

## August 26 — Because I Said So

### READ

Jeremiah 39:11-18  
Jeremiah 40:1-6  
2 Kings 25:8-21  
Jeremiah 52:12-27  
2 Chronicles 36:15-21  
Lamentations 1:1-22

Ezekiel 26:21 “... *I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!*”

### THINK

“Because I said so!” Did you ever hear that when you were growing up? It was so frustrating! But, we use it with our own kids. It’s a simple statement to remind them that, in the end, they aren’t in charge and it’s not their decision — even if they don’t agree or understand.

Throughout our readings over the past several days, we have repeatedly seen this phrase: “I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken.” God is simply reminding His people — and us — that, in the end, He is in control. And if He says it, it will happen.

This was frightening for the people of Israel when they were experiencing His judgment. But it can also be comforting when we remember that, no matter what we face, the God who loves us is in control. And since He has said He will be with us, He is fighting for us, and He has come to save us, then it will happen.

### PRAY

Lord, thank You for being the God who is in control and does what He says He will do. I will trust You today. Amen.

## August 25 — The Key to Success

### READ

Ezekiel 26:15-28:26

2 Kings 25:3-7

Jeremiah 52:6-11, 39:2-10

Ezekiel 28:2, 4-7, *“Son of man, give the prince of Tyre this message from the Sovereign Lord: In your great pride you claim, ‘I am a god!’ ... With your wisdom and understanding, you have amassed great wealth—gold and silver for your treasuries. Yes, your wisdom has made you very rich, and your riches have made you very proud. ... Because you think you are as wise as a god, I will now bring against you a foreign army, the terror of the nations.”*

### THINK

Off the top of your head, if asked to name the key to success, what would you say? Perseverance? Creativity? Believing in yourself? Not taking “No” for an answer?

These are all valid responses. But a better question to ask is: “Who is the key to success?” If you answered, “Me,” you might want to rethink it. Because, as we see in today’s reading, such belief didn’t fare well for the prince of Tyre and his people.

Tyre was one of the wealthiest and most powerful merchant cities of the ancient world. Because of its strategic location, it was known for employing unscrupulous tactics to take advantage of its neighbors. Ezekiel 28 delivers a strong indictment against Tyre’s king for his insatiable pride and greed. If asked, “Who is responsible for Tyre’s success?” The man would surely grin and say, “I am!”

As we’ve seen repeatedly throughout these past several weeks of readings, pride and self-proclaimed success led to a multitude of sins that laid low the greatest of cities and even God’s own people. The bottom line: All success comes from God! He is the “Who,” the key that unlocks every fortune — both tangible and intangible. And the Bible makes it very clear that, just as God gives, God takes away. If we praise ourselves and believe we advance by our own wisdom and fortitude, we’ll learn the hard way just how wrong we are.

So, whatever you achieve or strive for, remember “Who” the key to success truly is. Give thanks, and use it for His glory. Such humility will breed further gain and land you in the sweet spot of God’s blessing and favor.

### PRAY

Heavenly Father, All that I am, all that I have, and all that I’ll ever accomplish is by Your hand. In the face of success, help me remain humble with a thankful heart. May all I do bring glory to Your name, Amen.

## August 24 — Is Anything Too Hard For God?

### READ

Jeremiah 32:1-33:26

Ezekiel 26:1-14

Jeremiah 32:25-27, *“And though the city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians, You, Sovereign Lord, say to me, ‘Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed. Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: ‘I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for Me?’”*

### THINK

With our lips, we proclaim that God is a miracle worker. We point to events in the Bible like Moses parting the Red Sea, Daniel in the lion’s den, and Jesus walking on water. If asked about God’s ability, we’d immediately say, “Nothing is too hard for God.”

But many of us have faced times when this belief has been challenged, and we’ve wondered, “Can God really do the impossible?”

Jeremiah was in prison because he prophesied that the Babylonians would conquer Jerusalem. As the siege was happening at the city gates, God told Jeremiah to purchase land outside the city that he would have no opportunity to possess because the enemy had already taken control of it. Jeremiah immediately obeyed and bought the field in front of witnesses. He professed God’s past miracles for the people of Israel and then prayed to gain an understanding of why God would ask him to make such a seemingly foolish purchase.

Even though he was unclear about God’s reasoning, Jeremiah’s obedience pointed to his overall faith and belief that God would one day fulfill His promise to restore the purchased land to the Israelites. Therefore, he not only proclaimed what God could do, but he lived out his life in a way that gave an emphatic NO to the question, “Is anything too hard for God?”

Just as God didn’t directly answer Jeremiah’s question, He may not always answer ours. But we can trust that God’s ways are higher than our own; they won’t always make sense in our finite minds. And, even when we don’t see the desired result, God can and will use our obedience, our lived-out faith, to point others to Him and fulfill His amazing purpose!

So, when the impossible is looming, just remember — nothing is too hard for God!

### PRAY

Lord, NOTHING is too difficult for You! Let that prayer fill my heart and mind that there may be no space for doubt or disobedience! Amen.

## **August 23 — Shine His Light!**

### **READ**

Ezekiel 24:15-25:17, 29:1-16, 30:20-31:18

Jeremiah 34:1-22, 21:1-14

Jeremiah 34:15-16, *“Recently you repented and did what was right, following My command. You freed your slaves and made a solemn covenant with Me in the Temple that bears My name. But now you have shrugged off your oath and defiled My name by taking back the men and women you had freed, forcing them to be slaves again.”*

### **THINK**

“Treat others the way you want to be treated.” This is a common phrase you probably heard growing up by a parent or teacher. But have you ever really thought about what it means and how it affects you as a Christ-follower?

Once you enter into a personal relationship with Jesus, you are a bearer of His light. As reflectors of Christ’s light, a great responsibility is how we respond to or treat those who can do nothing in return for our kindness and concern. Additionally, we are called to represent His righteousness in the darkness of today’s world — we want those who don’t yet know Him to notice something different in us through our words and actions, to draw them in and share the reason for our hope and desire to live a God-centered life.

In today’s reading, God scolded the Israelites for their ill-treatment of slaves, even saying they had “defiled His name.” Wow! Although the context is different for us today, there is value in this powerful reminder of how we should treat other people.

What if we spin that common phrase to “Treat others the way GOD wants you to treat them?” God desires for us to view people through the lens that He sees them. So, get ready to shine Christ’s light! He wants to use you to reach those still living in darkness. Here’s a great way to make it happen: Remember, you have never looked eyes with someone that Jesus doesn’t love or didn’t die for. Be ready to shine His light!

### **PRAY**

Dear God, I want to shine Your light! This week, help me share Your love with as many people as possible through my words and actions. Thank You for Your love! Amen.

## August 22 — Standing in the Gap

### READ

Ezekiel 22:17-23:49, 24:1-4

2 Kings 24:20-25:2

Jeremiah 52:3-5, 39:1

Ezekiel 22:30-31, *“I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one. So now I will pour out My fury on them, consuming them with the fire of My anger. I will heap on their heads the full penalty for all their sins. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!”*

### THINK

Yikes! Today’s passage is intense, and it doesn’t speak well for what was going on with the Israelites of the day. God “searched” for at least one righteous person to “stand in the gap.” What does this mean? Let’s take a look at it both literally and figuratively to get a full picture of what was happening then and how we can apply it to our lives today — essentially, how we can fill the gap.

In ancient times, cities were vulnerable to attack if there were breaches within their fortified walls. In the event these gaps existed, people willing to fight off invaders stood and guarded the weakened areas, often risking their own lives to do so. In this instance, Jerusalem had been breached by sin. God couldn’t even find one person capable of standing in the gap to lift up an intercessory prayer — to cry out for their people in the face of coming judgment. Ezekiel, God’s prophet, had been warning His people, and not even one person heeded God’s message enough to pray, to stand in the gap where sin had so badly breached the walls of their hearts.

What does this mean for us today? How can we be “gap fillers?” First, we have to look beyond ourselves to the needs of others. God wants us to be sensitive to the promptings He places on our hearts. If someone pops into our minds and we feel a tug in our hearts to pray for them, we should — immediately. Second, it ushers in joy when we pray for a person in need, and the prayer is answered. And, third, it draws us closer to God. The more we respond to such promptings, the more He will work through us to fill such gaps.

So, open your heart today and be receptive to whatever God places on your heart. Fill the gap of righteousness and be blessed!

### PRAY

Heavenly Father, I want to stand in the gap for others. Nudge my heart like never before when people are in need of prayer. I seek to lead a righteous life to fulfill Your amazing plans and purposes. Amen.

## August 21 — For His Name’s Sake

### READ

Ezekiel 20:1-22:16

*Ezekiel 20: 8-9, “...they rebelled against Me and would not listen ... Then I threatened to pour out my fury on them to satisfy my anger while they were still in Egypt. But I didn’t do it, for I acted to protect the honor of My name. I would not allow shame to be brought on My name among the surrounding nations who saw Me reveal Myself by bringing the Israelites out of Egypt.”*

### THINK

In the words of William Shakespeare, “What’s in a name? A rose, by any other name, would smell just as sweet.” It’s true. A rose isn’t identified merely by its name but also by its smell and beauty. The same is true of God. When we speak of Him, there is far more to His name than we can truly grasp.

In Hebrew, God's name, YAHWEH, was considered to be so holy by the Israelites that they didn't ever speak it aloud. This reverence for God’s name is indicative of His character and nature. There’s truly something awe-inspiring and powerful about that name.

As we read God’s indictment of His very own people, we might find ourselves wondering: “Why didn’t they obey? How could they turn to idols? And why didn’t God completely destroy them?” As we’ve read throughout the Old Testament, we’ve seen how many opportunities He gave them to turn from idolatry and back to Him — the One who delivered their ancestors out of Egyptian slavery. Although it would have been just to destroy them in anger, He continued to give them more chances — to “protect the honor” of His name.

As Christ-followers, we’ll never truly grasp the magnitude of God’s name, but we can still be amazed by its power. Because of this, we, too, should be protectors of God’s name as we live a life that honors Him and all that He has done for our salvation and transformation.

Today, give thanks to the name above all names — Jesus Christ! Be amazed by His power, for He is worthy of our praise!

### PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for who You are. I know that I’ll never fully grasp the vast power of Your name, but I want to be in awe of it daily as I discover more and more about You. Today, I praise You and seek to honor Your name with my words and actions. Amen.

## August 20 — Hot Potato

### READ

Ezekiel 17:1-19:14

Ezekiel 18:1-4, *“Then another message came to me from the Lord: ‘Why do you quote this proverb concerning the land of Israel: ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, but their children’s mouths pucker at the taste?’ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, you will not quote this proverb anymore in Israel. For all people are mine to judge — both parents and children alike. And this is my rule: The person who sins is the one who will die.’”*

### THINK

Do you remember playing Hot Potato as a child? It's a simple game of passing an object from one person to the next in a circle while music plays. When the music stops, the person left holding the "hot potato" is out of the game. It ends when only one person remains.

As we mature into adulthood, many of us are still playing a very similar game — with a “hot potato” called blame. Carefully, we pass it around to ensure that it ends elsewhere. We blame our parents, other people, the government, our social and economic status — we’ll blame anything to divert ultimate responsibility.

In today’s reading, we see that this game is nothing new. We also see God’s response to the Israelites who passed the cause of their troubles to previous generations. What does He say? In a word — STOP!

What happens when we choose to take ownership of the hot potato and claim personal responsibility for our actions? When we recognize that we're fallen and fallible sinners? The chains of pride begin to break away. We gain more from humbling ourselves than from pointing fingers. As a result, reconciliation occurs with God and others as we experience the warmth of His grace. Humility yields far greater dividends than “passing the potato” because, in the end, we win!

### PRAY

Heavenly Father, I admit that I am responsible for my own actions and deeds, that You hold me accountable whether I want to take the blame or not. Nudge my heart when I begin pointing fingers. Thank You for Your forgiveness and grace. Amen.