

The Weekly Word
September 9-15, 2013

Labor Day is in the rear view mirror and a new fall season will soon be here. God is faithful in all seasons and His Word is always present. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 9: 1Corinthians 1– The Power of God...

After spending time in the Old Testament I often experience a rush of delight when I return to reading in the New Testament. I experienced that ‘rush’ today as I read the wonders of God expressed in 1Corinthians 1.

Verse 18 became my meditative melody for today. *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

My heart sang, yet with a tinge of sadness, “So true. So true.”

The wonder of the Gospel that I see and experience regularly as a Christ-follower, many others simply do not ‘get.’ When I share my faith some people latch on and the Gospel fills their thirsty soul, while others scratch their heads in bewilderment, as if to say, “Hey, it’s OK for you but not me; I don’t have a need for ‘religion’ or ‘Jesus’ or whatever their word.” Worse yet is when the other person’s reaction is hostile or condescending or ...

I return to Paul’s words, *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* People may think the ‘Jesus-Story’ is foolish or I am foolish for believing it, but I cannot do anything about that. But I don’t have to allow their disconnect or hostility to steal the joy I have found. Every day I experience the latter half of Paul’s words: ... *but to [me] who [is] being saved it is the power of God.*

This morning I revel in the power of God... the power of God that is saving me, that is guiding me, that is empowering me, that is restoring me, that is using me, that is filling me, that is...

Praise be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Alleluia. Amen.

Tuesday, September 10: 1Corinthians 2–Thank you Holy Spirit...

Yesterday I noted a distinction between peoples; those being saved see the cross as the power of God while others see the cross as foolishness. Why is this?

Reading today I learned a piece of the answer. Verse 14 says, *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Understanding the cross and other aspects of the Gospel is *spiritually discerned*, and people *without the Spirit... cannot understand them.*

Sometimes I think of the Holy Spirit as the ‘power producer’ of the Trinity, the one who empowers Christ-followers to do the works of God. And, yes, this is so as He wills, I should add. But the Spirit is much more. In verse 14 and its surrounding context, we learn that it is God’s Spirit within us that enables us to comprehend the things of God.

Yes, the Spirit brings power, but also understanding, wisdom and discernment. No wonder God gives His Spirit to all who believe in Jesus.

Praise be to the third person of the Trinity, God, the Holy Spirit. May I open myself up to Your wisdom and power, Oh Holy Spirit, and may Your wisdom and power help me to know more deeply and follow more closely the Son and the Father.

This is my morning prayer... prayed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday, September 11: 1Corinthians 3– A passion for God’s body, the church...

Paul is riled up in this chapter; animated, angry, peeved... because the people of Corinth are not doing what is best for the body, the church. They are jealous and quarreling, strutting their stuff about which teacher they follow! Like a mama bear fighting to protect her cubs, Paul rears his neck hairs and confronts the childish behavior of the Corinthians...

I found myself flipping to my world...

Do we act like the immature Corinthians when we laud pastor so-n-so, when we make our identity what earthly teacher we follow instead of making it clear that we follow Christ?

Do we act like the immature Corinthians when we pit church against church, growing jealous for our fellowship at the expense of others? Do we act like immature Christians when we badmouth other churches lead by pastor so-n-so?

Through Paul’s pen, God reveals a tenacious passion for His Church and I (we) best not do ANYTHING that harms, injures or destroys God’s possession, i.e., His Church!

Lord God, what about me? How am I doing with regard to Your Church? Am I strengthening or weakening Her? Am I sewing Her together or tearing Her apart... even a little bit?

Lord, even in my thought-life, do I pit church against church or teacher/pastor against teacher/pastor and so hurt Your body? Do I, Lord?

Give me a purer passion for Your Church and a companion desire to build and care for Your body. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Thursday, September 12: 1Corinthians 4– Two important reminders...

Many potent meditation stops caught my eye this morning. Eventually verses 4-5 drew me in to time with Jesus today.

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts....

My conscience is a gift from God, that impulse from within not to do certain things that do not honor God. But as the first sentence reminds me, my conscience, like all of me, has been corrupted by sin and can lead me astray as well. It is so easy for me to say, “Hey, I’m clean, I’m good, I’m okay before God”. Verse 4 cries to me... not so fast. *My conscience [may be] clear, but that does not make me innocent.*

Lord God, this is why regular confession and times of self evaluation are good and necessary but even they are no guarantee... I always rest on Your Grace. Always.

So if I cannot, with 100% accuracy, judge even my own self, I have to be doubly careful when it come to judging others. Why? Because I only know in part and I cannot ever judge motives with clarity. *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts....* Only God can judge with perfect clarity. I must never forget this... NEVER.

Two pretty good reminders for today...

Lord, may I have Your grace and Holy Spirit unction to live out the truth seen today in Your Word! I offer You my day... to advance Your Kingdom, to serve at Your beckon call and to sit at Your feet to learn. I pray this through Jesus, Master, Lord and Rabbi. Amen.

Friday, September 13: 1Corinthians 5– An uncomfortable word...

This is a difficult chapter as I sit and meditate on it because it is forcing me to think about the dark and dirty underbelly of church life... when sin, significant, debilitating, cancerous sin, invades the church.

First, it forces me to realize that such things do happen. The Church and my church are not perfect. They are not perfect because I am not perfect.

Secondly, although I have not acted like the brother in this chapter, I am capable of such sin. Proverbs reminds me that pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). Humbleness in recognizing that sin lurks in me and I must be vigilant in my fight against it. It is also coupled with a constant willingness to listen to the voice of the Spirit warning and correcting me is my only valid defense against the sin-filled part of my nature that is not yet surrendered to Jesus!

Thirdly, I have to beware that I don't get things backwards, like the Corinthians did. They were lenient on sin for people within the church, while at the same time expecting non-believers to live as if they were following Jesus. *I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world (9-10).*

This morning is a tough chew... an uncomfortable Word.

Jesus, bring the light of Your Word into the dark places of my life. Mold me and shape me to be like You, who offered grace to sinners and an invitation to repent and begin life anew with You. Help me to be such a person... for Your Cause and in Your Name, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, September 14: 1Corinthians 6– The changes God can bring...

The writer of Ecclesiastes says *there is nothing new under the sun* (1:9). Well, reading 1Corinthians makes that clear. Problems and issues in the church have been around as long as the church has been around. Paul is certainly exposing some whoppers!

It was Paul's descriptions of the before and after life of a person who converts to Christianity that caused me to pause and ponder... *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (9-11).*

Before Christ we Christians are a messy lot. We are marred and scarred. What is wonderful is that in becoming a disciple of Jesus we *were washed, ... sanctified, ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

With Jesus it is not where we start because Jesus can clean the worst of sinners. With Jesus it is about WHO we become! The inference of the text is plain, we are people who get to live differently, live better!

Pondering this, God took me down memory lane, considering who I was before Jesus and then who I am now that I am following Jesus.

God also asked me a direct question, “Can others tell you have changed because you follow Me?” Boom.

There’s the morning application of the Word... Is my life truly changing because Jesus is my Lord? Am I a different person today than I was when I first met and believed in Jesus...

How about you???

Lord, I sit silently before You today... pondering, thinking. In some ways I have changed dramatically, in others, not so much. In some ways I change and then fall back again. I am a mixed bag.

This morning in Your Word causes me to pause and take stock...

This morning in Your Word causes me to reaffirm, I am in. I am Yours. I need Your help of the Holy Spirit to become the person You saved me to be. I cannot do this on my own. I need You and I love You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I pray to You and in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Sunday, September 15, 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.