

## **The Weekly Word**

September 2-8, 2013

The lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer are over... but God's Word endures forever.  
Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

### **Monday, September 2: Numbers 31– A difficult lesson...**

These are hard chapters to read, God rendering judgment on an entire people. I struggle with chapters like this and I suspect most people struggle with chapters like this, too.

I sit early in the morning. I find myself contemplating the judgment of God. God was seeking vengeance on Midian for their seduction of Israel away from the Lord at Peor.

Even though I do not like this kind of a message, God is reminding me that He will have His day of vengeance over those who do not believe and particularly those who try to seduce people away from the truth.

Today's reading is not a pretty sight. God's final day of vengeance and judgment will not be pretty either.

I find myself thanking God for the faith in Jesus I have and praying for those who do not yet believe. I pray that their eyes will be opened and they will come to know the truth of God's love, mercy and grace...

*Oh, Lord, may it be so. May Your glory cover the earth as water covers the seas. May my life be a living testimony to Your love, faithfulness and grace. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Tuesday, September 3: Numbers 32– Commitment to others in need...**

The Ruebenites and Gadites saw a good possibility... land east of the Jordan. This easily could have become a highly divisive situation, which Moses forcefully explains (6-13). These tribes quickly quelled any potential problem through a declaration of commitment to the cause of Israel and in support of their brothers.

They willingly made a sacrifice to show their loyalty to their brothers. After building cities for families and livestock, they would lead the assault into the Promised Land. *We are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the land* (17). They will leave their families without adult males for an unspecified amount of time and willingly be the first into battle for the 10 other tribes, as their brothers possess the Land.

I shifted to my life. Would I be willing to make such a commitment on behalf of the brothers and sisters in my church or for brothers and sisters in the Church living somewhere else in the world?

Yes, the Ruebenites and Gadites gain something from their commitment, but what they really gain is a change of inheritance. They would have inherited land west of the Jordan. By taking their land east of the Jordan they actually give a gift or extra inheritance (land) to their brothers. In fairness, I also realized that they would have fought in battles had they traveled with everyone else into the Promised Land...

God keeps His commitments (they are about to receive their inheritance) and God expects us to keep our commitments.

I found myself thinking about commitments God expects of me toward others, especially my sisters and brothers in Christ...

- I thought about the parable of the Good Samaritan and how I am to help my 'neighbor.'
- I thought of Paul's words in 2Corinthians 9 about helping brothers in need, even far away

It seems God expects us to be there for others in need...

*Lord, as I round up this morning, I am finding myself contemplating what You desire of me in regards to Your church and Your world! Lord, continue to lead and guide me. Challenge me as needed, also Lord, that I might do and be all You would have me do and be.*

*I lay everything at Your feet...*

*Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, September 4: Numbers 33– Remembering, remembering our past...**

This chapter is a walk down memory lane. Moses records Israel's journey to freedom.

It occurred to me as I was reading this morning that it is good for us to remember from time to time where we are from and the journey the Lord has taken us to get on to where we are.

Remembering gives perspective. We did not always enjoy the freedom we have found in Christ. We did not always understand the goodness of God Almighty and His providential hand of protection, care and love. It is good to remember where we began so we can appreciate God and where He has brought us.

It is good, from time to time, to recall our journey... the path and places the Lord has taken us. To recall the life lessons we have learned at the hand of the Lord, both positive and negative life lessons. To recall the miracles we have seen. To recall how the Lord has been with us every step of the journey.

It is good to recall the vistas God has opened to us along the journey. As I spend my time with the Lord this morning I am writing from the Atlantic Coast of Liberia. In all my wildest dreams I never would have imagined speaking to Liberian pastors about the Word of God. And yet in less than an hour, I will stand before 150 people teaching for 6 hours...

Recalling also gives courage for the future. God had been with Israel for 40 years in the wilderness and God will be with them as they enter the next part of their journey... battling for the Promised Land!

As I recall my past I gain encouragement that wherever God takes me in the future He will be with me.

It is good for us, from time to time, to recall our past... that we may gain courage for the days to come and the journey the Lord will lead us on...

*Lord, thank You for my journey. I bless You and praise You, for the Your goodness to me as I have walked with You these 37+ years. What a wonder You are Lord... I praise You through Jesus, my Lord, Amen.*

### **Thursday, September 5: Numbers 34– Boundaries...**

As I churned this chapter around in my thoughts, the word ‘boundaries’ kept rolling to the front. As God established the boundaries of Israel’s inheritance, so I began to contemplate the boundaries God puts around us. God puts these boundaries around us for our good.

Even though my meditations stretch the text, I found myself continuing the meditation on God’s boundaries.

God gives boundaries of time. Night and day; day and night... God gives us a rhythm of rest and work, work and rest. When I stray past God’s boundaries and His rhythm of work and rest, I pay with a rundown body and less ability to cope with the people and things of life that do not go ‘my’ way.

I thought about the boundaries God gives around intimate relationships. Intimacy within marriage gives a man and woman full and beautiful closeness that cannot be matched. Lord, thank you for these boundaries, they keep us safe and allow us to enjoy totally the gift of wife or husband.

*Lord, I pray for those who disregard this boundary, that they would find Your mercy and grace.*

I contemplated the boundaries the Lord God set around our tongues... to use our speech to build up rather than tear down.

Our world would be a better place if we honored these boundaries more faithfully.

*Lord, help me to better keep this boundary or speech.*

*Lord, thank You for the boundaries You set for life here in Your world. Help me to honor You by keeping them. Lord, I pray, too, that I might see the good in these boundaries, that I might see them as Your protection and love for us. I pray this through Jesus, the Lord. Amen.*

### **Friday, September 6: Numbers 35– Honor, vengeance and mercy...**

Having spent 3 weeks in two African contexts this summer, I notice that men in these cultures are quicker to resort to shouting and even hitting than men in my culture.

If someone feels as if they have been slighted or dishonored, anger erupts. Standing for and fighting for one’s honor is a living reality. I wonder if this African tribal culture is closer to that of the ancient Israelites. I wonder this because of the comments today about striking and hitting other people addressed by God through Moses. The issue of intentionality is specifically emphasized in vv. 20-22. It is as if these words speak directly to the African culture that I have seen...

Although the connection is somewhat less to my culture, what I noticed is how God protects the innocent. The concept of the cities of refuge is a gift to people who, without malice, accidentally kill someone else. Without these cities, the person who kills without malice and/or by accident, would be at the mercy of the avenger of blood. And in a culture governed by ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth’ mercy is non-existent.

God displays His heart of mercy by establishing these cities. Justice is maintained, the guilty person cannot hide out in a city of refuge, but the innocent can. And for those difficult cases, the city of refuge gives due process where the accused and avenger of blood plead their case to the elders who determine the truth and make their judgment.

I found myself contemplating God’s mercy... so rich and so free. Yet mercy is balanced by justice, which God will administer with perfect integrity!

*Thanks be to God. Thanks be to You, Oh God. You sent Jesus to apply Your mercy while also fulfilling Your perfect justice.*

*I thank You, God, that Jesus found me and saved me and gave His righteousness to me while taking my guilt and sin. Mercy... MERCY! Amen.*

### **Saturday, September 7: Numbers 36– ...**

Numbers concludes with Moses clarifying the inheritance issue of the daughters of Zelophehad I mentioned last week.

Moses and Israel stand poised on the plains of Moab across from the Promised Land. Soon Moses will die (God has already told him so) and the people will enter the Promised Land. Before that will happen, Moses like every great leader, ties up loose ends, making sure he has fulfilled his word and clarified what he has spoken.

As I sit very early in the morning, this text is a good reminder to me...

- Fulfill my words
- Make sure what I have spoken is understood
- Finish well and finish strongly

Moses is an incredible role model for any leader. I am glad I have spent time with him these last weeks.

*Lord, thank You for Moses, this man of faith. He is not perfect, which actually encourages me. I know that I am not perfect. And yet, despite his imperfections, You used Moses to do great kingdom work. I pray, Lord, that despite my imperfections, I would surrender to You as Moses did. And that my life might be a tool in Your hands to complete the kingdom work You, Oh Lord, have for me to do.*

*I pray this through Jesus, my Lord and Savior, and the reigning King of kings and Lord of lords, whose return I await with expectation. Amen.*

### **Sunday, September 8, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click [here](#) for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.