

Journey Into God's Word



I Chronicles 10-29

Ezekiel 33-48

I Thessalonians 1-5

Dear Co-worker,

I must admit there are times when I feel spiritually drained. I am sure that you have probably had moments like that also. That is why I find Ezekiel 33-48 so refreshing. In chapter 37 I see the Spirit of God coming on a valley of dried dead bones and turning it into a mighty army. In Ezekiel 47 where I see a great river flowing from the temple, I am reminded that as I surrender my body, which I Cor. 3:16 calls the temple of God, a might river of compassion can flow forth. In I Chronicles 10-29, I see how God was able to do such a mighty work through David as he submitted unto the Lord. Then in I Thessalonians 1-5 we are challenged and encouraged to reach our full potential for the Glory of God. For example, I Thessalonians 5:8-11 reminds us that “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.”

As we encourage others and build them up we will also find ourselves encouraged and build up. Remember when you are down and out, don't forget the power of praising God. Please study David's powerful prayers of praise and thanksgiving in I Chronicles 16:8-36 and I Chronicles 29:10-13 Then please note the reasons David gives as to why we must praise God. Praising God causes us to refocus our attention from that which is troubling us to the Living Lord who created us and protects us. I know from personal experience that it is God who gives me the strength to continue in spite of the obstacles. Look at those who were considered David's mighty men as described in I Chronicles 11:10-25. In spite of the odds, they stood steadfast and were victorious. Please examine each one of those listed and cite what courageous acts they preformed.

So many are wiped out because they set out without seeking God's direction. David had good intentions when he wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The result of this action, though, was the death of Uzzah. (I Chron. 13:10) Later David admitted that the reason this took place was because "we did not inquire of Him" (the Lord our God) "about how to do it in the prescribed way." (I Chron. 15:13) When David inquired of the Lord, seeking His direction, David was victorious. Please describe the victory found in I Chron. 14:8-16. Remember, no matter how noble our actions may be, if we don't just seek God and inquire what His will is, the results can be disastrous. If we are not careful, Satan can trick us like he did David to act without God's direction. Satan convinced David to take a census, which very likely resulted in David taking pride in the strength of his army. What was the result of this action found in I Chronicles 21?

If we ask Him, God will give us direction. In Ezekiel 33:1 we read, "The Word of the Lord came to me:" In this case God is telling Ezekiel that "if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head."(Ezekiel 33:4) "But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood."(Ezekiel 33:6) What do you think this has to say about the need for us to speak up when we see a person's actions taking them down the road of self-destruction? How does it relate to our need to share the message of salvation with those who do not know Christ?

Those who don't care enough to warn others of the actions that could destroy them are referred to as bad shepherds in Ezekiel 34. What is the difference between a good shepherd and a bad shepherd according to that chapter? When someone doesn't care enough to warn the lost, it could be said that that person has a heart of stone. Yet God promises, "I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees." (Ezekiel 36:26) Let us claim this new work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we commit our lives to our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."(I Thess. 1:3) When the power of the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, the faith, hope and love that is generated will result in direct action. This direct action for Paul was sharing the gospel (the good news) "not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."

(I Thess. 1:5) Remember the result when the Spirit of God came upon those dried dead bones in Ezekiel 37? Now God wants to pour His Spirit out upon us in order that we may move forth into a dying world as a mighty army proclaiming in word and deed the hope resulting from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This proclamation involves, “encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His Kingdom and Glory.”(I Thess. 2:12)

What a joy it is to have this Holy Spirit work through you in the life of another person to the extent that they come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior! Paul put it this way, as he wrote those who had been saved as a result of his ministry. “For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”(I Thess. 2:19,20) How I thank God for the work He is doing in your life at this time, “What would be an adequate thanksgiving to offer God for all the joy we experience before Him because of you? We do what we can, praying away, night and day, asking for the bonus of seeing your faces again and doing what we can to help when your faith falters. May God our Father Himself and our Master Jesus clear the road to you! And may the Master pour on the love so it fills your lives and splashes over on everyone around you, just as it does from us to you. May you be infused with strength and purity, filled with confidence in the presence of God our Father when our Master Jesus arrives with all His followers.” (I Thess. 3:9-13 The Message Bible)

Yes, it won't be long and Jesus is coming back. What does that mean to you personally? According to I Thess. 4:1-12, how should we then live our lives? “But friends, you're not in the dark, so how can you be taken off guard by any of this? You're sons of the Light, daughters of the Day. We live under wide-open skies and know where we stand. So let's not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let's keep our eyes open and be smart. People sleep at night and get drunk at night. But not us! Since we're creatures of the Day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation.” (I Thess. 5:4-8, The Message Bible)

Christ has a job for each and every one of us. Let us do it cheerfully under the leading and power of the Holy Spirit, in the realization that Jesus could return at any time. “And now friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love! Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on.” “Gently encourage the stragglers and reach out for

the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other and always do your best to bring it out. Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens." (I Thess. 5:12-18, The Message Bible)

Please join me this week as we read II Chronicles 1-11, Daniel 1-12, and II Thessalonians 1-3. Now, "may God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it."(I Thess. 5:23,24)

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice