

The Weekly Word
August 19-25, 2013

We are in the dog days of August, but the Word of God continues to be a rich field of praise and inspiration. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, August 19: Numbers 19– How hard it is to be keep ourselves clean...

As I read this chapter I found myself fixing on verse 16 and pondering David and his fighting men. *Anyone out in the open who touches someone who has been killed with a sword or someone who has died a natural death, or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for seven days.*

Every battle likely meant they became unclean. And when they went back through the dead to gather the plunder, they would become unclean. And then for 7 days they would be unclean. In order to become clean they would have to go through this cleansing ritual washing on the 3rd and 7th days. But it is not hard to suppose that they would be fighting multiple days. Or they would fight, then advance and fight again, in a day or so.

I thought how difficult it would be for them to become and remain clean. The more I think about this, the more I suspect that they didn't go through the cleansing ritual until they returned home and the time of fighting was over.

What a life. How hard it must have been for soldiers to keep the law.

As I typed this last sentence, I realized how hard it is for anyone to keep the law. This is only the rule about being cleansed from touching a dead body. Add on top of this the myriad of other laws. It is impossible for us to keep God's law! But thanks be to God, He has given a way apart from the law through which we can live righteous before God.

Romans 3:21-22: *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known.... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

Oh, God, thank you for Jesus, for the righteousness that comes through faith in Him. God, I could never be righteous before you on my own. I couldn't and can't do it myself. Through faith in Jesus, which is a gift from You by itself, I have been graced with what I could never earn on my own. Thank You. Bless You. Praise You. Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, August 20: Numbers 20– Generational hatred and sin...

As I was reading today's chapter, I found myself filled with sadness over the episode with Moses and Aaron and the waters of Meribah. How sad it was that this man of God stumbled before God as he did. This sin cost him entrance into the Promised Land.

As I meditated, I thought how important it is for us to maintain vigilance in our walk with Jesus. Moses did not lose his eternal inheritance, but he did forfeit a blessing this side of eternity because he dishonored God before the people.

As these thoughts subsided, I found my mind sparked by the generational hatred that surfaced in the story of Edom. Edom is the descendants of Esau the brother of Jacob. It appears that the Edomites harbored bitterness that likely stems back to the problems between Esau and Jacob. It occurred to me as I was reading the Word, how deeply generational sins can embed

themselves into our lives. Esau and Jacob's issues were at least 400 years earlier, and yet the hatred still continues to manifest itself.

This same kind of generational hatred or distain can be seen in many parts of our world. Arabs and Jews; factions in Serbia; and ethnic cleansing I have witnessed across various African countries. Apartheid in South Africa and the black/white racism experienced in the US are all examples for generational hatred.

I felt the impulse of God to examine my life to see if this kind of generational division lives in me and if so to confess it, repent from it, and ask God to release me from it.

Lord, search me and know me. Look through the layers of my life and show me if there is any generational, racial or cultural hatred or distain in me against any peoples of Your creation.

As needed cleanse, instruct and show me Your way, that I might live faithfully for You all the days of my life until I live with You in eternity with brothers and sister of every nation, tribe, language and people. I pray in Jesus, the One Savior and Lord of all. Amen.

Wednesday, August 21: Numbers 21– Snakes in the camp...

The account of the snakes drew me in. It began with the people growing impatient. In their impatience *they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"* (5). Impatience led to inappropriate actions. How often this is true in my life. In my impatience, I get angry and

- think things that dishonor God.
- I say thing that embarrass myself and hurt people.
- I some things I do things that I regret and hurt others.

Impatience is a spark that sets things on fire and once the fire ignites, it is hard to regain control.

This maybe the first time I really considered the devastating effects of impatience. How wonderful that God offers to cultivate His fruit of patience (see Gal 5:22) in our lives as we learn to live by and cooperate with the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to all who follow Jesus.

The Lord sent judgment upon the people in the form of venomous snakes and many died (6). This brought the people to their knees in repentance and confession. *"We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us"* (7).

The judgment accomplished God's restorative purpose, the people turned back to the Lord. And then God gave them a way out from the judgment –a miraculous way out I might add.

God continues to show that when we sin, and we all will sin, God provides a way out from it. Through faith in Jesus, God offered a permanent solution to our sin-problem. When we sin, we can turn and confess our sins and be cleansed and restored. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness* (1John 1:9).

What a wonderful gift forgiveness is!

Lord, as I pray, I return to the morning's first theme... my impatience. I can be so impatient. And some situations seem to set me off more quickly than others. When I am late! When I am inconvenienced. When my agenda is disrupted. Acknowledging these specific times, I see how deeply selfish I am. It is all about me and when 'me' doesn't get what I want I grow impatient and bad things happen.

Oh, God, I am in much need of the Holy Spirit's cultivating work in my life... tending to and fertilizing patience, while at the same time removing and killing the deep roots of selfishness and impatience in my life. Keep working on me, Lord... please keep working in the garden of my life. In Jesus and for Your Kingdoms' sake, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, August 22: Numbers 22– The seduction of money...

The account of Balaam always gives me pause, Am I listening to the voice of the Lord or what I want the voice of the Lord to be saying?

God is clear with Balaam the first time he asks, *"Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed"* (12). So Balaam refused to go with them.

After this is when the story gets interesting...

The king of Moab won't take 'no' for an answer so he sends *other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. They came to Balaam and said: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me."* [The lure of money is a strong one.]

But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God. Now stay here tonight as the others did, and I will find out what else the LORD will tell me."

That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you" (16-20).

Whenever I read this I wonder if Balaam heard the voice of the Lord or his own voice disguising itself as the Lord this second night. I wonder this because God dispatches the angel to kill him during the journey. The text is quite definitive that great riches were being promised to Balaam. The conclusion I come to is that the money seduced Balaam!

This incident is referenced 4 or 5 times elsewhere in scripture, in each one God overrides Balaam in order to bless Israel and in 2Peter 2:15, Balaam is described as one *who loved the wages of unrighteousness*.

So with this account as background, God warns me to be VERY careful in listening to Him and not confusing any other voice with His voice.

A second learning for me is that when I know what God has said on a particular matter [for me this is preeminently when I see it clearly in God's word], I am not to go to God and ask again and again, in effect begging God to change His mind. God spoke definitively to Balaam and Balaam understood. Why would he go back to God again?...

Bill, learn this lesson, the Spirit whispered

Lord God, I am so thankful that You speak... Your word is alive and is always present to speak. And Your Spirit speaks as well. I draw comfort that what Your Spirit speaks will always be in accord with that Your written Word, already spoken, says.

Help me to be so in tune with You that I can clearly distinguish Your voice from any other.

Lord, I pray, too, that I will become very aware of those things that can so easily seduce me.

Lord, more than fame, more than riches, I want to serve You with heart and mind and soul and strength. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, August 23: Numbers 23– God keeps His Word...

I sat with verse 19 today... *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?*

Yes, God keeps His Word. Yes, what God says He will do, He does. What promises God makes, He keeps. Yes! Yes! YES!

Lord, I build my life on this truth, that You are a keeper of Your Word. I Trust the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be wholly Your Word, therefore, I will build my life on Your Word. Praise be to You, Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Saturday, August 24: Numbers 24– God’s purposes will not be thwarted...

I remember from the other day that Balaam is an unsavory biblical character. Scripture never commends Balaam.

As I think about Balaam, a person who hires himself out to curse people, he is not the kind of person with whom I would want to do business. And yet God even works through this unsavory, mercenary person to accomplish His will and bless Israel!

God’s will and purposes will not be thwarted. I don’t presume to understand the ways of God, but I sit back in awe as I see God working, orchestrating things to advance His will. The Lord truly is Almighty!

On this eve of worship, I begin to fill my mind with the greatness of the Lord. The Lord’s wonder, and power; His wisdom and mercy; His majesty and sovereignty. I find myself ‘wowed’ by God and meditating on various attributes of God. What a wonderful time with the Lord and what an incredible way to prepare my heart to praise and worship the Lord God Almighty tomorrow with brothers and sisters in worship!

Lord, thank You for this brief glimpse of who You are and this blessed reminder that You truly are Almighty! Alleluia. Amen.

Sunday, August 25, 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.