

# St. Paul: On The Same page

08.18.13 Week #260

**Day One:** Isaiah 66:18-23  
*And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory....And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites.*

Isaiah is picturing the future. In part he describes the end of this world and God's judgment. But mingled with those images are pictures of the nearer future.

He describes the violent and terrible destruction of Jerusalem which would happen a century later, and would happen again after Jesus' ascension to heaven. And yet at the same time he shows us wonderful things. The result of God's judgment would be blessing.

Yes, we have seen terrible destruction in the world. But we have also seen God sending his word out beyond Jerusalem so that people of every nation would come streaming to God's house. The great Temple

*"We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!"*

Hebrews 12:9

would be destroyed, but the nations would soon come running to Jesus who is the fulfillment of the Temple, the place in which God meets us.

War is tragic. But after every war and every disaster there has been a place also for the gospel coming to bring comfort and life. This is our reason for being. Yes, there is sadness in the world. There is violence in many places even while you read this. But we are here to carry the good news to the nations.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, this world is a violent place and filled with death. Let me be your messenger to bring Life and Comfort and Peace, so that the lost from every nation will come home to you. Amen.*

**Day Two:** Hebrews 12:4-24  
*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? ...No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness...*

Sometimes parents have taken out their own anger and frustration on their children. Sometimes discipline is cruel. Human parents are sinful and do sinful things. And yet, we all know that loving discipline is needed. It's even a good thing.

Can you think of any blessings you have received as a result of discipline?

None of us wanted to sit at a desk all day in school. None of us wanted to do all the work of learning. But we followed the discipline of our parents and teachers. In fact, we could have been called "disciples" when we were students, because we were under an educational discipline. And in school and in many other things we gained vital skills we have needed all our lives.

God does not spank us for running into the street, or send us to our room for

fighting. But he may use some hardships to make us wait for certain blessings - to keep us at our task of trusting and praying - in order to shape us and help us grow.

So a period of illness may prevent you from running around and doing all the things you normally do – even your work which you believe is very important. Are there perhaps some other things that are more important to God? Prayer? Study? Conversation?

Or poverty may keep you from doing what you wish with your life right now. What does God want you to do with your poverty? Perhaps grow in trust? Or serve others in need?

The writer to the Hebrews says that God's discipline produces more than strength or skills. It produces righteousness. That is, it makes us more like God. What seems like discipline in your life right now? What harvest might God give you?

*Prayer: Lord, these things are painful in my life right now. I can't see what blessing you will bring. But I trust your word. Help me to wait, and grow, from your loving discipline. Amen.*

**Day Three:** Luke 13:22-30

*Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.*

- Jesus did NOT say only good people will be saved.
- He did NOT say church people will be saved.
- He did NOT say all who work hard will be saved.

The door to heaven stands wide open and unlocked, but to people who were confident in their salvation, Jesus warned that only ONE narrow way was open – only faith in him would lead to eternal life.

Many would try to obey God's laws. Many would pretend to be godly. Some would even try to buy their way in. But all of them would be lost unless they came through the free entrance, through faith in Jesus.

Does that seem sad to you? It was sad for Jesus too. Read the verses that come after this text. People would plead to enter God's house, but they would want to come without Jesus. After God has given the life of his only Son for them, they would seek to

buy their way in, offering some pathetic obedience.

“Look, I went to church every week!” Or, “look at the donations I made to charity or how nice I was to others!” But none of those things can cover our sin. Only Jesus' terrible death was payment enough for our guilt. And so the Lord must say, “I don't know you...”

How does Jesus feel about those who will not come to him? He grieves at their stubborn refusal to receive his great sacrifice. He weeps because of it!

How should we feel about those who reject Jesus? We often feel like we are under attack, and we grow defensive. But we are attacked for saying that Jesus is the only way. We are condemned for pointing to the open path to eternal life. We should feel sadness and love for those who reject it.

Prayer: *O Jesus, thank you for welcoming me with open arms. I do not deserve your love. Now, Lord, please draw \_\_\_\_\_ to you as well. And if it be your will, let me be a part of leading this one you love through your open door. Amen.*

## Day Four:

1 John 4:19

*We love because he first loved us.*

I attended a seminar about human sexuality, especially about the challenging new meanings of sexuality that our world is raising. One speaker helped to define what it means to love someone.

If you have a friendship, in order to be a real friendship it must be non-instrumental.

That means your friendship doesn't just exist in order for you to get something for yourself. If you only "like" someone because they can introduce you to potential customers, then you don't really like them at all, do you?

This is not love. It's not even a friendship. In fact, it's something a bit creepy, because you're using the person as if he or she is only a tool.

More than that, a true friendship is not something that we have in order to keep from being lonely. It's not just to help us flourish and be happy in our life. That would just be another form of using the person for our benefit.

Instead, friendship is not a means to a flourishing life, it

IS the flourishing life! When our life is flourishing, we are giving love to others and they are giving love to us.

What difference does this make? Jesus did not love us in order to get something back from us. He loved us because God created us. He loved us because we are us. He loved us because it is his nature to love.

And why do we love Jesus? Or why do we love anyone else? It's because Jesus first loved us, and so we are filled up with his love.

Our society and our government have been arguing that we can reshape love and marriage in any way that we like, as long as it's beneficial to both parties. This treats people as if they are things, seeking only what benefits us. But God created love. And he made us to love in families - fathers and mothers and children - and in community, brothers and sisters in Christ.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, my world is seeking love but doesn't understand it. Help me to be a living model of love as your love lives in me. Help me to love with no thought of gain, but only of your grace. Amen.*