannot respect false religion.

4. Exodus 23:29 – “I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you.” God uses your enemies and your challenges for His purposes that are also for your greater good.

5. Exodus 23:32 – “You shall make no covenant with them and their gods.” God does not compromise with other religions, nor does He expect His people to partner with people of other faiths.

6. Exodus 24:13 – “So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God.” Moses mentored his future replacement.

7. Exodus 24:16 – “And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.” God meets His servants on the Sabbath.

8. Proverbs 6:7, 8 – “Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.” Successful people have the self-discipline and self-control to do what needs to be done today to prepare for tomorrow. Successful people are willing to do what unsuccessful people aren’t willing to do – give up instant gratification for long-term reward. Successful people can lead themselves into victory.

9. Proverbs 6:7, 8 – “Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer....” God wants you to be self-regulated and self-motivated.

10. Proverbs 6:12 – “A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech....” A deceitful person is worthless in God’s economy.

11. Proverbs 6:16-19 – “...the Lord hates.... a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” The Lord hates liars and people who start quarrels.

12. Proverbs 6:23 – “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.” The Holy Spirit uses God’s word to convict you of sin and keep you on track. If God’s words are not enough, He will use discipline. Better to do what you are told than to receive a God smack.

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13. Proverbs 6:25 – “Do not desire....” Following Jesus requires fighting your sinful desires and struggling to obey when it is hard for you. It requires determined effort and perseverance.

14. Proverbs 6:27, 28 – “Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?” Moral failure does not happen overnight, and people don’t fall into it, they slip and slide into it. Little compromises lead to complete surrender. Be an extremist when it comes to your holiness and your purity.

15. Matthew 27:5 – “He went and hanged himself.” Suicide involves having no sense of self-worth and no hope.

16. Matthew 27:18 – Envy drove people to crucify the Son of God. How do you think God feels about envy?

17. Matthew 27 – Jesus obeyed the Father to the end.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 6 Feb: “Go to the ant” today – Consider your 20-year goals today; where will you be in 20 years? What will be the state of your relationships, your physical health, your financial health, your spiritual maturity, your contribution to society, etc? How well are you working today to ‘gather for that harvest’? Are you making the most of every opportunity? “Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,” commit yourself to the disciplines required to best serve the Lord with the totality of your life.

DBRP- WEEK 6, Day 1, Monday, 5 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+5%3B+matthew+26>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 5 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 21:1-11 – “When you buy a Hebrew slave.” Bible verses related to slavery generate much emotion in our generation for good reason. However, the world view and concept of servitude and slavery were much different in ancient times. In that day and age, God’s word was revolutionary and controversial, not because of its cruelty but rather because of its uncommon concern for the rights of all people. Within ancient Israel, as in the entire ancient world, there were people who worked for others on the principle of servitude (servants), and there were slaves (usually foreign captives from battle). Servants are often viewed as slaves, but this wasn't the brutal form of slavery we think of today. "Moses did not institute slavery in any shape; the laws concerning it were made on purpose to repress it, to confine it within very narrow bounds, and ultimately to put an end to it." (Spurgeon) God brought the Israelites out of slavery, and it is fitting that His first laws dealt with respecting the rights and dignity of servants. There were four basic ways a Hebrew might become a slave to another Hebrew. In extreme poverty, they might sell their liberty (Leviticus 25:39); a father might sell a daughter as a servant into a home with the intention that she would eventually marry into that family (Exodus 21:7); in the case of bankruptcy, a man might become servant to his creditors (2 Kings 4:1); and if a thief had nothing with which to pay proper restitution (Exodus 22:3-4). Slavery, on the other hand, was often a choice given to foreign enemies as a substitute for death in a time where “total war” was the norm (when everyone was killed to totally eliminate enemies and the possibility of continued conflict with that enemy). The ideas of man-stealing into life-long servitude - the concepts many have of slavery - simply do not apply to the

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practice of slavery in the Old Testament. Normally, servitude was chosen or mutually arranged contractually, of limited duration, and highly regulated. In all of the four above mentioned cases, the servitude was never obligated to be life-long. The Hebrew servant worked for six years and then was set free. A careful consideration of the laws concerning slavery show that they abolished slavery among God's people, and substituted for it, contractual labor for a period of years. "Henceforward the condition of slaves among the Hebrew people would be in marked distinction to slavery as existing among other peoples. It was the beginning of a great moral movement." If, after the six years of servitude, a servant wished to make a life-long commitment to his master - in light of the master's goodness and his blessings for the servant - he could. However, this commitment was not motivated by debt or obligation, only by love for the master, and the good things that the master had provided for the servant. Still, it might be hard for us, being so far removed from society at that time, to imagine why God simply did not eliminate any form of servitude (slavery) altogether. Our complaints might be comparable to the trouble the Pharisees had in understanding how to navigate God's laws on divorce considering that the Bible states that God opposes divorce (Malachi 2:16). Jesus explained it this way: "He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.' And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate.'" (Mark 10:3-9) God's laws account for the hardness of the heart of man.

2. Exodus 21:16 – Again, the Bible does not allow forced slavery outside of war.

3. Exodus 21:19 – God values a person's time.

4. Exodus 21:22-25 – In the Bible, killing an unborn baby is a crime punishable by death, just like any other murder. God's view of abortion should be more than clear.

5. Exodus 21:16-36 – In Biblical justice, restitution is made to the victim, not to the government.

Why is that not the case today?

6. Exodus 22:2, 3 – The Bible makes a distinction between self-defense and revenge.

7. Exodus 22:3 – Everyone was held accountable to the law, regardless of their economic status.

8. Exodus 22:6 – God's laws hold people accountable for carelessness.

9. Proverbs 5:2 – "...that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge." Have God's words on your lips, ready for the moments of decision where you need God's word to keep from being deceived by your natural passions and desires and from doing what you want to do rather than what God commands you to do. If there is an area in your life where you know you are easily tempted, memorize Bible verses on that topic and recite them to yourself regularly, particularly in moments of weakness.

10. Proverbs 5:6 – Evil people often don't know or believe they are evil.

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11. Proverbs 5:8 – “Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.” If you know that certain things or certain situations entice you to sin, then the best thing you can do is stay far, far away from them. Don’t be complacent with or toy with temptations.

12. Proverbs 5:11 – “.... and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed.” People choose between two pains: the constructive pain of discipline today, or the destructive pain of regret tomorrow. You will reap what you sow.

13. Proverbs 5:12 – You will choose between two pains in life: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret.

14. Proverbs 5:23 -- Most pain in life is self-induced.

15. Matthew 26:8, 9 – “And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.’” Good works can’t replace genuine worship. More than charity, people need Jesus Christ. Acts of charity can be used a substitute for a lack of genuine love, designed to ease the conscience or promote self-righteousness. Acts of charity can also direct hope towards mankind rather than hope in Christ and can provide short-term comfort without addressing the deeper spiritual issues at hand. Christians should be most charitable, but as ambassadors for Christ on a mission of reconciliation.

16. Matthew 26:20-34 – Judas betrayed, and Peter denied. Betrayal involves planning and waiting, but denial can be instant, revealing the hidden truth of the heart. Verse 22 points out that anyone could betray Jesus, and we know that all of the disciples except John would abandon Jesus in the time of Jesus’ greatest need. We are all totally dependent on the grace of Christ with no reason to boast.

17. Matthew 26:53, 54 -- “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” Peter responded to his circumstances ‘in the flesh’, reacting emotionally, taking matters into his own hands based on his own understanding, relying on his own strength, all contrary to God’s will. Peter’s response revealed a typical security bias, overvaluing physical safety (of self or loved ones) at the expense of the mission. Conversely, Jesus chose to deny self and His personal security for sake of faithfulness to the mission given him by the Father. Following God requires self-denial, dying while still alive – “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:25) The Spirit empowers us to deny self. Self-denial frees us to follow the Spirit. As with the other fruits of the spirit, self-control is something we must cultivate, and often God will use the heat of the moment to reveal to us what is really in our hearts. How do you respond when you are attacked un-expectedly? Do you start cutting off ears or use the opportunity to glorify God in love? Love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 5 Feb: Do not defend yourself today, but rather make the most of every opportunity to not only demonstrate the love of Christ but also to proclaim Gospel of Jesus. Return good for evil, and tell them about Jesus too. Always point to Him. Deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus in example – when He was crucified, He prayed for the forgiveness of those who were persecuting Him. (Matthew 26)

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 7, Sunday, 4 Feb 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+4%3B+psalm+14%2C+15>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 4 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 19:5 – “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.” God’s blessings to the Israelites were conditional. God demands obedience.
2. Exodus 19:6 – “you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” God has always expected His people to be His priests – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9) Do you see yourself as a priest? Do others recognize you as a priest?
3. Exodus 19:11 – “Be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come....” Do you see the parallel with Jesus’ resurrection?
4. Exodus 19:22 – “Let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves.” Approach the Lord with holiness and purity.
5. Exodus 20:1-17 – The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. The remainder of the commandments deal with our relationships with others. However, they should not be considered as independent from one another. If we fail in any of the last six, we have already broken the first commandment and the Great Commandment.
6. Exodus 20:3 – “You shall have no other gods before me.” God will not accept you prioritizing something ahead of Him. Anything that influence your decisions more than God is your god at the moment, and idol. The first priority is to put God truly first in your heart, in all that you think, all that you say, and all that you do.
7. Exodus 20:4 – “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.” God is spiritual, unseen, and quintessential [beyond the five (quint) senses of hearing, seeing, tasting, feeling, and smelling. We are to worship Him as He is, not attempting to limit His essence by our imaginations. Whether we intend to worship it or not, we should never make an image of God, regardless of the justification we contrive. We are not only incapable of portraying God, we are forbidden from doing so. This commandment actually addresses the sinful nature of our hearts that is constantly trying to create the God of our imagination, one that looks like us and has our attributes. God created man, and man has been trying to create God ever since. It may seem innocent enough to create a statue or image of God, but if you meditate upon this deeply, you will realize just how inappropriate this is. God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.
8. Exodus 20:7 -- “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” Careless use of God’s name or careless words about Him show a complete disrespect for Him. God will not be disrespected. This commandment is closely related to the first commandment and the Great Commandment of total love for God. What we say reveals what is in our hearts. Loose words about God reveal a lack of Fear and love for Him.
9. Exodus 20:20 -- “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” Notice that the Bible says in this one verse, “Do not fear,” and then says we should “fear” Him. The first “fear” involves dread, while the second fear involves reverence, overwhelming respect and appreciation. Sin comes from a lack of reverence for God. The Bible says,

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“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” (1 John 4:18) When you love God, you have no desire to sin and, therefore, have no fear of punishment. When you are guided by love, you don’t need laws to constrain you. You will be able to say, “The love of Christ controls us.” (2 Corinthians 5:14)

10. Psalm 14:1 – “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Nothing has changed.

11. Psalm 14:1 – “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.” The obvious point of this verse is that atheism is utterly foolish. The less obvious point is that all sin (foolishness) is, essentially, a moment of saying, ‘There is no God.’ In sin, God has been removed from the decision-making cycle or rendered a non-factor. When the atheist rejects God, he essentially makes himself the god of his life -- the one to be served, the decider of right and wrong, the only hope for salvation, etc. That person, though (s)he may appear fun-loving or respectable, is corrupt at the core and guaranteed to do abominable deeds. On the other hand, the believer who sins has become his own god (idol) for the moment. The first letter in “idol” is “I”. When we make ourselves the priority against the First Commandment, we become the embodiment of foolishness, we become corrupt, and we are guaranteed to do abominable things. So, to restate the point -- This verse does not apply just (or even primarily) to those self-proclaimed, at times outspoken, atheists out there; but also, more importantly to the ‘practical atheist’, that person who proudly proclaims faith, but who thinks, speaks, and acts as if there is really no God. It is the person who proclaims faith without a true heart of faith that is perhaps most troubling because they, by their actions, bear false witness of the Lord before others; they proclaim a weak god of poor character. These are they who Jesus says, “because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:16) The practical atheist may believe ‘in God’ (as the demons do) but doesn’t believe God to love, trust, and obey Him. Counter to Hebrews 11:6, the practical atheist doesn’t believe God means what He says. The Practical atheist doesn’t take seriously the call to be a critical part of “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:6). The practical atheist does not take Exodus 20 very seriously. The practical atheist recklessly takes matters into his own hands without waiting on God. (Exodus 14:14) Psalm 15 points out today that the true believer is revealed by how they treat others -- truthfully, fairly, compassionately, graciously, generously, etc; the true believer never takes advantage of those less fortunate (such as by lending money with interest – profiting from God’s blessings), and the true believer obeys God regardless the personal cost. (Psalm 15:4) Whenever we sin, we are essentially, at least for a brief moment, saying that God is not Lord. What a terrible thing. We must never take sin lightly as it is an affront to God. It is a constant daily endeavor to ensure that your Savior remains the Lord and Savior of your heart.

12. Psalm 14:4 – “Evildoers... eat up... people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord?” Sin is self-centeredness and selfishness that violates the First Commandment and the Great Commandment. Self-centered, selfish people always hurt themselves and others. We were created to be interdependent. Outside of love, you are like a fish out of water, struggling violently and hopelessly for life, only expediting death the more you struggle. Jesus is the Living Water required for life.

13. Psalm 14:5 – “There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous.” Again, we have a tendency to think in the physical realm and apply physical rules to the spiritual God. We tend to think of God being “with” us in terms of time and space – He is physically here and then He is physically not here. However, God is spirit and is not bound by the physical attributes of time and space.

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Being with God or walking with God is a spiritual condition that is determined by the heart condition and by obedience. God is omnipresent and unchanging. We choose to separate from God and lose awareness of His omnipresence when we choose to separate from Him in sin. He is still present, but we become blind to His presence. We are like an out of tune radio that cannot receive the unseen radio waves that are being transmitted continually. The radio waves don't change; it is the radio that must be adjusted.

14. Psalm 15: 1, 4 – “O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” Presence with God is an issue of the heart and requires obedience that is motivated by love. God does not expect you to overlook the sins of the unrepentant.

15. Psalm 15:1, 5 – “Who shall dwell on your holy hill.... who does not put out his money at interest.” God does not intend for His people to lend money with interest. Money was originally intended to replace objects in trade. For example, rather than transferring a sheep, a person could transfer the worth of a sheep without the burden of logistics. However, interest adds no tangible (object) value but only transfers wealth from one person to another. Interest takes advantage of another person's need. In most cases, one person needs or wants something they can't afford, so they essentially give someone else who can afford it more than it is really worth. Interest creates a debt that makes a richer person richer and a poorer person poorer. The original word for debt is a word derived from another word meaning “snakebite: -- it takes life from you slowly. The only time Jesus displayed violence directed at others was when He attacked the moneychangers in the temple, calling them thieves. There are many ways to gain wealth, and many ways merely transfer wealth rather than adding real value (production). God wants His people to add value to the lives of others.

16. Psalm 15:5 – “He who does these things shall never be moved.” One last time – this is a spiritual statement meaning never moved from the presence of God. You can be “with” God anywhere and under any circumstances, all depending on your faith, trust, love, and obedience.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 Feb 18: Memorize the Ten Commandments. If you already know them from memory, teach someone else.

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 6, Saturday, 3 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+3%3B+psalm+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 3 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 17:2 – You test God when you do not trust Him to provide for your needs.

2. Exodus 17:2 – “Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ And Moses said to them, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?’” It is easy to act nice or good when things are going well. But how someone acts under pressure reveals the truth of their character and the truth of their relationship with God. Under pressure (stress, fear, hunger, sickness, etc), people are more inclined to become self-centered and to lash out at others if they lack spiritual strength. Relationships start to become more “dog eat dog” – “It's you and me until it's you or me,” syndrome. Emotions overcome reason. In this situation, one might say, “He acted out of character;”

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however, in truth, the person's true character was revealed. James, chapter 4 explains Exodus 17:2, and relational conflict in general, perfectly: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." (James 4:1-3) Quarrels are the product of selfishness and a godless perspective. Even when offended, the Christ-centered Christian understands that God is in complete control and will provide, that the offender is trapped in sin on "knows not what [he does]", and that it is love that prevails. The mature Christian understands that stress and conflict are tests of faith, revealing the truth of a person's faith. How do you act under stress and when offended? When tested, pray that you will remain Spirit-led and that God will use that opportunity to reveal to you the truth of your heart. Also, remember this truth when dealing with others. What are the spiritual conditions and emotions behind their offensive behavior? Remember that they are trapped in sin. They are not your enemy; they are your goal for reconciliation. The enemy is the Tempter, Satan. In your relationships, don't represent yourself, represent Jesus.

3. Exodus 17:3 – "But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'" Ultimately, grumblers, complainers, and whiners lack spiritual maturity. They tend to blame their circumstances and other people for their childish behavior, and they tend to avoid personal responsibility with victimization language – "Everything is against me so I can't do the right thing." They become catastrophists, making things worse than they really are, and as a result, they sink deeper into ineffectiveness and sin. Your job is to lead them out of their dark place to the light of Jesus. Like a drowning person, they will try to drag you down with them, but remember, you cannot save them if you are struggling in the sea of emotions too.

4. Exodus 17:6 – "And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel." God wants your obedient life to be a witness to others as He honors your obedience and works mightily through you to reveal Himself.

5. Exodus 17:7 -- "Is the LORD among us or not?" Because of their lack of faith, the exiles quickly lost hope and rapidly spiraled into abandoned sin. Among the great Christian virtues of "faith, hope, and love," this mob lacked all of them because, ultimately, they lacked the foundation of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is believing God, not just believing 'in' God but believing God; not only acknowledging that He exists (as even demons do) but trusting Him enough to obey Him, regardless. As God explains in Exodus, he tested the people to see if they would obey. The Christian life is about believing God. It is about living by every word that proceeds from His mouth (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). Faith walks with God one day at a time. Hope is faith looking forward, completely trusting God with the future because of what we know of Him and His love today. As the Bible says, "Now faith is the assurance [or substance] of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) Faith is the assurance or substance of our hope, giving us hope unlike the world (which is more like a fantastical wish or dream) but rather a hope that is total, unquestioned confidence because we know without a doubt the God is God and He keeps His promises of love for us, a hope of substance. Our hope is a "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" keeping us from being tossed about aimlessly and beaten against the rocks like a ship in a storm without an anchor. (Hebrews 6:19) Our anchor keeps us from drifting away slowly in the tide of sin. The exiles in today's readings did not have hope founded on faith and their ship was in peril. Without faith and hope, they lacked love. So, in their grief, they did what the faithless do,

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they lashed out against each other – hurting people hurt people. As Christians, our suffering gives us an opportunity to display God’s love which is founded on faith, which has assured hope, which

is anchored in Christ. Under persecution, today’s Psalmist describes his faith-based hope: “But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.” (Psalm 13:5, 6) I pray that, in our trials, our faith, hope, and love will cause us to “rejoice” and “sing”, thereby glorifying God to others.

6. Exodus 17:10 – “So Joshua did as Moses told him.” God expects our faith to give us the confidence to not only obey Him but also to submit to earthly authorities. Christians should model obedience.

Question: Do you drive the speed limit on the highways when no one is around or a bit faster because “It’s no big deal.”?

7. Exodus 17:12 – “But Moses’ hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.” God’s primary command is love, and with that command as central, He expects us to work together in love to accomplish His purposes. He will intentionally task us in ways that require interdependence. We cannot do what God wants us to do in isolation. How are you supporting the Christians around you? How have you asked for their support to do God’s will? Remember, “Two by two He sent them.”

8. Exodus 17:14, 15 – “Write this as a memorial in a book.... And Moses built an altar....” How are you memorializing what God has done in your life so that your friends and family will never forget?

9. Exodus 18:7-12 -- When godly people get together, they naturally talk about what God has done and is doing because it is what they are most excited about. Godly people love to be with other godly people who they can truly share life with, joyful relationships full of praise and worship for God.

10. Exodus 18:20 – “You shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.” What did God expect the national leader to do?

11. Exodus 18:21 – “Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.” The organizational concept of “span of control” is taught in the Bible which in the Marine Corps would look like forces, brigades, divisions, regiments, battalions, companies, platoons, squads, and fire teams. The fundamental concept is that leaders should focus their energies on developing (training, teaching, coaching, mentoring, and supporting) three to twelve other leaders, encouraging them to do the same. This is the “Master Plan for Evangelism”. Note the prerequisites to be a squad leader in God’s Marine Corps. Are you a squad leader? What is the condition of your troops? Are you building leaders in Jesus who, in turn, can make squad leaders? Write down the names of your squad and evaluate how you are doing with them. Write down the names of their respective squads. How are they doing with them?

12. Proverbs 3:2 -- "...peace they will add to you." Knowing and obeying God's word out of love for Jesus brings peace in your life.

13. Proverbs 3:3 -- "Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart." Once again, love and faithfulness go together. Obedience

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comes from the heart, not from just the head. You will not endure and persevere if you don't really want to from your heart.

14. Proverbs 3:5-7 -- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil." Memorize these verses if you haven't already -- they are critical to your walk in life. Your understanding and 'wisdom' will always mislead you apart from the continual counselling of the Holy Spirit through God's word. You do not possess the capacity to know and understand enough to make good decision -- you were not created to have that ability; you were created to be a receptor of the Holy Spirit and to translate God's revelation into practical action in the physical world. You were made to be a vessel. Yes, God wants you to use your volition, but in total love for Him. God makes it clear: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8, 9) How far are the heavens from the earth? The distance cannot be measured. How important than is it to stay connected to God day by day?

15. Psalm 13 – Sometimes when God is silent during trials, you may feel as if God has forgotten you; even John the Baptist needed reassurance that Jesus was the Christ, the Lord, the Savior. Someone once said, during the exam, the teacher is silent. Faith is tested during times such as these. Faith is trusting God now and acting on that trust. Hope is trusting God with your future. Love is an affection for God that gladly surrenders all to God regardless of outcomes – faith, hope, love – these three remain. We are weak, but He is strong: "But I have trusted in your steadfast love." (v5)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Feb 18: Consider this – What rank and position do you hold in 'God's Marine Corps'? Who are you leading, and who is leading you? Are you adequately organizing, training, equipping, and supporting those under your charge? What has your unit accomplished for the mission of the Great Commission lately? Privates are responsible for themselves. Lance corporals are responsible for fire teams (four people, including themselves); Corporals and Sergeants are responsible for squads (three fireteams); lieutenants run platoons (around 48 people); captains run companies (around 200 people); etc. So, what rank are you among God's troops, and how well are you doing in your responsibilities? "Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens." (Exodus 18:21) Pray today that God will help you lead, guided by the Great Commandment, to accomplish the Great Commission.

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 5, Friday, 2 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+2%3B+mat+25>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 2 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 15:1-21 – Church worship music is used to proclaim the glory of God and to remind people of His mighty works. What Christian songs and hymns mean the most to you?
2. Exodus 15:3 – "The Lord is a man of war." Many are on a mission to end all war, considering war to be the worst evil. However, there are evils that are worse than war. Injustice and godlessness can cause far more destruction over time than war. God is a God of justice, and "the Lord is a man of war." Peace only comes through surrender to God's will. When Jesus Christ reigns, war will end. Until then, wars will

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continue, and when there is not war, there will still be other forms of conflict and oppression. Luke 19:42 -- "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."

3. Exodus 15:8-10 -- "...the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.... the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters." Again, this does not describe a "reed sea" where Pharaoh's chariots were simply stuck in mud. This describes an unforgettable miracle seen by millions that brought them to their knees in fearful worship. Also, other nations heard of this event and trembled. (v14-16) Don't let humanists explain away God's miracles. Don't let them call you ignorant because you believe the truth of God's word and because you believe in the power of God which transcends their understanding.

4. Exodus 15:24 -- "And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" If you are going to be a leader, you are going to have to deal with ingratitude, disrespect, bad attitudes, selfishness, incompetence, etc. As one pastor said, "If you can't stand the smell of sheep, don't be a shepherd." People need leadership for a reason. Leadership is lonely and costly. Real leadership rarely 'pays off' in this world. Real leaders sacrifice all without walking around with a 'martyr complex'. Real leaders rarely say "I" or "me", but only point to the Truth.

5. Exodus 15:26 -- "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God...." Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by works. However, many of God's blessings on earth are conditional -- "If". God commands love as the Greatest Command. Jesus said that the evidence of love or product of love is obedience -- If you love me, you will obey my commands. We walk with Jesus and grow closer to Jesus through obedience. If you truly love Him, you will obey Him; the more you obey Him, the more you will learn to love Him. Be diligent in your walk in the word.

6. Exodus 16:3 -- "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." New believers or immature Christians are usually very self-centered in their faith and vulnerable to comfort-based temptations. Most people begin their spiritual journey selfishly much like infants only want to be fed, held, changed, and to sleep. It is natural to start out this way, but not stay that way. Mature Christians must be ready to patiently 'parent' babies in Christ, protecting them from their own self-centeredness, never forgetting that babies don't grow up overnight, and they don't grow up well without wise, consistent parenting (discipleship).

7. Exodus 16:3 -- "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full...." The Jews would have rather eaten meat as slaves than to suffer discomfort in freedom and under the protection of the Lord. The hand-fed caged bird might grow captive to comfort, unwilling to escape and experience the fullness of life in the great outdoors where each meal depends on God's provision. It takes courage and strength to live freely and to trust in the Lord. When you grow dependent on government or other man-made institutions, they become idols that rob you of the fullness of life and prove to be poor gods, providers that take far more than they give and can't love you back. Where have we surrendered freedom and joy for costly, unreliable security and comfort? How have we compromised fidelity to God for reliance on ungodly institutions. The comfortable captive is easy to control, and the best slave is the one that doesn't realize he is a slave. Psalm 84:10 -- "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

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8. Exodus 16:4 -- "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not." God's test for you is obedience in good times and bad, during times of want, and during times of plenty. God knows your heart, but he uses tests of obedience to reveal the truth of your heart to you and to others. You might have observed in life that people are susceptible to sin when they have too much or too little. Proverbs 30:8, 9 -- "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."

9. Exodus 16:8 -- "Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord." When you get mad at others for treating you unfairly (in your eyes), remember that God is still in control and knows exactly what is happening to you. Your grumbling is really against God who did not allow you to get what you wanted. Settle the matter with God, and return only good to the offending individual.

10. Exodus 16:15 -- "'What is it?' For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.'" Again, many secular 'scholars' have sought natural explanations for these supernatural acts of God, but God's word intentionally provides enough detail to demonstrate the miracle. Those who are swayed by worldly theories have not read the Bible first-hand to see the whole story.

11. Exodus 16:28 -- "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?" How you act reveals what you really think about God.

12. Exodus 16:35 -- God provided until the people could provide for themselves. God expects growth. He doesn't treat spiritual babies the same way He treats spiritual adults. God works in miraculous ways, but He won't usually use miracles as a substitute for your obedience or to keep you from the circumstances of your unrepentant sin. We own responsibility, and God owns accountability.

13. Proverbs 2:1-4 -- Six conditions for finding the knowledge of God: receive, cherish, pay close attention, call out, seek, and trust. How are you doing?

14. Proverbs 2:1-12 -- "If you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech." Wisdom (knowledge rightly applied) comes only from God -- we do not have, within our natural capacities, the ability to do what we ought to do, we need a supernatural capacity which comes only from God. To be guided by the Spirit, we must remain in God's word and pray for the special enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Walking in the word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, enables us to see through the deception teachings of the world, the perverted speech, and keeps us from getting distracted or off track. Wisdom is learned for God's word. (Proverbs 2:6, 7)

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15. Proverbs 2:7, 8 -- For whom is God a shield?

16. Proverbs 2:9 -- A person cannot understand justice and equity apart from God's word.

17. Proverbs 2:11, 12 -- "...discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil." When you are obedient to God, you will avoid needless pain and suffering that most other people go through. Most trouble in life is self-induced. God's word will help you avoid much self-induced trouble if you obey it.

18. Proverbs 2:13-17 -- God's word causes you to separate from those who have forsaken the paths of uprightness.

19. Proverbs 2:20 -- God's word will take you down a different path in life than the way the majority are travelling.

20. Matthew 25:1-13 -- Being unprepared for Christ to come is foolish.

21. Matthew 25:12 -- Salvation requires real relationship.

22. Matthew 25:34, 41 -- There are two groups of people, saved and unsaved. God has no doubt to which group you belong.

23. Matthew 25:35-40 -- God expects His people to be THE charitable organization on earth, ministering to the world IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission go hand in hand. You cannot be successful in the one without the other. We have been given the mission of "reconciliation". Too many Christians have pursued charity through secular organizations, failing to bring proper glory to God. These secular charitable organizations largely exist because of the void that was created when churches stopped ministering to the needs around them. Yes. Take care of people around you, but open your mouth too, and proclaim the Gospel.

24. Matthew 25:37-40 -- "Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" Our actions reveal what is truly in our hearts. Though we may make excuses, we do what we really want to do. For example, you may say you want to lose weight, but your favorite foods seem to win every time. Why? Because at the moment of truth, you want the pleasure of food more than the satisfaction of being fit and healthy. Behavior modification coaches would tell you that, in order to lose weight, your "No," must be bigger than your "Yes," when you stare at that cookie. Ultimately the Bible calls this self-control, not being controlled by destructive, sinful passions, urges, and desires. But self-control relies on the power of the Spirit within us, having a heart for God, and the mind of Christ. Our "Yes" to Jesus must be far bigger than anything else, giving us complete power to say, "No" to sin. In our Old Testament readings, God tests His people with specific instructions concerning food to see "whether they will walk in my law or not." (Exodus 16:4) Was their love for God more powerful than their appetites, their most basic desires? Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15) Concerning the commandments, Jesus said, "The most important is, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater

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than these.” (Mark 12:29-30) So, the greatest commandment is to love God totally; to love God is to obey His commandments, and the next greatest commandment is to love others. So, the very best way we demonstrate our love for God (the truth and proof of our love) is to love others, and certainly not just the loveable. As Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Matthew 5:43-46) The Bible makes it clear, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” (1 John 4:20, 21) It is in love towards others that we have relationship with God – “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.... So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:12, 16) Love is how the branch remains connected to the Vine. However, agape love is impossible in the flesh and goes against broken human nature. We must be guided by the Spirit, not by the flesh. Just as God tested the Jews in the desert with the manna, God will test you today with unloving people, guaranteed. The test is not to show God what his in your heart – he knows. The test is to show you what is truly in your heart – you are likely in denial. If you find it hard to love ‘that person’ (you know who I am talking about), then you have a heart problem that God is revealing to you. The Bible says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3) Love for God makes loving others “not burdensome.” If you find it a burden, check your love for God. Today, Jesus makes it very clear that when we love the people who are hard to love, people who can do nothing for us in return, we are loving God. This is our act of worship. Step out today in love.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 Feb 18: “Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord.” (Exodus 16:8) Today, don’t allow others to be the target of your frustrations and anger, regardless of what they do. Remember, that God allowed for His purposes whatever is happening to you. Go to God with any complaints you might have, but treat everyone around you, especially your enemies, with goodness, recognizing that it is their spiritual condition that causes their behavior – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) Walking in the Spirit requires seeing past the apparent physical realities of our circumstances to the spiritual realities of the real battle we are in. The person who offends you is in need of reconciliation to God who is love; reveal God through love, and trust God with your defense and physical condition. Whatever you lose in the surrendering of your personal ‘rights’ in the name of mercy, grace, and love, God can restore seven-fold.

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 4, Thursday, 1 Feb 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+1%3B+mat+24>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 1 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 13:3, 8 – “Remember this day.... You shall tell your son” Knowing human nature, God established rituals to teach future generations what He had done and to ensure that His people never forgot. How do you remind your family each year about what God has done in your life?

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2. Exodus 13:7 -- "Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory." Holiness and purity are all-or-nothing propositions. Just a bit of impurity spreads and ruins the batch.

3. Exodus 13:9 – "...that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth." God expects His people to know and teach His word.

4. Exodus 13:13 – "Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem [with a lamb]." Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was the perfect sacrifice who redeemed us once and for all.

5. Exodus 13:17 – "God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, 'Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.'" If you are following God, He will not give you more than you can handle – "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...." The Israelites equipped themselves for battle (v18), but God knew their limitations better than they did. They had not yet developed the faith for a fight. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Without faith, you are not ready for big victories.

6. Exodus 14:4 – "the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." God's plan for your life is the glorify Himself through your life. His glory takes priority over your comfort and security. However, God is faithful to save. God intentionally placed His people in an impossible situation, a totally vulnerable position that was impossible for Pharaoh to pass up. God left His people exposed and helpless (self-helpless). Why? Because He was about to use His people to reveal (glorify) Himself to a watching world (as well to His people). God glorifies Himself by doing what only God can do so there can be no doubt it was Him. Of course, by definition, the infinitely vast amount of what God does anyway is far outside the limits of what man can do, even far outside the limits of what man can even understand. We experience God whenever we have a glimpse of that continuous activity and appreciate that it is God's power at hand. In the situation of the Israelites pressed up against the sea, God was going to leave no doubt for anyone to question His presence. No surprise, God's people were overcome in fear by their situation and completely misinterpreted their circumstances, believing that God had left them to die. Most telling was that, in their desperation, the Jews longed for slavery again, that they might have the 'protection' of captivity. Doesn't the bird in a cage get fed far more consistently than the free bird outside? Just like the slave and the caged bird, many Christians are happy to sacrifice the fullness of their joy for the comfortable captivity of worldly compromise, syncretism, and dependence on ungodly institutions – "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25). The problem for these slave-minded Jews is the same as that of the compromised Christian, they are totally out of touch with what God is doing and lack the courage to stray away into freedom and true joy – "Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'?" In the midst of what God was doing, Moses, who understood the ways of God, reminds the weak that God is God -- "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." (Exodus 14:13, 14) Translation: "Shut up, stand there, and watch God work." While the weak were worried about what the weak always worry about – themselves; God was about His business doing what He always does – Glorify Himself – "the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." In order for God's people to experience the power of God in their lives, they had to be freed from captivity and placed in a position of complete dependence on God, and they had to walk through

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the impossible (in this case the Red Sea in pursuit) with God. Having gone through the impossible, “Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.” (Exodus 14:31) Jesus said, “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives.” (Luke 4:18) However, freedom requires courage. Christian courage comes from faith, hope, and love – total trust in God, in God’s love, and in God’s word. Without faith it is impossible to please God because God will always take you outside the limited realm of your human understanding and capabilities to function where He operates for His purposes and for His glory. In the faith environment, God becomes ‘real’ to us, and we then can truly witness to what we have seen and experienced first-hand, rather than just recounting stories we have heard from others. Jesus warned his disciples though to carefully consider the cost of discipleship. To follow God means we will have to step into rushing waters, fiery furnaces, and lion’s dens; we will have to face the giants. Unfortunately, most will choose to die in a desert rather than to face the giants in the Promised Land. Most never see the big moments because they prove themselves unworthy with the little things. Ten thousand troops were willing to go to battle with Gideon, but only 300 proved themselves disciplined enough to go at the water hole. The commitment to deny ourselves, take of our crosses, and following Jesus is not just a one-time decision, though that initial commitment is essential. We continuously decide to follow one day at a time, one step at a time, in the face of continuous temptations to do otherwise. Discipleship requires discipline – continuous Spirit enabled self-control to resist our internal desires to return to comfortable captivity, the promised protection of prison. Before we can be chosen to face mighty evil armies, we have to handle ourselves well at the water hole. Will we prove ourselves worthy today?

7. Exodus 14:11 – “What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?” When the going gets tough, the unfaithful reveal themselves. When things seemed hopeless, the hidden disloyal hearts of the Israelites were revealed. Their hearts hadn’t changed, but it was easy for them to act loyal when there appeared to be an escape option. The fully committed eliminate all other options but obedience.

8. Exodus 14:12 – “For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” Few people are willing to die in defense of the freedom to worship God. Many people prefer cowardice captivity than courageous freedom. It takes faith to live free.

9. Exodus 14:13 -- "And Moses said to the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.'" Fear is the opposite of faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Fear causes you to be more influenced by what can be seen than the God who cannot be seen. Faith trusts the unseen all powerful God and His word when what you see and feel seems to contradict it. What do you believe to be true?

10. Exodus 14:14 – “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” What a great verse to remember! Shut up and keep moving in faith. Verse 15 continues -- “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.” Quit worrying and whining and keep moving forward.

11. Exodus 14:21 – God reveals Himself by doing what is impossible for people to do.

12. Exodus 14:22 – “And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.” People, attempting to explain away God’s miracles, will say that the ‘Red Sea’ is a mistranslation of ‘Reed Sea’, which was a place of very shallow water and that what really happened was Pharaoh’s chariots were merely stuck in mud. However, the

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Bible makes it clear that the Sea became walls. And then the walls fell and covered the chariots completely (v28). What the Israelites saw caused them to fear God.

13. Exodus 14:30 – “Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.” What happens when you put your trust in an ungodly leader?

14. Proverbs 1:1-7 – “To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— Let the wise hear and increase in learning.... The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” People often confuse knowledge with wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied, and knowledge cannot be rightly applied without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our society is full of extremely knowledgeable people, but wisdom is harder and harder to find as society moves farther and farther away from God and people do what seems right in their own eyes rather than what God says is right. God is the only source of wisdom, and He is the only source of justice. As society drifts from God, it not only loses wisdom, it loses justice, not to mention mercy, peace, love, and hope.

15. Proverbs 1:20, 21 -- “Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out.” The voice of wisdom competes with the noise of the world. Have you ever noticed that the scoffer has to shout their views, interrupting and shutting down any opposing views without listening? The world’s counter to wisdom is to drown it out, to shut it out, to subvert it, to create a false narrative that becomes a mantra. Since wisdom comes from the source of Truth, it must be countered with a lie repeated loudly and continuously until it is accepted.

16. Matthew 24:3 -- “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” The disciples ask Jesus two questions – one relating to the destruction of the Temple (70 AD) and one related to End Times.

17. Matthew 24:4 – Jesus emphasized a warning against deceptive leaders. “Christ” is not a name but rather a title meaning “The Anointed One” or “God’s Chosen Leader”. Many will claim to be the leader who has come to solve all of our problems, but we should only follow Jesus Christ. This is important for Christians to remember during political debates. The only person on earth who is worth following is the one who is closely following Jesus and pointing to Him rather than to themselves.

18. Matthew 24:11 – “And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.” Many will be led astray by ungodly political leaders and also by ungodly church leaders who deceive in the name of God.

19. Matthew 24:12 – “And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.” Love is dependent upon obedience to God. You cannot really love while in disobedience to God. Disobedience and subsequent lack of love are signs of looming destruction in both a relationship and in a society.

20. Matthew 24:13 – “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” Endurance is required. Not everyone will remain obedient over time. Many who call themselves Christians will compromise to the world. Obedience that is motivated by fear, pride, and even duty will ultimately fail. Only obedience that is truly motivated by love can endure.

21. Matthew 24:14 – “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” The Gospel is proclaimed as a testimony to

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everyone whether they believe or not. Final judgment comes after the Gospel has been proclaimed throughout the world.

22. Matthew 24:30, 36-45 – Jesus repeatedly emphasizes that His return will be sudden, unexpected, and unannounced. This is an important point.

23. Matthew 24:36 – Anyone who says they know the date for the End is a false prophet – never listen to them again.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 Feb 18: "For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." (Exodus 14:12) Consider where you might be a comfortable captive to sin, where you might be compromising your obedience to God because you have grown to depend on worldly comfort, security, or pleasure and have accepted compromise in order to maintain it. Consider where you have refused to obey out of fear of giving something up or losing something of value to you. Resolve to make God truly BOTH your Lord and Savior in those areas too.

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 3, Wednesday, 31 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+11%2C+12%3B+proverbs+31%3B+mat+23>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 31 Feb 18:

1. Exodus 11:1 – God reveals His plan to His servants as they need it.
2. Exodus 11:3 – "And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians." God can control how people treat you and can even make your enemies live at peace with you.
3. Exodus 11:7 – "...the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel." The very apparent and unique blessings observed in the lives of God's people is a testimony of the glory of God to the unbelieving world.
4. Exodus 11:10 – No matter what you say or do, some people will reject the Gospel because belief is not an evidence issue but rather a heart issue.
5. Exodus 12:2 – "This month shall be for you the beginning of months." Two of God's events have been so great that they have reset the calendar. The first event referenced in Exodus 12 began the Jewish religious calendar. What marks the beginning of our current calendar? B.C. stands for Before Christ, and it means the number of years before the time of Jesus Christ. AD does not mean "After Death." It is an abbreviation for "Anno Domini," which is a Latin phrase meaning "in the year of our Lord," referring to the year of Christ's birth. BC means before Christ. So, 2017 AD is intended to signify that it has been 2,017 years since Christ was born. Jesus Christ reset everything. Exodus 12 is a shadow, a representation of what Jesus would do for mankind.
6. Exodus 12:13 – "The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Nothing can save you but the blood of Jesus. Salvation isn't about your sacrifices, it is about the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God on your behalf. When the Father sees the mark of the blood of Jesus on you, He will pass over you in judgment. As was foreshadowed with the Jews in the story of Exodus, there is only one way for salvation, and God defines the way, not people.

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7. Exodus 12:24-27 – Religious celebrations are intended to be opportunities for parents to teach their children about God in a way that can be passed down from generation to generation.
8. Exodus 12:37 – “About six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.” Over a million Jews left Egypt, and God would provide for all of them in a desert for 40 years!
9. Exodus 12:38 – Some people who were not Jews also obeyed God’s commands and went with them.
10. Exodus 12:47 – God exempted no one from remembrance and celebration.
11. Exodus 12:50-51 – God did the miraculous things needed to bring His people safely out of Egypt. All God’s people were required to do was obey. Our role in God’s work is obedience to Him in love for Him.
12. Proverbs 31:1 -- “His mother taught him.” Great leaders come from godly mothers who teach them God’s ways while they are young.
13. Proverbs 31:1, 2 – “What are you doing, son of my vows? Do not give your strength to women, your ways to those who destroy kings.” All relationships are built on trust, trust that comes from the integrity of the individuals. Families are built on relationships of trust based upon the character of the family members. Nations are built on relationships between families who have nurtured trustworthy character. As the family goes, so goes the nation. As Christians, our primary testimony is marriage. Marriage symbolizes before the world the relationship between Christ and His church, and it is through marriage that God raises up godly offspring. Why do you think God hates divorce? Adam and Eve walked naked in the garden, without shame or fear between them, until they realized that they had lost their integrity and could no longer trust each other, that they were vulnerable to each other’s sinfulness (again, sin always hurts others). God intends for us to live out His perfect will on earth, love that does not threaten. Proverbs 31:11, 12 – “The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.”
14. Proverbs 31:11 – “The heart of her husband trusts in her.” All relationships are built on trust based upon the character of the individuals. Love is faithful.
15. Matthew 23:11 -- “The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Servants have the lowest position in the house, are treated with the least respect, do the most work with the least amount of credit, enjoy the fewest luxuries, remain largely behind the scenes and make others look good. Servants don’t live luxurious lives or comfortable lives. Today the term ‘servant leader’ is very popular, but the worldly concept falls far short of Jesus’ meaning which he personally lived. Sun Tzu said that truly great generals never receive recognition because they never fight great, glorious battles. Great generals conquer their enemies without having to fight large, costly battles; they defeat their enemies before they make it to the battlefield; their victories go unobserved, and therefore, these masterful generals receive no honor. Similarly, servant leaders live largely in anonymity, not receiving any credit for the real work they do in quiet places to change lives. No fancy titles, no reserved parking spaces, no seats of honor, no ribbons, medals, or awards; no name recognition, no big offices or big desks; servant leaders just see needs and meet needs in the name of Jesus Christ, never in their own name. If there were rank in God’s Kingdom Army, I don’t think we would know who the generals were, and those who were religious ‘careerists’

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would have no rank at all. The job of servant is the greatest job in the Kingdom but the hardest for which to qualify.

16. Matthew 23:23 -- "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." Here Jesus commends tithing but condemns the Pharisees for their legalism. Tithing is a highly-debated topic in churches today. Many feel that the tithe was part of the Old Covenant and no longer relevant today, observing that, under the New Covenant of love, all belongs to Jesus. Two points for consideration: tithing is a practice that occurred before the Law (Abraham tithed to Melchizedek), and even under the Old Covenant, all belonged to God. Tithing was never meant to place a limit or minimum on giving. God has always commanded far more than just the tithe. Tithing, unlike gifts and alms, was a public act of worship that intentionally give the first and best part of income to God. It was something that could be measured and was used to support the collective works and needs of God's church and people. Tithes were given by the people and administered by the leadership of the church, without bias and in accordance with God's general and special revelation. When God's people tithed, the church could not only resource evangelism but could also care for its people. When God's people fell into need, they did not have to sell themselves into slavery to cover their needs (today's slavery is debt) or turn to ungodly institutions for help. This from an article posted in 2016: "Christians are only giving at 2.5 percent per capita, while during the Great Depression they gave at a 3.3 percent rate.... What would happen if believers were to increase their giving to a minimum of, let's say, 10 percent? There would be an additional \$165 billion for churches to use and distribute. The global impact would be phenomenal. Here's just a few things the Church could do with the kind of money: \$25 billion could relieve global hunger, starvation and deaths from preventable diseases in five years. \$12 billion could eliminate illiteracy in five years. \$15 billion could solve the world's water and sanitation issues, specifically at places in the world where 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day. \$1 billion could fully fund all overseas mission work. \$100 – \$110 billion would still be left over for additional ministry expansion. How much do you pay in taxes? How much do you pay to debt? How much do you spend on cell phone bills and internet/cable bills? Who gets that money you pay and what do they do with it? Do you tithe?

17. Matthew 23:26 – "You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean." Good deeds without true love give the appearance of godliness but in fact do not make a person godly. Two people can give the same charitable gift to people in need, and one gift is acceptable to God and the other not acceptable, all depending upon the motive of the heart that gave the gift. Sure, both provide a benefit to the needy, but God can use anyone to provide to the needy, even the wicked. What is acceptable to God is love.

18. Matthew 23:28 – "So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." Obedience to God inspired only by love for Him is the true act of worship.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 31 Jan 18: Today, seek to be a true servant leader. See note #15 above. (Matthew 23:11)

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 2, Tuesday, 30 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+30%3B+matthew+22>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 30 January 2018:

1. Exodus 9:16 – “But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” Our purpose is to bring glory to God on earth. God can use a person in positive ways or negative ways to reveal Himself. Pharaoh challenged God, and Egypt learned through Pharaoh's rebellion that God is God. Moses obeyed God, and the Israelites learned in miraculous ways that God is God.
2. Exodus 9:20, 21 – “Then whoever feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the Lord left his slaves and his livestock in the field.” It is your choice whether or not you obey God's word or not, but you will reap the consequences either way.
3. Exodus 9:22 – “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” Man's rebellion against God affects “man and beast and every plant of the field”.
4. Exodus 9:26 – “Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.” God's miraculous blessings bestowed upon His people serves as testimony to His Sovereignty.
5. Exodus 9:27, 28; 10:16 -- “This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Plead with the Lord....” Being sorry is not the same as being repentant. Pharaoh was ‘sorry’ he was being punished, but his heart had only grown harder over time. The mark of genuine repentance is a changed heart that responds with humility, surrender, fidelity, obedience, love.
6. Exodus 9:30; 10:1 – “But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.” Pharaoh surrounded himself with likeminded people – they were all equally and fatally wrong. No doubt, Pharaoh's servants encouraged Pharaoh in his rebellion, telling him what he wanted to hear. Christians should surround themselves with other committed Christians who will tell each other the truth according to God's word.
7. Exodus 10:2 – “...you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.” God wants us to tell others what we have personally witnessed God do in our lives. He especially wants to ensure that parents tell their children and their children's children.
8. Exodus 10:3 -- “Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.’” God demands humility and submission from all as the Sovereign Lord. He is patient, but not patient forever. All sin (all sin) is rebellion against God that comes from a shocking pride that prioritized the desires of the individual over the commands of the Almighty. God cannot and will not tolerate sin.
9. Exodus 10:7 -- “Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?” In his stubbornness and refusal to obey God, Pharaoh ruined Egypt. The consequences of sin not only affect the sinner but also those around the sinner. Sin's collateral damage is always much greater than anyone understands at the time the sin is committed. One of the reasons God hates sin is because it is the antithesis of love and hurts the innocent.

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10. Exodus 10:11 – “No! Go, the men among you, and serve the Lord, for that is what you are asking.” God does not negotiate or compromise with people. Partial obedience is disobedience.

11. Exodus 10:17 – “Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the Lord your God only to remove this death from me.” Many pray to God for relief from the wrong heart, desiring only God’s mercy rather than God Himself. God knows the heart and can see through the self-centered, unrepentant prayer.

12. Exodus 10:28 – “Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.’” Ignoring the truth doesn’t change the truth.

13. Proverbs 30:1-3 – “I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely, I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.” Going your own way apart from Jesus will wear you out.

14. Proverbs 30:2, 3 – “Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.” The more you know, the more you know what you don’t know. Socrates said, “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” Proverbs says, the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, understanding our total reliance on Him.

15. Proverbs 30:4 – “Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!” Why would you trust your own judgment or the judgment of other mortals over that of Jesus, the God-man?

16. Proverbs 30:5 – “Every word of God proves true.” God does not call us to trust in blind faith but rather faith in a revealed God. The Bible says that God is revealed in your conscience, in nature, in the miracles of God, and in God’s word. When you obey God’s word in the faith you have, it will be proven true, and your faith will grow.

17. Proverbs 30:6 – “Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” People add to God’s word to water it down, to make it more “reasonable,” to conform it to what they prefer. People also attempt to add to God’s word to make it more “sophisticated” or “relevant” to the times. Also, many cults and false leaders add to God’s word. The simplicity of God’s word is perfectly unchanging. You don’t need more word or a better word, you just need a heart that will obey God’s simple word.

18. Proverbs 30:7-9 – “Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” Agur struggled with untruthfulness and infidelity under certain circumstances. So, he prayed to God for strength of integrity. What sins are struggling with? Are these issues at the center of your prayer life? The things that hinder your relationship with God (sin) should be your greatest prayer concern.

19. Proverbs 30:10 – “Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.” You are not in a position to condemn (judge) others. Your perspective is always biased and very limited. Also, you cannot perceive what God is doing in the heart of another person. Be very careful what you think and say about others.

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20. Proverbs 30:20 – “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” In sin, a heart grows harder and harder and more and more desensitized to sin to the point where sin is no longer acknowledged. The extreme is the sociopath who can commit an atrocity with absolutely no sign of remorse, some of whom can completely erase the deed from their mind and convince themselves that they never did it at all. Some can even pass a lie detector test in their complete self-deception. Most of time, such psychological disorder can be traced back to patterns of decision over time.

21. Proverbs 30:32 – “If you have been foolish, exalting yourself... your hand on your mouth.” Ironically, self-exaltation is usually a product of deep-rooted insecurity. To stop always talking about yourself, seeking credit, or seeking the approval of others, you might have to get to the root of your insecurities – why you feel you need it. You might also need to remind yourself of your purpose in life – to glorify God alone. Self-exaltation draws attention away from Jesus, a mission failure on your part and a terrible sin.

22. Matthew 22:1-9 – The servants (Christians) are called to invite people to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, all are invited. However, many will not only ignore God’s messengers (Christians) but will even persecute them.

23. Matthew 22:11-14 -- “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.... ‘cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.” Unless you are “clothed” in Jesus Christ, you are not worthy to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. “See Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27;

24. Matthew 22:16 -- “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.” True teaching is the unadulterated word of God, no person should add to it or take away from it. It doesn’t matter what people think about God’s word, only what God’s word says.

25. Matthew 22:21 -- “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Hoping to trap Jesus, the Pharisees ask him, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” Jesus asks for the coin used to pay the tax, which for pious Jews should be a special copper coin minted with Rome’s approval, not the silver denarius, which is seen as idolatrous because it depicts the Caesar’s image and his title *divus et pontifex maximus*, Latin for “divine and high priest.” Jesus’ enemies are revealed as hypocrites when they produce the denarius (22:18–21). Those who hate idolatrous coinage are carrying unclean money themselves. Jesus turns them away with the following: “Jesus said to them, ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’ They said, ‘Caesar’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’” Most commentaries on this interaction will take from it the point that Christians should respect and obey governmental authority, which is true. However, the more powerful point Jesus is making is the second half of his statement, “[give] to God the things that are God’s.” What things are Gods? EVERYTHING! What Caesar demands is nothing compared to what God demands. What power would worldly governments have over a people fully surrendered to God? What value is Caesar’s money if God’s people put no value in it? Caesar’s claim on taxes was such a meaningless thing compared to what God was demanding from the people – their lives, wholehearted devotion, unconditional love. And what power do worldly governments have over God’s people anyway? None but what God gives them. Why fear men rather than fear God? If God’s people would but follow God, evil political powers would be powerless.

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26. Matthew 22:29 -- "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." Followers of Christ must know both God's word and God Himself. Many unbelieving Bible scholars lack any true understanding, and many believers hinder their relationship to God due to a lack of understanding of God's word.

27. Matthew 22:32 – Without study aids, Jesus knew God's word so well that He won an unanticipated argument by pointing out the tense of a verb from an Old Testament verse.

28. Matthew 22:34-40 – Jesus summarized the Old Testament in two sentences that pointed to affections rather than regulations. Obedience that is motivated by fear, pride, or even duty (anything other than love) is ultimately disobedience because the first command is love. If you don't start there, you are already wrong.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 30 Jan 18: Examine your love: Set a timer today, and every hour stop and review your attitudes and actions for that hour ask yourself, "Why did I do what I did? What was my motivation?" Were you motivated by fear, pride, duty, a sense of obligation, or were you motivated by genuine, selfless love? Was Jesus Christ your focus or something else? Briefly journal your answers. Pray that God will reveal to you where you are lacking in love. (Matthew 22:32-40)

DBRP- WEEK 5, Day 1, Monday, 29 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+29%3B+mat+21>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 29 Jan 18:

1. Exodus 7:5 – "The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them." God had a plan that was much bigger than just helping the Jews – He intended to glorify Himself to those who did not know Him, to the whole world and for all future generations. The Jews saw circumstances from their perspective and complained, but God had a much greater good in mind. Understand that God has a plan for your life that places Him at the center, even at the expense of your comfort and desires. However, also understand that though God's plan might call for discomfort in your life, His plan is always best for you too, the product of a perfectly loving God. If you see life from your perspective, you will only be frustrated and joyless. If you keep God in the center, seek to understand God's will, truly pray the Lord's Prayer in your heart – "Thy will be done...." -- you will find peace and joy in the midst of any circumstance and you will be in a position to be used mightily by God.

2. Exodus 7:6, 7 – "Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the Lord commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh." Moses and Aaron had come to a place in their lives where they were willing to obey God totally; it took over 80 years for them to get to that place. How long will it take before you are willing to do "just as the Lord commanded"? Then, you will be very usable.

3. Exodus 7:8-13 – World philosophies claim to be just as powerful as Christianity, claiming to produce the same results in your life as God. The world will point to many philosophies for relief of mankind's problems. Christians point only to Jesus Christ. Just as in the time of Moses, we are in a contest of beliefs. The Gospel will consume all other philosophies.

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4. Exodus 7:8-13 – World philosophies claim to be just as powerful and claim to produce the same results in your life as God. The world will point to many philosophies and remedies for relief from mankind's problems. However, they all fall short and only contribute to deeper issues. Christians point only to Jesus Christ. Just as in the time of Moses, we are in a contest of beliefs. The Gospel will consume all other philosophies ultimately, but what will control the lives of you and those around you? Our mission is to help guide people to the Truth.

5. Exodus 7:19 – "...there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone." It is comical how historians attempt to find natural causes for God's supernatural work. In the modern movie "Exodus", The Nile turns to blood because of rampant crocodile attacks. Here we see that the Bible points out that all water turned to blood. Hollywood doesn't mention that. When science becomes a person's religion, they leave no room for the supernatural, power beyond what can be observed and explained by the human intellect. When these humanists see the unexplainable, they have to create a false science, and explanation that cannot be proven but is accepted as truth. Then, anyone who doesn't accept the false truth must be condemned as ignorant, superstitious, and closed-minded.

6. Exodus 7:23 – "Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart." Pride is a powerful thing. You cannot convince a prideful person, through reason or miracles, to accept Jesus Christ because their heart hasn't been humbled by the Holy Spirit. However, our job is to proclaim the Gospel to all creation, regardless of the response. You never know what seeds you are planting. Proclaim the truth to all, but don't argue with the scoffers.

7. Exodus 8:1 – "Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me.'" Hollywood quotes, "Let my people go," but fails to include the most important part, the reason – "that they may serve me." Like Hollywood, we tend to see the Bible from a man-centered perspective rather than a God-centered perspective. It's not about giving us; it is all about God. God is not here to serve us or to make our lives what we want them to be. We exist to serve Him, to glorify Him, and to enjoy Him always.

8. Exodus 8:10 – "Moses said, 'Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.'" Again, God's intent is to reveal Himself and to bring glory to Himself, not simply to bless His people.

9. Exodus 8:22 – "But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth." When God blesses you uniquely, it is a testimony of His power to those around you. This is your testimony as His witness.

10. Exodus 8:27 – "We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he tells us." God's authority is higher than government's. You must obey God over government.

11. Proverbs 29:1 – "He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing." Safety investigators point out that most catastrophic mishaps were the result of unsafe practices that had become habits long before the mishap, and that there had often been previous near misses or close calls (warnings). Ninety-nine times out of 100, a person might get away with carelessness, but the 100th time is devastating. What is true with physical mishaps is also true with moral failures.

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12. Proverbs 29:1 -- "He who is often reproofed, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing." Don't take God's patience for granted, and don't be presumptuous with grace.

13. Proverbs 29:4 -- "By justice a king builds up the land." God is the God of mercy and grace, but never forget that He is also the God of justice. Imagine one day on earth with no justice, and you can start to understand that injustice is an evil that our loving, righteous, holy God cannot tolerate. We have to stand up for justice and be Ambassadors for Jesus Christ (who physically attacked the money changers in the Temple).

14. Proverbs 29:6 -- "An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices." Sinners claim to have freedom in sin, unshackled by God's commands. They don't know the freedom they are missing in Christ. Jesus teaches us that obedience to God allows us to enjoy the fullness of life without unneeded pain and sorrow. Fences on playgrounds keep the children from running out into the highway traffic, enabling them to enjoy the whole playground without fear. Obey God and enjoy His blessings without curses.

15. Proverbs 29:8 -- "Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath." Have we not witnessed this?

16. Proverbs 29:9 -- "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet." Wise people don't argue. Arguments occur with people who really don't want to hear what you are saying anyway. You can disagree without arguing and, in the process, even build relationship.

17. Proverbs 29:10 -- "Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright." People who live in darkness hate bright lights.

18. Proverbs 29:18 -- "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." The law reflects the perfect will of God, and restrains us where we have yet been perfected in love to protect us and others from ourselves. Obeying the law out of duty is not the same as obeying the law out of genuine love, but obedience at least helps bridle our worldly passions while we grow in love. Even those who don't believe in God receive good consequences from conforming to God's laws.

19. Proverbs 29:18 -- "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law." God's word is used by the Holy Spirit like a coach that makes you do what you often don't feel like doing so you can win the big game. Good coaches make you run laps you don't really want to run, pushing you out of your comfort zone to increase your capabilities. No matter how fast you run, the goal is to run faster. The Holy Spirit will run you too.

20. Proverbs 29:21 -- "Whoever pampers his servant from childhood will in the end find him his heir." God knows better than to pamper you.

21. Proverbs 29:25 -- "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe." Worrying about what other people will think of us or do to us is one of the primary reasons we fail to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

22. Proverbs 29:26 -- "Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the LORD that a man gets justice." This is such an important truth for us to understand. Too often we turn to human leaders or government

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for 'salvation' or 'justice'. Too often we look to others for what only God can give us. God is Almighty and Lord of all. Turn to Him.

23. Matthew 21:6 – “The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.” Followers of Christ obey, period. If you are comfortable in disobedience, you are not really a disciple. If you think grace gives you a license to remain in sinful habits, you are misled. If you don’t have a passion for holiness and purity, you don’t have a passion for Christ.

24. Matthew 21:6 – “The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.” Followers of Christ obey, period, just as Moses and Aaron exhibited in today’s readings. If you are comfortable in disobedience, you are not really a disciple; you might be a believer (the demons believe in Jesus), but you are not a disciple, a disciplined follower of Jesus. If you think grace gives you a license to remain in sinful habits, you are misled. If you don’t have a passion for holiness and purity, you don’t really have a passion for Christ.

25. Matthew 21:12, 13 -- “And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’” The only time it is recorded that Jesus used physical force against anyone was to throw the money changers out of the temple (John says he even whipped them). According to historians, when Jews came to Jerusalem to pay their Temple tax, they could only pay it with a special coin, the half-shekel. This was a half-ounce of pure silver, about the size of a quarter. It was the only coin at that time which was pure silver and of assured weight, without the image of a pagan Emperor, and therefore to the Jews it was the only coin acceptable to God. The money changers had cornered the market on them, and so they raised the price of them to whatever the market could bear. They used their monopoly they had on these coins to make exorbitant profits, forcing the Jews to pay whatever these money changers demanded. Also, these ‘money-changers’ sold livestock (and doves to the poor) at unfair rates. Jesus was particularly sensitive to the impact of this extortion on the poor (Mark 12:40-42; Luke 20:47; Luke 21:2). According to Mark 11:16, Jesus shut down the whole temple exchange system – “And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.” It is a terrible sin to take advantage of the poor, the needy, the ignorant, and the weak. Yet, the banking industry, the insurance industry, the gambling industry, and the sales industry often use very complex schemes to trick the ignorant into unneeded financial loss. I see this happen every day to young adults who are convinced by someone that their six or seven-year loan on that brand-new car is a great deal because they can afford to make the monthly car payment. Today, even the government uses state lotteries to supplement their income, institutionalizing the manipulation of the poor and ignorant (first state lottery, 1964; now in 44 states; no major church resistance). In some states, lottery income exceeds revenues from corporate income taxes. Often you will hear Christians compare today’s sexual immorality to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, but they forget about the similarities in economic manipulation – “Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49) The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice. Ezekiel 22:29) “In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.” (Psalm 10:2) A Christian must never be advantaged by taking advantage of others. Job defended his righteousness by pointing to his treatment of the weak -- “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have

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eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow), if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, if his body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket. For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty." (Job 31:16-23) Consider our economy and market from God's perspective.

- Psalm 72:4 -- May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!

- Proverbs 14:31 -- Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

- Proverbs 19:17 -- Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

- Proverbs 22:7 -- The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

- Proverbs 22:9 -- Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

- Proverbs 22:16-- Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.

- Proverbs 22:22-- Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate,

- Proverbs 28:3-- A poor man who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.

- Proverbs 28:6 -- Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.

- Proverbs 28:8 -- Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.

- Proverbs 29:7 -- A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.

- Proverbs 30:14 -- There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.

- Proverbs 31:9 -- Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

- Ecclesiastes 5:8 -- If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

- Isaiah 3:14 -- The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

- Isaiah 3:15-- What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

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- Isaiah 10:2-- to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!
- Isaiah 32:7 -- As for the scoundrel—his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.
- Ezekiel 16:49 -- Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.
- Ezekiel 22:29 -- The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.
- Amos 4:1 -- “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’
- Amos 5:11 -- Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.
- Luke 14:13 -- But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,

26. Matthew 21:12 – “And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.” Money changers were taking advantage of people financially through religious products. They were capitalizing on worship. This infuriated Jesus and, yes, Jesus reacted violently, using drapery chords as a whip to drive the moneychangers out (described on later readings). How many people are cashing in on Jesus today? How many teachers attract people to their books and other pieces of merchandise rather than the Bible? Matthew 10:8 – “Freely you have received; freely give.”

27. Matthew 21:12-17 – Jesus showed both justice and mercy which go hand-in-hand. Yes, Jesus violently stood up against injustice. We too must stand boldly for justice, but we must also stand boldly and faithfully for mercy and grace. One of the hardest things for a person to do is to understand how to administer justice, mercy, and grace as an ambassador of Christ. This cannot be achieved through intellect alone – it requires the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

28. Matthew 21:28-32 – You must be more than just a hearer of the word; you must be a doer of the word. Jesus said that those who really love Him obey Him. Anyone can talk about following Jesus, but it takes faith, hope, and love to really follow Him in obedience.

29. Matthew 21:43 – “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.” God’s people are the ones producing fruit in the name of Jesus Christ. How many people will you tell about Jesus Christ today? How will your words and deeds draw others closer to Jesus today?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 29 Jan 18: Meditate upon obedience today. Pray for obedience today. Pray for obedience that is truly inspired by love and not by merely a desire for personal ‘righteousness’. Seek to walk in righteousness today, and all the while, consider your motivation for what you are doing. (See today’s readings)

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 7, Sunday, 28 Jan 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+28%3B+psalm+11%2C+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 28 Jan 18:

1. Exodus 5:2 – "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...? I do not know the Lord." Pharaoh did not believe in God, but that did not remove his obligation to obey God, nor did it remove Moses' obligation to tell Pharaoh he had to obey God. Why would Moses waste his time and risk persecution trying to talk to Pharaoh about God? Because, God told him to, and that is all that matters. But wasn't God glorified through the process? Mission accomplished!
2. Exodus 5:4 -- "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens." For most people, productivity is more valued than time dedicated to worship. Notice that most people are too busy for daily prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. "I just can't seem to find the time." Time is a constant. We have no more or less time available in a day than anyone else has had throughout history. Our problem is not too little time; it is too much opportunity, too many choices. The world is harried chasing after many things, and we choose to do likewise. It is downright rebellious (against society) to just sit at Jesus' feet.
3. Exodus 5:6-9 – Serving as Christ's Ambassador may make life much harder for you and may impact your career.
4. Exodus 5:9 -- "Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words." The Enemy wants you so busy that you won't read, study, meditate on, memorize, and apply God's word. Expect to have a greater burden placed upon you in society as a Christian. For example, if you want to send your child to a Christian school, you will pay for both public school (through taxation) and for private school (through your discretionary dollars).
5. Exodus 5:17 -- "But he said, 'You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'" The world sees a Sabbath rest as laziness. Many view Christianity as a crutch for the weak and simple minded.
6. Exodus 5:21 – "and they said to them, 'The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.'" The people turned against Moses and Aaron because of pressure from the government. The people were more concerned about what government wanted than what God wanted. In their fear of the government, the people told themselves that Moses and Aaron were sinning against God. Religion became a means for them to justify their compromise.
7. Exodus 5:21 -- Even God's people turned against Moses in his obedience. Moses was called to stand alone, and it challenged his faith. Would you be willing to stand your ground against both the government and against the popular church?
8. Exodus 5:22 – "Why did you ever send me?" When the going got tough, Moses didn't ask for God's help but rather complained about the assignment. At least he went to God in prayer, and despite his whininess, God listened. How do you respond to setbacks?
9. Exodus 5:22 -- "Why did you ever send me?" God called Moses to boldly proclaim His word regardless the consequences or apparent outcomes. Moses, an Ambassador for God, was responsible for the message, not for the response to the message. God is God, regardless of what anyone chooses to

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believe. His word stands and should be proclaimed to all creation. The servant of God faithfully serves the KING at all costs. What is the faithful disciple of Christ to do when the church majority resists or rejects the bold proclamation of God's truth? Tell the truth at all costs – "Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth.'" (John 18:37)

10. Exodus 5:23 – "For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all." Moses expected instant results, and when he didn't get them, he lost faith. How do you act when you don't get immediate or amazing results?

11. Exodus 6:1 -- "But the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will do to Pharaoh....' Moses had to go through incredibly hard times before God revealed Himself in power.

12. Exodus 6:2 – "God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord.'" We lose faith when we lose perspective on who God is. Sometimes we need to be reminded that God is God! He has got you! Now, obey!

13. Exodus 6:9 – "Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery." The Bible provides countless warnings to the church to be careful not to lose faith in God and sensitivity to the Spirit because of earthly conditions. In hard times, Moses had the direct word of God, but God's people would not accept it. They had lost touch with God's will, though they worshipped God. In our current situation, is your church aware of God's will and remaining obedient to His word? What is God doing in America, and what role does your church play?

14. Exodus 6:14-26 – God's acts are done for and through specific people who can be listed and named.

15. Exodus 6:28, 29 – God has chosen to use "Ambassadors", messengers, and witnesses to communicate His word to the world; Jesus told His disciples to make more disciples throughout the world under His authority as the Son of God, and through His power. Are you accomplishing your mission?

16. Exodus 6:29 -- "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." The Ambassador of Christ need not fear but should be bold as the power and authority of Jesus has been given to him.

17. Proverbs 28:2 – "When a land transgresses, it has many rulers." Ungodliness causes divisions as people more and more seek their own self-interests rather than the greater good. Our national motto was original "E Pluribus Unum (Out of Many, One)", later changed to "In God We Trust". We changed our motto in the face of the global rise of secular communism as a reminder that only under God was strength of unity possible. Are we more united as a nation today or less? What role has the church played in uniting the nation around Jesus?

18. Proverbs 28:5 – "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely." God is Justice. The secular person does not know justice and will drift towards injustice.

19. Proverbs 28:9 – "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Sin hinders your prayer life. Don't expect God to bless you in your disobedience.

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20. Proverbs 28:10 -- "Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way will fall into his own pit." If you are not leading people to Jesus, you are leading them astray. Worldly ethics, morals, and bright ideas are founded on the 'goodness' of people rather than the goodness of God. We are not messengers of ethics, we are messengers of Jesus.

21. Proverbs 28:13 -- "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Being transparent, open and honest about your sinfulness, helps protect you from false pride. It is hard to be prideful when people know the truth of you. It is easier to point to Jesus when your life is an open testimony about your total reliance on His grace. If you are always trying to get people to trust in your goodness, talent, or skills, you are distracting them from Jesus.

22. Proverbs 28:21 -- "To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong." Everyone, regardless of apparent motive, must be held accountable to the law, though punishment can take into consideration factors that may have contributed to the crime.

23. Psalm 11:3 -- "...if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The basic institutions of society are severely threatened in America today. If the foundations are destroyed, what will you do? God calls His people to be the conscience of society to promote order and stability so that God's people can spread the Gospel.

24. Psalm 11:6 -- "Let him rain coals on the wicked." This verse describes God's judgment on the wicked such as what occurred to Sodom and Gomorrah. This is a judgment only God can carry out. Compare this verse with Proverbs 25:21, 22 -- "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you." What is the point? Do not return evil for evil but rather good, and God will administer justice in ways you could not possibly imagine and also take care of you in ways you could not possibly imagine. Trust the Lord in your persecution. Let Him be your defender rather than you trying to defend yourself. You can't possibly understand what is the right thing to do.

25. Psalm 11:7 -- "The upright shall behold his face." Not everyone will behold His face.

26. Psalm 12:1 -- "Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man." The psalmist wanted salvation in a society of people that had lost all goodness. Without the people of God to be salt that preserves and the light that exposes darkness, a society can become a virtual hell on earth. When the whole world turns wicked, will you still be holy, obedient and pure? How about your family. In times like this, when faith is being attacked, you need to double down on obedience.

27. Psalm 12:3, 4 -- "May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say, 'With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?'" Flattery is selfishness disguised by nice words. Flattery always has behind it a selfish motive. Similarly, many will speak of justice to pursue unjust gains; many will speak of love to promote sin; many will call love hate in order to disguise their own hate; many will define the language of an argument in order to win the argument. However, God's word will prevail, and we need not deviate from it.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 28 Jan 18: A theme in today's readings seems to be how to handle adversity and persecution. Resolve today trust God in your adversity and persecution.

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Remain obedient to Him and continue to pursue a deeper love relationship with Jesus Christ and with everyone around you. Don't worry. Keep pressing forward. When offended by others, respond with kindness and goodness. Try to see every situation from God's perspective rather than your own perspective. In every situation, remember, you represent Jesus Christ and His Ambassador, so you cannot represent your own interests. Have faith that God will restore whatever you lose for His sake because you refused to defend your own personal interests. As a Christian who has been crucified with Christ and no longer lives, and as a disciple who has decided to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus Christ, don't allow yourself for one second to think "What about me?"

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 6, Saturday, 27 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+27%3B+psalm+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 27 Jan 18:

1. Exodus 3:1 – Moses was born a Levite and married the daughter of the priest of Midian. God was raising up a future spiritual leader.
2. Exodus 3:1 – “Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian.” Jethro was the priest of Midian, but being a priest was not his livelihood. Jethro was a shepherd by trade and priest by calling. Likewise, the Bible says you are a priest, but you still need to work in order to care for yourself and for others.
3. Exodus 3:9, 10 – “Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” The Christian community needs leaders — the right kind of leaders. The Christian community must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and it must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of leaders of the stuff of which prophets and martyrs are made. God will hear the cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt, and He will send deliverance by sending deliverers. It is His way.

And when the deliverers come—reformers, revivalists, prophets—they will be followers of God and people of courage. They will have God on their side because they are careful to stay on God's side. They will be coworkers with Christ and instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Such men will be baptized with the Spirit indeed and through their labors He will baptize others and send the long-delayed revival. (A.W. Tozer)
4. Exodus 3:11 -- “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God doesn't give you a task you can do; he gives you a task He can do through you. The successes of God's plan did not depend on Moses but rather the power of God. Most churches will tell you to “discover your gifts” and use them for ministry. That is a good general principle as long as you don't lose sight of the fact that God often calls people to do what they are NOT good at so that the world can see His power and not your talents. Also, it doesn't take faith to do what you know you can do.
5. Exodus 3:12 – “But I will be with you.” We do great things when we do what God wants, not what we want to do ‘for Him’, and when we rely on His strength and not ours. Notice the pattern between Moses' calling and that of the disciples. Moses, like the disciples, was called to do the seemingly impossible; he was called to proclaim a truth that would not be accepted by many; he would have to

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leave his old life behind, including his occupation, his personal goals, etc – his life would never be the same; God told Moses that God would be with him, just like Jesus said when He gave us the Great Commission – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) Do you have the faith to fulfill the Great Commission?

6. Exodus 3:14 – “God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” God is God! Everyone should know who God is; He needs no introduction, and the proof of His character is self-evident. Our Founding Fathers proclaimed, “We hold these truths self-evident, that all men were created.... endowed by the Creator....” God is the Truth that is “self-evident”, plainly apparent to anyone who desires to see.

7. Exodus 3:18-20 – When God sent Moses to be His messenger, God already knew who would accept His message and who wouldn’t; nonetheless, God commanded Moses to proclaim His message to all. God also knew that Moses would be persecuted for proclaiming God’s message, but God called Him to proclaim it anyway. The New Testament says that we are Christ’s Ambassadors, called to proclaim the Gospel to all Creation, regardless the response to the Gospel. We are responsible for the message; what people do with the message is out of our control. We should not let fear of rejection or persecution quiet us; remember, God told us to proclaim His message under the authority of Jesus Christ and through His power, not ours.

8. Exodus 3:21-22 – “I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.” 1) God can control the hearts of people. 2) God will work in miraculous ways to give you the provisions you need to accomplish His work (not your work). 3) God often uses unbelievers and their resources to accomplish His purposes – Herod unknowingly financed Jesus’ ministry (Luke 2:8); Paul spread the Gospel on a ship dedicated to two foreign gods (Acts 28:11), etc. The cartoon Charlie Brown once spread the Biblical message of Easter to countless people who might have never heard it before. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” God doesn’t work all things together for everyone but for those who truly love Him and are called to His purpose rather than self-centered purposes. Paul had learned to be content in all situations because he knew that he was fulfilling the will of the Father who was in complete control and loved Him perfectly. God’s intent is not to help you build your own kingdom and bring glory to yourself. God’s intent is for you to serve His Kingdom and bring glory to Him. When you are intent on fulfilling His purposes, everything that happens to you will ultimately be good (regardless how difficult), and power that works far beyond your power will enable you beyond your capabilities.

9. Exodus 4:1-5 – Miraculous signs are used throughout the Bible for a purpose – to validate the authority or authenticity of God’s messenger. They are for the unbeliever who is so blind he cannot see the proof of God all around him every day. Miracles are for God’s glory, not just for earthly comfort. We may pray for healing, but we must understand that God heals according to His purposes, not just for our desires. Everyone who God miraculously heals will still face death (until the return of Christ) because that is God’s will. King Hezekiah prayed for healing for selfish reasons, and God gave him 15 more years

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of life, which ended up being the worst years of Hezekiah's life. Make sure what you are seeking is God's will, not your own, and don't put God to the test. The Almighty is not obligated to prove Himself to you – it is quite arrogant and audacious to expect Him to do that. Open your eyes, trust, and obey, and He will show you all the proof you need.

10. Exodus 4:10 – “Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” Another pattern revealed in the Bible about how God works in the lives of His followers is that He almost always asks them to step out in faith without showing them exactly how He is going to make things work out. Moses was told by God to “Go... to a place that I will show you.” If you are waiting for everything to be ‘right’ before you do what God told you to do, you are not stepping out in faith. Obedience to God is instantaneous and fully committed. If He told you to do it, do it. That doesn't mean be reckless or careless, and stepping out on your own plan will never work. However, understand that God almost always told His followers to drop everything they were working on, and immediately follow Him without a defined course to do the impossible for His glory, not theirs. “And without faith it is impossible to please Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

11. Exodus 4:14-16 – “Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, ‘Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well.... You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth.... He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth.’” Moses not only angered God by His lack of faith, but his lack of faith also tragically hindered Moses' mission accomplishment. Because of his insecurities and unwillingness to simply do what God asked of Him, Moses became dependent on Aaron who remained a thorn in Moses' side his whole life. Aaron led great rebellion against God, and caused the needless death of many (the Golden Calf). Had Moses simply walked in faith, Aaron would have never entered the picture. As you continue to read about Moses and Aaron, think about what could have been different without Aaron in the picture. How are you limiting yourself due to a lack of faith and an unwillingness to trust what you can't see simply because God told you to?

12. Exodus 4:21 – “But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.” Mission accomplishment for Moses involved rejection. God knew what was going to happen and knew that Moses would fail in the eyes of people (for a time) but succeed in his calling from God. God called Moses to preach to deaf ears. Would you do that?

13. Exodus 4:24 – “At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.” God's messengers are held to an incredibly high standard when it comes to obedience. If you call yourself a Christian and are simultaneously careless with His commands, don't be surprised by the discipline you will receive. “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)

14. Exodus 4:27 – “The Lord said to Aaron, ‘Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.’ So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him.” God intentionally works in human relationships and arranges meetings that seem coincidental to people. Pay attention when you experience a “chance encounter” with someone. God arranges circumstances to give you a unique opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to people who need to hear it, and He will use others to help you in your mission. Make the most of these once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. There are no accidents with God, and you are on a divine mission – don't lose sight of that, even for a second.

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15. Proverbs 27:1 – Do not be complacent with today. Serve God today as if today were your last day.
16. Proverbs 27:5 – “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.” If you don’t tell others about Jesus, you either don’t really care about them, or you are a coward.
17. Proverbs 27:6 – “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” If you only tell people what they want to hear, you are their enemy.
18. Proverbs 27:12 – “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” Only the wise can see what is truly going on around them. Wisdom comes from God alone, not from mere intellect.
19. Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” God’s will for your life is that you are in close relationship with other committed Christians, working together in sanctification. You cannot be a good Christian alone.
20. Proverbs 27:23-27 – Spend your productive years building production capacity so that you possess the ability to be financially self-sufficient.
21. Psalm 10:1 – “Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” The Psalms are very honest prayers, designed to show us how to pray. God wants us to be honest with Him. Tell Him how you really feel, and trust Him with your transparency.
22. Psalm 10:2, 3 – “In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord.” How many businesses and business practices take advantage of the poor and ignorant? How many get rich, not from producing anything new, but from taking advantage or exploiting the weaknesses, insecurities, and temptations of others? God knows. A Christian should never work in an industry that exploits. By the way, for those of you who support the lottery systems, consider that “households making less than \$28,000 a year are dishing out \$600 a year on lotteries.” Lotteries are an example of a business that exploits the ignorant and the poor.
23. Psalm 10:4 – “In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’” Unbelievers have a pride and arrogance problem. Those who sin (ignoring God at the moment) have a pride and arrogance problem that exposes itself in certain circumstance but may otherwise be hidden. What is at the root of your sin?
24. Psalm 10:6 – “He says in his heart, ‘I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity.’” The prideful are blind to the truth and cannot see the inevitable consequences of their decisions. The prideful have an inability to admit their faults and will intentionally, though often subconsciously, filter out any information that does not validate their position, beliefs, and behavior. They often respond emotionally to critique in order to avoid reasoned contemplation.
25. Psalm 10:16 – “The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land.” Be careful not to lose your perspective in patriotism. God is King, nations come and go. You are an ambassador of The Kingdom of God, representing Jesus in a foreign land. Your message to the nation is the Gospel. While others are pointing to certain leaders or political parties for national ‘salvation’, make sure you are point to Jesus. The Christian is the most faithful citizen and true patriot.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 27 Jan 18: Tell at least three people about Jesus Christ today without fear of rejection. (Exodus 4)

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 5, Friday, 26 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=exodus+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+26%3B+matthew+20>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 26 Jan 18:

1. Exodus 1:5 – What can God do with 70 people?
2. Exodus 1:8 – The Bible reminds us that power on earth is brief. The Bible also reminds us that we must carefully consider how the impact of our decisions will affect generations to follow.
3. Exodus 1:11 -- "Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens." Satan would also like to keep you controlled by keeping you heavily burdened. For example, if he can burden you with materialism, consumer debt, and needless activities, he will.
4. Exodus 1:12 – "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad." God's people obeyed God's first command to mankind to be fruitful and multiply. In obedience, oppression only made God's people stronger.
5. Exodus 1:12 – "And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel." Distrust in relationships often leads to sinful behavior.
6. Exodus 1:17 – The midwives feared God over government and disobeyed government when government told them to dishonor God.
7. Exodus 2:1 -- "Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman." Would you continue to have children in such terrible circumstances?
8. Exodus 2:1 – Moses had priestly credentials.
9. Exodus 2:4, 7-9 – God uses children in His work.
10. Exodus 2:9-10: No one could possibly understand that God's plan was to ensure that Moses would get the best of Hebrew and Egyptian upbringing with special access to both communities for a great future mission.
11. Exodus 2:12 – You cannot fight for justice unjustly. Doing the wrong things in the wrong way for the right reasons is still wrong.
12. Exodus 2:13, 14 – People observe your behavior more than you think they do. If you have lost your credibility due to your actions, you have lost your influence for Christ. Moses murdered and then tried to "preach" to others against unjust violence. When Christians don't do what they say, they dishonor God and discredit the Gospel before men. Christians who don't walk the talk are viewed as judgmental by others.
13. Exodus 2:12-15 – God's plan included using a wanted criminal, a murderer, for His purposes.

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14. Exodus 2:19 – God gave Moses a heart for justice and the heart of a deliverer, but He needed to learn humility, and He needed to know God. God IS justice. Justice comes from God and cannot be understood apart from God.

15. Proverbs 26 – Today's proverbs warn us against fools, sluggards, liars, and gossips. The warning is not only to protect us from others but also to protect us from ourselves. Christians must guard themselves against such behavior.

16. Proverbs 26:1 -- "Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool." Ultimately, the fool trusts in the attributes of man, while the wise person trusts in God. When seeking a leader in anything, seek a person that is following Jesus. Anyone else, despite how talented, confident, motivated, and convincing they are, are leading people astray, down a path of eventual destruction.

17. Proverbs 26:4, 5 -- "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." You have an obligation to hold others accountable for their sin, but don't stoop down to their level when rebuking them. Listen empathetically, don't get emotional, and don't seek self-justification. In love, speak the truth from God's word, and don't lose sight of the goal of reconciliation, bringing them closer to Jesus in some way. When you let self get in the way of your rebuke, you lose your moral authority and have become a 'judge' rather than a juror. Don't judge the person or seek to be the punisher -- judge the action and seek to free the person trapped in sin.

18. Proverbs 26:7 – "Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. Many have knowledge but don't know how to apply it because their hearts are not right. Many use the Bible in a self-serving manner rather than a God-centered way.

19. Proverbs 26:9 -- People often use God's word inappropriately to justify their foolish thinking, decisions, and behavior. People also tend to use God's word for self-justification in arguments with others. When rebuking others with God's word, be careful to check your motives -- are you really representing Jesus or just seeking to defend your own self-interests.

20. Proverbs 26:11 -- "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly." Repeating the sin you have been forgiven for through the blood of Jesus is just disgusting. Do you see it that way?

21. Proverbs 26:14 -- A lazy and undisciplined person's actions are very predictable.

22. Matthew 20:1-15 – "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" God is always just. We all deserve justice from God, but He gives mercy and grace. Justice is getting what we deserve; mercy is not giving us what we deserve, and grace is giving us what we don't deserve. In justice, we all deserve eternal damnation for the countless sins we have committed against God, and we deserve it immediately. His mercy gives all the opportunity to receive His gift of grace, salvation through Jesus Christ -- the offered gift must be taken for it to be possessed. God does not have to give mercy or grace to be just. If God offered salvation to no one, He would still be just. It is God's right and prerogative to give mercy and grace as He desires. Mercy is non-justice (not administering the full measure of justice), but it is not injustice. Likewise with grace. Often when God gives others enormous portions of mercy and grace, we compare and tend to think that somehow God has been unfair, as if any portion of mercy or grace from God is obligated of Him -- as if God were somehow being unjust or unfair. We start seeing God's amazing gift of grace as a wage, something He

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owes us, and when we compare, we presumptuously start questioning the value of that gift. In our hearts, we might be tempted to say, "That's not fair!" We forget that if God wanted to give us only "fairness", we would receive His total wrath. Jesus warns us in Luke 17 that we are all unworthy servants who deserve nothing and who should be grateful what the incredible blessings God has given us -- "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" (v 10)

23. Matthew 20:20-28 – Parents want the very best for their children, but a parent's ambition for their children can get them in trouble.

24. Matthew 20:22 -- "Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.'" Jesus knew the answer to the question He asked. He knew His disciples far better than they knew themselves. Full of self-confidence (at least at that moment), they had a much higher opinion of themselves than they should have. They wanted more than they could handle. Jesus will eventually use His disciples in a mighty way, but they still have much growing to do, and the Father will accomplish His will on His timing. You might be asking God for many things you are not ready to receive or that you should not receive. God knows your condition and situation and has a great plan for you. Trust Him and be grateful that He gives you what is best for you and not simply what you are asking for. As you grow in Christ, more and more of what you are asking for is what God desires for you. The small child might be frustrated with eggs for breakfast rather than candy, but the adolescent child desires and appreciates the eggs mom makes.

25. Matthew 20:23 – The Bible points out how two entities, equal in worthiness and value may not be equal in responsibility and authority. The Father and Jesus are equally God and are "One", but Jesus submitted to the Father's authority. This is a good model for marriage and family.

26. Matthew 20:24 -- Jealousy hurts relationships.

27. Matthew 20:26-28 – There is a lot of talk these days about servant leadership, but Jesus' definition of servant leadership is radical, being a slave (v27) to others and surrendering all of your personal interests (giving up your life) to others, literally not just figuratively. What rights, honors, respect, privileges, titles, etc do you think you deserve as a leader? What respect does a slave receive? Funny, but most of the people reading books on "servant leadership" are hoping to develop the traits needed to be more respected, to get promoted, and to get paid more. The true servant leader may not be recognized by anyone, quietly serving and influencing without praise, honor, or fanfare.

28. Matthew 20:32-33 – God knows what you want, but He expects you to ask.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 26 Jan 18: "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...." Are you still amazed by grace? Today, be truly amazed by the grace that you have received, and be truly grateful for your many blessings without comparing your blessings with those apparently received by others. Rather than comparing gifts, celebrate the gifts given by God to others -- "Rejoice with those who rejoice." (Romans 12:15). Grateful for what you have received, rejoicing with others, serve God wholeheartedly and follow Jesus, with no expectation other than being with Jesus. Pray for a heart that is more than satisfied by just being in the presence of God. (Matt 20:1-15)

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 4, Thursday, 25 Jan 2018

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<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+49%2C+50%3B+proverbs+25%3B+matthew+19>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 25 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 49:3 – Reuben was forgiven for a terrible sin, but he did not escape all of the consequences. He would never be who he could have been.
2. Genesis 50:15 – For the joy of reconciliation to be experienced, forgiveness must not only be received, it must be believed. Though Joseph had forgiven his brothers, they still greatly feared him and did not trust him. Likewise, Christians who don't have genuine belief in the forgiveness they have received in Jesus remain in fear, shame, and doubt, lacking complete joy.
3. Genesis 50:19-21 – Joseph models for us how to respond to abuse from others: Leave judgment to God; remember that God is in complete control, knows exactly what is going on, and is using your circumstances for a greater good you cannot understand; forgive; and return good for evil, trusting that God will cover your losses.
4. Genesis 50:24, 25 – Joseph knew what God was going to do with his family. The Bible says that God reveals His plans to His servants (Amos 3:7). What has God revealed to you?
5. Proverbs 25:2 – “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.” The government-run education system in our country is based upon the assumption that one can acquire knowledge and wisdom without God as part of the equation, and today, the “enlightened” class increasingly reject God, pursuing greater knowledge for their own glory. However, God in His glory withholds ultimate truth for His followers, truth that can only be obtained through the Spirit. Man's ‘knowledge’ is foolishness in God's eyes (1 Cor 3).
6. Proverbs 25:7, 8 – “What your eyes have seen do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?” Human discernment is always deceiving because we cannot see the whole picture that only God sees, hence the reason we should not judge others because we do not know what God knows about them and about the situation at hand. 1 Corinthians 4:5 says, “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.” We cannot see what God sees. Again, without special revelation, we are called to simply obey the general revelation of God's word. When we walk in general obedience, we won't quench the Spirit and will be positioned to receive the special conviction of the Holy Spirit. In relationships, we must be led by the Holy Spirit.
7. Proverbs 25:19 – “Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.” Trust is the foundation of all relationships. It doesn't take much to lose your credibility. Christians should strive to be unimpeachably trustworthy.
8. Proverbs 25:21, 22 – “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” God wants you to treat those who offend you with nothing but kindness. This is hard to do, particularly when you are caught off guard by bad behavior. Often our first response is to push back against offenders. Often our first, unguarded response reveals what is really in our hearts. Pay attention to your first responses, and pray for a genuinely loving heart that automatically loves the sinner who hurts us. Once again, God's

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commands (His general revelation), go against 'common sense'. Obey this command, and you will shock, potentially anger, those around you -- "Don't let her get away with that! Don't be a doormat! You need to stand up for yourself!" It takes faith to resist the temptation to fight back and obey God when it just doesn't seem to make sense. Walk in God's word and see what happens.

9. Compare Proverbs 25:21-22 to Psalm 11:6. Reading the whole Bible gives you a much fuller understanding and appreciation of God's word. The Bible reiterates key points -- God calls us to return good for evil. God can deal with the sins of others far better than we can.

10. Proverbs 25:26 -- "Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked." Don't let the wicked influence your behavior. Prepare yourself to meet the wicked today by reading God's word, praying for strength in obedience, and resolving in your heart not to sin at the moment of decision. How much feces would you allow in your drinking water? How much sin will you allow in your life?

11. Proverbs 25:27, 28 -- "It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory. A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." Do not let your selfish desires and pride get the best of you today. Apply self-control which is given to you by the Spirit (not your own will power). We cannot overcome self with self. Self-control must come from the Holy Spirit. When tempted, turn to the Spirit for strength. Today, you will be tempted to follow your urges, passions, and your perceptions rather than the Spirit. You will be tempted to put self over God, to draw attention to yourself rather than to Jesus, to do what you want rather than what God commands. Self is perhaps your most tempting idol. In small ways that we often don't consciously acknowledge (revealed in small decisions), we seek to place self on the throne rather than Jesus. Prepare yourself for the challenge and set your mind before the challenge. Be a selfless servant of Jesus today. When you inevitably catch yourself prioritizing self again, thank God that the Holy Spirit is convicting you of your sin, pray for forgiveness (repent), and start over -- this is part of the sanctification process.

12. Matthew 19:21 -- "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." In many different ways throughout the Gospels, Jesus said that the first step to following Him is to deny self. He means what He says. Obedience is only an issue where selfishness and self-centeredness remain. When we refuse to surrender all, only then do we say things like, "What exactly does the Law demand?", "How many times must I forgive my brother?", or "Who is my neighbor?" In self-righteousness, we want to give God only what He has specifically asked for, and we look very carefully within the boundaries of the Law to find a place within what is written to build our own glorious kingdom, a sanctuary from authority; we then build our palace far bigger than the temple of God within our hearts. However, what God has demanded is our everything, all of us. We are created to serve and glorify Him, and we were designed to have joy in serving Him. We were not created to serve self. The Bible says that we are Ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador is an official representative to a foreign country who represents the positions and interests of the appointing nation. But what would happen if an Ambassador began to show loyalties to the foreign country, began accommodating the demands and positions of that foreign country at the expense of their own kingdom, or began working on the side to establish their own private residency and position within that foreign kingdom? Not only would that ambassador be removed from position, he would likely be labeled a traitor. Today's Proverbs say, "The... LORD... overthrows... the traitor." (Proverbs 22:23) Are we still trying to get something for ourselves? Do we still think that there is what is

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God's and then what is ours? Have we not realized that it's all God's, including our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies? Are we really going to challenge God's Lordship in any part of us or what we claim to possess? Do we still think that we are 'somebodies'? Are we going to set out today to take care of ourselves and what we want? Or are we going to forget about self and serve wholeheartedly, all

in?

13. Matthew 19:25-26 – You cannot use will power to deny self. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can give you power over self. Self cannot defeat self, but self is no match for the Holy Spirit. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit over self.

14. Matthew 19:29 – You cannot stay where you are, with all that you have, and with who you are with and still follow Jesus. Meditate upon this – it only makes sense that a new creation has no need of its old things.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 25 Jan 18: Today, meditate upon and truly work at denying self for Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower you to overcome self. Monitor and record your thoughts – how many are focused inward (on self) and how many are focused outward (on God and others). Evaluate your actions, whether they are self-serving or charitable. Evaluate your motives, why you do what you do. Are you motivated by fear, pride, duty, or love? Check your perspective – do you evaluate everything from your perspective and position ("How does this relate to me?... How does it affect me?... How does (s)he compare to me?") or do you evaluate everything from God's perspective and position? Do you put everything in the context of your interests or God's? Look humbly and deeply into yourself today. Keep your thoughts on Jesus and on serving Him through your every action. Deny self, take up your cross today, and follow Jesus with all that you are, all that you say, and all that you do. (Matthew 19:25-26)

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 3, Wednesday, 24 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+47%2C+48%3B+proverbs+24%3B+matthew+18>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 24 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 47:20:21 -- "So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other." Read it again. The story of Joseph is almost always preached as an incredible story of forgiveness, ending in Joseph's powerfully true statement -- "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." (Genesis 50:19) However, Joseph's story is also about the destructiveness of deep-seated resentment and un-forgiveness. Our first hint of Joseph's unresolved emotions comes in Genesis 41 when he names his children -- "God has made me forget... all my father's house," and "God has made me fruitful." His mentality was to write off his family and to live by the old saying, "Success is the greatest revenge." But his family comes to him, and exposes his pain and resentment. So, he puts them all through needless torment. He deceives them; he falsely accuses them; he imprisons them; he threatens to kill them; he frames them; etc, etc, all during a famine. Eventually, Joseph is

convicted to show mercy to his family. However, Joseph is not done with the Egyptians. God had blessed Joseph with revelation and wisdom to graciously save the Egyptians, the Jews, and other nations during

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a time of terrible famine. The plan God gave Joseph was to collect from the people 1/5 of their harvests for seven years as a national reserve for the looming famine. Then, that food was to be provided back to the people. However, Joseph does not just give that food back to the people. He makes them surrender everything they own for that food (which they had grown) and finally submit themselves to slavery to Pharaoh. The former slave makes everyone else a slave. The only people he does not put into complete servitude are the Jews, who now own the choicest land in Egypt, and Pharaoh's priests (incidentally, he married the daughter of a priest). What God intended to be a blessing, Joseph turns into a curse. In so doing, Joseph sets the stage for national revenge against the Jews. We will see that, after the death of Joseph and Pharaoh, new national leadership will, in turn, put all the Jews into slavery for hundreds of years. Literally, the impact of Joseph's ungraciousness lasts for centuries. When the Jews finally escape slavery, God will give them specific laws to prevent such abuse of power in the future. How much pain could have been avoided if Joseph had simply shown others the same grace God had shown him? Having received God's grace through His Son, Jesus, do you now forgive others unconditionally, with no strings attached? As Jesus paid the penalty on the cross, do you carry your own cross and bear the burden of hurt in relationships with others in order to end the cycle of pain and to promote total reconciliation? Or, do you forgive with conditions or partially? Do you have deep-seated resentment you have been covering up for years that needs to be surrendered to God? Do you say, "I forgive you," and then make people jump through hoops for you? Remember, God has given us the mission of reconciliation -- "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19) "You received without paying; give without pay." (Matthew 10:8)

2. Genesis 48:18, 19 -- "And Joseph said to his father, 'Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.' But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.'" God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. To understand anything, we must rely on revelation rather than just reason. God gives us reason, which has its purpose, but revelation goes beyond reason to reveal what our small minds could never understand. God gives general revelation through the Bible and Creation to guide us along the path, but He gives special revelation through the Holy Spirit to know how to rightly apply knowledge in particular situations. How did Israel know to contradict tradition and to bless Ephraim over Manasseh, despite Joseph's protests? Israel was acting on special revelation. The Bible does not tell us how He received that revelation, but it does reveal that Israel had no doubt in the special revelation he received from God. Many people say, "I think God is telling me [this or that]." But one should not assume this is special revelation. When God speaks, there is no doubt He has spoken. There may arise doubt in obedience, but there is no doubt in the message. Don't confuse imagination with inspiration. And don't confuse a "positive mental attitude" with faith. A positive mental attitude places confidence in yourself to bring positive results out of challenging circumstances. Faith trust God, despite yourself and regardless the outcome. It's not about success; it's about surrender. It's not about fortune; it's about fidelity. It's not about winning; it's about worship.

3. Proverbs 24:7 -- "Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth." In biblical times, elders or local officials met at the city gate to settle disputes and to impart wisdom to the people. As the local Ambassador for Christ, are you that person to others? Do people naturally come to you

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because of your godly wisdom? Notice that many people who desire to be leaders, push their 'wisdom' out to others who never asked for it. Many people want to be thought wise, but few people have paid the price for wisdom.

4. Proverbs 24:10 – “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.” Your strength is built through proper discipleship, one day at a time over time; it is tested in adversity. When the storms of life come (and everyone will go through the storms), everyone will see whether or not your house was built on a solid foundation.

5. Proverbs 24:11 -- “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.” Proverbs 24 has much to say about how we are to deal with unrepentant sinners. Most importantly, we are reminded that we have a responsibility to rescue them from their sin – we can’t ignore what they are doing; we are our brother’s keeper. Elsewhere in the Bible, God says it like this: “If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.” (Ezekiel 33:8, 9) However, rescuing is dangerous business. Much like saving someone drowning, if you are not a strong swimmer, you are in danger of being pulled down too. We must be very careful not to go into the rescuing business casually or complacently – “And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.” (Jude 22:23) So, Proverbs warns that rescuing takes much preparation, well prior to the actual rescue attempt. (Proverbs 24:3-10) At the ‘day of adversity’ when you make the rescue attempt, you will discover how prepared you actually were. We have a responsibility to be prepared. Proverbs also gives us some ground rules for rescuing unrepentant sinners: Do not be envious of them or desire to be with them (Proverbs 24:1, 19); don’t act like you can’t see what they are doing (Proverbs 24:12; remember, silence is consent); do not rejoice when they suffer the consequences of their sin (Proverbs 24:17; that makes God unhappy); don’t worry about sinners or fear them (Proverbs 24:19); do not join with sinners (Proverbs 24:21; this is perhaps the Christian’s biggest mistake today); do not accept, tolerate, validate, excuse, or minimize their behavior (Proverbs 24:24); rebuke them by speaking honestly of their sin (Proverbs 24:25, 26); treat unrepentant sinners fairly and unemotionally (Proverbs 24:28, 29); and finally learn from their mistakes and take heed of the consequences of sin. (Proverbs 24:30) You will have plenty of opportunities to respond to sin today. What will you do? What most people seem to do is nothing. Again, silence is consent.

6. Proverbs 24:11, 12 -- "...will he not repay man according to his work?" God will not excuse His messengers who do not call out for repentance. The Good News is 'good' in context with the 'bad' news, that mankind is facing the wrath of God. It is in the context of the looming wrath of God that salvation through Jesus is such Good News. Those who don't desperately feel the need for salvation will not cry out to the Savior. We must first communicate the truth of the problem before we can point to the Truth, Jesus. Unfortunately, few want to hear the truth, so you will suffer if you have any courage to speak truth -- suffer with joy and thankfulness to be found worthy. Suffer out of love for God and for the sinner. Love makes you courageous. Courage, by the way is not the absence of fear. In fact, fear is required for courage. Courage is being faithful in spite of fear.

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7. Proverbs 24:16 – “for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.” Everyone falls, but how God’s people respond reveals the power of their God to the watching world. How God has seen you through your trials, tribulations, and personal failures is an important part of your testimony to others. A personal testimony likely eliminates any possibility for personal pride (because it is humiliating), and gives all glory to God. It is about one worthless, pathetic sinner who was saved by Jesus Christ and then used by God for His purposes. A personal testimony gives all glory to God, and the witness goes out of His way to avoid sharing any of the glory.

8. Proverbs 24:17 – “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles.” Verses 16 and 17 go together. We get up to help others up, not to step on them. The Christian does not want to see anyone fall -- our heart hopes genuinely for the repentance and salvation of the most despised, wicked wretch. Remember, everything God gives us is to accomplish His mission of reconciliation. If you are not reconciling, you’re wrong.

9. Proverbs 24:24 – “Whoever says to the wicked, ‘You are in the right,’ will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations.” God has put in the hearts of every person a sense of justice and a conscience. Likewise, God has enabled people to have a sense of guilt. Some will respond to their guilt with self-justification, and others will understand that justification can only come through Jesus Christ.

10. Proverbs 24:26 – “Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips.” Love demands complete honesty, and love demands that we speak the truth about sin.

11. Proverbs 24:32-34 – “I looked and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.” God gives every bird its worm, but He doesn’t throw worms in nests. God expects His people to work hard, to be disciplined, diligent, and persistent. Everything that matters requires daily effort to receive a future reward – finances, fitness, relationships, knowledge, wisdom, sanctification – it all falls under the principle of the farm – you will reap what you sow. You are cultivating your future harvest today – what will you have?

12. Matthew 18:1-4 – Jesus will challenge your pride. If you are seeking to “get ahead” of others or to be #1, you don’t understand love yet. If you are always talking about yourself, you don’t understand love yet.

13. Matthew 18:10-14 – Jesus first sought His lost sheep, those who were already in the fold but had gone astray. These are those who say that they are Christians but do not really follow Jesus. This is the first focus of the church. How concerned are you about the “carnal Christian”?

14. Matthew 18:15-20 – Jesus gives very specific steps for conflict resolution. Make sure you always follow these steps.

15. Matthew 18:23-35 – Jesus Christ accepts no excuse for your un-forgiveness of those who have sinned against you. If you accepted His forgiveness, you have absolutely no right to hold forgiveness from anyone else for any reason. If you are having a hard time forgiving, you don’t really understand the gift you have received through the blood of Jesus Christ. How much you are willing to forgive others

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reveals how much you truly value Jesus' sacrifice for you. Have you gone to the cross in your relationships?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 24 Jan 18: Meditate on how you forgive: Is there someone you haven't really forgiven? Have you said the words but still harbor resentment? Do you feel the urge to keep bringing it up? Are you holding back just a bit of love from that person as an unspoken, unacknowledged punishment? Are you harboring some sort of expectation for the other person to make it up to you? Or, have you truly 'cancelled the debt' of the person who has taken something (usually emotionally) from you? Are you willing to pay the price for their sin as Jesus did for you? Seek to settle your forgiveness issues today. Don't hesitate to pick up the phone or see someone today if you need to in order to settle a matter. Don't hesitate to apologize to someone who offended you if you did not forgive the way Jesus expects you to, unconditionally. (Gen 47:20, 21; Matthew 18:23-35)

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 2, Tuesday, 23 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+45%2C+46%3B+proverbs+23%3B+matthew+17>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 23 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 45:5-9 – With the right perspective on God and God's purpose for his life, Joseph was able to forgive his brothers. Joseph did not see himself as a mere hapless victim whose life was subject to the will of others. He knew that God was in complete control of His life and had a greater plan through it all. Consider this in context with Romans 8:28. Consider what this means for your life and for what you are going through. The victim mindset imprisons too many Christians and robs them of their joy. And the idea that we are controlled by others makes too many Christians fear people rather than God. If God is for you, who can be against you? How does your perspective on God effect how you treat those who mistreat you?
2. Genesis 45:18 – After Joseph had enslaved all of the Egyptians, Pharaoh gave Joseph's family (foreigners) the choicest land in Egypt. The seeds of racial conflict are being planted. God is providing for His chosen people, but how Joseph managed the blessings of God will cause his people much pain and suffering in the future. Wouldn't it be better to live in accordance with God's sovereignty and grace and not to add our own curses to God's blessings?
3. Genesis 45:28 -- "And Israel said, 'It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.'" How do you think Israel's perspective on His God changed when he learned that Joseph was alive?
4. Genesis 46:34 -- "'...your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.'" Again, see the seeds of future racial division being planted.
5. Proverbs 23:4 – "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist." There is such a thing as too much. Wealth building can be a substitute for faith, not trusting God to provide for your future. Also, we have likely all heard the adage, "Possessions possess you." Jesus walked with virtually nothing and told us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread." It is not sinful to maintain provisions for the future, in fact, it is Biblical; however, trying to build your own kingdom on earth and your own security

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can be idolatry and can destroy you. Use your resources for Kingdom work, advancing the Gospel and resourcing acts of love.

6. Proverbs 23:13, 14 – “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” Yes, the Bible promotes spanking your children, but not in emotional anger, rather in love to save them from future pain. Sometimes words simply aren’t enough for a rebellious child.

7. Proverbs 23:20, 21 – “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.” How many churches who are adamant about not drinking have an obesity problem within their congregation? Excessive eating and drinking are both sinful and point to our need of a Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the spiritual gift of self-control.

8. Proverbs 23:27 – “For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well.” Adultery is like prostitution. In fact, adultery is even viewed as worse than prostitution because prostitutes sin as a means of providing for themselves, but adulterers sin simply for the pleasure of it, destroying families in the process. (Proverbs 6:26)

9. Matthew 17:1-9 – Those who are closest to Jesus see what others don’t see and understand from experience what others can’t understand.

10. Matthew 17:9 – Jesus does not tell His followers everything, and some are told more than others. God will tell you what you need to know, what you are ready for. Don't worry about what you don't know. Be faithful with what you do know, and you will be given more. You have a big enough challenge obeying the word you have been given.

11. Matthew 17:11-13 – Those who studied God’s word the most did not understand the prophecy they studied and missed its occurrence. Prophecy must be revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals as He will -- trust Him with the timing and methods. Do the last thing you were told and, in the meantime, remain receptive. All revelation starts with God’s written word.

12. Matthew 17:16-20 – Though Jesus had given His disciples the power to heal and cast out demons, they could not heal the boy with a demon brought to Jesus by his father. Jesus explains that they couldn’t heal him, not because He hadn’t empowered them, but because they lacked faith to do what God said they could. How does your limited faith limit you? The Bible says that, though we have the Spirit, we can quench the Spirit and "Get out of step" with the Spirit. Be guided by the spirit, not by fear, pride, guilt, or shame.

13. Matthew 17:23 – God’s plan of salvation filled the disciples with grief because it would be a painful experience for Jesus and for them. How do you feel about the fact that Jesus said that if you truly follow Him you too will suffer for His glory and not yours? Will you still joyfully and thankfully follow?

14. Matthew 17:24-27 – “However, not to give offense to them....” Again, though the Son of God, Jesus sets the example by both obeying the law of God and by being careful to demonstrate humility, peace, and grace to others. Jesus used this opportunity to reveal His ultimate authority over all Creation and His power over everything. In most cases, we can remain obedient to God and reveal His power through our lives without disobeying governmental authority, disrespecting others, or needlessly offending others.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 23 Jan 18: Make a list of your primary relationships, those people that are closest to you or that you encounter the most at work, at church, within the community, etc. Ensure the list includes those around you that cause you grief or problems. By each name, make a note on how you have intentionally sought to draw them closer to Jesus, and make a note on the one thing you could do to have the most impact on them in the future for Jesus. Don't just use your intellect to come up with your own plan. Pray for God to reveal opportunity to you. (Matthew 17:16-20)

DBRP- WEEK 4, Day 1, Monday, 22 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+43%2C+44%3B+proverbs+22%3B+matthew+16>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 22 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 43:2, 3 – Jacob and his brothers did not go back to retrieve Simeon until they were out of food again and only when they had to go. This was a very selfish family.
2. Genesis 43:6 – “Israel said, ‘Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?’” Israel (Jacob) blamed his sons for what happened and made it all about him. Jacob was a very self-centered, self-absorbed person who saw himself as the center of everything. Yet, God did not reject Him.
3. Genesis 43:32 – Prejudice is nothing new, but God’s word says that there are only two types of people, saved and unsaved. Nothing else matters.
4. Genesis 44:2 – Joseph is still emotionally torturing his family with resentful games.
5. Genesis 44:5, 15 – Joseph practiced divination (and had married into the Egyptian priesthood). It is incredibly difficult, nearly impossible, for God’s people to be a part of the worldly system without being influenced by it. How has culture influenced you to do things God forbids?
6. Genesis 44:24-29 – How unloved Jacobs sons not born from Rachel must have felt.
7. Proverbs 22:2 – Everyone is accountable to God.
8. Proverbs 22:3 – Wisdom enables you to predict the consequences of your actions and the actions of others. Wisdom enables you to avoid bad outcomes before they occur.
9. Proverbs 22:6 – Most of your habits were ingrained in you during childhood, and they are very hard to change. How important is godly parenting? Malachi 2:15 says that the purpose of marriage is to raise godly offspring. For parents, this is your primary responsibility in life.
10. Proverbs 22:7 – God wants His people to be financially self-sufficient with enough resources to also finance the work of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.
11. Proverbs 22:9 – God will give resources to those He can trust to use them according to His purposes.
12. Proverbs 22:15 – Godly parents discipline their children in love so that later in life they will not be disciplined by someone who doesn’t love them.

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13. Proverbs 22:19 – Above all else, a godly parent wants His children to trust in the Lord and to diligently follow Jesus Christ. This is the ultimate goal of parenting.

14. Proverbs 22:26 – Have no debt.

15. Proverbs 22:29 – God wants you to be skilled in your work.

16. Matthew 16:1-4 – “‘You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.’ So he left them and departed.” The Pharisees were scholars of God’s word, they saw Jesus perform miracles; and the Son of God, Jesus, stood right in front of them, yet they still demanded more signs. The proof of God is all around us – it is self-evident. God is working all around us all the time, working on the hearts of unsaved, bringing about His ultimate plan of judgment and salvation. If anyone is empowered with the Holy Spirit and is not quenching the Spirit, they can see God’s presence, miraculous work, and activity in the here and now in a very powerful way. What does the Holy Spirit reveal to you on a daily basis? Do you need more evidence to obey God wholeheartedly?

17. Matthew 16:12 – “Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” The Pharisees and Sadducees used God’s word to promote self, to serve themselves rather than to truly serve God from the heart. They used God’s word to preach a form of moralism which seemed ‘good’. They preached legalism (self-righteous works) that were not truly motivated by selfless love for God and love for others. Just a little selfishness ruins the whole batch. Beware of ‘Biblical’ teachings that promote a self-righteousness rather than the righteousness of Jesus or that promote moral behavior over a genuine oneness with Jesus.

18. Matthew 16:23 -- “But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” Poor Peter – one moment he is receiving tremendous praise from Jesus; the next moment he is receiving his harshest rebuke. Peter wanted to serve God Peter’s way to achieve the results Peter wanted. Peter wanted God to validate his vision for success which likely involved earthly comfort, security, and power. Ultimately, Peter’s vision of serving God was heavily biased on self – it was selfish. Peter was very confident and committed, more committed most, but his selfishness and pride made him reckless and unreliable (cutting off ears and abandoning Jesus). We committed Christians run the risk of making the same mistake, seeking to serve God on our own terms, deciding for God what success looks like, or seeking to have God validate what we want by claiming it for Jesus. We are tempted to serve God to fulfill our own desires for accomplishment, praise, success, and self-worth. And our human nature is always biased towards safety, security, and self-preservation. This is why so many sermons preached today are self-centered: “How to have a better ____ How to be a better _____, etc.” The Bible is often reduced to a theological self-help book. As the times grow more uncertain, many people turn to religion, not to glorify God as much as to find some answers for themselves to get them through life’s challenges. They are in pursuit of the blessings of God rather than God Himself. Many pursue ambitious goals and objectives, often with Christian packaging, that are far removed from what God intends; and many wear themselves out pursuing what God never intended for them. We get out of alignment with God’s will, and then, when we receive the natural consequences of this misalignment, we tend to put a spiritual spin on it that removes our responsibility from the equation. Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” How important is it for us to be about God’s business? Service and worship that is acceptable to the Lord is selfless service – that should

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be our aim. It is not about us. Take the “I” and “me” out of it. It is all about Him. Seek to be “crucified with Christ.” Seek to “know nothing but Christ.” Jesus tells us today what it takes to be his true disciple

19. Matthew 16:24, 25 – “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’” Memorize these verses and meditate upon them all day every day. Receive the Holy Spirit’s conviction from these verses. Deny self – the greatest battle anyone would fight is the battle against self. It is mostly revealed in how we treat others, particularly those other sinners who wrongfully hurt us (taking up the cross). Taking up the cross does not just involve persevering under persecution but rather suffering in the name of Jesus, seeking the reconciliation of the persecutor in the name of Jesus, loving the persecutor in the name of Jesus, reaching out to the persecutor in the name of Jesus, and following Jesus is joyfully obeying Him and taking up His attitude – “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who... emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant... and... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8) Again, the first challenge Jesus levies is – deny self. Among the three enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the flesh seems to be the greatest threat. Why? Because the enemy of ‘self’ is ‘inside the wire’, an internal tempter; while the world and the devil are external threats. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, he was tempted externally but not internally, keeping Him free from sin. Conversely, we are tempted internally to seek our own desires rather than the will of God. Our selfish thoughts are sinful thoughts because they counter the Great Commandment and the First Commandment. Let’s take time today to consider our approach to God – how much of it is selfish? Let’s consider our service to God and look for hidden agendas within our hearts (if you can’t find them, you are not looking hard enough). Consider even how we are reading the Bible this year. How often do we approach God’s word selfishly, as if its primary focus was on us rather than the glorification of God? Let’s endeavor again today to die of self. This isn’t about submission; it is about complete surrender. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 22 Jan 18: Deny self. Seen note number 19 above.

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 7, Sunday, 21 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+41%2C+42%3B+proverbs+21%3B+psalm+8%2C+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 21 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 41:16 -- “‘I cannot do it,’ Joseph replied to Pharaoh, ‘but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.’” -- Despite desiring the favor of Pharaoh, Joseph did not hesitate to give God the glory instead of lifting up himself.
2. Genesis 41:28-40 -- God intends for nations and for people to store reserves for contingencies, to save for the rainy days of life.
3. Genesis 41:38 -- “So Pharaoh asked them, ‘Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?’” Joseph was valuable solely because of his relationship with God.
4. Genesis 41:41-54 -- God can completely change your circumstances in an instant.
5. Genesis 41:51 -- “Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, ‘It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.’” The fact that he named his son Manasseh suggests

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that Joseph really hadn't forgotten. Also, don't lose sight of the fact that Joseph married and had children with the daughter of a pagan priest. It is very difficult to succeed in a secular society without compromising your holiness.

6. Genesis 41:56 -- The greatest sermon never preached about Joseph's great failure -- "When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt." Joseph sold back to the people what was rightfully theirs. He abused his gift from God to take advantage of others. In fact, you will see that he uses the storehouse grain to sell all the people into slavery which will cause great hatred between the Egyptians and the Jews, resulting in enslavement of the Jews. This is also a Biblical warning about the abuse of government power.

7. Genesis 42:4 -- To Jacob, all the sons but Benjamin were expendable. Wow!

8. Genesis 42:7-28 -- Joseph toyed with and emotionally tortured his brothers, likely because of deep seated resentment. How do you treat those who have offended you? Do punish them emotionally by playing games? Do you make them jump through hoops to prove their sincerity?

9. Genesis 42:37 -- "Then Reuben said to his father, 'You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.'" Reuben appears to have grown greatly in character, having learned from his past failures. Now he is acting like a selfless leader.

10. Proverbs 21:1 -- "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." Watch and see how this truth is revealed in Joseph's life. This truth remains true today. God controls all political leaders for His purpose. God blesses and punishes peoples through their political leaders. If you do not like what is happening politically, you can protest as the world does, or you can turn to the Lord in repentance, prayer, and obedience.

11. Proverbs 21:3, 27 -- Obedience is the greatest form of worship. Ceremony is not substitute for obedience. In fact, the religious acts of the disobedient are insulting to God.

12. Psalm 8:1 -- Psalm 8 starts like the Lord's Prayer, acknowledging the Majesty of God. Without the right perspective of God, even our prayers are misguided. All sin starts with seeing God wrongly. All wisdom starts with seeing God rightly.

13. Psalm 8:4 -- "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"

After seeing God correctly, the second key to life is having the right perspective of ourselves in relationship to Him, totally undeserving of His mercy and grace, nothing but His humble servant but lived by Him unconditionally.

14. Psalm 8:9 -- "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Start and end praising God's majesty!

15. Psalm 9:1 -- The habit of praising God publicly keeps you on track and points the Way to others.

16. Psalm 9:10 -- "And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you." How well do you really know God, not 'know about God', but 'know God'? Jesus came that we could truly "know him who is true." (1 John 5:20) In fact Jesus said that eternal life is knowing God -- "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus

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Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) The better we truly know God, the more we trust Him (faith), love Him, and obey Him, the more we grow in the big three Christian attributes – faith, hope (faith projected forward), and love. Paul reminds us that among these three, love is the greatest, but he also tells us that love rests on faith – “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1 Timothy 1:5) Love is the greatest mark of faith and true relationship with God – “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” (1 John 4:7) “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8) The one who knows God and loves God, obeys God – “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:3, 4) Jesus said that his sheep not only know his voice, but they also follow him. (John 10) In fact, it is in the following that we grow in the knowing, trusting, loving, and obeying. We grow in our trust through personal experience in the faithfulness of God. Knowing God is not just reading about God, it is about walking with God and seeking Him with all of our heart. Knowing God is about relationship, not religion. Witnesses testify to what they have experienced first-hand, not about what they have heard about (that is hearsay). Our witness to others is only powerful when it is first-hand. Paul said, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:8-11) “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2) Knowing God, trusting Him, loving Him, and obeying Him, is a growth process – “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12) Though we have a relationship

with God, we must pursue greater relationship with God – “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22) So, how well do you know God? Do you desire to know him further? Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24) Today is a new day.

17. Psalm 9:13 -- "O Lord, see how my enemies persecute me! Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death." How are you trying to solve your relationship problems and the injustices you are experiencing? Go to God. He controls everything including the hearts of people.

18. Psalm 9:17 -- "The wicked return to the grave, all the nations that forget God." What happens when a nation makes laws contrary to God's laws?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 21 Jan 18: Meditate upon what God is doing with our nation, pray for a national repentance and revival, and pray that God will use you as a faithful beacon of light to expose darkness and to point to the only True Light, Jesus. Rather than being a spokesperson for a party, person, or organization, be a spokesperson for Jesus. (Proverbs 21:1)

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 6, Saturday, 20 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+39%2C+40%3B+proverbs+20%3B+psalm+7>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 20 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 39:2, 3 – “The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man.... His master saw that the Lord was with him.” Joseph was successful because the Lord was with Him, not because Joseph was lucky or talented. God’s activity in Joseph’s life was apparent to Joseph’s master. There are many talented people in the world, but being empowered by God is a totally different thing, revealing a power far beyond human abilities, bringing glory to God rather than the person. Is God’s activity in your life apparent to those around you?
2. Genesis 39:6 – “So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.” In captivity, Joseph worked so diligently for his master his master put him in charge of everything and worried about nothing. How does this compare to how you do jobs you don’t want to do for people you don’t want to do it for?
3. Genesis 39:6, 7 – “So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge.... Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, ‘Lie with me.’” Character is who you are in the dark, what you do when you have no restraints or no repercussions that concern you. Ethical failures, usually involving sex and money, have destroyed many high-level leaders. God allowed Joseph’s leadership to be tested in a big way. Here is where we see the truth of Joseph’s heart – he is truly a man of integrity and fidelity. Here is a leader you can trust. Today, society often overlooks the ethical failures of leaders and then wonders why they can’t seem to be counted on to make good policy decisions. People act as if character can be compartmentalized, as if a person can be untrustworthy in one area of their lives but trustworthy in another – nope. Character is what you repeatedly do – if you almost never murder, you’re still a murderer. If you hardly ever steal, you are still a thief. If you rarely lie, you are still a liar. A habit or trait doesn’t define you until it becomes who you truly are. Joseph acted faithfully because he WAS faithful. Who are the Joseph leaders today?
4. Genesis 39:7 – “Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.” Few people can handle the temptations that come with being attractive.
5. Genesis 39:9 – “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Joseph saw sins committed against others as, more importantly, sins committed against God.
6. Genesis 39:16, 17 – “Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying, ‘The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me.’” The light of the Christian life will expose the darkness in the lives of others, and the response of those who live in the dark will often be to extinguish the painful light. When Christians refuse to condone sin and participate in sin, they will be hated and silenced. Unfortunately, too many Christians respond to attacks from sinners by dimming their own light, by either compromising or remaining silent before sin. Had Joseph surrendered to sin, he might not have gone to prison, but he would have missed out on the great things God had intended for him along the path of fidelity and obedience.
7. Genesis 39:21 – “But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” A Christian following God is never a mere victim of circumstances, and God will bring all things together for good for them, even those things that seem so terrible at the time.

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8. Genesis 39:23, Genesis 40:23 -- "The Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.... Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." Genesis 39 and Genesis 40 end very differently and, together (intentionally), describe the challenge of faith both Joseph and Christians today will go through – apparent victories and agonizing defeats. Genesis 39:23 points out that God was in control of Joseph's life; yet Genesis 40:23 seems to imply that Joseph's fate was at the mercy of other people, circumstances, or even his own failures. No doubt, at times Joseph struggled with the question: "Where is God now?" Despite all of Joseph's efforts to obey God, it seemed like he was just a helpless victim. Perhaps, like so many of us do, Joseph felt like God was blessing him when there was obvious success and then ignoring him or punishing him when there was apparent failure. Surely, it is hard to feel loved, blessed, and protected by God when you are wrongly accused, abused, and forgotten in prison. At times like that, you are tempted to doubt. You may have even made a lot of personal mistakes that caused you to create your own personal 'prison', but "nothing can separate us from the love of God," not even our own buffoonery. (Romans 8:35-39) We will experience consequences of sin in a sinful world, but "we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) Throughout the Bible we have seen and will continue to see how God uses both good and bad circumstances, intentionally, to accomplish His purposes in both the lives of individuals and in the world. In Joseph's case, the chief cupbearer's forgetfulness was no surprise to God. God took Joseph through exactly what God wanted Joseph to go through as He prepared Joseph for a greater experience with God. Of course, it would be impossible for Joseph to know exactly what God was doing; that takes FAITH. It takes both endurance and perseverance. The Second Marine Regiment's motto is "Keep moving," derived from the WWII Battle of Tarawa where during the amphibious assault on the heavily defended island, Marines found themselves stuck on coral 500 yards from the shore, forcing them to wade/swim to the island under intense bombardment and machine-gun fire – hard to imagine a worse scenario. What do you do in a time like that? Keep moving! Sometimes in life, that is what the Christian must do. Keep pressing forward in faith, even joy. Faith is trusting God right now at His word, and hope is trusting God with the future from your foundation of faith. The God who IS love, loves you always and continually. "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive bad?" (Job 2:10) "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Spoiler alert: After Joseph had gone through so much abuse by so many people, he understood that it was all simply part of God's plan – "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20) Just as Moses had to go through the Red Sea; just as Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego had to go through the fiery furnace; just as Daniel had to go through the lions' den, Joseph had to go through his great test in order to become the leader God intended; and we must go through our trials too. Through trials or tests, God is doing five things: Revealing Himself to you in a greater way; revealing you to yourself in a greater way (He already knows everything about you, but you don't); revealing Himself to the world through your life; using your life to effect change in the world; and preparing you for greater things. See how God does these things in Joseph's life. See how He does these things in your life. God is Good!

9. Genesis 39:23 – "The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed." Again, Joseph was successful because God enabled him. Joseph wasn't a 'natural' leader but rather a God-empowered leader. Therefore, he was able to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Joseph was usable because he did not simply surrender to his terrible circumstances but relentlessly trusted in God. Joseph didn't take

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on a victimization mentality, wallow in self-guilt, seek some form of escapism, or even complain – he just sought to faithfully put his 100% into his current situation and wait upon the Lord. What do you do when life doesn't seem to work out for you?

10. Genesis 40:15 – “For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.” God was “with” Joseph, but God did not protect Joseph from terrible injustice and hardship. On the contrary, God allowed Joseph to go through seemingly hopeless situations so that God could prepare and position Joseph for greater things. Joseph accepted good and seemingly bad from God (which was really good). Do you?

11. Genesis 40:19 – “In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you! —and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.” Joseph did not sugar coat the word revealed to him by God but rather told people the straight truth. We too are called to communicate the unadulterated truth of God's word to others, in love, regardless of whether they want to hear it or not.

12. Genesis 40:23 – “Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.” How do you respond when people let you down? How do you respond when you never seem to get a break?

13. Proverbs 20:3 – “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.” Again, being ‘right’ is not nearly as important as being loving.

14. Proverbs 20:6, 9 – “Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find...? Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin’?” Pride is the worse form of blindness. If you ever catch yourself proclaiming your best attributes, repent, and return to humility. If you catch yourself comparing your ‘righteousness’ to that of another person, repent, and return to humility.

15. Proverbs 20:14 -- “‘Bad, bad,’ says the buyer, but when he goes away, then he boasts.” God's economy does not allow for a person gaining wealth at the expense of another. There is a way to gain wealth while genuinely adding value to others. When you do things God's way, you earn your wages in ways that give more than you get. Others get more than what they paid for. This brings glory to your God.

16. Proverbs 20:22 – “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.” When offended by others, you can only handle mercy and grace, not justice. Only God can handle justice because only God is just, and you will likely ere in your favor. Never try to seek justice for yourself against others. When offended, show mercy and grace as shown you by/through Jesus, and leave it to God to settle the score. If you try to be the judge, you sin.

17. Proverbs 20:27 – “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts.” You cannot be adequately self-aware, self-controlled, or self-disciplined apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. This should make sense to you: if self is the problem, self can't fix the problem. You need a power that is beyond self, a power that can see what you can't see and control what you cannot control. You need something beyond your limited natural abilities, you need the supernatural. Today's culture promotes humanism, the notion that humans are the answer to human problems. Secular humanistic concepts have crept into the church, and many churches seek to validate these concepts by attaching out-of-context scripture verses to them. Yes, it is important for Christians to be self-aware and self-controlled, but the Bible is clear that only through the Holy Spirit can this be achieved. See Galatians 5.

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The Bible says that we should constantly have within our decision-making calculus three awarenesses -- awareness of God, awareness of self, and awareness of others. We can only have true awareness of all three as God enables. If we seek awareness of these three merely from our own intellect, we will be deceived and constantly in error. You will read many Bible verses this year which will clarify this point.

18. Psalm 7:9 – “Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous—you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God!” God knows your mind and heart, and He uses circumstances to reveal your mind and heart to you. He knows your heart and knows you don’t. You can’t fix what you can’t see or what you are not willing to be honest about. Your spontaneous fit of anger is God’s revelation to you that your heart is not right. So, what are you going to do about it?

19. Psalm 7:12 – “If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow.” The first word of Jesus’ message was “Repent”. The message hasn’t changed, though fewer and fewer churches are proclaiming it.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 20 Jan 18: Today, seek to be like Joseph when things aren’t at all going your way – remain faithful to God and wholly obedient to God’s word. Trust God’s unfailing power and love through your circumstances and with the future. Make the most of whatever you have; make the most of your circumstances – if you wind up in prison, then run it and make it great. Never give up! Don’t worry about the score on the scoreboard (Genesis 39:23)

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 5, Friday, 19 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+37%2C+38%3B+proverbs+19%3B+mat+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 19 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 37:3 – “Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.” Children are not equal in character and competence, and there are some attributes that are more favorable in one child or another, but a parent should never love one child more than another or show favoritism. Israel sowed the seeds of hate and destruction in his family by showing favoritism to his children.

2. Genesis 37:4 – “But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.” People may hate you simply because you are blessed. Again, envy is one of the most powerfully destructive emotions which often turns violent. Be careful to guard your heart against any thought of envy.

3. Genesis 37:5 – “Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more.” Mastering human relationships requires knowing what to say and what not to say. Just because you know the truth doesn’t mean the time is right to share it, and how you share it matters too. Knowledge has a tendency to puff you up, but love lifts up the other person. Verse 4 says that Joseph’s brothers “could not speak peacefully to him,” and then it says that Joseph shared his dream. So, it would seem that Joseph was intentionally goading his brothers. Proverbs says that a fool’s mouth invites a beating. Joseph, in pride, is acting foolishly, and it is going to cost him dearly. You may be right on concerning a matter, but it is never beneficial to incite a quarrel with others or to escalate an argument.

4. Genesis 37:12-14 – Joseph had become an outsider to his brothers and was viewed as an enemy because he brought bad reports of them to their father. Joseph was not an agent of reconciliation.

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5. Genesis 37:13-17 -- “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem?... Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word....” Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.” The Bible records that Jacob sent his favored son alone to Shechem, the place where Jacob’s son massacred a city. Jacob shows incredible negligence as a father here and is further evidenced by his careless disregard for the destructive behaviors growing in his family. If he couldn’t see what was going on between Joseph and his brothers, he was negligent. If he did understand the strife between them, he was irresponsible for sending Joseph out to report on his brothers. He should have clearly recognized the resentment this would incite. It is a parent’s responsibility to know the strengths and weaknesses of all their children and to develop their respective characters. Teaching kids to manage emotions and conflict within the home prepares them for challenges in the world. The home is intended to be the schoolhouse for character development, and the parent is the teacher, coach, mentor. The Bible then points out that in fact, Joseph would have to walk another 13 miles in the desert to meet his brothers in Dothan. Would you walk 13 miles to meet a bunch of bullies who hated you and “could not speak peacefully to [you]?” Joseph was willing because he was incredibly diligent – one of his positive character traits. God has called you to proclaim the Gospel to people who will hate you. Will you do it? Will you walk 13 miles to take a beating simply because your Father told you to?

6. Genesis 37:17 – “And the man said, ‘They have gone away, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.” The community is always watching you and your family and making judgments whether you realize it or not. You might be very surprised if you realized all that people notice and what they think of you from what they observe. Whether you accept it or not, you and your family are a testimony to something. Does your family’s character point to Jesus and glorify God?

7. Genesis 37:18 – “They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him.” Joseph’s brothers had transitioned from one of the most destructive of all emotions, envy, to the most destructive of all emotions, hate. This is the opposite of love. Love promotes life, and hate promotes death. When a person or a group are driven by hate, they are capable of unspeakable sins, things that would otherwise shock you from them.

8. Genesis 37:21, 23 – “Let us not take his life....” And Reuben said to them, ‘Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him’—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father.” Reuben was still influenced by conscience, but he lacked requisite courage of conviction. Though he intended to save his brother’s life, he lacked the strength to control his brothers; so, he diverted to scheming, which didn’t work. He pretended to play along while working a hidden agenda to save his brother. How do you confront sinful popular opinion? Had he gone to trial with his brothers, he would have been found guilty too because, though he kept Joseph from being murdered on the spot, he didn’t do enough to protect Joseph. It is not enough to have ‘good intentions’, we have to fully commit to doing what is right. As the saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”. How Reuben’s guilt must have consumed him over the years after Joseph was sold into slavery! Reuben’s life is a negative leadership lesson. Reuben was the oldest who committed incest with his father’s concubine and will lose his birthright to Joseph. Reuben wanted to be the leader of his family and, his eventual birthright, but he lacked the requisite integrity and moral courage to lead. Some seek positional authority, rank, or titles to claim leadership, but it is moral authority combined with competency that makes a true leader. Notice throughout the Bible, that when God calls a leader, it is usually not from the group of pre-established positional leaders. In the midst of priests, God calls His

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prophets from the ranks of laymen. Are you the leader where you are? The true leader knows the way and has the character and competence to lead others along the way. Jesus is the Way – do you demonstrate the character and competence to lead others to Him? A seminary degree is not a requirement, nor is a piece of paper or special clothing. In fact, those things can stand in the way if they promote pride and self-confidence rather than humility and God-confidence.

9. Genesis 37:25 -- “Then they sat down to eat.” Envy, jealousy, and hate can make a person ruthless. It is hard to believe that God could still use these terrible people who can casually eat lunch while torturing their younger brother. From what depths can God rescue a sinner today?

10. Genesis 38 – Genesis 38 is a shocking story. Judah commits unthinkable sin after unthinkable sin and at the end of it all is willing to burn to death as daughter-in-law for getting pregnant from prostitution (idol worship prostitution) without condemning himself for being the one who got her pregnant. Again, after reading Genesis 38, it is hard to believe that God would use Judah to be in the lineage of Jesus Christ. What does that tell you about how God works? Why do you think God wants you to read this story?

11. Proverbs 19:2 -- “Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.” Consider very carefully what you desire to do – don’t let emotion lead the way. Is it what God wants you to do? Do you have a plan to accomplish God’s will, and are you willing to do what it takes to see it through? “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

12. Proverbs 19:3 – When we receive the natural consequences of our own actions, we tend to blame God for being unfair to us.

13. Proverbs 19:10 – God intended for His people to “subdue” the earth, to be the dominant influence on earth for His glory. What if Christians controlled Hollywood, the government, the education system, industry, banking, etc. and ran things according to His law? It is not fitting that Christians have surrendered the systems of power over to the world and are now controlled by them.

14. Proverbs 19:11 -- “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” God expects us to show mercy and grace to people as He has shown us mercy and grace. Mercy is not giving people the punishment they deserve, and grace is giving them the forgiveness they don't deserve. Judgment is giving the punishment deserved. Why is it we often want justice for those who offend us and mercy and grace for ourselves?

15. Proverbs 19:15 -- “Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.” God expects you to be a hard worker. He does not bless laziness.

16. Matthew 15:1-20 – Religiously sincere may defend theological tradition and miss the mark on love for God and for others, the Greatest Commandments of all.

17. Matthew 15:8, 18-20 -- “Their heart is far from me.... What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person.” The heart of man’s problem is the problem with man’s heart. While we tend to focus on actions; God looks at the heart behind those actions – “The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on

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the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7) The Lord searches the heart, tests the heart, weighs the heart, and judges the heart (Jeremiah 17:10, Proverbs 17:3, Proverbs 21:2). Fundamentally, our ‘heart’ is what we love. The “upright in heart”, the “wholehearted” have been given the First Commandment and Great Commandment upon which every other commandment rests: “You shall have no other gods before me.... You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. (Exodus 20:3; Luke 10:27) Well before sinful deeds are exposed to people, our sinful hearts are exposed wide open to God. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8) Our problem is “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) Because of the deceitfulness of our hearts, we cannot even honestly critique our own motives – “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.” (Proverbs 21:2) We are totally dependent on God. First, it is God, and God alone, who gives us a heart that even can love and to obey Him:

- Jeremiah 24:7 -- I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

- Ezekiel 11:19 -- And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

- Jeremiah 32:39 -- I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.

- Jeremiah 32:40 -- And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

- Mark 6:52 -- for they did not understand... their hearts were hardened.

- Psalm 119:32 -- I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!

Then, only God can reveal to us, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the truth of our hearts:

- Psalm 139:23 -- Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

But we must remain receptive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and act on that conviction. It starts with a humble and contrite heart:

- Psalm 51:17 -- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

- Lamentations 1:20 -- Look, O Lord, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious.

- Isaiah 57:15 -- For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

- Joel 2:12 -- “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

Then, in complete reliance on God, we must diligently, relentlessly pursue love, holiness, righteousness, mercy, justice, obedience, purity, unity with God:

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- Psalm 119:112 -- I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.
- Ezekiel 18:31 -- Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?
- King Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 12:14 -- And he [king Rehoboam] did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.
- Ezra 7:10 -- For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

The Bible says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (Proverbs 4:23) We must put all of our effort into 'keeping' our hearts because everything flows from the heart. An important part of keeping our hearts is continually examining our hearts (again, empowered by the Holy Spirit). Today, Jesus points out again that the tongue is a great revealer of the condition of our hearts. Of course, the relationship between heart and tongue is repeated throughout the Bible. We are held accountable by God for every careless word that comes out of our mouths. Today, ask God to show you what your words say about the true condition of your heart.

18. Matthew 15:12-14 – Religious activities and good deeds that were not commanded by God are worthless.

19. Matthew 15:27-28 – Though focused on His mission, Jesus stopped to make time to minister to the needs of people not directly tied to His ultimate objective.

20. Matthew 15:32-34 – The disciples seem unable to learn from what they have already experienced with Jesus. Has your faith grown from what you have already experienced with Jesus? Can you trust Him because you know Him to be trustworthy?

21. Matthew 15:32-34 – The disciples seem unable to learn from what they have already experienced with Jesus. Has your faith grown from what you have already experienced with Jesus? Can you trust Him because you personally and powerfully know Him to be trustworthy from your real experiences with Him, not just from what you have read about Him or heard about Him from others? You cannot grow in faith if you don't walk in faith. Walking in faith requires walking beyond your own knowledge and capabilities that you might see Him work the impossible in your life, all for His glory rather than your desires.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 19 Jan 18: Today, be people focused rather than task focused. (See comment number 19 above)

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 4, Thursday, 18 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=Gen+35%2C+36%3B+proverbs+18%3B+matthew+14>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 18 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 35:1, 2 – An encounter with God caused Jacob to seek holiness in his life and the lives of those around him.

2. Genesis 35:2 -- "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves." God demands total loyalty and purity from His people.

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3. Genesis 35:3 – “God... answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” Jacob had a life testimony based upon his personal experiences with God, a testimony he shared with others. What is your personal testimony, and how do you share it with others?

4. Genesis 35:4 – “So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.” Jacob’s people committed to get rid of their foreign gods but Jacob didn’t. He hid the idols which is certainly not the same as destroying the idols. Outwardly he looked pure, but in reality, his idols remained, waiting to influence in the future. The Latin of the word “decision” literally means, “to cut off” completely. Making a decision is about “cutting off” choices or removing possibilities from your life. Jacob made a “decision” but not really. He kept open the possibility of the idols remaining idols. When we repent, we must cut off completely whatever was impure or unholy in our lives. Don’t leave a door for sin to reenter into your heart.

5. Genesis 35:10 – “Israel” means, “He struggles with God,” and many believe that this name refers to when Jacob struggled with “a man” in Chapter 32. However, it seems from our readings that the name “Israel” applies to Jacob’s whole life as he struggles to transition from the “deceiver” to a godly person. Jacob struggles with his sin nature his whole life. Can you relate to that? Jacob/Israel relies solely on God’s mercy and grace. It is worthy to note once again, that the Bible reveals its main characters to be terrible sinners, not super heroes as would have been the case if the Bible were written by men. The Bible reveals the humble condition of man and the need for salvation through Jesus Christ.

6. Genesis 35:11 – God commands His people throughout the Bible to grow in numbers, regardless of the world situation.

7. Genesis 35:22 – “While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine. And Israel heard of it.” Israel’s family was corrupt, in no small part due to Israel’s poor example and leadership. Israel seems to do nothing when his sons sin terribly. He did nothing when they slaughtered a town, and here he seems to do nothing when his son commits this abomination. Beyond being an unthinkable sin, Reuben’s action was a challenge to the headship of his father Israel. Reuben clearly had no respect for his father or his father’s authority.

8. Genesis 36 – The word of God, in careful detail, shows how He formed other nations from the lineage of Abraham and how the Edomites became divided from the Israelites. This history is important. Of note, Herod, who reigned over Jerusalem when Jesus was born on poverty, was an Edomite.

9. Proverbs 18:1 – “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire.” Isolation is a form of self-centeredness and is contrary to love. Christianity is all about close relationships with God and with others.

10. Proverbs 18:2 – Listen

11. Proverbs 18:4 – “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.” There are countless ‘teachers’ out there, but wisdom is scarce. Let the Holy Spirit be your Counselor through the word of God.

12. Proverbs 18:12 -- “Before destruction a man’s heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.” Most people cannot see their own destruction because they are blinded by pride.

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13. Proverbs 18:13 – “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” Christians don’t interrupt. They don’t listen just to respond, they listen to understand.

14. Matthew 14:4 – John the Baptist lost his life ultimately because he challenged the adultery of a political leader. He called out sin. How boldly to Christians challenge sin today? In the face of a moral revolution (or revulsion), the church seems pretty quiet.

15. Matthew 14:6-12 – John the Baptist was called the greatest man who had lived by Jesus, yet John the Baptist died a very inglorious death by the hands of terrible sinners. How do you define life success? Do you need to do something “big”, important, or famed to feel successful? Many Christian who say, “What does God want me to do?” are really just not satisfied with what God has called them to do. What does God want you to do? Be faithful to Him today, right where He as placed you, regardless of what happens to you in the process. Perhaps no one will give you any credit – great! Your reward is in Heaven.

16. Matthew 14:7-9 – Rash promises bring sorrow.

17. Matthew 14:9 – Being sorry and repenting are two different things.

18. Matthew 14:16 -- “But Jesus said, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat’.” Jesus tasked the disciples to do what was clearly impossible for them. Yet, the disciples obeyed Jesus’s instructions and, as a result, experienced the power of God in a way they had never seen before. As Christians, we must learn to be uncomfortable in the realm of ‘impossible’ – this is the faith zone where we learn to rely on God rather than ourselves. This is where we see the power of God in our lives, where we grow in our relationship with God, and where God is glorified. God allows us to participate in His impossible tasks because He is always doing two things at once: strengthening our relationship with Him while glorifying Himself to the world – He does this by leaving no doubt that it was He at work. God is not trying to show the world what a bunch of really talented and committed Christians can do; He is showing the world His power through ordinary people like us. We say, “God would never ask me to do something I can’t do.” However, God is always asking us to do something we can’t do but for His mighty working. Look throughout the Bible and see how often God reveals Himself to the world through humble, obedient servants who are willing to step into the impossible, and God intentionally refuses to clear the path before His servant’s step. Noah had an impossible task; Abram had an impossible task; Moses had an impossible task; Jesus left the Apostles with an impossible task: disciple all nations. Those who refuse to step out into the impossible are like the tens of thousands of Gideon’s army who walked away from the 300 who were willing to step out in faith on an impossible mission and who personally witnessed God’s Mighty Hand at work. We are called to be witnesses. Witnesses report first-hand experience, not hearsay. If we refuse to operate in the faith zone, we miss out on what God is doing, we hinder our personal relationship with God, and we fail to fulfill our purpose in life. We have little of which to bear witness. What did Mordechai say to Esther? “For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14) You were born for “such a time as this.” Even today, you will face seemingly small decisions that, for you, are like the Nile River, the Jordon River, a fiery furnace, a lion’s den, a mighty giant, an unstoppable army. Will you trust God to step into the impossible?

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19. Matthew 14:30, 31 – What is truly most real in your life, Jesus Christ or your apparent situation? Keep your eyes affixed on the person of Jesus Christ rather than the storms of life, and you will not sink. However, when you do doubt, Jesus will catch you.

20. Matthew 14:34-36 -- "And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well." Don't miss this: Why did "the men of that place recognize Him"? Review Matthew 8:28-34. The first time Jesus had gone to the region, He healed a demon possessed man, and the people, in great fear, asked Him to leave. The demon possessed man begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus instructed him, "'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him." (Luke 8:39) By the time Jesus returned to the region, large crowds were ready to receive him. The formerly demon-possessed man apparently was a tremendous witness, preparing the way for the return of Jesus. Like the demon possessed man, you might prefer to just enjoy Jesus one-on-one, but also like the former demoniac, Jesus has commissioned you for more, to "declare how much God has done for you". When Jesus returns, how many will be eagerly awaiting Him because of your testimony?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 18 Jan 18: Today, truly listen to others empathetically. Don't just pretend to listen, and don't just listen for the things you want to hear or things that seem to validate your perspective. Don't listen merely for facts, determining whether you agree with what is being said while preparing your response. Don't listen impatiently where you believe you already understand what is about to be said and already have the answer (interrupting). Listen empathetically – seek to understand the person. Don't just listen to what is being said, seek to understand their perspective and what is behind their words. Listen for what is not being said. Slow down, be patient, talk less and listen more, repeat back what was said to ensure you don't overlook anything. Seek to understand before being understood. Listen in order to build relationship and to model the character of Jesus. (Proverbs 18:13)

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 3, Wednesday, 17 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+33%2C+34%3B+proverbs+17%3B+mat+13>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 17 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 33:2 – "And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all." There was certainly no question who Jacob favored. Facing a threat, the last people Jacob wanted to see harmed was Rachel and Joseph. How do you think the rest of Jacob's family felt about that? As we read, watch and see how God responds to Jacob's favoritism.

2. Genesis 33:4 – "But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." Despite being the offended party, Esau took the initiative in reconciliation.

3. Genesis 33:9 – "But Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.'" It is far easier to be patient and kind when you have everything you need or when you are comfortable in your position. However, when people feel vulnerable or threatened, they are susceptible to attacking others. Contentment is an attitude that doesn't have to depend on external conditions. If you learn to be content in any situation, you will be in a good position to love others as you should.

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4. Genesis 33:10 – “For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.” Guilt and fear can consume our lives. Jacob has spent most of his adult life essentially exiled and living in the shame of having deceived his brother. Esau’s welcoming of Jacob was like taking an enormous burden off of Jacob’s shoulders, a gift Jacob didn’t deserve, and to Jacob it was similar to the grace God bestows. How will your forgiveness affect others?

5. Genesis 33:16, 17 -- “So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.” Reconciliation is critical to a Christian. Reconciliation is a total forgiveness that restores two parties back to complete harmony or unity, back to the same quality of relationship that existed before any disagreement or divisive offense – no emotional barriers, perfect peace, fullness of relational joy. The Bible says, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:10) In this reconciliation, our trespasses were covered over, not counted against us. (2 Corinthians 5:19) Having been reconciled through Christ, Christians have subsequently been given the mission and purpose of reconciliation – “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) To be worthy to carry the message of reconciliation, we must be reconciled in our own personal relationships. How important is this? Jesus said, “Leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:24) Reconciliation requires five conditions: first, the offender must be repentant and humbly recognize the need for forgiveness; second, the offender must desire forgiveness and be willing to ask for forgiveness and/or receive forgiveness; third, the offended must be willing to forgive (truly forgive) the offender; fourth, the offender must TRULY believe and accept that he is forgiven; finally, the two must agree to return to their original relational conditions and activities (Amos 3:3 – “Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?”). The primary stumbling block for most Christians is with the fourth condition – they don’t really BELIEVE that they are totally forgiven by God. Therefore, their relationship with God is still uncomfortable, lacking of the fullness of joy and blessings that are potentially available. There remains an elephant in the room. There remains a feeling of guilt and unworthiness that causes the believer to keep up emotional/spiritual barriers, to ‘hide in the garden’; to continually, awkwardly, and painfully seek to make up for what has already been nullified, to earn the forgiveness that has already been given, and/or to keep a more comfortable distance or go their separate way. We have all seen this in human relationship that ‘just weren’t the same’ after a major offense, despite the proclaimed forgiveness. The two that were once so close slowly drift apart. This is what we see happen with Jacob and Esau. Jacob was guilty and very fearful. It would appear that Esau was ready to forgive. However, Jacob could not trust in the forgiveness and politely went his separate way – the relationship was never fully restored; they never again experienced the joy and blessings of brotherhood. This is a sad story, given to us for a reason. To fulfill the Great Commandment and the second one like it, we must pursue genuine reconciliation in our relationships with God and other people respectively. With God, we must truly believe in and trust in (faith) our forgiveness and then return to our original relationship (serve and walk) with God without fear – “Enter into the joy of your master.” (Matthew 25:21) “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11) With other people, we must master forgiveness and graciousness. We must deny self and surrender our rights

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before others. We must be ready to receive persecution from others and to bear the burden of that offense upon ourselves. This is a big part of what it means to 'take up our cross'. How are your relationships, both with God and with others? Are you experiencing the fullness of joy that comes from reconciliation in all of your relationships? Do you fully forgive because you truly know that you are fully forgiven? Is the truth of Christ Crucified and Risen revealed in how you treat others? If not, "leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

6. Genesis 34:1 – "Now Dinah... went out to see the women of the land." Engaging the world is extremely dangerous. Because so much of the world seems so appealing, we can forget the destructive power of sin and to what extremes to godless can go. Some of the vilest people appear to be the 'nicest' people.

7. Genesis 34:5-12 – Shechem did a disgraceful thing and deeply offended Jacob's family, but Shechem apparently desired to make restitution and seek reconciliation – "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give." However, in their self-righteous indignation and anger for what happened to Dinah, the sons of Jacob sinned terribly against the House of Hamor. Their resentment resulted in great destruction and hatred that would last for generations to come.

8. Genesis 34:13 – "The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah." Jacob's sons returned sin for sin, resulting in the slaughter of many who had nothing to do with the original offense.

9. Genesis 34:13 – Jacob was a model of deceit for his children. What did you learn from your parents, and what habits are you teaching others?

10. Genesis 34:27-39 – "The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered." Because of the sin of one person, the sons of Jacob slaughtered countless unsuspecting, peaceful bystanders. If we are not careful, we too can let our anger get out of hand and hurt the innocent around us. For example, strife between a mother and father hurts the children.

11. Genesis 34:30 -- Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.'" Jacob was not as concerned about the spiritual significance of what his sons did as he was about the social impact. Jacob was only concerned about his own skin. You will see this character trait continue to play out as we read on.

12. Genesis 34:31 – The sons of Jacob put revenge ahead of justice and mercy, and they were willing to sin in order to get revenge and make a statement.

13. Proverbs 17:1 – "Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife." Strife takes the joy out of everything.

14. Proverbs 17:1 -- What good are riches and resources if you can't enjoy them because your heart is not right?

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15. Proverbs 17:3 – “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.” The Lord is testing your heart through your circumstances to see if you will remain loving and faithful. What you say about your situation reveals more about you than your situation. How does God test your heart? What is God revealing to you about your walk with Jesus?

16. Proverbs 17:5 – “He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.” Is there a part of you that is happy when offensive people suffer the consequences of their behavior, or do you pray that they will be driven to the comfort of Jesus? Jonah couldn’t stand the thought of God forgiving evil Nineveh. Do you ever feel that way?

17. Proverbs 17:6 – “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged.” God calls us to have plan for generations.

18. Proverbs 17:9 -- "He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends." Gossip is contrary to your God-given mission of reconciliation and makes you an adversary of God.

19. Proverbs 17:14 – “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.” Just drop it – that is the Christian thing to do.

20. Proverbs 17:15 -- "Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the Lord detests them both." Personal forgiveness and civil accountability are two different things. You should personally forgive the criminal, but he still must be held accountable to society.

21. Proverbs 17:16 – “Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?” There is a political theory that says that poverty (economic plight) and poor education is the cause of strife. However, the issue is the heart, and no amount of education or money can fix the heart.

22. Proverbs 17:19 – “Whoever loves transgression loves strife.” Strife is the product of sin. Avoid the love of transgression. When someone transgresses against you, don’t respond with transgression.

23. Proverbs 17:20 – “A man of crooked heart does not discover good.” Heart problems keep you from the fullness of God’s blessings.

24. Proverbs 17:27, 28 -- "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue." Your temper and rash words reveal your spiritual immaturity and lack of Spirit-enabled self-control. All the Bible knowledge in the world and logical thinking can't hide this heart problem.

25. Matthew 13:1-15 – People will respond differently to God’s word, but we must spread it everywhere.

26. Matthew 13:12 – “For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” To receive more truth from God, you must obey the truth you have already been given. If you won’t obey what God has already revealed to you, not only will you not receive more, even what you have will depart from your life. God will not allow you to stay where you are – you are either growing or withering.

27. Matthew 13:15 – “...understand with their heart.” Understanding comes from the heart, not from the head. You can have all the Bible ‘knowledge’ in the world but no understanding if God’s word

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doesn't change your heart. If God's word hasn't transformed your life, if it hasn't inspired you to fulfill the Great Commandment of love, you don't really understand and have only empty knowledge that is powerless.

28. Matthew 13:15 – “For this people's heart has grown dull.” Every time you hear God's word and neglect it, your heart grows dull, and you lose a bit more of your ability to hear from God in the future. You will still be able to study God's word, but less and less are you inclined to be changed by it.

29. Matthew 13:17 – “Many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” Everyone of God's faithful in the Bible that you are reading about would have loved to have the opportunities that you have been given to know Jesus and to serve Him. The authority of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit has been given to you as a priest and ambassador of Jesus to fulfill the Great Commission during a time when God's word is available to just about everyone, and the whole world can be reached due to technological advances. What are we doing in our age?

30. Matthew 13:18-23 – Which seed are you?

31. Matthew 13:18-23 – God does not expect all labors for Him to produce similar results or success.

32. Matthew 13:22 – “As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.” Most Christians in America seem to fall into this category. So easily do we replace the Great Commission with the American dream. We are worried about so much, harried, busy, consumed. Too often, our Kingdom mission gets what little is left.

33. Matthew 13:28-30 – “So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’” Don't waste your time trying to figure out who isn't saved or really a Christian. Rather, spend your time making more disciples. God will separate the weeds from the flowers in His own time.

34. Matthew 13:33 -- “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.” Your role as yeast is to slowly influence others. Like yeast, we slowly influence others, and eventually the Kingdom grows very large. You have no idea how much your small impact on others will produce tremendous results.

35. Matthew 13:44 – When we have truly discovered Jesus Christ, our joy is complete and nothing else matters, nothing else gives us greater joy. Our joy is complete in Him.

36. Matthew 13:46 – When we truly know Jesus Christ, giving up everything to follow Him is not a difficult thing to do but rather comes naturally. Everything else loses its value, and all that you have is dedicated to drawing closer to Him. If you are still hanging on to something, you need to work on your relationship with Jesus Christ.

37. Matthew 13:54 – Amazement is not faith.

38. Matthew 13:58 – A lack of faith robs us of God's blessings in our life.

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"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 17 Jan 18: Consider what truly gives you joy more than Jesus. Consider what influences your daily decision-making more than Jesus. Consider what, if it were lost, would cause you to doubt God or love Him less joyfully. Whatever that thing is, it is an idol to you that ultimately robs you of the joy God desires for you, joy that can only be found in Jesus. Chances are, your idol is not necessarily a bad thing, rather your preference for it over God has made it a bad thing. Don't make that thing less important, make your relationship with God more important.

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 2, Tuesday, 16 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+31%2C+32%3B+proverbs+16%3B+mat+12>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 16 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 31:3 – “Then the Lord said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.’” To remain with God, Jacob had to go where God was leading. If Jacob had chosen to stay, if he had delayed, he would have remained outside of God’s plan for his life. What Jacob didn’t realize is that God was leading Jacob to a confrontation with Esau; He was leading Jacob back to the roots of Jacob’s deception. He was going to bring Jacob face to face with the reality of his infidelity. God had to deal with Jacob’s lack of integrity, and Jacob had to trust God through the process. When we know we have sinned terribly against another, the last thing we want to do is face them in our guilt, especially if we know they are resentful. When we know we have sinned terribly, the last thing we want to do is shed light on that sin, to expose it, to acknowledge it fully. However, unresolved sin and guilt is a barrier to relationships with God and with others and is a barrier to our spiritual growth. God doesn’t want us to carry that hidden burden but rather to surrender it to Him, to accept His total forgiveness and to walk in repentance and the confidence of His grace. We must no longer drag the chains of continued sin but must walk in the freedom of Jesus, in obedience to Him out of love. Jacob was still trapped in the sin and guilt of deception, and the consequences were closing in around him – Esau wanted to kill him, and he had worn out his welcome with Laban’s clan. God will lead him into crisis so he is forced to face the truth of himself, but more importantly, the truth of God’s love, mercy, and grace.
2. Genesis 31:5 -- “I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me.” In your sin, others may be done with you, perhaps never being able to forgive you again, but God will not forsake you and will continue to draw you closer to Him. He will forgive, but He will also deal with your sin, but in love, always hoping to reconcile you to Him.
3. Genesis 31:6, 7 – “You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me.” In conflict with others, we tend to give ourselves more credit than we deserve and cast all the blame on others. We also tend to believe that God is on our side.
4. Genesis 31:9 – “God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.” God is in control of your future, not others. God knows what is happening to you and will intervene for His purposes and in His way to do what most brings glory to Him and best provides for you.
5. Genesis 31:14 – “Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, ‘Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house?’” Rachel and Leah were motivated by self-preservation rather than simple obedience to God.

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6. Genesis 31:14-16 – “Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, ‘Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house?... Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.’” Rachel and Leah’s decision follow God’s plan was based upon personal self-interest rather than love. They were willing to go because it made sense to them, not simply because it was what God directed. If we only obey instructions with which we agree, we will be disobedient, and our obedience won’t be virtuous. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey me,” but we are not perfected in love and disobey Him when we prefer what we want over what He wants. Obedience is hard because it goes against our desires. For example, abstaining from sex outside of the covenant marriage is not hard until it wars against our desires.

7. Genesis 31:19 – “Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father’s household gods.” This is a very revealing statement – not only can we see how deception and greed had been passed down to the next generation, we can also see that idolatry had been taught to the family. Here, the idolatry involved an actual idol; but idolatry is anything that threatens our fidelity to God. If in reality, you prioritize anything over God in your life, it is an idol. What idols have we passed to our children? See how God took the initiative to work in the lives of terribly sinful idolaters, unlikely suspects in God’s master plan. Through these people, God was revealing His righteousness, mercy, and grace as well as our total dependence on Him. He is teaching that we are all totally unworthy apart from Jesus. The only righteousness we can demonstrate in our lives is that of Jesus flowing through us, Christ in us being revealed in our surrender to Him.

8. Genesis 31:19, 20 – “Rachel stole her father’s household gods. And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee.” The Bible does not conceal the sins of its ‘heroes’ but records them for posterity. This transparency directs all glory to God and reveals His incredible mercy and grace. God calls us to be open and transparent concerning our sins in order to remove all pride from us and to direct all glory to Jesus Christ who saved us wretched creatures for the wrath of God which we deserve.

9. Genesis 31:22— “Jacob had fled.” Do you avoid relationships with certain people because of “what happened”? God has given us the mission of reconciliation. “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:8) Living at peace doesn’t involve avoiding loving confrontation when there is no peace within your heart or theirs. Leaders take the lead in reconciliation and don’t just leave things unsettled. If reconciliation means you pay the price of their sin, then pay the price – it is a far less price than Christ paid for you when you didn’t deserve it.

10. Genesis 31:24 – God can influence the thoughts of your adversaries.

11. Genesis 31:31 – “Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.” Secret sins in marriage are highly destructive, ungodly, and prevent the two from truly becoming spiritually one.

12. Genesis 31:32 – “‘Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it.’ Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.” Concealed sins between husbands and wives not only divide their spirits, but the consequences can be catastrophic to the family. A marriage must be completely transparent that the two may truly be one and that real issues can be resolved as quickly as possible.

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13. Genesis 31:36 – “Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban.” Be very careful in your ‘righteous’ indignation because in reality you are guilty.

14. Genesis 31:36-43 – An offense caused Jacob and Laban to rehash a long history of unresolved resentment between them. As always, this resentful review of history was unproductive and did not support reconciliation.

15. Genesis 31:42 – “God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.” God can work on the hearts of your adversaries in ways that you can’t.

16. Genesis 31:44-55 – Jacob and Laban could not bring themselves to reconcile, which resulted in a broken family – tragic.

17. Genesis 31:50 – “God is witness between you and me.” Covenants, such as the marriage covenant, are promises before God that recognize God as the mediator. When we break a covenant, we invite God’s punishment into our lives.

18. Genesis 32:10 – Fear has a way of removing our pride and enabling us to see our true unworthiness. What added to Jacob’s fear and humility was that, deep inside, he knew he was guilty. Christians should not have pride issues because they realize that they are worthless sinners, deserving of no honor, who have been saved only by the blood of Jesus Christ.

19. Genesis 32:10 -- “I am not worthy.... Please deliver me....” God takes away all self-confidence that we might confide in Him, humble ourselves before Him, and depend upon Him.

20. Genesis 32:13-23 – In the face of danger, Jacob led from behind – not good. He was willing to sacrifice everyone before himself, though he was the one who had offended Esau.

21. Genesis 32:27 – Jacob’s wrestling match with God was a major turning point in his life where he came to terms with who he really was as a person. Jacob had lied about his identity to steal his blessings, and now as Jacob faced a perilous situation and struggled for a new blessing, God had one question for Jacob: “What is your name?” Jacob left Laban with defiant self-righteousness, but now Jacob was in a struggle with the Truth which was convicting him of his ungodly character. Jacob means deceiver. Jacob had to come to terms with the truth of his life. God brought him to this moment of honesty with himself. Repentance requires humbly admitting the truth of your sinfulness and surrendering to the mercy and grace of God. Only then was Jacob ready to be called Israel.

22. Genesis 32:28 – “Then he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.’” With Jacob’s life transformation from God came a new name – no longer would he be known as the deceiver but rather Israel -- “Triumphant with God”, “who prevails with God”. Jacob [Israel] didn’t prevail against God in a wrestling match (in fact, he walked away with a permanent limp); he prevailed “with” God. He prevailed because of God, because God guided him through the greatest battle anyone will ever fight, the battle against self.

23. Genesis 32:29-30 – “Then Jacob asked him, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.’” Do you know the name of the One with whom Israel wrestled, the One who left Israel marveling, having seen the “face of God”?

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24. Proverbs 16:1 – There is what you plan on doing and what God is really going to do with you. Best to conform to God’s plan for your life than to attempt to force your own plan. Joseph certainly did not plan on being a slave, but God had a greater plan.

25. Proverbs 16:2 – “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.” We all have a tendency to justify our actions, but God always knows the truth of the matter. Humility involves being willing to hold our actions accountable to God’s standards.

26. Proverbs 16:2 – God knows what you need far more than you do.

27. Proverbs 16:3 – “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” We were created to work for God. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had great joy in work, and all their work succeeded because they were doing exactly what God wanted and exactly what God wanted, with God and with each other. The creature has fulfillment when it is doing what it was created to do. However, Satan deceived Adam and Eve to begin working for themselves rather than God – nothing has been the same since. “See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Work is not a consequence of sin; toilsome, frustrating work is. Why? Because we weren’t created or empowered to work for ourselves. God wants you to return to joyful, productive work by working for Him, rather than self, by seeking to contribute to the Kingdom of God rather than building your own kingdom, and by relying on His strength rather than your own strength, and trusting Him in His work rather than trusting in yourself. This isn’t doing the work you intend to do while saying you are doing it to honor God. This is turning your labors over to God completely, allowing Him to do whatever He will with you. The ball is completely in His court so-to-speak. Many Christians want to do what they want to do while saying they are seeking to honor God. It is like children who are given chores by their parents they don’t want to do, so they do easier chores and seek praise from their parents nonetheless only to hear the parent say, “That’s nice but not what I asked you to do.” If your work is joyless and unfulfilling, perhaps you are doing it for yourself rather than for God.

28. Proverbs 16:6 – “By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.” The secret to overcoming sin is to truly know and love God and to truly appreciate His Majesty. If overcoming sin is your goal, you will fall short; if knowing God is your goal, sin is not an issue. Your force of will and determination will never be enough as long as your will is not truly compelled by selfless love for Him.

29. Proverbs 16:17 – “The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life.” A highway gets you where you need to go quickly and directly. Spiritual maturity doesn’t need to take as long as most people take. Some even take the wrong road and never actually get closer to the destination but, in fact, further away.

30. Proverbs 16:20 – “Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.” Don’t just read the word, give true thought to the word and discover its goodness by trusting enough to obey it.

31. Proverbs 16:32 – “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” The true measure of your leadership is not in your ability to control others but rather in your ability to control self. The foundation of your leadership is self-leadership, and the hardest thing to control is yourself. Self-control is one of the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ listed in Galatians 5. Self-control

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is really being Spirit controlled. If you lack self-control in any area of your life, it is a spiritual issue. America is more overweight than it has ever been before, but few consider this a spiritual issue. However, the Bible compares gluttony to sexual immorality, idolatry, sorcery, and drunkenness because all of these sins deal with a lack of self-control which is the result of a lack of Spirit empowered control.

32. Matthew 12:1 – “At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.” Don’t miss this point: On mission with Jesus, the disciples were so hungry, they were plucking and eating heads of grain. They had no other food. They gave it all. That is full commitment and radical discipleship. They did not simply ‘spiritualize’ Jesus’ message to sell everything or leave everything they had to follow Him, they actually did it. They were all in. And while they were hungry, they were joyfully ministering to the needs of others. How do you treat others when you are hungry or don’t know where the next meal is coming from? Under what conditions do you start to lose your joy in ministry?

33. Matthew 12:2 – “But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.’” While Jesus and the disciples were living in poverty for the Gospel, the rich religious leaders could only criticize them in the name of religion. In complete discomfort while doing what is right, how do you respond to criticism and mistreatment from those who are clearly wrong and self-righteous? Do you get emotional and strike back at them, or do you graciously speak truth to them in pursuit of reconciliation?

34. Matthew 12:7 – “And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” The followers of the law who talked about godliness from a self-centered perspective criticized Jesus’s disciples who had truly surrendered themselves to Jesus and walked with Him in truth. While others practiced religion, the disciples obeyed Jesus wholeheartedly.

35. Matthew 12:7 – “And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” God wants people who truly follow Jesus, not those who just perform acts of religion as it suits them.

36. Matthew 12:8 – “For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.” When you are truly with Jesus, you have Sabbath rest.

37. Matthew 12:10 -- “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” People are always looking for excuses to not show the love and mercy to others that God requires, and often, they will use religion or misapplied, out of context, Bible verses to justify their hard-heartedness.

38. Matthew 12:11, 12 – God’s laws can only be rightly applied from the context of love. When we approach God’s laws in a self-centered, self-serving, and self-righteous way, we will apply them inappropriately. Justice, mercy, and grace go together, and only the Spirit can reveal how to rightly apply both together.

39. Matthew 12:14 – “But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.” Often Christians are more persecuted from within the ‘church’ than from outside the church.

40. Matthew 12:15, 16 – “And many followed him, and he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known.” Jesus performed real miracles, not trying to bring attention to Himself, but many false prophets have performed and still perform fake miracles in order to bring attention to themselves.

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False teachers are always telling others about themselves while using the name of Jesus merely to validate their goodness.

41. Matthew 12:18 -- “I will put my Spirit upon him.” Matthew 12 contrasts the Spirit-filled life with the religious, works-based life (as Jesus opposes the Pharisees and their teachings). First, the Pharisees challenge the legality of the disciples eating grain on the Sabbath. Why were the disciples eating grain? Because they were famished. Anyone who has ever plucked heads of grain by hand knows how difficult it is to get your fill that way – this signals real hunger. Why were the disciples so hungry? Because they had completely depleted themselves healing and preaching the kingdom. Jesus had just previously sent them out under his authority to “freely give” to the “lost sheep of Israel” with instructions not to take along any provisions. He had sent them out “like sheep among wolves.” (Matthew 10) Jesus told them, “He who receives you receives me.” Relying on the hospitality of the homes and towns visited, the disciples returned famished (unsupported); meanwhile, the Pharisees, from their positions of comfort, wealth, and self-righteousness, studied the Scriptures like legal documents or text books looking for a way to condemn those who were actually doing the will of God. By reminding the Pharisees of when David ate the consecrated bread, he is also indirectly placing the Pharisees in the position of Saul who chased David and killed the priests of the Lord (1 Samuel 22). Remember, Saul was the king of Israel by legal authority, but he had lost his morale authority and anointing by God; whereas David lacked earthly authority as king but had the anointing of God. Likewise, the Pharisees were the recognized, positional leaders of the ‘church’ but lacked the authority of the KING. While the Pharisees attempted to use their religious knowledge to justify themselves before men, Jesus used the power of God to heal, revealing the truth of his faith and displaying the mercy and grace of the Father so that the Father would be glorified. (Matthew 12:9-14) The Pharisees not only lacked the authority of God, they lacked a genuine heart for God, the Spirit of God, and therefore, the power of God. In fact, Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.” (Matthew 22:29) Jesus describes the Pharisees as empty houses, “swept, and put in order,” more appealing to homeless unclean spirits than those who are not self-righteous legalists. Their good works were motivated by the flesh, not by the Spirit; so, they actually worked against the plan of God, and scattered what was to be gathered – “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” Jesus ends the chapter with the proof of a Spirit-led, true disciple: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven.”

42. Matthew 12:22 – “A demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him.” Let’s not lose sight of the fact that this man was demon-oppressed when he was brought to Jesus – he was unclean. Subconsciously, we are often tempted to set conditions on who we are willing to share Jesus with, as if some are not good enough to hear about Jesus. We might not be as compelled to share Jesus with someone who has offended us or whose lifestyle offends us. In this account, the man had no ability, apart from the Holy Spirit, to accept Jesus, yet others brought him to Jesus in hope. Who will you bring to Jesus?

43. Matthew 12:28 – “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Wherever God is, there is the Kingdom. If you have the Holy Spirit within you, you are part of the Kingdom and bring the Kingdom wherever you go. Much like a US ship on international waters is considered US sovereign territory, you are God’s sovereign territory, and attack on you is an attack on the Kingdom of God.

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44. Matthew 12:30 – “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” Jesus forces everyone to decision – you are either all in or not in at all. You are either working with God or against Him. All of your ‘good deeds’ done in any name other than the name of Jesus are offering people an ‘answer’ other than Jesus. If you are not clearly pointing them to Jesus, you are not really helping them.

45. Matthew 12:34 – “You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” First, note that Jesus did not mince words here, nor was He gentle. Jesus spoke very harshly to the self-righteous. Second, note that you can know and preach the Bible without knowing Jesus and leading others to Him. People don’t need to see your goodness or learn knowledge from you, they need Jesus.

46. Matthew 12:34-37 – Your words reveal your heart.

47. Matthew 12:36 – “People will give account for every careless word they speak.” Careless words, within the context of this chapter, involve speaking the truth with an untruthful heart, speaking the truth but not living the truth – You know God’s words, but in practice, you couldn’t ‘care-less’. You must walk your talk. When we speak the truth but don’t live it, our own words condemn us. (v37)

48. Matthew 12:39 -- “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign.” Those that need a sign do not have the heart to accept the truth of God they have already seen, and no amount of evidence will be enough because the problem is not proof, it is the heart.

49. Matthew 12:39-42 – People who won’t respond to what they already know about God should not expect any additional revelation from God.

50. Matthew 12:41 – “The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.” Jesus Himself stood face-to-face with them, yet they could not see Him. Jesus is the Truth that is self-evident. If a person cannot see Him, they don’t desire to see Him.

51. Matthew 12:43-45 – Heaven forbid we would repent of our sins and accept forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ only to return to our sin. When we demonstrate this sort of callousness, we fall much deeper into sin.

52. Matthew 12:48-50 – The family of God are the followers of God.

53. Matthew 12:50 – “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Relationship with Jesus is based upon obedience.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 16 Jan 18: Today, seek to share Jesus with those you might think would be the least likely to accept Him. Look for those who among the seemingly unlikely who do not scoff but listen. (Matthew 12:22)

DBRP- WEEK 3, Day 1, Monday, 15 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+29%2C+30%3B+proverbs+15%3B+mat+11>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 15 Jan 18

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1. Genesis 29:25 – “Why then have you deceived me?” Another theme you see throughout the Bible is that God often allows people to be treated the same way they treat others. Jacob deceived others, and now he is the victim of deceit. Ironically, the deception he committed was very similar to what he experienced – both involving misrepresentation.
2. Genesis 29:26 – “Laban said, ‘It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.’” Another theme throughout the Bible is a warning not to confuse traditions, customs, social norms, or even morality (what society says is right and wrong) with God’s commands and will. Colossians 2:8 says, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Laban followed worldly principles over what he should have done, and it would contribute to the breakup of his family.
3. Genesis 29:30 – “So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.” Jacob’s polygamy caused great pain and suffering which would have an impact for generations. God’s plan for marriage is that one man and one woman would marry, become “one” in spirit, and raise up godly children, passing faith from generation to generation. (see Malachi 2:13-16)
4. Genesis 29:35 -- “‘This time I will praise the Lord.’ Therefore she called his name Judah.” Only God can fill the love void in your heart. People cannot fulfill your need for love that only God can give.
5. Genesis 29:35 – Ultimately, God would settle the matter between Rachel and Leah -- Leah is in Jesus’ lineage, not Rachel.
6. Genesis 30:1 – Envy is a very powerful emotion that can cause a person to do terrible things to others as the Bible warns from beginning to end. In envy, Cain killed Abel, and envy was behind the crucifixion of Jesus. Envy is a form of hate that is outwardly directed at other but inwardly is a deep resentment of God because God gave someone something that you think you deserve instead. Envy comes from deep within your heart. The Bible says, above all else, guard your heart. You cannot address what you are not willing to be honest about. Search your heart diligently for any envy. As God said to Cain, “Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” (Gen 4:7)
7. Genesis 30:24 – Receiving God’s blessing brings expectation and faith in God’s future provision and blessings.
8. Genesis 30:25 – Jacob constantly makes plans with no reference to God’s leadership. (See also Gen 25:23)
9. Genesis 30:42 – “So the feebler would be Laban’s, and the stronger Jacob’s.” Jacob became wealthy at Laban’s success. He was a conniver with a grudge, and he further contributed to family divisions.
10. Proverbs 15:1 -- “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Christians should be masters at handling conflict and bringing out the best in people. Our mission is reconciliation, and we are God’s priests on earth. How well do you handle difficult people?
11. Proverbs 15:8 – “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.” Don’t let unrepentant sin stand in the way of your prayers.

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12. Proverbs 15:11 – “Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord; how much more the hearts of the children of man!” God knows everything about your heart, far more than you do. Pray that God will expose your heart to you and create in you a pure heart that loves Him wholeheartedly.

13. Proverbs 15:12 – “A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.” Scoffers despise Christians who call for repentance.

14. Proverbs 15:16 – “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.” Jacob got it all along with great trouble. Better he had simply waited upon the Lord and received it all without sorrow. Getting all that you want is never a blessing unless all that you want is Jesus.

15. Proverbs 15:19 – “The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns.” Laziness prevents us from achieving all that we could.

16. Matthew 11:2 – Even John the Baptist had moments of doubt. Concerning John the Baptist, Jesus said there was no greater man born of woman. Don’t be surprised by your doubt, Jesus isn’t. We are all like the man who said to Jesus, “I believe; help me my unbelief.” (Mark 9:24) Your sanctification involves growing in your faith, which only happens through challenges. Stepping out in faith is hard – it requires trust. Trust requires “knowing” Jesus – the more you know Him, the more you love Him and trust Him. Jesus said, that the path (and proof) of loving Him is obedience, which will require you do often do what you don’t want to do. The more you are willing to “trust and obey” the more the faithfulness of God is revealed, and the more your faith grows that you will be willing to take another step forward in faith and closeness to Jesus. Trust and obey!

17. Matthew 11:4, 5 – Miracles are not primarily for those who are blessed by them but rather for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

18. Matthew 11:11 – Jesus acknowledged the fidelity of John the Baptist but did not save John from physical death. God does not remove life’s challenges from our lives. He walks with us through them and draws us closer to Him in an eternal love relationship.

19. Matthew 11:11 – “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” John’s ministry on earth only lasted about six months, and he gladly watched most of his disciples leave him to follow Jesus; then he was wrongly accused, imprisoned, and executed. While some might call him a flash in the pan, Jesus said that John was greater than all the Bible greats – Noah, Moses, Elijah, David, etc. Beyond this surprising statement, Jesus goes on to say that you and I can do even greater things than John the Baptist – we have the Holy Spirit within us, and the authority of Jesus Christ. Our mission is the same mission John the Baptist had – to proclaim Jesus. John gave it all he had for six months and received Jesus’ highest compliment. What will you do in your day?

20. Matthew 11:12 -- “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.”

- This unusual statement made by Jesus appears to be related to two other verses:

-- Luke 16:16: The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.

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-- Matthew 23:13: But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

- The Greek for 'suffered violence' is 'biazō', meaning, 'to force, crowd, or press oneself into'. The Greek for 'the violent' is 'biastēs', meaning, 'the forcer' or figuratively, 'the energetic'. I believe that when Jesus speaks of the violent taking the kingdom of heaven by force, he is talking about the total commitment of the true believer who puts everything on the line for heaven and presses towards to kingdom with all of their might, even at the price of their lives. In Matthew 11, this verse marks a contrast between the attitude of John the Baptist (not a wind-blown reed in soft clothing) and the majority of his generation who act like children in the marketplace playing games. (Matthew 11:16) Jesus then announces 'woe' to the unrepentant cities. (Matthew 11:20-24) In Luke 16, Jesus talks about those who force their way into the kingdom after a discussion on wholehearted commitment – "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.... No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Luke 16:10-13) Immediately following Luke 16:16, Jesus says, "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void." Finally, in Matthew 23:13, when Jesus proclaims 'woe' to the Pharisees for attempting to "shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces", he is condemning those who use religion to exalt themselves above others and who maintain the appearance of godliness but whose hearts are selfish and unloving; these do not enter the kingdom themselves because they have not truly committed in their hearts to God but rather are serving the master of self. Jesus' message is that the true Christian is all-in, fully, wholeheartedly committed. This is serious business – "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27-33) Are we children playing in the streets or are we warriors?

21. Matthew 11:17, 18 – People come up with a million reasons why they don't accept Jesus and follow Him, but the truth to Jesus is self-evident.

22. Matthew 11:19 – Jesus led a joyful lifestyle, though at times he went with absolutely nothing, had no place to call home, and continually challenged the hypocrites. His joy came from His relationship with the Father.

23. Matthew 11:20 – Jesus expected repentance.

24. Matthew 11:20-26 – God has given men all the evidence they need to believe in Jesus. It is a heart issue, not an intellectual issue that separates men from the Truth.

25. Matthew 11:27 – If you don't know Jesus, you don't know God. There is only one way to God – Jesus Christ.

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26. Matthew 11:28-30 – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” If Christianity exhausts you then you are practicing religion rather than enjoying a relationship. There is a greater exhaustion beyond physical exhaustion – emotional and spiritual exhaustion. Sleep and temporary sabbatical will not rejuvenate your soul – you must find rest in Jesus. Jesus was essentially homeless, always on the go, and often with very little to eat. He often prayed throughout the entire night, and He rarely had any privacy. He also faced relentless opposition. However, He was at peace. He wasn’t grumpy, didn’t complain about not having enough time in the day, didn’t complain about being underappreciated, didn’t complain about being treated unfairly, and didn’t go into self-pity mode. He was a beacon of peace, joy, and rest. In the midst of it all, He received the rest and strength that could come only from the Father. If you are weary, find rest in Jesus.

27. Matthew 11:28-30 – Those who know Jesus can be recognized by the peace that they have which transcends understanding, a peace that makes them gentle, humble, and calm. How do people see the impact of Jesus Christ on your life?

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 15 Jan 18: Today, consider what is robbing you of joy and peace and surrender it to Jesus. Walk with Jesus and have peace in your soul. (Matthew 11:28-30)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 7, Sunday, 14 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+27%2C+28%3B+proverbs+14%3B+psalm+5%2C+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 14 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 27:1-10 – Rebekah and Jacob sinned against family to steal the blessings God had already promised. Christians often sin when they think they have to make God’s promises happen through their own efforts.
2. Genesis 27:13 – Family members become idols when we put them ahead of God.
3. Genesis 27:13 – “His mother said to him, ‘Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me.’” Rebekah led her child into sin against God while rashly and flippantly calling the curse upon herself, but God holds all accountable for their part in sin – Jacob would not be able to blame his mother. Also, Rebekah's willingness to shield her son from the punishment of sin would not protect his character from being corrupted and tarnished from sin -- you can't handle filth and not get filthy. She may have thought that she was acting in Jacob's favor by securing his earthly prosperity through deception, but in reality, she was contributing to his separation from God and his potential downfall. As the saying goes, "When someone loses their fortune, they have lost nothing; when someone loses their health, they have lost something; but when a person loses their character, they have lost everything." Ironically, they were trying to steal what God had already promised. Sin will never bring us closer to our goal, and we cannot have what God has not given without a curse.
4. Genesis 27:18, 19 – “‘Who are you, my son?’ Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn.’” Pay attention: The culminating point in Jacob’s life will be when God challenges Jacob with a similar question -- “What is your name?”, another way of saying, “Who are you?”. Jacob’s life and character will be defined by deceit until Jacob wrestles with God and changes the course of his life. In big or small ways,

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people often live a lie, trying to be something God never intended them to be or trying to do things God never intended or in ways God never intended. You will never be who you are supposed to be until you humble yourself completely before God, own the truth of you, and live the truth of Jesus.

5. Genesis 27:20 -- "Because the Lord your God granted me success." Jacob was so deep in sin that he even claimed that God had supported him. He not only misrepresented himself, he also misrepresented God. Many people use religion to deceive other people about their sins.

6. Genesis 27:26 -- "Come near and kiss me, my son." The kiss was a deep form of intimacy and trust. Jacob defied all trust in his deceit and demonstrated complete callousness. Similarly, Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. A sinner is completely untrustworthy even to those closest to them.

7. Genesis 27:41 -- "Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, 'The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'" Proverbs says, "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." (Proverbs 10:22) We add the sorrows through our sin and unfaithfulness. Jacob's blessing had already been promised by God at Jacob's birth -- "The older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23) However, Jacob could not wait for and trust in God's timing and God's ways to bring about that blessing. He thought he could steal what had already been promised and gifted to him by God. Therefore, Jacob induced many unnecessary sorrows for himself and many others. He could not enjoy his blessings but rather lived fearfully and painfully. God says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11) Jesus says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) However, when Jesus taught throughout the cities, villages, and synagogues, he observed that the people were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36) Solomon observed, "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Too many Christians are living fearful, painful, harassed, and helpless lives, unable to enjoy God's blessings because they have "sought out many schemes" -- attempting to earn what has been given to them by grace, and pursuing many worldly goals that God never intended them to pursue. They have denied themselves the restful soul, the light burden, and the peace that transcends understanding by choosing to live by the flesh, by seeking personal kingdoms rather than the Kingdom of God, and by getting caught up in the worries of the world. Though they have the Good Shepherd, they live as "sheep without a shepherd" because they are not following the Shepherd but rather wandering off on their own paths (often in the name of the Shepherd) expecting the Shepherd to follow them and continue to bless them along their way. Though they have full access to the Living Water that takes away all thirst, they have instead "hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13) Therefore, they live in dry lands and thirst needlessly. Are you harassed today? Did your 'blessings' come with sorrows? Perhaps you have loaded unnecessary burdens upon yourself by doing things your way for your purposes rather than denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus. Perhaps in some areas of your life you are a builder laboring in vain. (Psalm 127:1) Do you feel like there is not enough time in the day to do all the things you need to do? Well, God has given you all the time you need to do all the things He wants you to do without losing your joy and peace. If you find that you have drifted away from the Good Shepherd, return to him in your weariness, and he will give you rest (and don't try to earn what he has given you or it won't be restful).

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8. Genesis 27:41 -- "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." Just like the story of Cain and Abel, hate, jealousy, bitterness, and un-forgiveness caused one brother to want to kill another. Interestingly, Herod who sought kill Jesus, was an Edomite, perhaps fulfilling the prophecy in verse 40.
9. Genesis 28:1 – God intends for His people to marry other followers of Christ.
10. Genesis 28:3 – God intends for His people to multiply and become great communities in Christ.
11. Genesis 28:4 – Throughout the Bible God's earthly blessings include children, land, His presence, and His provision.
12. Genesis 28:8, 9 – "So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father, Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth." Esau's resentment towards his family drew him deeper into sin, further away from God, and closer to the ungodly world.
13. Genesis 28:15 – "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Despite his deceitfulness, God continued to bless Jacob based upon God's integrity, not Jacob's. Aren't we all grateful that God's fidelity does not depend upon our fidelity? God will discipline Jacob, but He won't abandon Jacob.
14. Genesis 28:16 -- "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit, and God is at work all around us, but many Christians cannot perceive His presence. Can you?
15. Genesis 28:20, 21 – "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.'" Is your fidelity to God conditional, based upon His blessings to you? Does God have to do something for you before you will obey Him and follow Him? Pray for a love for God that doesn't depend upon His blessings, that doesn't change in good times or bad times.
16. Genesis 28:22 – "And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you." The principle of tithing is found throughout the Bible, but in tithing, we must never forget that it is all God's.
17. Proverbs 14:2 -- "Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is devious in his ways despises him." Your actions reveal what you really think about God.
18. Proverbs 14:4 -- "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox." What is your ox? Have you invested in the capacity to produce, or have you only invested in products that do not add a capacity to produce more for you? Many people buy cars, but few people buy the factories that make the cars. Many people play video games, but few people build and sell video games. What do you produce?
19. Proverbs 14:34 -- "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Revival is the only hope for our nation. It must start with the church; it must start with you.

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20. Psalm 5:3 – “O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.” Start your day the right way, rededicating yourself to God, and then keep your eyes open to see what God is doing, prepared to join Him in His activity. One of the best things you could do this year is commit to beginning every day with prayer and Bible study.

21. Psalm 5:4 – “For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.” Don’t let sin hinder your relationship with God. He can forgive your sin, but He cannot tolerate it. He cannot bless sin. God hates sin. He will deal with it.

22. Psalm 5:5 – God does hate some people.

23. Psalm 5:7 – “But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.” We can approach God because of His steadfast love, not because of our own merit. We are unworthy apart from Jesus who covers us over with His righteousness.

24. Psalm 5:8 – “Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.” We cannot know the way; we must be led by the Holy Spirit. Only God can make our way straight.

25. Psalm 5:11 – “But let all who take refuge in you rejoice.” Taking refuge in God requires obedience to Him.

26. Psalm 6:1 – “O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.” This is what we want from God; are we willing to give this type of grace to others?

27. Psalm 6:8, 9 – “Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my plea.” When persecuted, don’t try to take matters into your own hands. Turn to the Lord, and wait on Him to deliver you. God will hear your prayer and do only what is very best. Again, you cannot know what is very best from your very limited perspective and understanding. God knows what you cannot know. God can do what you cannot do. When you try to act from your perspective, you only add to sin and make matters worse. Be patient and persevere through persecution. Trust and obey and watch what God will do. When He sees you through, you will grow in faith and have more strength to follow Him than you did before.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 14 Jan 18: Focus on following God’s lead today. Don’t just act – pray and wait. When in doubt, test your thoughts with the standard of God’s word before you act. Obey what you know, and continue to pray for more insight. Be very careful not to act on emotions or ‘common sense’. Remember, feelings are often very misleading. Gut feelings and intuition can be very valuable, but only where they are aligned with God’s word. God will never lead you into sin or ask you to do ‘good’ things in bad ways. (Psalm 5:1-8)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 6, Saturday, 13 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+25%2C+26%3B+proverbs+13%3B+psalm+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Saturday, 13 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 25:1, 5, 6 – “Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.... Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.” Abraham caused immeasurable strife in

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the world by having multiple wives, concubines, and children outside of his monogamous marriage. Note that Abraham did not treat his children equally.

2. Genesis 25:16 – “These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes.” It is very interesting that there were 12 tribes of Israel and also twelve tribes of Ishmael.

3. Genesis 25:28 – “Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Favoritism tears families apart. Favoritism also causes parents to overlook the character problems developing in the favored child.

4. Genesis 25:29-34 – Esau had no self-control, sacrificing his future for instant gratification, a bowl of stew. Today, many people sacrifice their futures for a ‘pot of stew’ – they sacrifice their health for bad vices, their financial future for temporary luxuries, etc. The pot of stew equates to lacking the personal self-discipline or self-control to deny self in the short term for the sake of long-term reward. Do you have a ‘pot of stew’ in your life? If so, learn from this story.

5. Genesis 26:6-10 – Isaac learned how to lie from his dad Abraham. (see Gen 20, 21)

6. Genesis 26:14 – Your blessings will make others jealous.

7. Genesis 26:34, 35 – “When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.” Esau was motivated by his passions rather than a heart of obedience. The same character he displayed when he sold his birthright was reflected in his relationships.

8. Proverbs 13:3 -- Rash words can ruin you.

9. Proverb 13:5 -- The righteous will desire obedience.

10. Proverbs 13:8 -- It can be freeing to have nothing left to lose.

11. Proverbs 13:13 – “Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.” God’s word is not hard to understand. What a person does with God’s word determines consequences.

12. Proverbs 13:16 – Always decide rationally rather than emotionally.

13. Proverbs 13:20 – Choose your friends carefully. Wisdom is a journey. Walk with the wise and become wise.

14. Proverbs 13:25 -- The wise know how to be content in any situation. The wicked are never satisfied.

15. Psalm 4:4 – “Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.” There is a right way to handle anger, and it involves silence, meditation, prayer, and worship.

16. Psalm 4:4 -- “Ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah.” The Christian life is to be lived “on purpose”, intentionally striving to accomplish God’s purpose for our lives, in accordance with His intent. While the Bible has much to say about the importance of planning in life, Jesus explains that

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successful execution of the 'plan' is accomplished one day at a time, making the most of every opportunity that is placed in front of us:

- "Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34)
- "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit' — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.'" (John 4:13, 14)
- "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." (Proverbs 27:1)
- "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time [every opportunity], because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15, 16)

While we can and should plan, one of our major challenges is that we don't know the details of the plan, only the ultimate end state. It's God's plan, not ours, and our thoughts could not be farther than His thoughts; also, we can see in the Bible that God always takes His servants off of their intended course to accomplish His plan in His ways.

- "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)
- "A man's steps are from the Lord; how then can man understand his way?" (Proverbs 20:24)

God's command to Abram was "Go... to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1) So, when you don't know where you are going, the key is to stay close to the leader. "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) When we drift from God's intended trajectory for our lives, this is called "sin", a word taken from marksmanship which means, "to miss the mark". Expert marksmen know a counter-intuitive secret to shooting that makes them far superior to the rest: the expert marksman does not focus his eye on the target but rather on his front sight — the sight (the thing closest to him) is very clear (the clearer the better the shot), but the target is very blurry. The marksman need only be concerned that the very clear sight has a very blurry target behind it. Then he applies the other fundamentals of properly releasing the round as not to move the sights from their intended location. This rather uncomfortable approach to shooting always produces amazing results. It is no accident that the Bible uses "sin" to describe what causes us to "miss the mark". We make the amateur mistake of trying to see the target clearly while allowing our sights to get blurry — a guaranteed miss. As Christians, what we must see VERY clearly is Jesus Christ in our lives, revealed through our lives TODAY. Our eyes must be fixed upon Jesus as we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in all that we think, say, and do today, walking as Jesus would walk, making his appeal to the world for him through the power of the Holy Spirit and under his authority. To that end, the disciple has some very basic daily habits or fundamentals of good 'marksmanship' such as Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. However, another very important, often overlooked, daily habit of discipleship is humble, Spirit-led assessment. At the end of the day, we must receive our debrief from the Holy Spirit on how well we lived the day to God's glory. How well did we deny self, take up our cross (proclaim Christ in word and deed), and follow Jesus? How well did we produce the fruit of the spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Did we succeed at making ourselves slaves to Christ and servants to all others? Did we consider everyone else's needs above our own? Did we directly communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ (rather than just hinting at it) to all those around us? Did we forgive and seek forgiveness while on our mission of reconciliation? Note from our

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verse today that as we consider our day's activities and decisions, the Holy Spirit will convict us about the condition of our hearts that produced those actions. It is always a heart problem and a love problem. Even our outwardly good deeds may be burst into flames by the conviction of the Holy Spirit which reveals the selfish motivations behind them. Honest daily assessment with repentance and confidence in Grace will bring us a brighter day tomorrow, one day at a time – "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." (Proverbs 4:18) The assessment process IS NOT a time to wallow in guilt, get frustrated, or quit striving. One of the key attributes of discipleship is persevering, working through mistakes and challenges. Countless people have taken piano lessons, but very few people are concert pianists. Why? Because most get frustrated at their constant mistakes and quit practicing, happy to tinker around on occasion, perhaps at parties – no perseverance required. Let's make beautiful music unto the Lord through daily, persistent habits of discipleship which include ending each day quietly in our beds pondering our hearts.

17. Psalm 4:6 – "There are many who say, 'Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!' All goodness comes from the Lord. People will always let you down, but God never will.

18. Psalm 4:8 – "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." You will only find peace in Jesus. Peace on Earth only becomes a reality when Jesus is present. When you trust in Jesus with all your heart, you will have peace in any situation. You will be able to rest peacefully in the back of the boat while it is being tossed about by the storms and while everyone else says, "We perish".

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 13 Jan 18: Consider your "bowls of soup", those places in life where you lack adequate self-control. Remember that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, not merely will power; pray for greater self-control; and instead of focusing on the soup, focus on Jesus. (Gen 25:29-34)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 5, Friday, 12 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+23%2C+24%3B+proverbs+12%3B+mat+10>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 12 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 23:2 -- God's ways do not protect His people from normal griefs and losses in life.
2. Genesis 23:6 -- "Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us." Abraham had established a reputation among unbelievers as God's faithful leader, and though they did not share his faith, he had earned their great respect. Are you recognized in your community as faithful child of God, an ambassador for Jesus?
3. Genesis 23:16 -- "Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants." Abraham was very careful to leave no doubt that all of his business dealings were more than fair. He likely paid more than "blue book" for this land.
4. Genesis 24:2-6 – The servant's past obedience gained him great responsibility.

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5. Genesis 24:3, 4 – "... you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell...." Most important to Abraham was that his son marry within the people of God; this was non-negotiable as it must be today. See Deuteronomy 7:3, and 2 Chronicles 6:14-15.

6. Genesis 24:12 – "Please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham." The faithful and obedient servant wanted blessing for his master. Note also that the servant realized that success could only come from God. As faithful servants, our goal should only be what God wants, and we should recognize that only He can accomplish that goal through us; we cannot do it ourselves. God-sized goals always require God-sized power. God is always asking you to do what is impossible for you so that His power and glory may be revealed rather than yours.

7. Genesis 24:12-14 – The servant had a test of character for Isaac's future wife, not a test of personality, beauty, or family connections.

8. Genesis 24:15, 16 – God arranged circumstances and put everything in place to ensure that Rebekah met Isaac.

9. Genesis 24:16 – Rebekah had saved herself for marriage.

10. Genesis 24:19, 20 -- "When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, 'I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.' So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels." Watering camels was a huge task, but Rebekah offered to do it for a complete stranger without being asked. Note also that she did it quickly, with great zeal, not begrudgingly. What does this say about her character? Who do you know who lives this way?

11. Genesis 24:50, 51 – No man can thwart the plans of God. God blesses those who abide by His plans.

12. Genesis 24:52-54 – The servant paid the bride price. You too were bought at a price which you will soon learn all about in your daily Bible readings.

13. Genesis 24:55-58 – It is easy to say you will follow God (vs 50, 51), but delay indicates doubt, self-centeredness, and disobedience. Willing obedience is always instant obedience.

14. Proverbs 12 – This chapter compares the attributes of the righteous person with the attributes of the foolish person. Read this chapter and see which ones apply to you. Do you love discipline (v1)? Do you see God's favor in your life (v2)? Are you firmly grounded and strong (v3)? Are you in iron-sharpens-iron, honorable relationships (v4)? Are your thoughts pure, holy, and wise; and do you give sound counsel (v5)? Do your words rescue and heal people rather than destroy them and hurt them (vs6, 18)? Are you commended for your good sense (v8)? Do you live well within your means, without concern about impressing others (v9)? Are you equally kind to the lowliest people (v 10)? Are you hard working (vs11, 24, 27)? Do you focus on doing the best you can rather than worrying about what everyone else is doing and rather than becoming envious or jealous (vs12, 14)? Are you always truthful, even in the smallest ways (vs13, 17, 18, 22)? Do you humbly listen to the advice of others? (v15)? Do you hold your emotions and ignore insults (v16)? Do you plan to make peace with all others rather than adding friction (v20)? Do you speak the truth only when it is helpful and brings peace and reconciliation (v 23)? Do you always comfort others in distress (v25)? Do your words and guidance always lead people to a better place and closer to Jesus (vs26, 28)

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15. Proverbs 12:1 – “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” God disciplines you to teach you. Don’t despise His discipline – learn from it.
16. Proverbs 12:9 – “Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread.” Don’t seek honor; seek to be honorable.
17. Proverbs 12:11 -- "Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense." God is Author of both the natural laws and the ethical laws. One theme that is constantly repeated in the Bible is "You reap what you sow." God's natural and ethical laws are simple and produce obvious results. We complicate things when we attempt to work around God's laws and do pointless things. Don't waste your time, energy, and efforts by doing things God never intended.
18. Proverbs 12:16 -- "The prudent ignores an insult." Did you get that? Ignore insults and be prudent.
19. Proverbs 12:18 -- "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Are all of your words healing?
20. Proverbs 12:20 -- "Those who plan peace have joy." You have to have a plan for peace.
21. Proverbs 12:25 -- "Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." You can help take a load off of others by giving them a good word to ease their anxiety.
22. Proverbs 12:26 – “One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.” Let God’s good word take away your stress.
23. Proverbs 12:26-28 -- "One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.... In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death." A good leader guides people to where they need to go. They know the way and show the way. The Bible says that Jesus IS the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Good leaders lead people to Jesus. Leading people anywhere else is to lead them astray, wickedness. So, all those secular gurus out there are, in fact, wicked.
24. Matthew 10:1 – Jesus empowered His disciples, but because of their lack of faith, they did not always use the power they actually had.
25. Matthew 10:6 – The church’s top priority is to properly disciple believers that they may then properly go and make more disciples. Today’s body includes many lost sheep that need to experience repentance and revival.
26. Matthew 10:11-15 – Some are ready to receive God’s word; others are not. We cannot do the work of the Holy Spirit. We must provide the message and be ready for those who are willing to receive it.
27. Matthew 10:16-20 – God is intentionally sending you into situations where you will be persecuted. It goes with your task. Don’t be surprised, and don’t worry about it – trust God.
28. Matthew 10:24, 25, 38, 39 -- "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.... Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." A big theme in today’s readings is discipleship and followership. Saving faith is not just a believing faith, it is a following faith. It is not just believing in God, it is believing God, trusting

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Him at His word, and obeying Him. In our OT readings, we learn some things about followership and obedience: God's path will not take us 'out of the world' or shield us from all of the problems or sorrows of the world. (Genesis 23:2; see also John 17:15) Obedience will make us ready for greater responsibility and usability by God. (Genesis 24:2-6) God leads us to where He is already at work preparing the way for His purposes. (Genesis 24:27, 48) When we follow God's lead, we will see His miraculous provision in ways we could not have imagined, and this will drive us to greater worship and a closer relationship to Him. (Genesis 24:25-27, 48) When we follow God, it is His power that brings us success, not our power. (Genesis 24:40) A key to followership is focus and perseverance. When you know God has led you, you need to keep following despite temptations to get sidetracked. (Genesis 24:56) Following God means that we have to wait on Him and trust His provision, even in apparent delay. (Genesis 24:63) In the NT, Jesus further expands on the traits of a disciple, concluding that it demands a level of love and loyalty that far exceeds what we display in our most intimate human relationships. We must deny self, take up the cross, and follow Jesus; otherwise, Jesus says, we are not worthy of him. (Matthew 10:38) Of course we know that we are not, of ourselves, worthy of Him, but we should strive to become 'perfected in love'. We are not worthy, but God is more than worth of our complete surrender. Interestingly, the word 'worship' essentially means, 'worthy-ship' or worthy of complete praise and honor. Related to our theme today, The Bible says, "By the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1) Let us worship not only in spirit but also in truth.

29. Matthew 10:34 – Jesus did NOT come to bring peace to the earth, rather spiritual peace for those who "know" Him.

30. Matthew 10:37-38 – Notice the degree of love Jesus expects from His followers.

31. Matthew 10:40 -- You are Christ's Ambassador.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 12 Jan 18: Trust God in obedience today, and watch Him work in your life in ways you would have never imagined. (See today's readings)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 4, Thursday, 11 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+21%2C+22%3B+proverbs+11%3B+mat+9>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 11 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 21:1 -- "The Lord did to Sarah as he had promised." The Lord always keeps His promises. As His ambassadors on earth, we must model His character by always keeping our promises.

2. Genesis 21:12-13 – God has plans for people you may dislike.

3. Genesis 21:23 -- "Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity." Abraham's trustworthiness came from his relationship with God. Abimelech called upon Abraham's faith in God as the foundation of their relationship of trust. If someone doesn't ground their integrity on fidelity to God, their integrity will always be in doubt because soon or later, self-interest will take priority over self-sacrifice. Ultimately, the unbeliever makes themselves 'god' at some point.

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4. Genesis 22:1, 2 -- Our difficulty is not usually that we don't know God's will. Our discomfort comes from the fact that we do know His will, but we do not want to do it! When God first spoke to Abraham, His commands were straightforward. "Go to a land I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Then God led Abraham through a number of tests over the years. Abraham learned patience as he waited on God's promise of a son, which took twenty-five years to be fulfilled. Abraham learned to trust God through battles with kings and through the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The pinnacle of Abraham's walk of faith was when God asked him to sacrifice the one thing that meant more to him than anything else. Abraham's previous obedience indicated that he would have quickly and decisively sacrificed anything else God asked of him, but was he prepared for this? God did not ask Abraham to make such a significant sacrifice at the beginning of their relationship. This came more than thirty years after Abraham began walking with God. As the Father progressively reveals His ways to you in your Christian pilgrimage, you, like Abraham, will develop a deeper level of trust in Him. When you first became a Christian, your Master's instructions were probably fundamental, such as being baptized or changing your lifestyle. But as you learn to trust Him more deeply, He will develop your character to match bigger tests, and with the greater test will come a greater love for God and knowledge of His ways. Are you ready for God's next revelation? (Henry T. Blackaby)

5. Genesis 22:1-12 -- God will use those who hold nothing back from Him. You cannot value something more than your relationship with God.

6. Genesis 22:8 -- Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb." This is a prophecy of Jesus. Notice that Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice as Jesus carried His cross.

7. Genesis 22:14 -- "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." The "land of Moriah" is where Jesus was crucified. There is much debate over the various hills of Moriah and whether or not Abraham's sacrifice was the exact location of Jesus' crucifixion, but there really is no way of proving any theory. The key point is that this is a foreshadowing of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for us.

8. Proverbs 11:2 -- "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom." Pride is mentioned around 100 times in the Bible, only a few times is it mentioned in a positive way. Conversely, humility is mentioned around 100 times in the Bible, either as a godly attribute possessed by someone, or something God does to the prideful through discipline and punishment. God hates pride. Do you? Watch out for any indication of pride in your life. Pursue humility.

9. Proverbs 11:12 -- "Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent." It is always good to maintain a long-term view on relationships. Your family will be with you your whole life. You will have to work with your co-workers for a long time. Your neighbors will be your neighbors for a long time. If your behavior promotes strife with the people around you, you may have to live with it for a long time. You may even be surprised one day when that stranger you argued with in a parking lot or shopping center checkout line (exposing your bad side) turns out to be your new neighbor, church member, etc. -- someone you didn't realize you would see regularly. Best to always treat people in a way that promotes peace, whether they deserve it or not. Additionally, the people closest to you are your first responsibility in ministry and discipleship. They will see more of you than anybody and, therefore, have the best opportunity to see Christ in you. Make the most of the opportunity to bear fruit for the Kingdom.

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10. Matthew 9:6 – “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” — he then said to the paralytic— ‘Rise, pick up your bed and go home.’” God uses miracles to glorify Himself and to validate His messenger, in this case His Son. We often pray for miracles for our reasons, but God uses miracles for His ultimate purpose -- to reconcile people to Him.

11. Matthew 9:8 – “When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.” Jesus transferred His authority to His disciples and said that they would do even greater things than He:

- “And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.” (Matthew 10:1)

- “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

- “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” (Titus 2:15)

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

12. Matthew 9:13 – “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” When you think you are righteous, you have a hard time forgiving others. The self-righteous believe their deeds (such as sacrifices) make them more righteous than others. Mercy comes from the truly humble sinner who understands the price Christ paid for them in mercy and grace. Mercy is a true act of worship. There is not greater indicator of what we really think about God and how much we really love Him than how we treat others. We worship primarily, first and foremost, through relationships. The Bible says, “He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20) Love is the evidence of our salvation: “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” (1 John 3:14) Jesus said that if we truly love Him, we will obey Him, and the primary commandment He gave us was to love one another – “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34) How did Jesus love us? “God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Therefore, we must ‘lay down our lives’ before those who sin against us and who the world would consider ‘unworthy’ of love, the unlovable. How much we value the mercy and grace we have received through the blood of Jesus is not revealed in songs, rituals, sacrifices, or other religious activities but rather in the mercy and grace we show others. This is how we glorify God: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35) This is how we change the world, not through personal successes, parades, conventions, protests, speeches, or politics, but by changing hearts, one heart at a time -- “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Luke 20:25) God gave us our mission; it is a mission of reconciliation: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5: 18, 19) The messenger is known for shocking love, mercy, generosity, and holiness: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the

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Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." (James 1:27) "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1) This is how we change the world.

13. Matthew 9:15 – "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." Now is the time of fasting. Do you fast along with your prayers?

14. Matthew 9:18-25 -- The woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood made Jesus "unclean" as a Rabbi when she touched the fringe of his garment. (Leviticus 15:25-27) She acted selfishly without considering the needs of others. However, Jesus did not scold her. Now Jesus was unclean, but now Jesus could enter the house of the dead girl and touch her without intentionally making Himself unclean (touching a dead body made priests unclean by Levitical Law). God will not let the sins of others get in the way of Him using them for His glory, and our sins do not change God's plan. God uses all things, good and bad, for His glory and in accordance with His plan, though we cannot see how all things are coming together.

15. Matthew 9:36 – "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." You see all types of people in a crowd. Crowds often bring out the best and worse in human nature, some are courteous towards others, and some aren't. Some people simply hate crowds because of how people act. Jesus had compassion on crowds, understanding that they were simply "harassed and helpless". How you feel about crowds reveals more about you than the crowd.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 11 Jan 18: Seek to be a righteous leader today by leading everyone to Jesus. (Proverbs 12:26)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 3, Wednesday, 10 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+19%2C+20%3B+proverbs+10%3B+mat+8>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 10 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 19:1 – "Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom." The term "sitting at the gate" signifies that Lot was a leader within the community who settled disputes and offered counsel to others. Lot had become a respected member of a highly sinful society. What does that say about Lot?

2. Genesis 19:1 -- "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening". Note that the Lord and the two angels visited Abraham, but the Lord did not accompany the two angels to Sodom. Abraham had a level of relationship with the Lord that Lot, having chosen to partner with corruption, never experienced. 2 Peter 2:7, 8 describes Lot as a "righteous" man, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked... for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard." However, Lot chose to stay among the wicked, to do business with them, to raise his children with them, to partner with them. There is no account of Lot's influence on Sodom, but as you will see, the Bible has much to say about how Sodom influenced Lot's family. Christians are called to be in the world but not "of the world". To be influence agents but not influenced by agents of evil. Perhaps the greatest threat to the modern church is syncretism -- the blending of worldly ideas with the Biblical standard, the mixing of the holy and unholy, compromise with

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the world for the sake of getting along, finding unity with the ungodly around something other than Jesus. Within the world, Christians cannot isolate themselves and still accomplish their mission of preaching the Gospel to all creation, but we will always be set apart from the ungodly, lacking unity with those who unify around moralism, humanism, patriotism, traditions, culture, or any other substitute for Jesus. The Lord would not even engage Sodom, but Lot had to be kicked out by the angels -- he didn't leave of his own volition. Where might you have grown attached to ungodly things or have sent mixed messages, combining worldly viewpoints with the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ? If someone were to ask your acquaintances what you are all about and what you care about most, would they say, "Jesus"?

3. Genesis 19:2 -- "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house...." Lot clearly knew that his fellow citizens were untrustworthy and unfit for holy guests.

4. Genesis 19:8 -- "Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." Rules of hospitality were well established in the customs of the day, requiring the host to protect their guests at all costs. Lot valued the cultural customs of hospitality more than God's command of love -- he was willing to subject his daughters to gang rape and likely death for the sake of customs. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for the same heart -- "Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3) Many socially acceptable customs, traditions, and standards of our day are actually contrary to God's word. Consider where you might have allowed your fidelity to God to be compromised because of what has always been practiced.

5. Genesis 19:9 -- "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge!" As per the comments on Matthew 7 from yesterday, the common refrain from the unrepentant sinner to those who would challenge their sin is, "Who are you to judge me?" Lot was not condemning the sinner but rather condemning their actions and likely hoping to protect them from the inevitable consequences of their sin.

6. Genesis 19:9 -- "Now we will deal worse with you than with them." When Lot tried to prevent people for sinning, he was labeled as "judgmental". Why do Christians face so much persecution? Unrepentant sinners hate the one who challenges them on their behavior.

7. Genesis 19:16 -- "But he lingered." Having been compromised by Sodom's culture, Lot had grown unresponsive to God's word sent through God's messengers. As previously mentioned, the Bible says that Lot was a "righteous [man], greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard)". (2 Peter 2:7,8) Yet Lot had partnered with his sinful community to the point where he could not bring himself to separate from them, and as a result, he lost most of his family, and he allowed his daughters to be morally corrupted to the point where they committed terrible sexual sin themselves. At the point where God was prepared to destroy the city, Lot's witness was so weak and corrupted that his only response to the mob of homosexual predators who threatened to rape the angels was to offer his virgin daughters for their sexual gratification! At this point, Lot's pleas to his sons-in-law to leave the doomed city were taken as jokes. Of course, we all know what happened to Lot's wife. A key point from this story is that Lot's compromise was slow, over time. The whole culture had gradually slipped into ever-increasing sin to the point where no one could comprehend its gravity and where completely desensitized and unaware of the looming destruction. God's wrath, though it should have been anticipated, came as a thief in the night. Jesus, uses this story to warn our generation: "Just

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as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. (Luke 17:32) We must be wary of gradual compromise and syncretism. In Luke 17, Jesus continues to explain what caused both Lot's sin and Abraham's sin in his dealings with Abimelech: "Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.... He said to them, 'Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.'" (Luke 17:33, 37) If we have not truly denied self, taken up the Cross daily, and chosen to follow Jesus on his mission rather than our own, we are in peril of losing our saltiness and luminance before a society that desperately needs salvation. We must not allow ourselves to lose our holiness in this sinful world.

8. Genesis 19:26 -- "But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Had Lot left Sodom when he should have, he would not have lost his wife. Had he never taken his family to Sodom, his wife would never have grown attached to the wicked city. Godly leaders are called to protect weaker Christians from their weakness by being a shield against temptation whenever possible. This responsibility starts within the home.

9. Genesis 19:32 -- "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." Lot was a righteous man, but he chose to raise his daughters in Sodom. Sodom was more of an influence on Lot's daughters than their father was; so they had become sexually perverse.

10. Genesis 19:36 -- "Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father." The children of incest grew into enemy nations against Israel.

11. Genesis 20:2 -- "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.'" Fear of man can lead you to sin terribly. It takes faith to obey God regardless the perceived cost.

12. Genesis 20:5 -- "Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Abimelech showed more integrity than God's prophet Abraham -- what a tragedy. And Abraham's cowardice almost cost Abimelech his life. How terrible is it for one of God's people to dishonor God by sinning before unbelievers? How incredible is God's grace that He does not give up on the failures of His servants? Abraham, like the rest of us, was in no position to brag of his righteousness; he could only brag about the mercy, grace, and righteousness of God.

13. Genesis 20:6 -- "It was I who kept you from sinning against me." You have no idea how many times God has protected you from your own weakness by shielding you from temptations you would not be able to handle -- another reason no one can brag about their righteousness. God knows that, often times, if you got what you wanted, you would not be able to handle it with integrity and would drift from Him.

14. Genesis 20:11 -- "Abraham said, 'I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'" The Bible says that we cannot know the hearts of other people, and we often prejudge others inappropriately causing us to sin by treating them unfairly. This year, we will read several stories in the Bible where misunderstandings between people led to avoidable

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conflict, pain, and destruction. As Christians, we must be very careful not to let our biases get in the way of fairness.

15. Genesis 20:14 – “Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him.” Abimelech paid restitution despite having been deceived and having attempted to act in integrity. Abimelech paid the price for peace though the conflict wasn’t his fault.

16. Proverbs 10:8 – “The wise of heart will receive commandments.” A wise heart is an obedient heart.

17. Proverbs 10:4, 5 – “A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.” Success requires persistent hard work for a long time. Successful people do not expect instant gratification.

18. Proverbs 10:10, 11 – “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.” A person’s words either build up others or tear them down, and words reveal whether or not you have a heart of love which is a godly heart.

19. Proverbs 10:22 – “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.” Many seek to create their own blessings on earth, but sorrow comes with them. Only God knows what is best for us. We must not sacrifice His will for what we want. When we set our own goals, we may accomplish them and miss what God intended for us. Make sure you are pursuing God's plan for your life and not your own plan.

20. Matthew 8:4 -- "And Jesus said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.'" Likely, Jesus was not trying to hide His glory from the world but rather was first revealing Himself to the religious leaders that they might lead others by example in repentance. When leaders fail, God raises up new, faithful leaders.

21. Matthew 8:6 -- “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” The Centurion put his reputation on the line to approach Jesus because of his compassion for his servant.

22. Matthew 8:10 -- “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.” True followers of Jesus trust Him at His word and act upon His word with complete confidence.

23. Matthew 8:11, 12 – “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Many who think they are going to heaven aren’t.

24. Matthew 8:13 -- "And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment." As physical beings, we have a tendency to view God from a physical perspective, limiting in our minds how we think God might work in a situation based upon what we have seen and understand. Here we see that Jesus did not have to go to the servant to heal the servant, though that was what most would have expected. The power of the Holy Spirit is not limited by time and space.

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25. Matthew 8:20 – “And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’” Jesus exemplified personal sacrifice and commitment and expected His disciples to follow His example.

26. Matthew 8:22 -- "And Jesus said to him, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.'" Following Jesus requires wholehearted, total commitment. You cannot go with Him while staying where you are. You also cannot ask Him to wait for you until you are ready to join Him on the journey. Nor can you take a path halfway between where you are going and where He is going and still be with Him. You just need to walk with Jesus right now, leaving behind all self-interest in pursuit of His will.

27. Matthew 8:25 -- "And they went and woke him, saying, 'Save us, Lord; we are perishing.'" Our thoughts are not God's thoughts, and our ways are not God's ways -- they are completely different. We cannot understand our lives or what we should do from our own understanding which is based upon our limited awareness and perspective. What we see and what we feel is not the total reality and is often a distorted interpretation of reality. While the disciples thought they were going to die, Jesus was sleeping calmly because Jesus had quintessential (beyond the five (quint-) senses) awareness or supernatural (beyond natural abilities) awareness through the Holy Spirit. To understand anything, you must be guided by the Holy Spirit, not relying on your own understanding.

28. Matthew 8:26 – “And he said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?’” Crisis reveals what you really believe about Jesus and in what you place your faith. Doubt is your signal that you don’t know God as well as you should.

29. Matthew 8:28 -- "And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes." Jesus led His disciples to the land of the pagans who worshipped Baal and valued swine, unclean to Jews. Immediately they met two demon-possessed men coming out of tombs (imagine that in your mind) confirming in the minds of the disciples they had no business being there. However, Jesus intended to spread the Gospel to these Hellenistic people. Jesus performed a miracle but the response from the crowd was not positive -- "they begged him to leave their region." Once again, this undoubtedly convinced the disciples that this journey was a wasted effort, time squandered on ungodly people who would never accept Jesus. Jesus did not try to convince the crowds but rather he will focus His attention on the one under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We will soon read of the powerful impact this one trip had on the entire region. This is also another good example of how we are called to engage or sinful culture without partnering with that sinful culture. Jesus in no way compromised His fidelity, His integrity, or His holiness while He travelled the country of the Gadarenes. He did not try to validate their culture or show 'respect' for their false religion. He did not change along the way, but He transformed others.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 10 Jan 18: Today, don't just do something. Wait for the Holy Spirits guidance and act upon it. Don't just follow your routine or plan. Ask God what He wants you to do, and quietly wait for a response. If He convicts you to call someone, call them. If God convicts you to go somewhere, then go. Keep your eyes open for where the Holy Spirit is working in someone's life, and join Him there. Be an ambassador for Jesus to the person the Holy Spirit is already working on. Don't waste your time trying to build something where the Holy Spirit is not building. You will find at first it is very difficult to follow the Holy Spirit and wait upon the Lord for direction. We are a very busy people who often measure the day's success on what we got done. The problem with that is we might get all the wrong things done, being so busy we missed what God would have had us do. God is already

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working His plan around you -- join Him in what He is already doing rather than asking Him to join you on what you want to do or on what you think He should do. (Matthew 8:28)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 2, Tuesday, 9 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+17%2C+18%3B+proverbs+9%3B+mat+7>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 9 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 17:1 -- "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless." God's standard for His people has not changed. God's expectation for His chosen people is clear and consistent throughout the whole Bible: "Walk before me, and be blameless.... Keep the way of the Lord." Previously in Matthew we heard Jesus say, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Today, Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.... depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:21, 23) Though we are saved by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9), we are expected to obey in response to grace. The Great Commission says, "Go therefore and make disciples [not merely 'believers' like the demons described in James] of all nations.... teaching them to observe [obey] all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Or as James says, "faith without deeds is useless (James 2:20)." Genuine faith inevitably produces a changed life from a changed heart. We are saved not by our works but by faith; but genuine faith works. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17)!" Jesus said, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3:8)." The "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22, 23)." The Bible is clear that, of our own merit, no one is righteous (Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:10), rather we are made righteous through Christ (II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4). However, in our state of grace, we are compelled to "seek righteousness". (Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 6:33) With all our might and with all our heart, we "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11)." The genuinely saved person will change for the better (2 Corinthians 5:17). That person is saved "for good works" (Ephesians 2:10), and there is no way (s)he can fail to bring forth at least some of the fruit that characterizes the redeemed (Matthew 7:17). His desires are transformed; (s)he begins to hate sin and love righteousness. He will not be sinless, but the pattern of his life will be decreasing sin and increasing righteousness. Disciples are disciplined and produce the last-mentioned fruit of the Spirit -- self-control.

2. Genesis 18:1-2 -- "And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him." This is another Old Testament Theophany -- Jesus appearing with two angels.

3. Genesis 18:19 -- "For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord." Obedience is to be taught to the next generation. Even those without children are commanded to "make disciples", to train up others to follow Jesus. You are not merely called to be a good student; you are called to be an instructor.

4. Genesis 18:22-32 -- God's people have a genuine heart for sinners and seek to intervene for them.

5. Proverbs 9:4-6 -- "'Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!' To him who lacks sense she says, 'Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the

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way of insight.” The invitation is out there for anyone willing to repent and to humble themselves before the Lord.

6. Proverbs 9:7-8 – “Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” Jesus told His disciples to invest their time and energy on those who would accept their message and to ‘shake the dust off their feet and walk away’ from those who were clearly not willing to listen -- “And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.” (Matthew 10:14) We are called to proclaim the Gospel to all but most importantly to make disciples of those who would follow Jesus. Pay close attention to Jesus’ Great Commission to us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) Again, God did not call us to just make believers, He called us, you and I, to make disciples, teaching them “to obey all”, to be priests on this earth. (1 Peter 2:5-9) That means the you must first be a good example of a priest, knowing how to rightly divine and to teach God’s word, and you must lead others in walking in the word. It is much, much more than simply sitting in church and in small group Bible studies, it is hitting the streets with fellow believers as the Spirit leads, like Jesus did with His twelve. It means getting dirty and stepping out in faith into the unknown. It means learning how to discern who is already being convicted by the Holy Spirit and then ministering to them. Are you ready to accept the Great Commission? Do you have mentees who are equally committed to following Jesus? As you lead others, remember to lead them as a mere follower of Jesus – it is always about Jesus and not about you. Never, ever point to yourself, always to Jesus.

7. Proverbs 9:7-9 – One of the big differences between a fool and a wise person is the ability to receive instruction and correction from others.

8. Proverbs 9:10 – “The knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” We are only as wise and spiritual as how well we know Jesus. Jesus explains this in John 17. It is not moralism that saves us. It is Jesus. Jesus doesn’t just want us to live ‘good’ lives and do works of charity so that life might be more comfortable on earth for the lost. Jesus wants us to know Him and lead others to knowing Him.

9. Proverbs 9:12 – “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” The choice is ours. Will we obey God’s word in total, or will we get wrapped up in the worries of the world? Some “scoff” in obvious ways by denying Jesus, but others “scoff” in less obvious ways by ignoring God’s Great Commandment and Great Commission, the call to live solely as an ambassador for Jesus. Even the demons believe and Jesus, and many church goers scoff – the lukewarm who have lost their light and saltiness.

10. Proverbs 9:15-16 – “The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way.” Folly’s message competes with Wisdom’s (Jesus’) message, inviting all to live for self-interest and pleasure. In the competition of ideas, you are called to proclaim Jesus, not moralism or a message the merely promises better living on earth.

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11. Matthew 7:1, 2 -- "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Perhaps no Bible verses have been more misapplied than these. Many blatant unrepentant sinners have quoted these verses in response to calls for repentance. Many Christians have used these verses to justify their failure to "speak the truth in love" to those who needed to be confronted in their sin. These verses are not telling us to remain silent before sin or to make light of sin. If they were, they would be countering countless other clear verses in the Bible. If Jesus were telling His disciples not to challenge the sinner, John the Baptist would have lost his head for all the wrong reasons, and Jesus Himself would have been out of line while driving out the money changers in the Temple and calling the Pharisees a "brood of vipers" and "whitewashed tombs". Instead, Jesus is telling us here not to play the role of the "judge" [the righteous administer of justice who is God] rather than the juror [merely a peer who is judging whether an action is right or wrong]. We are not called to condemn others from a self-righteous position, viewing ourselves as more righteous than the other; we are called to humbly speak the truth to others in love, not hoping for their punishment, but hoping for their reconciliation with God. We must be motivated by love, and our goal must always be the sinner's best interest. When we see the sin in others, we must seek to help them out of sin while recognizing our own unworthiness before the Lord, never trying to compare ourselves to them [only God sees the whole picture]. And before we engage the sinner, we must search our own hearts for any selfish motive -- are we concerned for them only, or are we offended and hoping to justify ourselves or seek 'justice' for ourselves? We are merely poor beggars helping others find bread. Only God knows the hearts and minds of others, we cannot. We can only observe outward behavior and compare it to God's commands, all the while remembering our need for accountability from others too. Also, we cannot place another person in the proper context of God's total perspective. If we lived the life of the other person, we might have done worse than they them. The less talented person is quick to accuse the more talented one of being egotistical. The person who grew up on a stable home with good parents is quick to condemn the person from a broken home of being undisciplined. The rich person is quick to withhold charity to the poor person, arguing that they will just squander to gift. God does not call us to judge the person but rather to judge the actions with a heart for reconciliation, always pointing to Jesus. And, here is where continual forgiveness comes in to play. God does not want us to ever give up on the sinner. If he or she is still trapped in sin, our job is not done. God placed you in that relationship for a reason -- His reason -- reconciliation. This is tough work, but you have been given the authority of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to do that work for His glory. Quit on that sinner when you want God to quit on you -- you know you are going to sin again against God today and every day. You need continual grace and they do too.

12. Matthew 7:7-11 -- If you desire a relationship with Jesus Christ and to know His will, He will reveal Himself to you and show you His will for you.

13. Matthew 7:12-14 -- "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." The 'Golden Rule' is 'Golden' because it is both valuable and very rarely found among people. Few are willing to enter the narrow gate. Few are willing to truly follow Jesus and obey this command. Are you? If not, consider Matthew 7:21 very carefully.

14. Matthew 7:15-19 -- "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs

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from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” Don’t listen to teachers who don’t walk as Jesus walked. Bible knowledge is not the same as wisdom which is revealed in holiness and love. A true teacher will not boast in themselves for their knowledge but will walk humbly and point solely to Christ.

15. Matthew 7:22-23 – “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” You can do all the right things for all the wrong reasons and receive no credit from God.

16. Matthew 7:24 -- “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Once again, hearing Jesus is not sufficient. You must obey His commands. The greatest command is unconditional love and forgiveness. It is a far greater sin to know God’s word and choose to disobey it than to not know it at all. Don’t take God’s word lightly – what God says He means. To obey God, you must love Him enough to deny self, take up your cross in messy relationships, and follow Jesus as He seeks the lost, the wounded, the suffering, and those struggling with sin.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 9 Jan 18: Today, pray that God will help you interact with offensive people as His ambassador rather than as your own defender. Pray that He will help you see them as He sees them, that your wholehearted goal for that unloving person will be that they draw closer to Jesus. Take yourself out of the equation -- it is not about you. You are on mission for Jesus in that relationship. Pray for the strength to endure whatever persecution you will encounter as you continue to minister to the needs of that person, whether it be a person you know very well and deal with regularly or that person who just cut you off on the highway or took your parking spot. And in that moment, continually search your heart, remembering that your first reaction, what you do without thinking, is the best indicator of what is really in your heart. As C.S. Lewis said, the rats in the seller are only visible for a brief moment when you turn on the lights. They are then hidden but still there. Look for the 'rats' in your heart and deal with them. (Matthew 7)

DBRP- WEEK 2, Day 1, Monday, 8 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+15%2C+16%3B+proverbs+8%3B+mat+6>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 8 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 15:1 -- “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield.” When God is your shield, you definitely have nothing to fear. Do you think this vision ended Abram’s fear? Do you trust God in His word?
2. Genesis 15:16 – God’s promise to Abraham would take four generations to be completed. Are you satisfied to obey God without immediate reward if any at all? Do you think generationally?
3. Genesis 15:17 – “When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.” In ancient times, two people would bind a contract by walking together through the blood of animals cut in half, signifying that breaking the contract was deserving of death. Notice that in this covenant, only God ‘walked’ through the animal parts, perhaps

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taking full responsibility for the covenant. God would hold up His end of the bargain, but when Abraham would inevitably fail to keep his end, God would not abandon the covenant or destroy Abraham.

4. Genesis 16:1-4 – “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.” Rather than patiently trusting on God’s word, Sarai and Abram took matters into their own hands and followed a very common worldly practice to accomplish their goals. As a result, great strife entered into the world that continues through Islam today. Obedience requires a willingness to wait on God rather than getting desired results the wrong way. Often, popular opinion or ‘common sense’ stands in direct contrast to God’s commands but often seems to produce practical, quick results. However, God will not bless disobedience, and there are always negative, destructive consequences for disobedience, some consequences that may affect generations.

5. Genesis 16:12 – The Bible prophesied of Islam and the bloodshed it would inspire.

6. Matthew 6:1 – Our motivation for doing the good things we do should only be to serve God in love; any other motivation is unacceptable before the LORD and dangerous to you.

7. Matthew 6:2 – “When you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.” One of the biggest traps for a Christian is being tempted to share glory with Jesus, taking credit for what they do or drawing attention to themselves. Be wary of the Christian who talks about themselves, even if in the process, they ‘tip their hat’ to Jesus. Watch your “I”s and “Me”s. Search your heart – are you trying to feel good about yourself and gain the approval of people? Or, are you serving Jesus, solely out of love for Him, and giving your all so that “when you have done all that you were commanded, [you] say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’” (Luke 17:10)

8. Matthew 6:7-14 -- “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him....” The value and power of a prayer is determined by the heart behind the prayer, not the words. Jesus challenged the empty prayers of the ‘religious’ by offering the “Lord’s Prayer”, not as something to be recited (which is now customary) but rather as a challenge to the hearts of would-be followers. A true prayer first glorifies God and seeks His will above self-interest. A genuine prayer only seeks from God what is necessary to accomplish His work on earth, not to live in prosperity. A genuine prayer is truly ‘amazed by grace’ and seeks the strength to forgive all others as Jesus forgives. A genuine prayer desires the strength to resist temptation that God would be best glorified.

- Jesus ended His challenge with a reemphasis on forgiveness which is a measure of true thankfulness for salvation. How you forgive the one who persecutes you, who ‘crucifies’ you, is proof of your faith and love for Jesus. Most who recite the Lord’s Prayer don’t stop to consider that they are holding themselves accountable to forgiveness by asking God to treat them the way they treat others in forgiveness. Jesus was calling out the prideful to true humility. He was reminding all who desire grace from God that they must give unconditional grace to others. Jesus said, if you have a relationship that

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has not been reconciled, don't bring Him an offering until you have sought reconciliation and have truly forgiven. Worship is in relationships first.

9. Matthew 6:9, 12, 14, 15 -- "Pray then like this: ...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.... For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Again, the Lord's Prayer is first and foremost about forgiveness (undeserved, unconditional grace), and Jesus is delivering a not so subtle rebuke to many in the crowd in order to humble the proud. Jesus calls the unforgiving 'believer' a hypocrite – an actor, a liar, a fraud. It is an impossibility to receive unmerited forgiveness from God while refusing to offer the same to an offender. How could there be a higher arrogance than to expect forgiveness from the Holy One while demanding justice for ourselves, mere pitiful sinners? In walking the listener through The Lord's Prayer, Jesus is pointing out that absurdity. He first has the would-be supplicant acknowledge the absolute Holiness of the One we have sinned against; He then points out that the Kingdom is where God's will is done -- clearly, we have all fallen short of the Kingdom. Jesus then drives His point home by telling the listener to ask God for the same forgiveness we give to others – ouch! He finally tells the petitioner to acknowledge their own frailty by praying for more protection against further temptation and sin (which is inevitable). Forgiveness can be hard until we consider the offense against us in context with the awfulness of our own sin against God and the magnitude of the grace we have received at the unfathomable price of Christ crucified. To refuse to forgive is to claim ourselves to be more important or worthier of justice than Jesus Christ – unthinkable! Jesus looked down on those who had ruthlessly and mockingly nailed Him to the cross and cried out: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34) How could we refuse to do less? Forgiveness is not a spiritual gift, a skill, or an inherent trait. Forgiveness is a choice. Jesus said that if we are withholding forgiveness from another, we are not ready to worship God. (Matthew 5:23-24) So, if you realize that you have not forgiven someone; there is no higher priority in your life than to settle the matter right now.

10. Matthew 6:21 – "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." You will dedicate your time, energy, resources, and efforts to what you care about most. Many pursue Christianity in the selfish hope that God will give them what they want in this world, and their prayers reveal their self-centeredness – "Lord, give me what I want". Sometimes, they seek to make a deal with God – "Give me what I want, and I will serve you more."

11. Matthew 6:22-24 -- "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." Life perspective and focus is everything. What you really believe is true about life and what you care about most in life defines how you view everything and what you will act upon. If you really believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that changes everything -- you will not have any competing priorities in life and will live for Him only. If your eyes are affixed on Jesus, you won't even notice the potential distractions around you.

12. Matthew 6:27 – "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" Being anxious not only accomplishes nothing, it dishonors God who graciously promises you His best for you. Also, anxiousness promotes bad decision-making.

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13. Matthew 6:33 – “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Just focus on remaining obedient to Jesus, and let Jesus take care of the rest.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 8 Jan 18: Today, settle any unpaid debts of forgiveness today, and then remain debt free by unconditionally forgiving everyone, immediately, on the spot. Accept the personal price of forgiveness, cancelling the debts owed to you by others. No, it won't be fair – that is the point. (Matthew 6:7-14)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 7, Sunday, 7 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+13%2C+14%3B+proverbs+7%3B+psalm+2%2C+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Sunday, 7 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 13:6, 7 – “Their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, and

there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.” Throughout the entire Bible, we are warned not to let possessions or the pursuit of possessions to get in the way of relationships. Abram and Lot had been blessed by God in a tremendous way, but greedy hearts turn God's blessings into curses. When we get more than we need, we are told to give the rest away. Actually, we are told to give our best away and take for ourselves only what we need from the rest. Jesus warned of the man who had so much that he built new barns to store it all so he could retire and live comfortably (like worldly investment advisors recommend). Jesus called him a fool who should have stored up treasures in Heaven by caring for others with what he had today. (Luke 12:13-21) In this Genesis story, the family divided in pursuit of earthly gain, and everyone eventually paid a hefty price for choosing worldly prosperity over relationships. Consider families today – everyone goes their separate directions to make a living, and they rely on technology to maintain some degree of connection. When life's challenges come, many turn to strangers (counsellors, bankers, etc) rather than family for support. This is so normal, we hardly question it. However, God had a different plan for families and church families.

2. Genesis 13:9-11 – “‘If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the

right hand, then I will go to the left.’ And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.” In conflict, Abram following the godly principle of selflessly accommodating the desires of the other person. Abram's focus was on reconciliation while Lot remained focused on getting the best deal, coming out on top. Lot chose what he thought was the best land, and allowed Abram to take a harsh land full of enemies. No complaint was registered by Abram, though he got the raw deal. It took great faith for Abram to behave this way. It took no faith for Lot to take what he wanted. Abram's choice was blessed by God; Lot's choice was cursed. Do you have the faith to do what God wants even when obedience comes at a great cost to you and seems to give the advantage to more selfish people?

3. Genesis 13:13 – “Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.”

Better to live with nothing than to live in comfort with sinners.

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4. Genesis 13:16 -- Abraham had to walk in faith, believing beyond human reason that his descendants would be greatly blessed by God.

5. Genesis 14:12 -- Lot partnered with the ungodly and got entangled in ungodly conflicts.

6. Genesis 14:13-16 -- Abraham was prepared to defend himself and his loved ones.

7. Genesis 14:14, 15 -- “When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led

forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus.” Christians not only have an inalienable right to self-defense but also an inalienable responsibility to self-defense. This responsibility cannot be abrogated. Lot’s government did not protect or rescue him, Abram did. Abram had his own fighting force, and he didn’t create them overnight – they were highly trained and obviously very capable. Abram wasn’t looking for a fight, but he was ready to win one. Christians are called to seek peace and reconciliation but also to protect themselves, their families, and other fellow believers when necessary. Jesus rebuked Peter for attacking the Roman soldier with a sword because it was not a time for fighting, but don’t lose sight of the fact that Peter carried a sword, something that could not have escaped Jesus’ attention. In fact as Jesus drew closer to His crucifixion, He warned His disciples to make sure they had enough swords to protect themselves. (Luke 22:36-38)

8. Genesis 14:18-24 -- In great victory, Abraham worshipped and made offerings to God while others sought spoils of war.

9. Genesis 14:20 -- “And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” This is the first recorded act

of tithing – giving the first tenth of acquired wealth to God. Note that Abram did this before the Law required it. Melchizedek is a fascinating and mysterious Biblical figure, described here as “priest of God Most High.” Of the Messiah, Jesus, Psalm 110 says, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” This order is specifically different, set apart, and higher than the priestly order of Aaron from which was handed down the Law. Melchizedek is further mentioned and associated with Jesus in Hebrews 5-7. Hebrews 5 repeats that Jesus was “designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 6 points out that Jesus is forever a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and Hebrews 7 goes into a bit more detail about Melchizedek -- “He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!” Many believe that Melchizedek was a theophany, actually Jesus Himself appearing to Abraham, that Jesus is the only person in the “order” of Melchizedek and has been and will be forever, explaining why no one else is ever mentioned as part of this order. If the description in Hebrews 7 is literal, then it is indeed difficult to see how it could be properly applied to anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ. No mere earthly king “remains a priest forever,” and no mere human is “without father or mother.” However, others believe that Hebrews 7 is not intended to be taken literally and that Melchizedek was just a “type of Christ” who foreshadowed the coming Messiah. Are Melchizedek and Jesus the same person? A case can be made either way. At the very least, Melchizedek points to Christ.

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But it is also possible that Abraham, after his weary battle, met and gave honor to the Lord Jesus Himself. What do you think?

10. Genesis 14:22, 23 -- "But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'" Abram refused to partner with the ungodly, to become dependent upon the ungodly, or to be entangled in the affairs of the ungodly, which is what got Lot into trouble. Unfortunately, partnership with, dependency on, and entanglement with the world has largely disempowered the church today. As an example, according to the Evangelical Christian Credit Union, churches in America spend 82 percent of their budgets on overhead costs, largely due to building debt to ungodly banking institutions. Churches use only 3 percent of their budget for children's and youth programs, and only 2 percent for adult programs. Local and national benevolence receives just 1 percent of the typical church budget. Comparatively, the American Red Cross spends only 8 percent of its revenues on administrative and fundraising expenses; World Vision spends only 14 percent; and Compassion International spends just 16 percent. Also, among those Christians who claim to tithe, studies show that they actually give about 2% while they pay around 35-40% to debt. We should learn from Abram.

11. Genesis 14:22-23 – Abram had a healthy distrust of secular government which our Founding Fathers shared. Abram gave the king of Sodom what was his and wanted nothing in return – no strings attached. He did not want earthly kings to lay claim to any of God's glory. He did not want a relationship with the ungodly to compromise his relationship with God. Abram laid the foundations for separation of church and state. Abram's King was God. He needed no other. A church that becomes dependent upon government or any other institution will eventually compromise fidelity to God in favor of that worldly benefactor.

12. Proverbs 7:1, 2 – "My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live." God's commands are intended for your very best, though the sinful heart views them and needlessly restricting. Throughout the Bible, you will see God passionately warn people to obey His word for their benefit; and throughout the Bible, you will see people reject God's impassioned plea with devastating results. This pattern continues today.

13. Proverbs 7: 6, 7 – "For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense." The Holy Spirit will use God's word to give you a perception in life others don't have. As you read God's word and walk in God's word, the Holy Spirit will reveal to you the truth of God's word in the circumstances and activities that are occurring around you every day. You will begin to see and understand what God is doing in the lives of others around you, and you will have opportunities to help others understand the truth too. When you read God's word in the morning, God will continue to teach it to you all day long if you keep your eyes and ears open.

14. Psalm 2:1 – "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?" The entire Bible reveals a cosmic, timeless battle over who is really King. Is God the one and only Almighty God, or are people gods? Is it, "Thy will be done on earth..." or is it, "My will be done on earth..." This battle will continue until Jesus' return, and until then, everyone will take a side.

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15. Psalm 2:7 -- God has always planned to work through His Son to accomplish His mission of world redemption.

16. Psalm 2:10-12 – “Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” God expects all earthly leaders to serve Jesus. This is part of our message and His ambassadors.

17. Psalm 3:8 – “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” People place their hope in many different things. Some place their hope in politicians, others in finances, others in friends and family; but hope, peace, and security are ultimately found only in Jesus. Build your house on the rock of Jesus. Everything else is shifting sand.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 7 Jan 18: Trust God enough today to show mercy, grace, and forgiveness to others. Mercy is choosing to not give people the bad that they deserve; grace is giving people the good that they don't deserve; and forgiveness is cancelling their perceived debt to you (physical or emotional), and viewing them as 'right' with you. God showed you mercy, grace, and forgiveness through the ultimate price of His Son, Jesus – on this you place the unshakable hope of your Salvation. Your act of gratitude to God is to show the same kind of mercy and grace to others who would 'crucify' you in relationship. Having received reconciliation with God through Jesus, He is now calling you to be a minister of reconciliation with all others, those terrible sinners who God knows are going to hurt you because “Hurting people hurt people.” Today we read how Abram made himself vulnerable to Lot, and Lot took advantage of Abram's graciousness; but we also read how God blessed Abram beyond anything Lot could have done for him, and God restored ten-fold anything Abram might have lost in his generosity. Abram did not show any resentment to Lot and did not seek to get even with Lot but trusted God to provide and handle the justice equation – justice comes only from God, not from people. On the contrary, Abram stood ready to rescue Lot from the consequences of his own selfishness. 'Common sense' rules of 'fairness' would have validated Abram if he had decided to let Lot face the consequences of his actions or at least to receive payment for saving him from his actions, but Abram chose to follow a higher standard, the standard of the order of Melchizedek, the order of Jesus – mercy, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and love. Abram did not receive 'fairness' from the people around him; he received a higher blessing from God, and his blessings lasted for generations, for eternity. Trust God and choose the higher path of unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love. Today, sinful people will, in some way, treat you unfairly (though they will likely not literally crucify you as they did your example, Lord, and Savior Jesus). Leave justice to Jesus, and offer the gift of mercy, grace, forgiveness, love, reconciliation, and peace. But what if they don't ask for it or don't appreciate it? Remember the example of Jesus – “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) God gave before we asked, when we didn't even want the gift – that is what leaders in Christ do, regardless the personal cost. (Genesis 13:6-11)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 6, Saturday, 6 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+11%2C+12%3B+prov+6%3B+psalm+1>

Observations from today's readings: Saturday, 6 Jan 18:

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1. Genesis 11:1, 4, 6 – “Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.... Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city.... let us make a name for ourselves’.... And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.’” Without restraints in pursuit of godless objectives, mankind would have rapidly disintegrated into hell on earth. Therefore, God mercifully limited their abilities by confusing their language. Technology and globalization have become the new Tower of Babel, and there is quickly becoming no limit to the evil mankind can do.

-- There are many rally cries for “unity” and for compromise for the sake of unity. However, unifying around the wrong thing only means destruction for everyone, and comprising the truth for the sake of unity only contributes to the demise of all. Some say our country is more divided now than it has been since the Civil War, and as a result, we cannot make ‘progress’. However, division may not be such a bad thing if it is keeping us from making progress in the wrong direction. Christians are salt and light in the midst of society, preserving order and lighting the way by refusing to compromise the truth and by showing people the only thing worth unifying around – Jesus! There is no real unity, no real peace apart from Jesus.

2. Genesis 11:31 – “Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.” Abram’s (Abraham’s father) Terah first inspired Abram to travel from Ur to the area of the Promised Land. Terah had a vision to go to the Promised land, but for some unmentioned reason, Terah didn’t make it all the way. His vision would be fulfilled through his son. God works through families over generations. Do you have a long-term vision for your family to bring glory to God on earth?

3. Genesis 12:1 – “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go... to the land that I will show you.’” One of the ways of God revealed throughout the Bible is that God calls His servants to “Go” without showing them exactly where they are going. He knows His total plan for His servants, but He usually doesn’t completely reveal it to them. He will act the same way in your life. God expects His servants to walk in faith and total obedience. We always want to know exactly what God is doing in our lives, and when you think about it, our constant desire for answers is motivated by a lack of faith. Sometimes we are called to just go and see what God is going to do. And when God tells us to do something, it is quite often something we cannot do, because God intends to show us and the world what He can do, not what we can do. Again, it takes faith. The Bible says, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Have faith.

4. Genesis 12:8 – “And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.” One of the signs God is working in someone’s life is their motivation to pray, worship, and glorify God. Abram’s response to God’s activity in his life was to build altars to the Lord and to call upon His Name more and more. This took time and effort away from Abram’s travels and work, but He was compelled to do it. Notice that along his way, Abram didn’t build altars to himself, and he wasn’t celebrating his accomplishments. He was proclaiming what God had done, leaving markers for his family that they would never forget.

5. Genesis 12:10 – “Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.” God gave Abram a vision of greatness and then immediately led Abram right into a terrible famine where Abram’s faith was tested. To accomplish God-given objectives,

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God will seek to build in you a godly character. Character is built through adversity and challenges. You must learn to be faithful through any and all circumstances.

6. Genesis 12:12-14 – When Abram focused on self rather than others and lost his confidence in the LORD, he sinned. Sin is conceived in self-centeredness, pride, and fear. Sin translates destructive motives into distractive actions.

7. Proverbs 6:1-11 -- The Bible commands that you stay out of debt and to work hard for what you need rather than borrowing from others for what you need.

8. Proverbs 6:12-15 -- God expects you to always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

9. Proverbs 6:16 -- "There are six things that the Lord hates." Do you know the six things the Lord hates? Don't you think you should have those memorized if God hates them? Good News: You will get to review these six things every month this year.

10. Psalm 1:1, 2 – "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." Where do you go for advice? Who or what has the most influence on your daily decision-making? When you have to make a decision, even a seemingly small or insignificant decision, do you start you thinking with God's word? Would you say that God's word is so important to you that it is your "delight"?

11. Psalm 1:6 – "...for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." Again, Proverbs 1 talks about the two paths people take: the path of eternal life and path eternal death. Everyone takes one of the two paths. Jesus said, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:14) Are you willing to take the hard road to eternal life? Interestingly, Jesus described the way to life as "hard", but Jesus also says, "I am the Way," and "Come to me, all who labor and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28, 29) Seek to be so yoked to Jesus that the "hard" way may become "easy."

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 6 Jan 18: Consider carefully today who/what is influencing you in life. Who or what are you listening to on a daily basis that is not godly or that isn't from God. Resolve to not "sit in the seat of scoffers" by removing negative influences from your life, even those that 'scoff' in the name of righteousness. Remember that any teacher that doesn't point to Jesus as the answer is a false teacher. For many, moralism has become a 'noble' substitute for the Gospel. Consider what 'good ideas' you have allowed to influence your thinking rather than the purity of God's word. Consider where you have been drinking out of man-made cisterns rather than straight from the Living Water of Jesus. (Jeremiah 2:13) Resolve to fill your mind with Jesus Christ, seeking an ever-increasing relationship with Him. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers." (Psalm 1:1)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 5, Friday, 5 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+9%2C+10%3B+proverbs+5%3B+matt+5>

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Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Friday, 5 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 9:1 -- "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Again, God commands His people to grow and take control for His glory.
2. Genesis 9:3 -- "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." Notice that before the flood, God gave people "every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit." (Gen 1:29) Notice that after the flood, God gave people animals to eat too. And, you will see that, in Genesis 7:2, God told Noah to take "seven pairs of all clean animals.... and seven pairs of birds" in order to provide both food and sacrifices to the Lord. Things changed after the flood, and much theory surrounds these changes, but what is clear is that God expects people to eat meat in a balanced way and has made provision for people to eat meat.
3. Genesis 9:6 -- "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." Many use verses such as this to argue against the death penalty without mentioning that the Biblical punishment for murder is public execution. Also, contrary to modern popular opinion, this verse again drives home the point that people are not just higher forms of animals -- they are created by God with spiritual potential that animals cannot possess. Organizations that prioritize animals over people are unbiblical.
4. Genesis 9:13 -- "I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." What does the rainbow really symbolize?
5. Proverbs 5:3-6 -- "For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it." Sin is selfishly choosing pleasure and self-gratification over love, faithfulness, and obedience, with no consideration of the consequences or the inevitable destruction to follow. The sinful are blind to the reality of sin because their eyes are not on God, and they aren't viewing things from God's perspective.
6. Proverbs 5:7, 8 -- "And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house." Laws and social moral codes cannot keep you from sin, only faith can. Faith gives more value to the unseen than the seen. Faith is more motivated by God's word, which cannot be seen or handled, than the appealing physical things right in front of us. Do you believe God and His Majesty is more real and more wonderful than the 'shiny apples' at your fingertips?
7. Proverbs 5:12 -- "...How I hated discipline...." You will choose between two pains in life: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret.
8. Proverbs 5:22 -- "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin." Do not be trapped by sin.
9. Matthew 5:2 -- "And he opened his mouth and taught them." Proverbs describes two roads we can take in life, the path of the righteous, and the path of the wicked. (Proverbs 2:20-22) At the crossroads of these two paths is the word "if" -- "if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you... if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding... if you seek it like silver and

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search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.” (Proverbs 2:1-10) What we do with God’s word, and how we respond to God’s word, His teachings, and His commandments is crucial. In our readings today, Jesus delivers His first recorded teaching to the ‘crowds’ and to His disciples which I believe it would have been shocking to everyone in the audience. How we respond to

His teaching today is crucial. First, He describes the heart of a true disciple: humble, mournful, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure, reconciliatory, and resolute. (Matthew 5:2-11) Then He describes the fruit of the heart of the true disciple, “good works” that can only point to God and that glorify God before men, standing out as a beacon before men, radically different than the artificial, self-righteous good works of the world. He describes a hyper obedience that is concerned by every “iota” and “dot”, an obedience that does not take a ‘relaxed’ approach to God’s commandments nor teaches others to do so. (Matthew 5:17-19) However, the obedience Jesus describes is to far exceed the ‘righteousness’ of the Pharisees because of the ‘beatitude’ heart behind the obedience. Jesus then makes His point with the commandments against murder, adultery, divorce, deceitfulness, and vengeance, pointing to the sinful heart that has already disobeyed the First Commandment (Thou shalt have no other gods before me.) and the Great Commandment (Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself). All other commandments rest on the First and the Greatest. Long before anyone has broken the others, they have already broken these. So, Jesus drives the point home further by talking about loving our enemies. By this point, everyone with an ounce of humility in the crowd would have felt very uncomfortable and hopefully repentant. Many in the modern ‘grace’ movement would suggest that Jesus’ ‘impossible’ standard points not only to our absolute dependence on Grace (which is true) but also to a more ‘relaxed’ approach to God’s Commandments (which is exactly opposite of what Jesus is teaching). Jesus further exemplifies his teaching on wholehearted obedience in a latter discussion with the Pharisees -- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” (Matthew 23:23) Note, that Jesus is NOT nullifying the details of the law for sake of the “weightier matters” but is rather saying that God demands both. Grace is not an excuse for complacency, and Jesus concludes his sermon with these words: “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” For the disciple, this is an all-in, wholehearted, dauntless pursuit of righteousness with the goal being unity with the Father and the Son as Jesus describes in his prayer in John 17. In our righteousness (achieved through Christ and Christ alone), we pursue righteousness that we may ‘abide’ in Him and glorify Him. “As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:15, 16)

10. Matthew 5:16 – “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Our goal must be to have our words and deeds give glory to God, not to ourselves. Too many Christians hope to share glory with God (Moses’ big mistake). It isn’t about you; it’s about God. If people are singing your praises at the end of the day, you have received your reward on earth rather than Heaven. If they are praising God at the end of the day, your reward is awaiting you in Heaven.

11. Matthew 5:19, 20 – “Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and

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teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” God’s Law is a product of God’s righteousness, justice, grace, love, and will. A Christian, like Jesus, seeks to fulfill God’s Law, not relax on them in the name of “grace.” A Christian’s righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, not because we fulfill God’s Law out of fear, pride, or duty, but rather out of LOVE. If we tell people that they can relax on God’s commands, we may still be going to Heaven, but we will be the least in the Kingdom.

12. Matthew 5:22 – “Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.” The murderer and the un-righteously angry have this in common: they have both violated the 1st Commandment and the Great Commandment which is also deserving of death.

13. Matthew 5:23, 24 – “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” We cannot leave conflict unresolved as Christians. Before any other gift to Him, God wants us to honor Him with unconditional forgiveness and reconciliation. Just as God took the initiative with us, we must be the leaders in forgiveness, regardless of how we have been offended. With no delay, forgive.

14. Matthew 5:24 – “But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” This is how Jesus feels about divorce, and this is His command concerning divorce. It seems pretty clear, regardless of the fact that most denominations have “relaxed” on this command, perhaps because so many Christians have divorced. We have all sinned in many ways, but our response should be to repent, accept forgiveness, pursue future righteousness, and speak out against sin, even those we have committed. When we speak out against sins we have committed, many will consider that to be hypocritical, but the word hypocrite means, “actor,” pretending to be something we are not. We are forgiven sinners who seek God’s will in all of our future actions. We don’t stand against sin in a judgmental way, from some misguided perception of superiority, we warn others out of love and speak the truth in love.

15. Matthew 5:37 – “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.” If you don’t do what you say you are going to do (“I promise” is not required), you are lying and are being led by evil rather than following Jesus.

16. Matthew 5:38-42 -- “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.” God expects us to do what is unreasonable in all relationships, even if we are clearly being taken advantage of by others. So, do you give to the beggar who you suspect will use your gift inappropriately? Do you lend to the one who doesn’t deserve it or can’t really be trusted?

17. Matthew 5:44 – “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” One of the true tests of your spiritual maturity is how

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you treat your enemies and those who wrongfully hurt you. Christian love truly loves enemies and seeks their reconciliation with God.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) -- 5 Jan 18: Begin the New Year by personally forgiving everyone who has wronged you and by seeking forgiveness from those you have wronged, whether they know you have wronged them or not (no secret sins). Seek reconciliation in every relationship. Be the leader, and take the initiative, but don't do it in your name or through your power. Do it in the name of JESUS CHRIST and through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 5:23, 24)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 4, Thursday, 4 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+7%2C+8%3B+proverbs+4%3B+matt+4>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Thursday, 4 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 7:1 -- "Then the LORD said to Noah, 'Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation.'" The children of Noah faced a significant decision. They lived in a world where everyone blatantly disregarded God. Wickedness was the norm. No one would have condemned Noah's sons for living evil lives like the rest of society—no one except their father. In a world rampant with ungodly attitudes and every form of wicked behavior, they were fortunate to be Noah's sons. When their father invited them to spend the next hundred years building an ark in obedience to a word from God, Noah's sons had to choose whether to believe those around them or to trust their father. They chose to join their father. What a wonderful testimony of Noah's godly influence in his home! How fortunate for Shem, Ham, and Japheth that their father refused to compromise his integrity, even though everyone else in his society had done so. Your life has an influence on those around you as well. Your spouse and your children are profoundly affected by your choices. Your coworkers, your neighbors, and your friends will all be impacted by your life. As the world tries to persuade people to follow its standard, your life should stand in stark contrast as an example of a righteous person. Your life should convince those around you of the wisdom of following God. Do not underestimate the positive effect that your obedience will have upon those close to you. (Henry T. Blackaby)

2. Genesis 7:5 -- "And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him." Noah's key attribute was unconditional obedience. The Christian life demands unconditional obedience as God directs us down paths we never intended to go. Obedience is not required just in the 'big' things but especially in the small things as we strive for holiness. Every small decision you make both reveals your character and shapes your character, for better or for worse. Obedience is a product of faith that also strengthens our faith for the future.

3. Genesis 7:13 -- "On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark." The Christian life is a life of leadership, guiding others in God's will. Leadership starts with those closest to you. Christians serve God in relationships, not in isolation. We have a responsibility to serve as Christ's Ambassador in the lives of those around us. A leader knows the way and shows the way. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life...." A true leader is closely following Jesus and directing others towards Him. Fortunately for

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Noah's family, Noah was walking with God, and his family were willing to follow Noah against all practical reason.

4. Genesis 7:16 -- "And the Lord shut him in." Noah did all that God commanded, but God completed the work in a way only He could enable. God demands that we work diligently for His purposes, but He works beyond our abilities to glorify Himself. The Christian life trusts in and depends upon the power of God. God's path will be impossible for us to walk in our own strength, though we are called to press forward with all our might in faith that we do not labor in vain. Our dependence in God, which requires faith, reveals the power of God in our lives, both to ourselves and to those around us. It does not take faith to do what we already know we are capable of doing.

5. Genesis 8:20 -- "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar." The Christian life begins with worship, is lived in constant worship, and ends in worship. In ALL things, God gets ALL the glory. Noah began his new life on earth with worship and sacrifice (a tremendous act of faith considering his scarcity of resources). Begin this year in worship.

6. Proverbs 4:7 -- "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." Wisdom comes only from God, but we must make the choice to receive it. This is not small choice -- it is life defining. You will either choose to trust God implicitly or will choose to trust your own understanding. If you want God's wisdom, you must sit at His feet in Bible study and prayer and listen. You must then get up and walk with Him, following His every step rather than expecting God to follow you. Set your heart to following God -- this is the first step.

7. Proverbs 4:14 -- "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil." With the choice to follow God comes the decision to follow no one else. Who are the wicked? Those who are not following in the footsteps of Jesus, those who lift themselves up as the leader. If they are not continually pointing to Jesus, and if they are using themselves as the example, let them go their own way. Jesus is not a help-mate -- He is the Leader. Be a respecter of no man and a disciple of Jesus.

8. Proverbs 4:18 -- "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." No Christian follows Jesus perfectly or is perfected in love, but if they are seeking Him with all their hearts, they are getting closer to Him every day and are growing in love every day. Day by day, their light becomes brighter.

9. Proverbs 4:23 -- "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Above all else, guard your heart. All of life's issues start with the heart. Fortunately, the Bible doesn't just tell you to protect your heart, it tells you how to protect your heart. Read the rest of Proverbs to understand some of the actions required to protect your heart. (Proverbs 4:24-27)

10. Matthew 4:1 -- "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." The Spirit led Jesus into temptation. What do you make of that? The Christian life is led by the Spirit rather than just human reasoning and understanding. The Spirit will lead in ways that don't seem to make sense to us and that may be very uncomfortable, even scary. It takes faith to trust the invisible Eternal over the visible, tangible, temporal.

11. Matthew 4:3 -- Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Jesus was tempted in every way that we are, yet He never sinned

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(Heb. 4:15). Jesus began His public ministry with His baptism. As John the Baptist raised Him from the water, Jesus heard His Father's affirmation, "Well done!" Immediately afterward, Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness. There, Satan met Him and presented three temptations. First, Satan enticed Jesus to use His divine power to transform stones into bread. It seemed like a logical thing to do. Jesus was hungry, but He had a much greater need to follow His Father's leading. The Father had led Him to fast; Satan sought to persuade Him to eat. Next, Satan tried to convince Jesus to use Satan's means to accomplish the Father's ends. "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down" (Matt. 4:6). Jesus understood that this would be presumption, not faith. It would be attempting God's work in the world's way. The world looks for spectacular displays; God uses a holy life. The final temptation Satan proposed for Jesus to worship Satan (Matt. 4:8-9). In return, Satan offered to give Him worldly success without suffering the cross. Jesus knew that only God was to be worshiped and to do this would not bring instant success, as Satan promised, but seemingly devastating failure, pain and suffering. As you seek to follow God, temptations will inevitably come. Sometimes they will come to you immediately after a spiritual victory. Jesus relied on God's Word to see Him through the temptations that could have destroyed Him and thwarted God's plan. He has modeled the way for you to meet every temptation. (Henry T. Blackaby)

12. Matthew 4:3-11 – Satan tempted Jesus by perverting God's word. However, Jesus knew God's word well enough, within its proper context, to refute Satan's man-centered false teaching.

13. Matthew 4:4 -- "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" To a Christian, God's word is more essential to life than food. God's word is our daily nourishment that enters inside of us and builds up our souls. We are what we eat. In an age where obesity is at epidemic proportions, Christians would do well to prefer God's word over bread. Here is a good habit: don't eat until you have done your daily Bible study and prayer.

14. Matthew 4:7 -- "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" The Christian understands that God is God and we are merely humble servants, created by Him for His glory. We are here to serve Him, not vice versa. God has nothing to prove to us and certainly owes us nothing. Proper fear of the Lord does not presume anything. We receive both good and bad circumstances with thanksgiving to God that we may glorify Him as He has sought fit for us. We also don't decide God's plan or how we will serve Him. It's God's plan, and He must assign the tasks.

15. Matthew 4:10 -- "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Christians serve God and God alone, period. Our measure of success is how well we are serving, honoring, loving, and glorifying God. Most acts of service involve serving others, but not just serving others, serving others in the NAME OF CHRIST, not in our name or the name of any other institution made by men. When we serve and give, we DO NOT represent ourselves in any way.

16. Matthew 4:11 -- "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him." The Christian is ministered to by angels.

17. Matthew 4:19 -- And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." From our readings today, we can learn much about the life of a true disciple: The Christian objective is people, not riches, not fame, not comfort, not happiness, not programs, just people. We serve as instruments of God to advance the Kingdom one heart at a time. Jesus focused most of his time, energy, and effort on just twelve people (prioritizing three). He had no riches, started no organizations, wrote no books, built

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no monuments, and though he spoke to thousands, never tried to lead massive movements. He fulfilled God's will, one day at a time, with what God place in front of him.

18. Matthew 4:20 -- "Immediately they left their nets and followed him." God's plan takes you off of your plan and requires personal risk. The committed, usable Christian responds to God's call immediately, no hesitation. This takes significant faith because God will take you away from your plans and your self-reliant security. It will require a choice between the world's version of success and God's version of success. God's version is not appealing to the world and will receive little if any honor from the world.

19. Matthew 4:23 -- "And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people." Again, the Christian life involves healing, teaching, and proclaiming the Gospel. Ministry is NEVER separated from the message. It isn't just about 'good deeds' it is about the Great Commission. After we have 'denied self', we 'take up the cross', which involves accepting our identity as an Ambassador for Christ, and then we follow Christ.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 4 Jan 18: Endeavor to serve others as a representative of Jesus rather than just another nice person. Connect the Savior to your service. Make sure everyone understands that it is not you who works but Jesus who is working through you. When you impact the lives of others, leave them thinking about Jesus, not about you. (Matt 4)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 3, Wednesday, 3 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+5%2C+6%3B+proverbs+3%3B+matt+3>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Wednesday, 3 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 5:22 – "Enoch walked with God." The Bible only uses the phrase "walked with God" to describe the lives of Enoch and Noah, both used mightily by God. Our goal should be to make that our epitaph!
2. Genesis 6:8, 9 – "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God." In a corrupt world, Noah stood out as faithful. In his fidelity, God revealed to Noah what no one else could see and used Noah to play a critical role in redemptive history. We should seek to be blameless on our generation. Are you willing to defy the entire world for God?
3. Genesis 6:9 – "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God." Who are you walking with? Your actions reveal the answer.
4. Genesis 6:13 – "And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh.'" God reveals His plans to His faithful servants, those who can be trusted with revelation as evidenced by their response to God's commandments.
5. Genesis 6:19 – "They shall be male and female." Gender confusion does not come from God.
6. Genesis 6:22 – "Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him." Again, Noah could be trusted to obey completely. Note that Jesus commanded that His disciples make disciples who would "obey all that I have commanded." Obedience is the proof of faith, hope, and love.

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7. Genesis 6:22 – “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.” Noah was known for total obedience, making him usable by God to do great things. Be known for total obedience to God.

8. Proverbs 3:3 – “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you.” Love and faithfulness go hand-in-hand. If you love God, you will obey Him. If you struggle to obey, understand that it is a heart problem. Don’t simply try to strengthen your resolve, get to the “heart” of the problem. In your failure, turn closer to Jesus, not further away. Don’t give up, surrender instead. Turn your life over to Jesus more completely.

9. Proverbs 3:4 – “So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.” Success is defined by God. Success is found in fulfilling God’s purpose for your life which is becoming one with Him. When you have success with God, you will be respected by the respectable.

10. Proverbs 3:5-8 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.” Another critical theme throughout the Bible – You cannot know what you should do apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To be guided by the Holy Spirit, you must seek to walk in God’s word, to obey God’s word, to make the decision to turn away from evil (disobedience). Only God can keep your path straight. If you choose to trust in self, you will walk away from God no matter how much you ask God to bless what you have chosen to do. God does not follow you, you must follow God.

11. Proverbs 3:9, 10 – “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.” When you are working for God, when your life is dedicated to Him, you give Him your best, not what is left. You put God first with your focus, your time, your energy, and your resources. When God is first, you will no longer struggle to find time for Him.

12. Proverbs 3:11-12 – “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” Are you grateful for God’s discipline in your life? How do you respond?

13. Proverbs 3:19 – “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.” When you walk in the wisdom which only comes from God, you walk in harmony with all creation. You tap into the powers that control the universe, the power of the Creator! Nothing can compare to that.

14. Proverbs 3:24-26 – “If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the Lord will be your confidence.” The prohibition most repeated by Jesus in the Bible is “Do not fear”, or “Fear not”. When you are walking with Jesus, you never need to worry about your circumstances. Even in death, you can trust that your perfectly loving, all powerful Father is giving you the very best for you, far greater than you can imagine.

15. Proverbs 3:27-28 – “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.” God’s greatest commandment for us is love, and He expects instant and willing obedience. Don’t

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hesitate in your obedience by withholding love, even for a second. If you see a need, meet the need immediately. See what happens.

16. Matthew 3:1, 2 – “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” As with Jesus, John the Baptist’s first message was “repent”. We don’t hear that word used much anymore, though it remains critical to the Gospel message. Damnation must be understood before salvation can be appreciated. We must remember that we are saved, not from the earthly consequences of our sinful behavior, but from the wrath of The Holy God. You must know the bad news before you can appreciate the Good News.

17. Matthew 3:4 – “Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.” John the Baptist was not focused on the comforts of life. He was focused on preaching the word of God.

18. Matthew 3:7 -- “You brood of vipers!” Today, few would dare talk to others about their sin as John the Baptist did for fear that they would be labelled as “judgmental”. Jesus used the same sort of language several times, and even physically attacked people in the Temple. In John 7:24, Jesus says, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” How do you make sense of that?

19. Matthew 3:8 – “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” True repentance produces fruit revealed in a changed life.

20. Matthew 3:8 -- “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” His message mirrors that of Jesus, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17) A confession of faith starts with repentance. The Greek word is *metanoēō*, which means to “change your mind”, or to change the ‘intent of your heart’. (Acts 8:22) Of course, the expectation is that with a changed heart comes a changed life, the ‘fruit of repentance’, the product and evidence of faith. Today, we read the story of Noah who “found favor in the eyes of the Lord.... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.” (Genesis 5:8, 9) I prefer the King James translation in this verse: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” The word ‘grace’ here being the Hebrew word *chên*, “kindness and mercy imposed by a superior to an inferior.” The order of the verses in this account matters – Moses received “grace” and was made “righteous” or ‘right’ in the eyes of God; Moses then, in response to grace, lived righteously and “walked with God”. What does it look like to walk with God? “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.” (Genesis 6:22) Noah lived “by every word that [came] from the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3) In today’s readings, we see Jesus exemplify the fruitful life of obedience by being Baptized by John the Baptist though Jesus was without sin – “But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’” (Matthew 4:15) Noah was certainly not perfect when God called him, and as we will soon read, Noah still messed up terribly after God called him; nonetheless, Noah ‘pursued’ righteousness and obedience, rendering him usable by God for a critical task requiring much attention to detail (obedience in the smallest of matters). We should encourage one another to walk with God in obedience, confident in grace.

- Isaiah 1:19 -- If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land;

- Acts 6:7 -- And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

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- Romans 1:5 -- through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,
 - Romans 5:19 -- For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.
 - Romans 6:16 -- Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?
 - Romans 6:17 -- But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,
 - Romans 15:18 -- For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,
 - Romans 16:19 -- For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.
 - Romans 16:26 -- but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—
 - 2 Corinthians 2:9 -- For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.
 - 2 Corinthians 7:15 -- And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.
 - 2 Corinthians 10:6 -- being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.
 - Philippians 2:8 -- And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
 - Titus 3:1 -- Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,
 - Philemon 1:21 -- Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.
 - Hebrews 5:8 -- Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.
 - 1 Peter 1:2 -- according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.
 - 1 Peter 1:14 -- As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,
 - 1 Peter 1:22 -- Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,
21. Matthew 3:12 -- “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Jesus separates the true followers of God from everyone else.

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22. Matthew 3:15 – “But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’” Again, Jesus modelled obedience and submitted Himself to the will of the Father in humility. He is our example of obedience.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 3 Jan 18: Resolve to develop a reputation, first and foremost, as a person who walks with God. Resolve to stand out as holy, pure, and faithful. Make your first priority, your daily goal to reveal Christ to others in both your words and your deeds. Stand out in such a way that all credit and glory is given to Jesus and none to you. Judge your success today and every day based on how well you serve as an agent of reconciliation between people and Jesus -- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (See today's reasons)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 2, Tuesday, 2 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+3%2C+4%3B+proverbs+2%3B+matt+2>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Tuesday, 2 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 3:1 -- “Did God actually say...?” Sin starts with questioning God’s word and trying to alter its obvious meaning in order to accommodate sin. How important is it then to personally know God’s word? Then, how important is it to actually trust God’s word rather than second-guessing it? How important is it to trust enough to obey God’s word even when it doesn’t seem to make sense? Most people hardly know God’s word, and all who know God’s word (though no one knows it well enough) are tempted to doubt it and to rely on their own opinions instead. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, Jesus responded with the right application of God’s word which Jesus had memorized – He is our example.

2. Genesis 3:4 -- “You will not surely die.” It is not enough to ‘believe in God’, which, as James reminds us, even the demons do – “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19) At least the demons shudder -- many today don’t even do that; demon-like faith would be a step up for some. We must not just ‘believe in God’, we must ‘believe God’. The Christian life is about believing God and trusting Him -- faith. It is about living by every word that proceeds from His mouth (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). To say that we live by every word that God speaks is the same as saying we trust Him implicitly -- we take God at His word. This is the kind of faith that the Bible calls, in one sense, childlike faith (not childish but childlike). We don’t trust in our own understanding, but rather in His perfect wisdom (Proverbs 3:5); we aren’t controlled by our own desires but rather His (2 Corinthians 5:14). Faith is obedient. The Bible says that without faith, it is impossible to please God because we won’t believe Him enough to do what He commands, which will usually be contrary to our desires and to human wisdom. (Hebrews 11:6; Isaiah 55:8) Paul writes, in 1 Corinthians 13, of the great triad of Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love – faith: trusting God now; hope: trusting God’s future promise (faith projected forward); love: unity with God and both the source and fruit of genuine faith. The greatest of these is love, and Jesus tells us that love obeys. One of the first steps of faith in a Christian’s

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life is to prayerfully study God's word. At first, this might be difficult, but love will make this a passion rather than a difficult task. However, careful study of God's word must be followed by obedience to God's word; this is where the heart is tested, and this is where knowledge turns to true understanding. Adam and Eve knew God's word and, like Jesus did in the desert, responded to Satan's temptations by reciting God's word. However, unlike Jesus, Adam and Eve trusted themselves more than they trusted God's word. They allowed their emotions, passions, and desires to influence their decision-making more than God's word. The visible, tangible apple in front of them became more real to them than the invisible God that created it. They became practical atheists and dethroned the KING, replacing Him with the idol of self. At the moment of decision, their "Yes" became bigger than their "No". One seemingly small decision had eternal consequences. As with Adam and Eve, our problem is not usually that we don't know what God wants, we simply don't want to do what God wants. Our problem is not the gap between ignorance and knowledge but rather the chasm between knowledge and commitment. Why? Because the reality of who God is isn't real enough in our lives. At the point of decision (which is continuous), our faith must trust the invisible Eternal more than the visible temporal – "we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18) Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23) The first obstacle is self, the "I" in idol. The battle against self is a "daily" struggle.

3. Genesis 3:4, 5 – "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" When we doubt God's word, we are doubting God Himself, questioning His Sovereignty, Righteousness, Holiness, Perfection, and Love. We are committing cosmic treason, trying to claim the rights of authority for ourselves. Treason against God is a crime deserving of death. The God of Justice must deal with this sin; The God of Grace and Mercy gave his Son to pay that penalty.

4. Genesis 3:6 – "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." Again, sin involves trusting our own perceptions over God's word; it involves preferring what can be seen over what is unseen. Sin places selfish desires over God's commands. Sin seeks self-gratification over obedience to God. Sin promotes self over God. When we sin, we also promote sin in others. We lead others away from God, whether we realize it or not.

5. Genesis 3:7 – "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Sin destroys relationships because it makes us selfish and untrustworthy. All relationships are built on trust. Real trust can only be found in love which will never take advantage of the other person. Only in selfless, loving relationships can people be safely vulnerable and fully exposed, fully open, truly one. Love and obedience go hand-in-hand. God's greatest commandment calls us to love Him wholly, and the second greatest commandment is to love others though they are incapable of loving us unselfishly. This means we are called to be vulnerably exposed to others despite the fact that, in imperfect love, they will undoubtedly hurt us. This is why Jesus said that to "come after Him", we must deny self (be selfless), take up our cross (loving the unloving who will hurt us), and follow Him. This is why Jesus promised that His true disciples would suffer persecution. When we suffer because we lovingly expose ourselves to unloving people that they might see the love of Christ, we fellowship with Jesus.

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6. Genesis 3:8 – “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” The guilt we feel from sin causes us to separate, even hide from God. Guilt prevents us from experiencing the fullness of joy that comes from close relationship with God, and this hurts all of our earthly relationships. Key to all of our relationships is having unquestioned faith in forgiveness from God through faith in Jesus Christ who paid for our sins once and for all. With grace through Jesus, we can walk with God confidently, fully exposed, without fear. When we sin again, we don’t have to hide our sins from our loving Father who gave His Son to pay for those sins. We can lay those sins before the Lord, repent of them, and start anew, pressing forward to ever-increasing holiness. As we confidently accept continual forgiveness through Christ, we must then freely give forgiveness to those who will continually sin against us – how could we possibly do otherwise?

7. Genesis 3:9 – “But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” God has always called out to the sinner.

8. Genesis 3:12, 13 – “The man said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” People have a tendency to blame God and others for their sins. One of the first steps to getting right with God is being humble enough to take responsibility for your sins, to stop blaming someone else or your circumstances for your sins. Pride makes it hard to be honest with yourself and before God. You cannot fix what you are not willing to be honest about.

9. Genesis 3:15 – “...he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This is the first proclamation of the Gospel, prophesying Jesus’ victory over Satan. When Jesus was wounded on the Cross, Satan was dealt a mortal blow.

10. Genesis 3:16 – “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband.” God knew from the beginning that marriage would be a unique struggle between man and woman; marriage is the schoolhouse for Christ-like character development. Marriage is the primary place where people learn how to love selflessly, sacrificially, and unconditionally. This is the primary place most people are called to deny self, take of their cross (in relationships), and follow Jesus. As our example, Jesus hung on a cross and freely gave His life for those who persecuted Him, and as He died a brutal death, He said, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” Your spouse will mistreat you, but your “cross” will never compare to the forgiving sacrifice Jesus gave on your behalf, the sacrifice upon which you place your hope. In your domestic struggles, deny yourself and take up your cross as an act of love, first for Jesus and then for others. God knows what you are going through and has given you a great opportunity to both glorify Him and draw nearer to Him. You worship God primarily in your relationships, and your greatest worship is found in your closest relationships.

11. Genesis 3:17 -- “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you.” Whoever or whatever on this earth has the most control over you at the moment of decision is your god, or better stated, idol. Your choices that are made outside of the authority and will of God cannot be blessed by God, only cursed. God still loves you, but He will not honor your disobedience, and He will not accept idols in your life. One of the most important things you can do this year, and every year, is continually consider why you do what you do. What is the real motivation behind your actions? Are you truly

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serving God or serving self (sometimes with great religiosity)? Are you motivated by selfless love or fear, pride, greed, or self-righteousness? Is something other than God driving your decisions? Does fear of man have more relevancy in your life than fear of God? Are you trusting in Him, trusting in self, or trusting in others? Do you have a Savior or a Lord and Savior? If you are honest, you will admit that your motives are mixed, and if you are humble, you will earnestly seek the Holy Spirit's power in your life to purify your motives. Throughout each day, examine your heart and continually pray for greater purity, again, always walking confidently in the grace of God. Don't stare at or wallow in your constant past mistakes but keep pressing forward in Christ, seeking a closer walk with Him with each step.

12. Genesis 3:19 – “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground.” At the very beginning of this year, you can put the “prosperity gospel” teachings to rest. Life is guaranteed to be challenging for all, including the faithful Christian. You will work hard, experience many life crises, get sick, and eventually die, no matter how many times God heals you for a time. Times might be hard today, but as you read the Bible, consider what life was like for those you are reading it about. When was it ever easy? In his final recorded prayer for us in John 17, Jesus specifically states that He is not praying for us to be kept from life's challenges but that we would be protected from the temptations of Satan as we go through them, that we would remain one with Him through life's challenges. The Bible will teach you this year that, in Jesus, we can have contentment, peace, rest, and joy despite life's challenges. Read carefully and prayerfully to understand this truth.

13. Genesis 3:20 – “The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” God values men and women equally, though He gives them very different roles and responsibilities. Our popular culture challenges these roles, in part, by implying that certain roles and responsibilities are more important than others. The Bible gives certain authorities to men over women, much like the Father has certain authorities over the Son, though the Son is no less God or less important than the Father. The general designs the strategy, but the colonel designs the operations, the captain executes the tactics, and the sergeants put the rounds on the targets – they are all essential to winning the battles that win the war, none of them worthier of praise than the other. We all have our roles to play. Success is found in fidelity to God in our unique purpose. Nothing good happens on the battlefield when sergeants try to be generals and when generals try to be sergeants.

14. Genesis 3:21 -- “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” In His grace and mercy, God shields us from the total impact of our sins.

15. Genesis 3:22 – “Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’” God places limits on us for our own benefit and for the benefit of others around us. He gives us what is best over what we want. If we got what we wanted, it would ruin us because we don't want what He wants. God's answer to your prayers is often “No,” for good reason. Trust Him with “No.” The more what you want is what He wants, the more you will hear “Yes.”

16. Genesis 3:24 – “He drove out the man.” For His perfect purposes, God will often take you where you don't want to go and will have you experience hardships you don't want. Again, trust Him. He may drive you out, but He will never abandon you, and He remains in complete control.

17. Genesis 4:1 -- “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” God creates life, not us. The lives of the unborn belong to God, not to mothers or fathers.

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18. Genesis 4:4-7 – “And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.’” One of the first, most powerful, and most dangerous sins recorded in the Bible, revisited countless times throughout the remainder of the Bible, is envy. Envy is obviously directed at other people, but ultimately it is directed at God. We are angry because God has given somebody something He hasn’t given us. We are challenging God’s justice and fairness. Resentment creeps in and takes control of us, causing us to sin against God and others. The Bible says that envy destroys us – “rots the bones”. Envy drove Cain to murder. Envy caused the religious leaders of the day to murder Jesus. God calls us to focus on our relationship with Him and to be content with what He has given us rather than to compare our lives with others. Focus on your fidelity to Him, not on your circumstances.

19. Genesis 4:7 – “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” The greatest battle we fight in life is with self, or “the flesh”. We must resist our temptations to sin. The world and the devil are external temptations, but the flesh tempts us from within, making it our greatest threat. Through your Bible readings this year, you will learn how to resist internal temptations.

20. Genesis 4:9 – “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Another major theme throughout the Bible is that God holds us accountable of taking care of others around us. We are never permitted to act as if we are not responsible for others. Yes, you are your brother’s keeper.

21. Genesis 4:14 – “Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” Even evil Cain knew that He was helpless without God’s provision and protection. The height of arrogance is for a person to believe that they are in control of their life.

22. Genesis 4:15 -- “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” God Himself protects the sinner. We cannot possibly know what God is doing in the life of an obvious sinner. We are called to judge the actions, not the person. Our job is to seek to help others be reconciled with Jesus, not condemn them, even if we must punish them.

23. Genesis 4:17 – “When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.” When people walk away from God, they glorify themselves over God. They build monuments to themselves rather than God. They want people to recognize them and remember them rather than to recognize and remember God. The Christian doesn’t want any credit, any accolades, or any attention. The Christian’s whole life points to Jesus. Christian, be very wary of the vertical personal pronoun of “I”. Don’t try to share glory with Jesus. You were called to be an ambassador for Jesus, not an ambassador for yourself. Do everything in the name of Jesus, not in your own name.

24. Genesis 4:24 – “If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.” A godless people become increasingly obsessed with sex and violence, and they grow a distorted view of justice while viewing mercy as weakness.

25. Genesis 4:26 – “At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.” The Bible shows a division in society right from the beginning between the lineage of Cain who walked away from God and

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sought their own power, and the lineage of Seth who called upon God. Everyone places their faith in something. Some will trust earthly power, and some will trust God. Within the political cycle, many will be proclaimed as the hope of the nation; how often did you hear people proclaiming Jesus as the hope for our nation? While everyone is preaching politics, hopefully you will preach the Gospel.

26. Proverbs 2:1-5 – There are three conditions (“if”) to obtaining the “knowledge of God”. Do you know what they are, and are you meeting the conditions? Review: “My son, IF you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, IF you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, IF you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” These verses contain the first “If... then” statements in our readings this year, the first conditional blessings from God. You will see conditional blessings throughout the Bible this year – make note of them. Yes, to receive the fullness of God’s blessings, we must do something. Our responsibility starts with receiving and treasuring His word, studying it, applying it, and praying to Him for more and more understanding. Only through reading and applying God’s word can we find the knowledge of God. Key to this year’s Bible study is understanding that you won’t understand what you don’t apply. For example, you can’t understand football simply by reading all the best books on football. You have to play the game, succeed and fail, get bruised and battered, get dirty, etc. Likewise, when the Holy Spirit tells you what you need to do, you must do it to understand it and to eventually win the game.

27. Proverbs 2:6 – “For the Lord gives wisdom.” Another critical theme in the Bible – wisdom comes only from God. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied. There are many knowledgeable people in the world, but not many wise people in the world. The Holy Spirit must guide you beyond your very limited intellect to do what you cannot understand through your own ability.

28. Proverbs 2:6-22 – Everyone is on one of two paths in life. One path, the path of life, is only known through Jesus Christ; it cannot be found by anyone else. We must deny self and follow Jesus Christ to be on this path; in fact, He is the path, the “way, the truth, and the life”. No one can get to God apart from Him. Jesus said that His path was a very narrow path that few would find. The other path, the path of destruction, is very wide, and the majority take this path. This path is for those who choose not to deny self and follow Jesus.

29. Proverbs 2:10 – “For wisdom will come into your heart.” Wisdom is not a mental issue, it is a heart issue. Wisdom is not achieved intellectually, it is achieved spiritually. Wisdom is knowledge controlled by love and applied with love. God is love. To have wisdom we must become one with the God who is love and obey Him in love.

30. Matthew 2:1 – “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.” Herod was one of the most powerful kings of his day, his ruins still remain visible to this day. But in the time of Herod, Jesus was born, without earthly wealth, without political power, and without grand acclaim. He had no armies and never built anything we can see today. It took incredible faith to believe that in the time of Herod, a small poor Jewish child was the Savior. Would you have believed then? Do you believe today? Do you believe enough to surrender your life to Him? Have you placed your complete trust in Him? Has He become your life’s purpose?

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31. Matthew 2:1-7 – “Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him....’ Herod... [assembled] all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him.... Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.” Very few people knew God’s word well enough to know that the time of Jesus was at hand – almost everyone completely missed it. However, among the very few who knew that the Messiah had come, even fewer sought Him out to honor Him as King. Some studied God’s words with intent to counter Jesus while others studied the same word in order to worship Him. Even armed with superior knowledge, some still chose to reject Jesus. The same remains true today. Elite Bible knowledge is required, but it isn’t enough. Ultimately, belief is a spiritual matter not an intellectual matter.

32. Matthew 2:13, 20 – “Remain there until I tell you.... Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel.” God knows what you cannot know and sees what you cannot see. Our natural perceptions are very limited, but the Holy Spirit can give you supernatural perceptions. When you walk in the Spirit, guided by God’s word, He will lead you where you would not know to go and when you would not know to go. He will keep you from the threats you never saw. Joseph was in-tuned to the Spirit’s guidance because He was committed to obedience. He obeyed the word God had given Him, and God gave Him more. If you are walking in disobedience, you are not in position to hear God’s next instruction.

33. Matthew 2:22, 23 – God can use what seem to be bad situations to fulfill His intent and purpose. Sometimes, from our incredibly limited perspective, what looks bad might be God doing a mighty work in our lives for His glory and our blessing.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 2 Jan 18: Consider your motives behind your Bible study: Are you seeking God’s blessings or seeking God Himself, to be closer to Him? Even with Bible study, you can endeavor in a self-centered way or a God-centered way. Seek to study God’s word in a way that places Him at the center, that makes knowing Him and loving Him the only goal, regardless of whatever blessings you might receive. Be like the wise men in the Bible who only sought to Honor the King and found their greatest joy merely in being in His presence. (Matthew 2:1-10)

DBRP- WEEK 1, Day 1, Monday, 1 Jan 2018

<http://esv.literalword.com/?q=gen+1%2C+2%3B+proverbs+1%3B+matt+1>

Observations from today's readings and today's S-WOD, Monday, 1 Jan 18:

1. Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The first thing God wants you to understand is that He created everything. This fact is critical to your understanding of life and is reiterated throughout the remainder of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 is the “uni-verse,” the ‘single verse’ that reveals the origins of all Creation. If you want to know the answers to the questions of life, go to the Creator of life. He created the ethical laws (the right application of justice, mercy, and grace), the physical laws (like the law of gravity), and the principles of life (how life works, wisdom). God’s ethics and principles reflect His character as Creator and are unchanging. However, man replaces God’s ethics (what we ought to do) with “morals” (from the word “mores”, meaning the habits of the people or what

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is commonly accepted); and man replaces God's principles with "values" (a distorted perception of principles based upon man's viewpoint rather than God's). The remainder of the Bible will reveal a contest between God and man over who is really in charge, who is king, who defines "rightness", in whom is salvation and security, and who is to be served. The foundation or beginning of wisdom is acknowledging and respecting God as KING and Jesus as Savior.

2. Genesis 1:1 – The Bible begins with the beginning of world history. However, first and foremost, the Bible is not a history book, though it does contain history; the Bible is not a science book; though all true science will agree with it; the Bible is not a self-help book; though it does offer practical solutions to all of life's issues; the Bible is intended to reveal God to you and to help you draw closer to Him. The Bible is God's personal word to you in His relationship to you. All of the Bible points to Jesus. You will read later in John 17 that eternal life is "knowing" Jesus, the Father and the Spirit, the One triune God. As you begin reading this year, don't lose sight of the target – the target is not better living or moralism; the target is Jesus, knowing Him a bit more each day, loving Him a bit more each day, trusting Him a bit more each day, following Him a bit more each day, and making Him known more each day to those around you. As you read, meditate deeply about what you are reading, praying that the Holy Spirit will help you understand what God wants you to know about Him, about Jesus.

3. Genesis 1:21 – "So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind." There is much debate about how God created the earth. The debate is not between scientists (those who study the world through observation and experimentation) and religionists, though it is often portrayed that way. Since no one observed original creation, the debate starts with beliefs taken of faith. Some believe that the Creation came from nothing, the absurd notion that nothing can create something indescribably magnificent and complex. Others believe that God created it all. Among those who believe in God, there remains much debate over evolution, between macro-evolution, one species morphing into another species, and micro-evolution, changes in a single species in order to adapt to environmental changes. No one has observed macro-evolution, but we are all aware of micro-evolution. Genesis 1:21 tells us that God created creatures according to their "kinds," or species. In essence, if two animals can mate and produce babies, they are a "kind", which can survive from generation to generation, physically adapting over time to their respective environments, but over time, they will not miraculously produce an entirely new species of animal. Wolves can mate with domesticated dogs, but they will never give birth to cats.

4. Genesis 1:26, 27 – "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion....' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." God made people different from the animals, with a spiritual dimension, with a distinct purpose, with special authority and responsibility on earth. God also created mankind with intentional gender roles, male and female. For the first time in my lifetime, mankind is seeking to redefine gender.

5. Genesis 1:28 – "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" God's first command to mankind was to raise godly offspring in order to manage the earth for God's glory. God intended for His people to serve Him, to

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grow in numbers and influence on earth, and to maintain godly order on earth – “Thy will be don on earth as it is in Heaven.”

6. Genesis 1:31 – “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” What God makes is very good. Only sin corrupts what God made for good. Sin uses originally good things in bad ways for bad purposes. For example, God made sex for good, but mankind has used sex for selfish, self-centered was to produce highly destructive results. God calls His people to “subdue” the earth by obeying his will in all things, by using all His good things in loving ways.

7. Genesis 2:3 – “So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” When we take a Sabbath rest each week, against the world’s pressures to get stuff done, we acknowledge personally and publicly, that God is the Creator, not us, that God is in control, not us, and that God will provide for us what we cannot provide for ourselves. The Sabbath rest is an act of worship and an act of faith which is also physically healing.

8. Genesis 2:7 – “The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Only relatively recently did scientist discover that the human body is comprised of the same basic elements as the earth. Again, the Bible is not primarily intended to be a science book, but the Bible will not contradict ‘real’ science, only ‘political science’ which seeks to make unproven claims that contradict the truth of God’s creation in an attempt to nullify the Creator.

9. Genesis 2:15 – “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” God made man to work for Him, to translate spiritual truths into physical realities on earth. Contrary to what some believe, work is not a curse – we were made to work. When people toil over what God does not desire, work becomes a curse. We were created to work for God, not for selfish ambition. God blesses your work when it is for Him and not for yourself.

10. Genesis 2:16, 17 -- “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” God gave man and women all but one thing. Sin is not satisfied with all that God has given. Sin is not satisfied to trust God with good and evil and to simply obey Him. God did not want His people to “know” evil, only good. Within our limited intellect, we cannot know what is right, our knowledge is far too limited, and we are deceived by our own selfish desires. We must simply trust and obey God. When man does what He thinks is right rather than following God’s word and His spirit, He inevitably sins. This will be a theme throughout your Bible readings this year. Don’t try to be smarter or wiser than the Creator. Trust and obey.

11. Genesis 2:18 -- “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Thus far in Genesis, God has proclaimed everything He has created as good until this first “malediction.” It is not good for a person to be alone. Isolation is not only unhealthy, but it is contrary to God’s command to love others. God is love; we were made in His image; we were designed to love others. From the beginning, God intended people to be in loving relationships with Him and with others. You were created for relationships – with Him, with others, and with nature. The best cure for depression is loving God, loving others, working hard (God created you for work), and enjoying God’s Creation outdoors. Do all these things together. You were not created to be inside alone doing nothing but thinking about yourself.

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12. Genesis 2:19 – “Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” God’s Sovereignty accommodates free will and choice. God’s plan is not disrupted by our choices which He allows us to make. God gives us choices as an act of love; what we do with those choices is up to us, and we can’t blame God when we choose poorly. Every choice produces a consequence. As you read the Bible this year, take special note of what God says about our responsibility to choose wisely.

13. Genesis 2:24, 25 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” The most important institution in the Bible is that of marriage. The Bible begins with marriage and ends with a wedding (see Revelation). We must guard marriage as sacred. Marriage is the building block of society, designed by God to be a lifetime commitment between one man and one woman for the purpose of raising godly offspring (see Malachi 2:15). As the institution of marriage goes, so goes society. Most marriages fail today, and many have simply chosen cohabitation over marriage. Many others who have remained married are unhappily married. If you have struggled or struggle in marriage, dedicate your relationships to God “from this day forward,” and walk in forgiveness and love.

14. Genesis 2:25 -- “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Adam and Eve had no psychological barriers in their relationship, no shame, not distrust, no guilt, no anger, etc., because they had not sinned. Sin always hurts relationships, striking at our life’s purpose. Even ‘secret’ sins hurt relationships because they cause people to put up walls, to hide something from the other. Two cannot truly become one when there is a barrier of guilt in the way. This applies both to our relationship with God and our relationship with others. Forgiveness is key to relationship with God and others – another critical theme in the Bible that God wants you to understand.

15. Proverbs 1:5 – “Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance.” Everyone needs to continue to study, meditate upon, and apply God’s word.

16. Proverbs 1:7 -- “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The Christian honors God as GOD and treats God’s written word accordingly, living by that word.

17. Proverbs 1:8 – “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.” God intended for every child to have both a father and mother to instruct them in God’s word and ways. Where this is not possible, God’s people are called to support the single parent.

18. Proverbs 1:8 -- “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching,” The Christian honors all God-ordained earthly authorities, in family, in church, and in government. Even Jesus honored his mother’s trivial request to turn water into wine.

19. Proverbs 1:15 -- “My son, do not walk in the way with them.” The Christian does not partner with those who are living life for themselves rather than God.

20. Proverbs 1:20 – “Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice.” The truth is “self-evident” for anyone who cares to pay attention and heed its instruction. Unfortunately, many refuse to listen.

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21. Proverbs 1:23 -- "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you." The Christian life requires repentance and a spirit of continual humility while trusting in the Grace of God. Repentance is a continuing action in a Christian's life: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

22. Proverbs 1:28 -- "Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." There comes a point when it is too late.

23. Proverbs 1:33 -- "but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster." The Christian life is a life of confidence, peace, joy, and hope. Even in tribulation, the Christian has unyielding hope in God's promised future.

24. Matthew 1:1-17 -- "...the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The Bible is full of long genealogies which are often hard to read and may seem to have little value to us today, but in fact, they are very important to understand as they reveal much about God's will, ways, and plan. For example, the genealogies should remind us that God places people in specific times and places throughout history for great purposes they don't understand and which may take generations to fulfill. God has you right where He wants you for purposes you cannot see but will be revealed over time. Also, God shows us that He uses all sorts of people, all sinners (with the exception of Jesus), to complete His perfect plan. Note that Jesus' genealogy includes a long list of very imperfect people including liars, adulterers, murderers, and prostitutes. God can and will use you. No matter what you have done, God calls you to repent, accept His forgiveness, and dedicate the rest of your life to serving Him for His purposes. God has a great plan for your life, but it is not about you, it is about Him. Serve Him wholeheartedly and fulfill your purpose in life.

25. Matthew 1:19 -- "And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly." Not much is written in the Bible about Joseph, but here we see a glimpse into his character. His fiancé turning up pregnant out of wedlock would have been emotionally and socially devastating to him. By the law, he could have had her publicly stoned, at least ostracized; however, he demonstrated mercy and grace and sought rather to resolve the matter quietly. What do you do when people hurt you terribly? Joseph, a "just man", demonstrated justice, mercy, and grace by being prepared to hold Mary accountable to the law but in a way that sought to maintain her dignity and her future. Do you seek to protect those who hurt you terribly?

26. Matthew 1:20 -- "But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'" Note that the Holy Spirit did not speak to Joseph until after Joseph chose to treat Mary with mercy and grace. When you are faithful with the little things, day to day, at the moment, then the Holy Spirit will reveal to you more, things you cannot understand on your own.

27. Matthew 1:24 -- "When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife." To obey God, Joseph had to do what defied all human reason. Throughout the Bible this year, God will remind us that our thoughts are very far from His thoughts and that we cannot trust our own understanding or desires, nor can we trust "common sense." We must walk by the Spirit, not by intellect.

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28. Matthew 1:24 – “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.” The defining attribute of Joseph’s character was obedience. Joseph was used mightily by God, but at a tremendous personal cost. God’s plan for Joseph’s life would change his life forever, taking from Joseph his dreams for a normal marriage and a normal life, bringing Joseph no honor before men of his day. Marital engagements in those days usually lasted for about a year while the husband built a home for the wife, adjoined to the father-in-law’s house. There could be no hiding Mary’s unplanned pregnancy. One can only imagine what would be said within the community about Joseph’s wife. Yet, Joseph displays a character trait that is evident throughout what little is written about him, he was obedient. “He did as... the Lord commanded him,” apparently without hesitation. Joseph not only obeyed God, but he also respected the civil authorities (as God commands), which is why Jesus was born in a manger, because Joseph was dragging his extremely pregnant wife “from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem” to take part in the census in accordance with Caesar Augustus’ decree. (Luke 2) Joseph could be trusted to do the right thing, regardless the personal cost; perhaps this is why he was chosen by God for the incredible task of serving as the earthly parent of Jesus. Joseph’s obedience stands in stark contrast to what we all know about the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Our readings today in Genesis and Matthew begin one of the constant themes of the Bible which is summarized in Proverbs 29:18 – “blessed is he who keeps the law.” God’s word reveals God’s will which is aligned to God’s character and to all that He has created. There is a natural cause and effect relationship between God’s laws and our obedience or disobedience. God’s laws are just as dependable as the laws of nature – consequences are predictable. After all of his days, having done and seen it all, after having acquired unmatched wisdom and wealth, and after permanently and catastrophically damaged the kingdom of Israel due to his sin, Solomon concluded, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Jesus took it even further as stated that if we really love him, we will obey his commandments. Obedience is essential to love, not only to loving God but also to love others. God is Love and the only source of true love; obedience brings us into harmony with him and enables us to truly love, not like the world loves by rather with agape love. (Colossians 3:14) Disobedience is ALWAYS unloving and in violation of God’s Greatest Commandment to love. Our level of obedience reveals the level of our faith, hope, and love. Of course, it only takes a split-second of self-examination to realize that we haven’t been “perfected in love”, but our endeavor is to, while in the confidence and freedom of grace, “pursue righteousness”. As we begin a new year, recommit to honoring God through your obedience. Obedience is key to our walk with God. Joseph did not hesitate in his obedience – he acted immediately. If God has put on your heart to do something, do it immediately – this is so very important. If God is convicting you right now to forgive someone, minister to someone’s needs, call someone, etc. Stop what you were doing or planning to do and, instead, obey God first.

- 2 John 1:6 -- And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

- 1 John 5:2, 3 -- By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

- 1 John 3:18 -- Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

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- 1 John 2:5 -- but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:
- 1 Peter 1:22 -- Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,
- James 2:8 -- If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.
- Hebrews 1:9 -- You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."
- 2 Timothy 2:22 -- So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
- 1 Timothy 1:5 -- The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
- Romans 12:9 -- Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.
- John 15:9, 10 -- As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
- John 14:15 -- "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
- John 14:21 -- Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."
- John 14:23 -- Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

"Cross" Fit S-WOD (Spiritual Workout of the Day) – 1 Jan 18: Reconfirm your commitment today to search God's word as if you were searching for a great treasure, to apply what you read daily, and to be responsive to the convictions of the Holy Spirit. Also, recommit to loving God through the relationships with others in which He has placed you. (See today's readings).