

Journey Into God's Word



2 Samuel 1-12

Isaiah 45-66

Colossians 1-4

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

There is a longing in every person for fulfillment. This is a desire to belong, to be connected, and to be accepted. Some try to fill this God-given vacuum with success defined as making lots of money, others use drugs, alcohol, relationships, entertainment, the list goes on and on. You know from previous experience where all that can take you. The vacuum that exists in each of us can only be filled by God Himself. More and more people, after trying everything else, are coming to that conclusion. The question is how do we get closer to God. Many will say getting more and more information. The fact is information without transformation still leaves one empty and frustrated. Paul was battling a group of people like that in the Book of Colossians. These people, known as Gnostics, believed that the accumulation of knowledge was the way to salvation. They believed that their special knowledge was hidden from most. Paul responded by saying Christ provides all the knowledge we need. Gnosticism taught the body was evil, but Paul declared that God Himself chose to come to us in a body when He embodied Jesus Christ. Like many today, Gnostics claimed Jesus was only human. Paul responds, "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him (Jesus), and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross." (Col. 1:19,20) In Colossians 1:9-14, what things do we see Paul telling the Colossians that he is praying for concerning them? What insight does this give us into praying for others?

Now stop and think about it. God "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." (Colossians 1:13) Don't let anything cause you to return to that dominion of darkness and hopelessness. Continue to trust in Christ daily. Remember "just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to

live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Col. 2:6)

In the book of Colossians, Paul clearly points out that Jesus can only fill the longing within us. He is not only equal to God, but He is God. “He is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”(Col. 1:15-17) Do you believe this, or is it just a bunch of words on paper? Seven hundred years before Jesus was even born, the prophet Isaiah gave a full description of how Jesus would bring salvation and healing. Look at Isaiah 53 and describe how it portrays that the Messiah’s strength is shown in humility, suffering and mercy.

“He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed.”(Is. 53:5) In the book of Colossians, Paul tells us what this means to each of us personally: #1). “God made you alive with Christ”(Col. 2:13) This means you have been forgiven and reconciled to God as you have been made new and been given Christ’s eternal resurrection. “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.”(Col 1:13,14) #2). When we receive Jesus He comes in a special powerful way to live within us. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”(Col. 1:27) #3). Our old, rebellious nature has died with Christ. (Col. 3:9,10) #4) we are “now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”(Col. 3:3,4) With this reality in mind what are we to therefore put to death according to Col. 3:5-10? What positive virtues are we to put on according to Col. 3:12-22? “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ, you are serving.”(Col. 3:23)

Brothers and sisters, as you faithfully serve the Lord, it is important that you “devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (Col. 4:2) Here Paul tells us that we should “devote” ourselves to prayer and be “watchful” in prayer. Our persistence in prayer is an expression of our belief that God does answer prayer. David is a man who prayed. In 2 Samuel 2:1 we read, “David inquired of the Lord ‘Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ he asked. The Lord said, ‘Go up.’ David asked, ‘Where shall I go?’ ‘To Hebron,’ the Lord answered. “David was a man who devoted himself to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

He would ask God for direction. Then he would follow God's direction and give God the glory. As a result, God did great and mighty things in David's life. In fact, what covenant did God make with David in 2 Sam. 7:1-16? God tells David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever." (2Sam. 7:16) This happened as a result of Jesus the Messiah being born of the lineage of David. "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David." (2Timothy 2:8) When David learned of this miracle, he did not let pride consume him. Instead, as you read David's prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18-27, note his humility. What sin entered David's life when one day he did not devote himself to prayer and instead, "got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace? From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her." (2Sam. 11:2,3) What was the result of this sin? What steps are you taking daily to "devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful?" Thank God for friends who help encourage, motivate and challenge us to live a life that is God-pleasing. Nathan was such a friend to David. He was always willing to speak the truth to David, even when it hurt. It was Nathan who "reported to David all the words of this entire revelation," (2Sam. 7:17) where David was told of the special covenant God was making with him. It was also Nathan who helped David see the terrible sins he had committed by showing David that he would not tolerate the same behavior from anyone else. (2Sam. 12:1-13) Who is the Nathan in your life? As human beings, we have a great capacity to lie to ourselves and make wrong look right. What gifts God has given us through His word and friends who care enough to confront us in love when we do wrong! Thank God you are now studying His word! Let it speak to you when you do wrong. If you don't have a friend like Nathan, ask God to give you one.

Stop and reflect on what a privilege it is to pray to the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of the earth. He declares, "I am the Lord and there is no other; apart from Me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged Me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I bring prosperity and create disaster; I the Lord, do all these things. You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the Lord, have created it." (Is. 45:5-8) What a great God He is! Don't you think it is time to start "devoting yourself to praying, being watchful and thankful?" What woes are given in Isaiah 45:9,10 to those who do not do this but instead quarrel with their Maker? Now He declares, "Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no

other.”(Is. 45:22) Will you respond by further devoting yourself to Him in word and deed?

“This is what the Lord says – your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, Who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea,”(Is. 48:17,18) The question is as you are praying, are you listening “being watchful and thankful”? Are you letting Him speak to you through His word the Scriptures and His works of creation? Are you letting “the Lord your God” teach you and “direct you in the way you should go.” Jesus has told us “if you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”. (John 8:31) “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand,”(John 11:27,28) Please read carefully Isaiah 49-52 and note what it says concerning how and why we must awaken to the Lord God and what He desires to do in our lives at this time. How do the promises He made to Israel relate to us today as part of the new covenant provided through the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “your God reigns!”(Is. 52:7) Please read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and see how it explicitly describes the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ some 700 years later. In what way can this be described as the greatest news that humanity has ever experienced? How are you sharing this good news on a daily basis? Please read Isaiah 54:1-10 and share in what ways it encourages you to share the hope that the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides? What promise does Isaiah 54; 17 give you as you face opposition to sharing the good news? As you share in word and deed that there is hope because Christ is Risen, you also need to be nourished on a daily basis. Please read Isaiah 55 and note the free nourishment that God gives you. As you study this chapter, please state how it describes you can get this nourishment?

“This is what the Lord says ‘Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed!’(Is. 56:1) How does Isaiah 56:9-12 emphasize that it is time for us to wake up and not be blind, mute dogs? Jesus grants us victory not only in life, but also in death itself. Because Christ is Risen, those who trust Him and “walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.”(Is. 57:2) “Death has been swallowed up in

victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”(1Cor. 15:54-56) “For this is what the High and Lofty One says—He Who lives forever, whose name is Holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite.”(Is 57:15)

Please study Isaiah 58 and write out how it proclaims that true worship is more than the religious ritual of praying, fasting and reading the Bible. How does true worship reveal itself in genuine compassion for the poor, homeless and oppressed according to Isaiah 58? What promises are given in verses 6-14 of Isaiah 58 to those who engage in justice and directly helping the needy? Please look closely at Isaiah 59 and then state why you feel that justice is not the central theme in more churches today? “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, He was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so His own righteousness sustained Him.”(Is. 59:14-16)

Jesus is about to return. Are you ready for Him? “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.”(Is. 60:1) “No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.”(Is. 60:18,19) Please note the calling, your calling found in Isaiah 61, as a follower of Jesus Christ, who quotes verses 1 and 2 as found in Luke 4:18,19? What does this chapter have to say to you today in light of the soon return of our Lord? Next time as you work in the garden, keep Isaiah 61:11 in mind. “For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all the nations.”

Have you noticed how Isaiah mentions the work of the Holy Spirit more than any other Old Testament writer? For example, example, in Isaiah 44:3-5 we see that, through the Spirit, God’s true children will thrive. In Isaiah 48:16 the Spirit sends Isaiah to prophesy. Isaiah and then Jesus and now you and I are anointed by the Spirit to proclaim the good news according to Isaiah 61:1. But we must not grieve the Spirit as described in Isaiah 63:10,11 and Eph. 4:28-32. For “like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord.

This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.”(Is. 63:14) Now let the Spirit of the Living God give you rest in the reality that God loves you and will guide you daily in the light of His word.

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rages.”(Is. 64:6) How we need Jesus and the hope He provides as He promises, “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”(Is. 65:17) “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”(2Cor. 5:17) “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.”(Roman 8:19) “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain.”(Is. 65:24-25) It won’t be long and Christ will be returning. “This is what the Lord says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will my resting-place be? Has not My hand made all these things, and so they came into being?’ This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word.”(Is. 66:1,2) What steps are you taking to be a good steward of the earth, which is God’s footstool, and remain humble, contrite in spirit and trembling at His word? “See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; He will bring down His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire, and with His sword the Lord will execute judgement upon all men, and many will be slain by the Lord.”(Is. 66:15,16) “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”(1Thess. 5:4-11)

This week I want to encourage you to join me as we read 2Samuel 12-24, Jeremiah 1-10, and Ephesians 1-6. Please remember, “devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message.”(Col 4:2,3) “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned

with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone,”(Col. 4:6) “See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord.”(Col. 4:17)

Yours in Christ,

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