

St. Paul: On The Same page

for 01.04.15 Christmas2b

Day One: 1 Kings 3:4–15

⁴ *And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.* ⁵ *At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.”* ⁶ *And Solomon said, “...I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.* ⁸ *And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude.* ⁹ *Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”*

God gave Solomon wisdom. But if he was so wise, then why did he fall into such a mess? Against God’s will, he took 700 wives and 300 concubines, and as he grew older “his wives turned his heart after other gods.” He even built temples for false gods in Jerusalem!

We could see this coming already in the verse before our text. “Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places.” God had commanded that all the high places, altars where false gods had been worshiped, be destroyed.

Solomon offered God large sacrifices, but he broke God’s law even while he did it. God gave him wisdom to know right from wrong, but that doesn’t mean he would always choose to do the right.

After all, do we? No. Even when we know what is right, we frequently choose not to follow it. The wrong seems more attractive.

Solomon was famous for his wisdom, but he could not take his own advice. If you wish to live better than him, then you do not need great wisdom or great strength. You need God’s Spirit living in you.

Prayer: *Father, you gave me great wisdom too. I have your word, but I have often ignored it. Forgive me for Jesus’ sake. And now I need your Spirit to give me strength to do what I know to be right. Amen.*

Day Two: Ephesians 1:3–14

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of

our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Did you get everything you wanted for Christmas? Do you now have all that you want?

No, we never do. It's impossible. Even if we were super rich, we couldn't have everything that we want because our desires grow with our riches. But God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing because of Jesus. God's treasury of good things has been emptied for you!

You have forgiveness and eternal life. You have a new relationship with your Father, the source of all good. What more could you ask for or desire?

Your sinful nature feels that there is still something missing. You keep searching for what it is, but God says, "No. Whatever you think you still need is here – in me."

Read those verses again, slowly. Listen to what God has for you!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I don't ask for anymore gifts today. Only help me to open and use those gifts I already have, which you purchased at such a terrible price. Amen.

Day Three: Luke 2:40–52

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. ⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. ⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to

them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Only a few months ago, we got to hold our newborn baby granddaughter, but already she is changing and growing.

Children grow quickly and move away from mom and dad, grandma and grandpa. But do they grow in wisdom and grace? Not always. As they explore the world, we try to protect them from bad things as Jesus' parents tried to protect him.

But Jesus knew all about good and evil, and he knew that he would face great evil, great danger, great pain and suffering. No one could save him. But he would save us.

How can you help a child to learn, not only about this world, but also about God's love and his gift in Jesus?

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, you grew up, as I did. But while I often followed my own path which led to tears and bitterness. You followed the path appointed for you. It led through pain and death, but it led to eternal life for me. Grant me grace to follow you. Amen.*

Day Four: Ephesians 1:3-6

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,* ⁴ *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love* ⁵ *he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,* ⁶ *to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

Let's think some more about the epistle lesson for next Sunday. It talks about our purpose. Lots of people, and companies, and even countries are trying to figure out what their purpose is. "Why are we here?" is a common question.

Every human reason seems to fall short. And in the Bible every reference to our purpose turns out bad. But listen to what it says about *God's* purpose...

"I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." (Exodus 9)

"I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me." (Psalm 57)

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails." (Proverbs 19)

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55)

"Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose..." (Jer 15)

"...in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." And "now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit..." And "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Paul's letters)

Why are you here? You're here for a wonderful reason! God has a purpose for your life today. It is to be with him, now and forever.

Prayer: *Dearest Father, I have sought a sense of purpose. I have doubted my purpose. I have fought to achieve my own purpose. Take me and use me as you see fit, as you created me. I know your purpose is excellent, and I will rejoice in it. Amen.*