

The Weekly Word
August 12-18, 2013

Numbers continues to teach me. I hope you can say the same thing. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, August 12: Numbers 13– Know your role...

And they spread among the Israelites a bad report... (32).

It was not only a bad report but it went beyond what Moses asked them to do. Moses asked for information not advice. He wanted to know about the land and the people; he was not seeking military advice from his spies. But they gave it. Ten of them *spread ... a bad report*, which took the faith out of the people and the people rebelled.

We have to know our role. In this case, the ten went beyond what Moses had asked, they did it poorly and the people suffered.

It was a sad day for Israel.

I pondered the power of a negative word. (It is a bit frightening to me but TV & radio news is almost all negative. No wonder we have an agitated and nervous world.) Too often, among God's people, I have seen a negative word zap the faith from a people, particularly one not called for and often times beyond one's authority or ability level. This is a dangerous time for the people of God...

Oh, God, help me to maintain faith and to be a voice for You in all situations... in the face of danger, trial, or come what may. May I be a Caleb who said "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

All for Your glory. Amen!

Tuesday, August 13: Numbers 14– Rebellion...

The bad report given by ten of the spies led directly to rebellion by the people! All night they whined and complained and by morning they were whipped into a frenzy of rebellion. NO, we will not go! NO, send us back to Egypt! NO, God, NO!

Their act of rebellion cost them dearly. Rebellion from God always costs. God doesn't suffer insolence.

I pondered the way in which a bad report escalated into rebellion. If only the situation could have been nipped in the bud, correcting the bad report before it poisoned the people. Life is like that. Sin grows in the shadows and darkness. We are always better off confronting sin at the earliest moment. The sooner sin is confronted, the simpler the task of gaining victory.

The flip side is true as well. The longer we allow sin to lurk in the shadows and grow, the more difficult it is to confront and overcome. And generally, the greater the punishment when God deals with it.

I guess this is why the wisdom of Jesus and the ancient heroes of the faith says to keep short accounts. And daily, if not more often, make our confessions and admissions to the Lord that we might be cleansed from our sin and so that we do not allow sin to grow into a 'monster' difficult to defeat.

Spending time in confession seems to be the order of the day. I begin praying a prayer with deep roots into the life and history of Christ followers...

Most Merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. I have not loved You with my whole heart and mind and strength. I have not loved my neighbors as myself. I am truly sorry and humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and forgive my sins; that I might delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name.

Oh, Lord, my God, as I sit before You and make my confession, cleanse me, heal me and set me upright that I might serve You this and every day. To the glory of Your name. Amen.

Wednesday, August 14: Numbers 15– Sinning defiantly...

"But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the LORD, and that person must be cut off from his people. Because he has despised the LORD's word and broken his commands, that person must surely be cut off; his guilt remains on him" (20-21)

I found myself pondering the difference between unintentional sins (verses 22-27) and the person who sins defiantly.

Sin is sin and we are all guilty of sin. I am guilty of sin. These verses make a significant differentiation between unintentional and intentional ('sins defiantly' is the language of the text). Unintentional sins have a ritual for atonement and forgiveness. Defiant sin, however, calls for perpetrators to be cut off from the people.

According to the text, defiant sin despises the Lord's Word. That's a strong statement.

I found myself drifting through a review of my own life. The frightening thing is there are times when I choose to sin. By OT definition, that is defiance. Oh my, have I despised the Lord's Word? Raw honesty, probably so.

Oh, God, I am so grateful that Jesus covers all sins. I sit here a lump before You, contemplating the incredible gift of atonement and forgiveness given in Jesus. Intentional and unintentional forgiveness!!! What an amazing gift. I sit here so blessed, Lord. Amen.

Thursday, August 15: Numbers 16– Validating Lordship...

At its heart, the uprising in the desert was against the Lord and His leadership design for Israel. It was not ultimately against Moses and Aaron. The rebelling people were attempting to change what the Lord had established. Verse 11 confirms this. *It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?"*

The Lord understood that this challenge to His rule and reign is about Lordship so He wasted no time in setting this rebellion down. In dramatic ways the Lord showed HE was in control.

There are only a few instances like this in Scripture. Ananias & Sapphires in Acts 5 come to mind. These are times when the Lord chooses to validate His Lordship over His people in a highly visible manner.

I am thankful that demonstrations like this are not common in Scripture. Yet, at the same time, having these in the Bible stands as a reminder that the Lord God is in absolute control whether He chooses to demonstrate it or not.

My meditations and prayer today are that I would learn from these scriptures and not require God to demonstrate this truth in dramatic ways before my eyes!

Oh, Lord God, You are the great and awesome God. You speak and all creation listens... seas part, grounds open up, the sun continues to shine, the seas calm. You speak and it happens.

Only humankind dares to rebel. Only we dare to say, 'No, do it our way.' Forgive us... forgive me, when in my own ways I say 'no' to You.

Lord, may I remain humble and You be exalted in and through my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Friday, August 16: Numbers 17– Only two options...

In today's chapter, God adds to the dramatic demonstration of who He is by causing Aaron's staff to bud, flower and produce almonds in 12 hrs. In so doing, God demonstrates His glory and power, plus He establishes Aaron's lineage as priests of God.

The people tremble before their great and awesome God. Fear, a holy fear, descends upon the people. They cry out to Moses, *"We will die! We are lost, we are all lost! Anyone who even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to die?"* (12-13).

By reading a chapter a day we are left hanging. Will the people die?

We know the answer, since the Bible doesn't end here. They do not die. But, hopefully, they learned a valuable lesson.

The question for me/you today is did I/you learn the lesson God sought to teach his children? Did I/you learn that there is only one God and it is not me or us! As God, His Word goes. As God, His Word is the rule. As God, He is to be believed and followed, not challenged or ignored!

Do I/we live in obedience or rebellion? They are the only two options when it comes to the Lord...

Think about it...

Lord, obedience or rebellion? Imperfect as my living and obeying might be, I choose obedience. Lead me, guide me, give me understanding of Your eternal word that I might know You and what You have spoken so that I might obey.

Where You have given understanding, may I have the faith to obey. Where I lack understanding, may I gain it that I might not sin against You. May my life be an example for others to follow. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, August 17: Numbers 18– I have things to do...

The Levites would not be given any land as an inheritance. The Lord was their inheritance and service in the sanctuary was their inheritance. But sanctuary service will not fill one's belly or feed one's family. How will the Levites survive?

God has everything under control. This is my first meditative moment. When I am worrying how things will work out, I need to remember that God has things under control. This doesn't absolve me from responsibility. But God is never surprised, and if we follow God's order of things, He has the bases covered.

The Levites lived off the tithes of the people. Whatever was not consumed in the fire was for the Levites. The offerings of the people provided for the Levite families whom God chose to minister in the Tabernacle. God's plan takes care of everyone! Even the Levites were to tithe on what they received which was given to the priests, descendants of Aaron.

Those who received the tithe, gave a tithe. I sat and chewed on this one for a while.

God's ways work when everyone fulfills their role. If the people don't tithe, the Levites can't survive. If the Levites don't tithe then the priests won't survive. Everyone needs to play his or her part for the plan of God to run correctly.

I heard God saying, "Bill, I need you to play your part for My plan to work smoothly." As I pondered this, I thought 'WOW'!

- I need to give my tithe to the church so the church of God can do all God wants it to do.

- I need to serve the body by using the gifts God has given me so that the body functions smoothly and there are no gaps because of my laziness.
- I need to be making disciples because God calls all of us to be disciple-makers...

And so my meditations went as I pondered the various parts God has for me to play in His world!

Lord, today's Word gives me new eyes to see Your will. I am so blessed to be part of Your plan and will. Help me, Lord, give me strength and passion to do the things You have for me to do! Holy Spirit work on my attitude so that I do Your bidding with a smiling face, no matter how difficult the task or calling may be.

Thank You, Lord God, for inviting me to be part of Your extraordinary plan. I pray this through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Sunday, August 18, 2013, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.