



For the best spiritual benefit, please prayerfully discuss this Nugget with those with you on your faith pilgrimage.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

As I (Sue) have been going through the Older Testament earnestly seeking what Father would have me internalize this time around, I found myself grieving alongside Him over the resistant disobedience of the people He calls His “wife”. The same holy God Who called Himself the “husband” of Israel (Isaiah 54:5) often refers to His collective unfaithful beloved as prostitutes, an adulterous wife, harlots (e.g. Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 4:12) — terms which strike a chord of revulsion and sorrow over their spiritual adultery against Him. By their rebellious actions they were proclaiming He wasn’t enough for them! The One True God Who alone deserves praise and adoration and prayer found His treasured possession spiritually defiling herself with detestable idols. The Word was indeed coming to life for me in sadness.

And then this came to me. We who are the bride of Christ in the new covenant — aren’t we also guilty of spiritual adultery, giving our Lord Jesus a small slice of our lives but then ignoring Him the rest of the time to pursue our own way even if it involves less than holy, time-wasting entertainment? The apostle James leaves no doubt about our Father’s view when we compromise our claim of belonging to Jesus with pursuing worldly values and goals: *“Adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”* (James 4:4).

The past several weeks as I’ve been poring over Ezekiel early in the morning, I’ve come to breakfast brimming with intense sorrow. I’ve seen how far God’s people Israel pushed Him so that He had to bring overwhelming devastation upon them. Over cereal I’ve been sharing these insights with Mike, connecting so much of what’s been unjust, unloving and unholy in this country with what I’ve been seeing in God’s Word about Israel’s unrighteousness. Because Mike too has felt the intensity of what I’ve been noticing in Ezekiel, he recommended I write some of this down to send you. It’s certainly not a “Bible study” of the prophet’s writings. Rather, consider this a tool for prayerful self-examination of what specific actions and responses the Spirit of Christ in you needs you to take now so that you aren’t defaming Him as a spiritual adulteress.

Many Christians really don’t see much point in using the Older Testament to help them discern Father’s will and identify which of our own motives and attitudes and actions are righteous from His holy perspective. But for me, what’s vitally important is WHO authored these words through the writers He chose to transcribe them! I’ve met so many Christians who either relegate the Hebrew Scriptures to something that’s only for Jews, or who erroneously think of the Older Testament as “the law” and therefore not needed by them because they’re “under grace”. But that unbiblical distinction misses the whole point of WHO is behind all of His Word! Whether you think of the Older Testament as “the law” or as “God’s instructions”, keep your eye on WHO spoke it forth! Out of love for each of His own, He made sure that ALL of His Word was given to us! And if I might challenge you, closely look at some of the “contrast” Proverbs, those from Chapter 10 onward especially which distinguish clearly between what’s righteous and good in God’s sight, from that which HE sees as wicked and foolish. What needs to change in your own life?

God is indeed long-suffering, not wanting anyone to die in unrepentance. But His holiness and justice demand consequences for ongoing sin! Let's look at a well-known example from Scripture whose unrighteousness offers many parallels to the United States today. While Sodom is widely known for the evil of rampant homosexuality, God makes known through Ezekiel 16:49,50 other abominations in His sight that precipitated this city's fiery destruction:



- **“proud arrogance”**, which could for example describe this country's unquenchable thirst for oil no matter how many Christ-less souls from other nations are being destroyed to get it.
- **“overfed”**, especially since this nation tips the scales with 2/3 of the populace classed as overweight or obese. And sadly, the cheapest food is the least nutritious, specifically targeting the impoverished who live in “food deserts” lacking access to affordable fresh produce.
- **“careless and complacent, doing nothing to help the poor”**. Many who call themselves “Christian” are well aware of the needy in their community. But they resist taking action to help them or speak up when minorities and immigrants in particular are unjustly harassed, jailed, or even deported.
- **“they committed disgusting acts before Me”**, perversions which are considered abominations in God's sight yet are openly practiced and condoned.

**“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says:
Since you have forgotten Me and turned your back on Me, you must bear the
consequences of your lewdness and prostitution” (Ezekiel 23:35).**

So what are some of the catastrophes which Scripture says God intentionally sends so that a land's inhabitants might repent and He might relent? Here are 4 severe judgments listed and described in Ezekiel 14:13-21 which are repeated in Revelation 6:8. The same God has been violated in both testaments by ongoing sin, and He uses disaster to achieve His just purposes:

- **Famine.** *“Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it” (v. 13)* What are the elements which result in widespread famine in any country? Drought. Inability to get food products transported to market. Costs so high that farmers stop growing it. Far higher demand than supply. Hopelessness drives violence!
- **Wild Beasts.** *“If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts” (v. 15).* The nature of these beasts is unknown, but certainly the natural fear of humans which many animals have is absent in this scenario because God has made it so.
- **A Sword.** *“Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land,’ and I kill its people and their animals” (v. 17).* A “sword” 2500 years ago when this was written could include any type of weaponry we have today, whether handguns, armed drones, jet bombers, or cruise missiles. The result is the same: death, destruction, wholesale panic because there's nowhere safe to go. And note that the “sword” can come from *within* a land as well as from abroad. People who are without food or water are so desperate that the weaker are easy prey when a seared conscience wields the weapons.

- **Plague/Epidemic.** *“Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out My wrath on it through bloodshed, killing its people and their animals”* (v. 19). It is out of our Father’s great mercy that we have not been consumed by the devastating epidemics which seem to “come out of nowhere”, do their massive and destructive death work, then fade away. But the worst of times are designed by our Lord to bring out exceptional compassion and unsurpassed spiritual endeavors in those who are filled with His Holy Spirit. As Christ’s people labor out of sincere love, the desperate who receive His care through them may soften their resistant hearts, repent, and cry out to Jesus to be their Savior and Lord as a new creation.

Suggestions For Mutually Helping Each Other Avoid Tolerated Sin

Love for and trust in God our Father (see Proverbs 3:5,6; Mark 12:30) are the heart issues that nurture continuing spiritual growth as Christ’s own. As this growth deepens, our Father and His Son Jesus receive glory from your life. At the same time, you develop increasing Christ-likeness as the Spirit keeps working in you to do Father’s will with joyful obedience.

Worship and Praise (see John 4:24) are exuberant expressions of gratefulness that reveal your true heart toward our Lord. Through worship and praise your spirit is able to manifest your loving recognition of our Father and His Son in your life. This isn’t a particular form or style of worship or praise that pleases God, but rather what flows from a forgiven, repentant heart.

True, sacrificial love for others (see Matthew 25:31-46) can emerge only out of the quality of loving trust you maintain in the Vertical. Your ability to genuinely care for people who can never repay your kindness can only come through the love and power that the Holy Spirit provides from within you. All other kinds of love fall short of the humble sacrifice that stirs the recipient of your love to praise our Father. This is what truly sets followers of Jesus apart as we live out our lives in the horizontal. The inner motivation of your heart is to glorify our Father, and this distinguishes your activity in the world from all other motives.

Mutual encouragement (see Hebrews 3:13; 10:23, 24) by those who follow Jesus with all their heart and soul helps you avoid the traps of sin’s deceit. Satan’s schemes are designed to trap you in self-pity and despair, or entice you to entertain particular sins which you excuse or refuse to flee. The enemy may try to convince you that our Father isn’t hearing your prayers, or that He has even rejected you. (However, your self-consumed, self-pitying attitude does send the message to our Lord that He is untrustworthy.) But authentic fellowship counters deception with testimonies of answered prayer and our Father’s faithfulness. You can recount God’s past *and* present acts of kindness toward you as His beloved child.

Fellowship with the righteous (see 1John 1:3; 2Corinthians 6:14) is crucial to your faith journey. We’ve written how important interconnected fellowship in homes was to the earliest followers of our Lord Jesus. The primary purpose of their gatherings was to uphold communal righteousness by ongoing repentance, prayer, instruction in godliness, breaking of bread, and one-anothering in order for the Father to answer their prayers (see James 5:16-19; 1Peter 3:12; Acts 2:42). The righteous in Christ walk by grace in obedient trust and love. They intentionally seek the indwelling Spirit’s guidance, following Father’s commands without conjecture as to any consequences which their obedience might result in. Love for God and a desire to walk in the righteousness of Jesus compels you to help each other press on with boldness (Proverbs 28:1).

Your sufferings (see Romans 5:3-5; 8:14-17; Hebrews 5:8; 1Peter 2:20,21) are character transformers, not trials to avoid at all cost. You yearn to give the Potter freedom to change within you all that He desires, and to form in you whatever will suit His purposes. It isn’t that

God changes anything around you; He changes you. Your identification with our Lord Jesus in His sufferings increases profoundly even as your peace and joy in Him swell (see Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:1-16).

Having your needs met God's way (see Genesis 1:26,30; 2:8,9;15-25) is the only way you can genuinely experience the freedom that's offered you through Jesus. Your God-given need for •dignity, •authority, •blessing and provision, •security, •purpose and meaning, •freedom and boundary, and •intimate love and companionship can only be experienced when your generational strongholds are demolished. As these needs are met, you experience a greater fullness in your relationship with both our Father and His Son Jesus, and with other people.

Removal of generational strongholds (see Ephesians 6:12; 2Corinthians 10:3-6) frees your soul, that is, your mind, will and emotions, for the Holy Spirit to change you into conformity to Jesus. Even many who have embraced the true Gospel still find themselves struggling with bondage to demonic strongholds which have been passed along from generation to generation. The transformation process that's promised to them as part of their sanctification is impossible until these demonic influences are demolished. In the authority of Jesus' Name, demolish the strongholds that impede your soul's transformation into Christ-likeness! Then you can fully reflect the character of our Lord Jesus and be used by the Spirit as a more effective instrument in the lives of others.

Repentance that produces righteousness (see 1John 1:9) is key to your ongoing relationship with both our Father and His Son Jesus. You can have no true fellowship with others *if* this divine fellowship is obstructed through holding onto tolerated sin (see 1John 2:7-10). Repentance is your first step in embracing the true Gospel, and it's the glue that maintains your fellowship until you are welcomed into heaven.

Embracing the true Gospel (see John 7:38,39), the authentic Good News of which Jesus speaks, is the first step of being *genuinely* born again. As you embrace the stipulations of the new Covenant that is offered by our Father, He seals you with the Holy Spirit guaranteeing His part of the Covenant promises. Realize that the salvation that's offered in the true Gospel doesn't occur at conversion. Rather salvation is the glorious culmination of a life pilgrimage (see Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-9; Philippians 2:12,13) which is completed when our Lord proclaims your name in front of the hosts of heaven (see Revelation 3:5).

"...work out your own salvation [together] with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12,13).

These recommendations are meant to strengthen and encourage you and those who are your brothers and sisters in your fellowship family. Prayerfully discuss these and put them into practice so that you may each have a testimony to share of how the Holy Spirit has been at work in and around and through you. Then no matter what chastisement takes place in this land (or in any other nation), you'll have no cause to fear. Stand firm in His love and promises!

