

February 11th Readings

[ISAIAH 12:1-14:32](#)

[2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14](#)

[PSALM 57:1-11](#)

[PROVERBS 23:9-11](#)

Psalm 57:1

*Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
till the storms of destruction pass by.*

Recently, there was a false report of an impending nuclear ballistic missile strike on Hawaii. One report I read said people were standing on the streets crying, frozen with fear. My wife and I discussed what we might do if we knew a missile was coming down on us in a few minutes. Of course, we don't know what we would do, but I find it interesting to think about it.

I would like to think I would thank God that I knew Him, and that my soul is safe in His hands. I hope I would realize that this world will end when God decides, and my life ends when He decides. That as evil as men can be, we cannot destroy this world or any part of it until God decides it is time.

I like to think that as long as there is hope that at least one more soul will turn to Him that He will exercise restraint to allow that person to choose Him. I may be wrong. I may not have another day, or even another minute. There is no promise that there will be enough time for these words to be read by another person.

So, what do you choose? Will you be standing in the street crying for all you are losing, wishing for more time? Will you thank God that He holds your soul in His hand? It really is up to you how you will respond.

February 12th Readings

[ISAIAH 15:1-18:7](#)

[GALATIANS 1:1-24](#)

[PSALM 58:1-11](#)

[PROVERBS 23:12](#)

Proverbs 23:12

*Apply your heart to instruction
and your ear to words of knowledge.*

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Why did that proverb pop into my head? If I depend on my own intelligence, my smarts, my sense of right and wrong, the end is death. I MUST apply my heart to God's instruction, attune my ears to hear His words. Only then will I avoid destruction. I may still die a horrible death. I most certainly will sin and suffer for it. But, if I have sufficiently learned God's words and ways, then I can find salvation. Hmmm? What shall I choose?

February 13th Readings

[ISAIAH 19:1-21:17](#)

[GALATIANS 2:1-16](#)

[PSALM 59:1-17](#)

[PROVERBS 23:13-14](#)

Proverbs 23:13-14

*Do not withhold discipline from a child;
if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.
If you strike him with the rod,
you will save his soul from Sheol.*

As with many teachings in the Bible, this is one that must not be taken out of the context of a loving, merciful Father. I had a step-father from an early age. He rarely spanked me. I still remember both times he felt compelled to use force on me. I will never ride another man's horse without asking, and I will never again cock my arm to hit him. He died a few years ago, but those incidents shine brightly in my memory. I never felt abused, even shortly after each of those events. I was ashamed to tell anyone for fear of having to own up to what I did.

My biological father, on the other hand, spanked me uncountable times. I remember some times I got the rod (belt, paddle, switch, hand) because I was one of six kids in the house and the actual culprit could not be uncovered. Of course, sometimes I was the culprit.

When I spanked my own children, I made sure I was not still emotionally angry over whatever infraction incurred my wrath. I would sit my child down and we would talk about what specific instruction or rule was broken, how they broke it, and what might help them not to break it in the future. Sometimes, maybe even most of the time, a spanking was no longer necessary. But on those occasions when they ended up getting spanked, I was sure the physical pain would help imbed the memory deep in their minds. It was never capricious, and occurred only after discussion and usually not a few tears from both sides.

As far as I can tell, both my children still love me and feel loved by me. They are certainly productive members of society, with children of their own. And I am reasonably sure they vividly remember one or two occasions when their willful defiance or the egregious nature of an offense earned them a swat on the bottom.

February 14th Readings

[ISAIAH 22:1-24:23](#)

[GALATIANS 2:17-3:9](#)

[PSALM 60:1-12](#)

[PROVERBS 23:15-16](#)

GALATIANS 2:17-3:9

So, you need to be a strong example in Christ. Does that mean you can't fail, can't mess up, or you have failed Christ, God, your children? No! We sin because we are humans, falling to temptation just like Adam and Eve. Sometimes the most powerful examples are those that show how to return to trusting God's grace. Those who remember that we can't get to heaven on our own. Those who remember we are no longer under the law of "thou shalt nots". We are under God's grace. Under a benevolent God's mercy and love. Be the example of how to turn to God again. And again. And again. Be strong in your faith knowing that God waits for you with the open, nail-scarred hands of His Son.

February 15th Readings

[ISAIAH 25:1-28:13](#)

[GALATIANS 3:10-22](#)

[PSALM 61:1-8](#)

[PROVERBS 23:17-18](#)

In this passage by Isaiah, he explains destruction and salvation in very tangible human terms. Walls and towers strong enough to withstand the enemy, the walls of foreign cities laid low, in piles of rock. A tent to shelter from the sun.

We often think of serving God in these same tangible, earthly terms. How much should I give? How good do I have to be? Can I fudge on my taxes just a little?

It is somewhat ironic in that our ultimate salvation or destruction will not be understandable in earthly terms. We will either be with God or without God. With God, there will be no tears, no sin, no greed, no pain, no bad days or lonely nights. Without God, there will only be pain. Torture. Endless. Corrosive. Fears all the time. Nothing to shield behind. Nothing to shelter in.

And THAT fate depends entirely on a simple decision you make. Will you believe God and trust Him? Do what He asks of you? Or will you live for yourself?

February 16th Readings

[ISAIAH 28:14-30:11](#)

[GALATIANS 3:23-4:31](#)

[PSALM 62:1-12](#)

[PROVERBS 23:19-21](#)

Psalm 62:3-4

*How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?*

*They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.
They take pleasure in falsehood.
They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.*

We have seen it in history, how the workers rise up to destroy the foreman, the boss, the owner. Sometimes it seems as if the only complaint is that the foreman, boss, owner was socially higher or wealthier than the workers. That is the picture David is presenting here.

I don't know why some people are rich and others are poor, some powerful while others are downtrodden. It can be so arbitrary. But, to hate someone simply because they are rich or powerful is not the solution.

Later, in verse 9, David says: *Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.* This life is transitory. It means little when compared to eternity. David says to put your trust in God. He is the refuge, the rock. Salvation.

So, whether I am rich or poor, powerful or weak, it matters not, if I put my faith in God.

February 17th Readings

[ISAIAH 30:12-33:9](#)

[GALATIANS 5:1-12](#)

[PSALM 63:1-11](#)

[PROVERBS 23:22](#)

Galatians 5:1

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore,
and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

This amazes me on so many levels. WE ARE FREE. The nation of Israel had priests to intervene with God for them. Jesus died on the cross and became the only mediator we need. So, why do so many religions have priests to offer sacrifices for the people? Why have priests to intercede with God for us? Peter says every christian is part of a Holy Priesthood (1Peter

2:5). Individually, the only intercessor we need is Jesus. The only sacrifice we need is Jesus.

Of course, our response to the sacrifice Jesus made of Himself will constrain us to do good works, to obey Him, to submit completely to His will, to turn to Him for grace and mercy when we fall short of the mark.

He freed us. Why would we want to place chains on ourselves that are not required by Him?