

## 2011 Week Eight

### Offerings for Quiet Time Study

#### 1. CHOOSE RIGHTEOUSNESS

##### Psalm 125

- Spend some time meditating on the part(s) of this short psalm that especially resonate, thanking God for his reassurance

*When I first read verse 3, I read it like a proclamation from God, like a statement God was making about something that is always true, as if, "the sceptre of the wicked will not, will never, cannot, ever, remain over the land allotted to the righteous..." But then I thought about it more and what that verse is supposed to be teaching me, personally. I decided that it's telling me that I have a choice: if I want to be righteous, **I have to decide** to cast off "the sceptre of the wicked," – starting with refusing to allow wicked thoughts to remain in my mind.*

Psalm 125:3, "the sceptre of the wicked...." Sceptre (or "rod" in KJV) is from the Hebrew "shebet"<sup>1</sup>, meaning a rod that can be used for supporting, as well as for striking or beating; it also can mean an offshoot, a branch, (like the tribes of Israel were offshoots or branches of the patriarch Israel); and it can be a metaphor for authority, in this case, the authority or power of the wicked over the righteous.

- What are some "offshoots" or produce, if you will, of wickedness that I have to deal with in my thoughts, or in my life circumstances?

In the same verse, "the land allotted to" the righteous doesn't have to mean land in the literal sense, the Hebrew word there is "lot,"<sup>2</sup> which can mean, "my portion," or just me, my life.

And the word "righteous" (it's good for me to look all this stuff up)—I am righteous because God has given his righteousness to me. This means I have a responsibility to respond with the right heart toward this grace from God: to choose to "act in accordance with divine or moral law."<sup>3</sup> I'm considered free from sin (and therefore guilt!), thanks to God's amazing covenant of grace. As long as I'm human, I'm sinful, but God considers me righteous under his covenant. It's all about me continuing to care about and deepen my relationship with God and my choosing to act in such a way that honours and pleases God.

SO: I take this verse (125:3) to mean that I have a choice to make and a responsibility to fulfil. I must cast off the power of the wicked in my head, in my life. I have an obligation to learn how to keep my thoughts under control, disciplining my mind, and to cast off the power of the enemy (humanism, worldliness, negative thinking, Satan, my sinful nature, faithlessness).

#### 2 Corinthians 10:5

- Capture in writing any negative, evil, wicked, ungodly thoughts I can find floating around in my mind.<sup>4</sup> Cast them off by confessing them aloud to God, to people. Pray for more self-control in my thoughts and thank God for the victory he will give in this area

**Psalm 125:3** "...for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil," or NASB, might "put forth their hands to do wrong." *Disciplining my mind is so important because the consequence of not doing it is that my thoughts might lead me to do wrong, cause hurt to others, sin.*

#### 2. RIGHTEOUSNESS MEETS FAITH

##### Matthew Chapter 1

- God gives Joseph two specific commands in this chapter. What's the first one?
- Why did God have to give this command to Joseph?

Joseph had in mind to follow a course of action, which he believed to be righteous. God had a different idea.

- What might have been scary to Joseph about bringing Mary home as his wife? List as many concerns as you can think of. *I came up with five.* \*

God was asking Joseph to believe in something that he had never seen before, in fact, that no one had ever seen before! God was asking him to do something that surely couldn't have felt right to him, yet was in fact, the right thing to do.

- Clearly, there was only one time in history that God would introduce his Son in the flesh into the world, and would have to prepare Jesus' physical family in this way, but do you think that righteous people today might also find themselves in Joseph's dilemma? Does God ever ask us to believe in something we've never seen before? Does it ever happen that God's will can be surprisingly different from what a righteous person might have thought? Write down any personal examples I can think of. *My thoughts:*
  - a wonderful marriage, for mature single women who have never dated as disciples
  - a non-believing husband to come to faith
  - a "lukewarm" person to become "hot" for God
  - that I will overcome my own character sins enough to be able to do great things for God (for example: become humble enough, be spiritually focused enough to do what I need to do in order to raise my preteen son to become a disciple at the right time)
  - non-believing adult children will learn to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength
  - miraculous healing for my friends who have terminal cancer; or – kind of an opposite: being able to accept with peace and faith unforeseen tragedy when it strikes
- Pray specifically about what God has put on my heart from this one command to Joseph, asking God to help me to not be afraid!

### 3. THE HEART OF A DISCIPLE III

**Proverbs 25:4-7; Luke 14:7-11; Proverbs 25: 12, 27**

(Here's another example of Jesus' teaching, linked directly to the Proverbs.)

- What character quality does these scriptures teach, which should be apparent in the heart of a disciple?
- In what ways does this challenge me? Write them down; pray about them
- What could I do today to put what I see in these Scriptures into practise? \*\*

### 4. THE HEART OF JUDAS I

**Luke 22:1-6; 1 Peter 5:9; Genesis 4:6-7**

- Did Satan have to enter Judas? What could Judas have done to prevent this?
- Can I sense Satan trying to enter my heart in any way?
- What do I need to do to resist Satan today? Pray about this and back up my prayers with faithful action today

### 5. THE HEART OF JUDAS II

**Luke 22:14-30**

- What was the atmosphere like around Judas, the betrayer?
- In what situations is it hard for me to decide to take on the role of "the youngest," or to be the one who serves? Are there any situations where I'm clearly not humbling myself in this way but my conscience is telling me I should? What are they?
- Pray **Ephesians 4:2** and **Philippians 2:3** and visualize myself obeying these scriptures today in situations where I normally might not be so deliberately and successfully righteous!

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H7626&t=NASB>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H1486&t=NASB>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/righteous>

<sup>4</sup> *I'm enjoying a few days' retreat with my family and some close friends as I write this. Casting off the sceptre of the wicked for me, today, means, banishing evil thoughts like, "you don't deserve to have special time like this...isn't there something you forgot to do and shouldn't you be feeling guilty about something?...something terrible is bound to happen because you're away and have left your responsibilities at home..."*

*\* What would people think?; I'm not ready to be a father; I don't want to take responsibility for this child, I don't even know whose it is; Probably Mary is not who I thought she was, I don't know her after all – confusing! Believed her to be God-fearing, then she turns up pregnant ;If what the angel said in the dream is true, how can this be true, nothing like this has ever happened before!*

*\*\*I need to pray to learn to listen better; I need to pray to not be seeking my own honour in doing good things for God; I need to pray to see opportunities to humble myself before God and in the presence of others. Practical ways to put this into practice: ask for feedback and actively invite my friends to disciple me to Christ (not just waiting for it to happen)*