

Journey Into God's Word



Genesis 24-38

Psalms 24-38

Matthew 15-21

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Why is it so hard to let go and let God? This past week as I read the Scriptures and tried to live in the light of them, it seemed that a battle raged every step of the way. Paul described it this way in Romans 7:22, 23, "For in my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members."

Our reading this past week from Genesis 24-38 showed me how I am not alone in my struggle. There is Jacob who deceived and was deceived. In his case, he got into an outright wrestling match with God. (Genesis 32:22-31) Then there is Peter, who one minute declares to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God," (Matthew 16:16) and the next minute "sticks his foot in his mouth," responding after Jesus told him that He would have to die and experience the resurrection, "Never, Lord. This shall never happen to you." (Matthew 16:22) Jesus then has to rebuke Peter, whom earlier He had commended, by declaring "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Paul declares that the answer in this struggle is "Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 7:25) Now the question is: how do we fully surrender our lives to Jesus? It isn't long after we think we have done this that the pride, greed and self-centeredness seem to be right back there looking us right in the face. Some have just thrown up their hands in the middle of this struggle and walked off. Yet even as they walked, they found no peace. I truly believe God wants you and me not to walk away from it all, but to remain steadfast, immovable, abounding in His Word and in the peace that comes from abiding in the knowledge of His presence and love. So in the midst of the trials and tribulations, I find myself crying out, along with the Psalmist in Psalms 38:21, 22, "O Lord, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior."

This past week as I struggled over personal issues, the battle raged within. Would God perform the miracle that is so heavy on my heart at this time? I know I must believe and hang on to the promises in God's Word. I know I must not only read it but also let it go deep into me. Psalms 25 promises in verse 3: "No one whose hope is in You will ever be put to shame." Then there is the direction in verse 5, "guide me in Your truth and teach me for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long."

When doubt strikes, I am left with the choice to either give into that doubt and respond in the flesh or return prayerfully to the Word, seeking God's direction as to how to respond under His leading. "The Lord is my light and my salvation -- whom I shall fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1) The answers are in God's word -- See it for yourself by checking out the following: Psalm 27:14, Psalm 31:1,4,5, Psalm 31:24, Psalm 32:7, Psalm 33:4,5,11,18, Psalm 35:10; Psalm 36:8, and then read all of Psalm 37 letting God speak to you through His word to the problems you are facing.

Unless we are living in the light of God's word and the knowledge of His loving presence, we will slip into the restlessness of self-effort outside of Christ. Call it an anti-Christ 666 existence that never moves into the rest of 7 which represents the 7th day when God rested. Now He invites us to abide in that rest, that peace that he provides as we surrender unto Him. II Peter 1:2-4 explains it this way, "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us by His own glory and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Contrast this divine nature with that which Jesus says naturally comes out of the heart in Matthew 15:19. How does Eliezar seek God for direction in finding a wife for Isaac in Genesis 24? When Eliezar arrives with Isaac's wife, what is Isaac doing in verse 63? When Isaac has a problem in Genesis 25:21, what does he do? What does his wife Rebekah do when she has a question? (Verse 22)

One of the hardest things for me to do when I see a need is to be still and wait. Psalms 37:5-7 commands, "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him;" Ok, I am waiting now, what does Matthew 16:24-27 tell me concerning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and what really matters in life? Why is "mountain-moving faith" important in achieving these goals of "denying ourselves and taking up the cross?" (Matthew 17:20, Matthew 21:21, 22) Where are the three times that Jesus speaks of dying and rising from the dead between Matthew 11-17? How does Jesus explain to his disciples in Matthew 18:1-4 the difference between childish and child-like? What steps for conflict resolution does Jesus give us in Matthew 18:15-17?

Prayer has been described as God's power working through us. What does Matthew 18:18, 19 have to say about the power of the prayer of agreement?

The Bible has answers to the problems presently being debated in society. What does Jesus say about marriage in Matthew 19:4-6? What do you think this has to say about gay marriages? Does Jesus indicate there's any place for them? What does Jesus say about divorce? Why did Jesus say in verse 12 that some may not marry?

What does Jesus tell the rich young man in Matthew 19:21? How did Jesus say in Matthew 20 verses 26-28 that true greatness is achieved? Why did Jesus drive the moneychangers out of the temple in Matthew 21:12, 13?

The Bible has answers to our questions in life. It tells those who have put first the Kingdom of God in Matthew 21:22 that, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." This is not a magical formula, but a statement of the power of God that releases itself through prayer for those who will believe. In Genesis 24-38 we see this power of God at work in His people. Those like Esau who allowed the immediate gratification of the flesh to prevail had a price to pay. In Esau's case, what was this price? Others like Jacob saw how their sins of the past could come back to haunt them. How was Jacob deceived by his uncle after Jacob had fled his home, following his deception of his father to get his brother's birthright? Contrast the morality of Joseph in Genesis 37 to that of his brother Judah in Genesis 38.

One of the things that cause us to be defeated is our negative thinking and negative speaking. Psalms 34:13 says, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." That means not to be negative toward yourself or anybody else. Psalms 34:14 says, "Depart from evil." That includes saying evil words and believing evil thoughts about yourself as well as anyone else. Verse 14 goes on and says "and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."

The words and names given to children can directly affect how they see themselves throughout their whole life. That is why we see Jacob changing his youngest son's name in Genesis 35. "They left Bethel. They were still quite a ways from Ephrath when Rachel went into labor-hard, hard labor. When her labor pains were at their worst, the midwife said to her, 'Don't be afraid-you have another boy.' With her last breath, for she was now dying, she named him Ben-oni (son-of-my-pain), but his father named him Ben-jamin (son-of-good-fortune)." (Message Bible) Maybe when you were growing up you were made to feel by your parents, teachers and others to be a son or daughter of pain. If that is the case, then believe the fact that Jesus has come and changed your name to son or daughter of good fortune. Where does he declare, in Matthew 21, that this transformation happens as you put your faith in God? When you do this, regardless of the circumstances you are transformed from victim (son-of-my-pain) to victor (son-of-good-fortune). Jesus says in Matthew 21:20-22, "Yes-and if you embrace this Kingdom life and don't doubt God, you'll not only do minor feats like I did to the fig tree, but also triumph over huge obstacles. This mountain, for instance, you'll tell, 'Go jump in the lake,' and it will jump. Absolutely everything ranging from small to large, as you make it a part of your believing prayer, gets included as you lay hold of God." (Message Bible) To believe, in the Greek New Testament, means to adhere to, cling to, and trust in God totally. It involves child-like trust. How does Jesus describe that in Matthew 18?

Along with faith comes the desire to do God's will, rather than doing just what we want to do. This often involves self-sacrifice. In Matthew Jesus says, "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't

run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for?" (Message Bible) What verses in Matthew 16 do you find the above in? As we trust Jesus and are willing to lose ourselves in His behalf we are free to overcome injustices and reach out in love to those who are in need.

Joseph is sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver. Jesus is betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. This week as you read Genesis 39-50 and Matt 22-28 note how Joseph and Jesus dealt with the injustices they encountered. Note how they didn't apathetically resign themselves to their circumstances with a lot of God-language but at the same time they didn't fight their battles "in the flesh".

How did they overcome their adversities? Also, as you read Psalms 39-58, notice how the Psalmist encounters and overcomes the problems he faces in his daily living?

Yes brothers and sisters, I do believe we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who strengthens us daily. This victorious living involves letting Jesus be Lord not only in word, but also indeed, in every area of our lives. It means surrendering our lives to His will and living in the light of His word.

Christ is Risen. May we now let the reality of that resurrection live in us and through us each and everyday.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice
New Life Evangelistic Center