

# St. Paul: On The Same page

09.29.13 Week #266

**Day One:** Hab. 1:1-4; 2:1-4  
O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? <sup>3</sup>Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. <sup>4</sup>So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

If you listen to a news station during your drive to work, how many crimes do you hear about? If you check a news website, how many murders are reported there each day?

A man hires someone to murder his wife, and then tries to hire a killer to kill the killer.

A group of men carry out a planned attack in a shopping mall, killing anyone who refuses to affirm faith in Allah.

A man starts shooting people outside of a store, everyone who is a different race than his own.

“...fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, <sup>7</sup>for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:6-7

Our world is filled with violence and bloodshed. Injustice is not the exception; it is the rule among us. We \*expect\* to be cheated, our identity to be stolen, bad things to happen. And we often complain about it. But what is our response? How do believers in Jesus react?

The prophet goes on, “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... If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.’”

Prayer: *Father, you have given me a vision to share, a message to carry. Give me courage and passion to tell the world about the Prince of Peace! Amen.*

**Day Two: 2 Timothy 1:1-14**

*I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. <sup>6</sup>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, <sup>7</sup>for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

*...Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

A friend of mine posted a cute little commercial to his Facebook page. It's intended to encourage men to be active parents, and it showed a man looking rather silly as he was going through a cheerleading routine, until the camera pulled back and you saw that he was helping his little girl practice.

That's a lovely image because we all love the idea of parents modeling good things for their children. We love the idea of parents showing love to their children. We connect actions like that will a happy home.

But here's the catch. How many of us are actually doing this for our kids?

I don't mean just going to all their soccer games and encouraging them in their figure skating or piano lessons. I mean in even more important life skills. How many of us are modeling things like:

- Prayer
- Reconciliation
- Charity
- Devotion
- Kindness

We would like our children to be mature and loving Christian adults, but what do they see in us? They often see our priorities as sports, politics, work, cars, friends, and things. Though we may have a relationship with Jesus, they don't see us forgive. They don't hear us go to Jesus in prayer for our own troubles. They don't see us turning to God's word.

"Fan into flame... follow the pattern... guard the good deposit." These are our tasks today.

*Prayer: Holy Spirit, others can see my love for earthly things. Help me to model eternal things for my children and others. Amen.*

**Day Three:** Luke 17:11-19

*On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance <sup>13</sup>and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."<sup>14</sup>When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup>Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice...*

I've heard a lot of sermons that criticize the 9 lepers for being unthankful. I probably have even preached it myself. But as I read the text now I wonder if they were really unthankful, or if they were just like me.

When I was a kid my mother tried to get me to write thank you letters for the Christmas gifts I received from my godfather. I was not ungrateful. I still remember fondly the Erector set he gave me.

But even when I was grateful that didn't mean that I wrote a letter. My gratitude only went as far as a happy feeling.

You can be sure these 9 sick men were joyful, and even grateful. And they could argue that they were only obeying Jesus, since he told them to go show themselves to the priest. That was the prescribed thing to do when cured of leprosy.

But only one was grateful enough to put off his own plans. He put off the pronouncement of his healing. He put off a reunion with his family. It was more important for him to be with Jesus.

I expect you're grateful for all the good stuff God has given you. I imagine you are grateful for Jesus' death for your sins, and the gift of eternal life. But what difference does your gratitude make? Where does it express itself? How does it interrupt your plans for yourself?

I have lots of plans for the things God gave me, like my money. But FIRST I want to interrupt my plans to show my gratitude to him. By using his gifts, by giving from them, I put him before myself.

*Prayer: Dearest Jesus, you healed me too. And you gave me gifts. Help my gratitude to go beyond my feelings. Amen.*

**Day Four:** 1 Cor. 15:58

*“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”*

Next Sunday we will be bringing our pledge cards to church. Many people struggle with the idea of making a commitment, or filling out a “pledge card.” But Paul tells us that we should always be prepared to stand up for what we believe. We love to sing, “Stand up, stand up for Jesus.” But you cannot sing standing up without being seen.

Our giving is a public stand. In other times, believers were tempted to worship idols. It was important for them to publicly reject the false gods. What more common idol exists among us than money? By our commitment to give, we are asserting that money is our tool, not our master. We show that we are not ruled by the things of this world, but instead we are able to rule over them, and to use them in the Lord’s service.

We should not use our giving to boast, and for that

reason we don’t make a show of our giving. But at the same time we shouldn’t hesitate to show our willingness to trust in God, as the apostles did.

When we follow the example of the early Christians who openly sold property and gave to the poor, and who publicly supported the ministry of the apostles, then we too become an example to others—and we encourage one another to follow our Lord.

Your commitment in giving will help our church to plan our work together. And we hope that your time of prayerful decision making has been a blessing for you also.

God has many more gifts for you in his Word. I pray that you will join us in worship, and in Bible study, to continue to grow in knowledge, love, and faith.

**Prayer:** *Lord, remove the obstacles in my heart that would keep me from trusting and following you. As you give me the ability, lead me to provide for the saving gospel of Jesus in places near and far. Give me a spirit of joy and eagerness for the work of your kingdom. And let use all that I am and have for you. Amen.*