

The Weekly Word
September 23-29, 2013

The ancient words to the Church in Corinth continue to speak to me. I hope they speak to you as well. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 23: 1Corinthians 13– Love...

Love, love, love.

Love, Love, love

All you need is love... all you need is love

So sang the Beatles.

It sounds good as a lyric, but hard to live in real life. And what is love anyway? Is it the sex-driven eroticism we see on the every screen every day?

Paul certainly would say 'no'. His timeless definition remains the pinnacle for love.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (4-8).

I sat and asked myself, is this how I LOVE my wife, family, church family, etc.???

As I considered each relationship, I laid this definition upon it. I have a long way to go to 'love, love, love' consistently.

Oh, Lord, love is supposed to be the hallmark of Your followers. I fall far short. Forgive me, teach me, show me and love me as I work on this. Amen.

Tuesday, September 24: 1Corinthians 14– A passion for God's body...

Paul's passion is for the church, for the body, for the group and he longs for us to understand and live his passion for the church body,

Our individualistic Western mindset has trouble processing Paul's passion for the body. It shows up again in and throughout chapter 14. Over and over Paul calls the people of the church to live in such a way that the group, the body, is enhanced, not merely the individual...

As he is winding down a section on why prophecy is more important for the body than tongues, Paul writes, *Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church (12).*

God whispers to me through these Words, "Be eager to build up the church. Be eager to strengthen the body, excel in your care for the body and help the body."

'Excel' is such a great word, but so often we hear it in things like excel in school or sports or your job. Paul longs that we excel in gifts that build up the body.

His focus is body of 'Christ centered'... not 'me centered'. And this is my challenge today... it is a challenge of the heart, a challenge of perspective, a challenge of mindset and priority. And I have much maturing to go to approach Paul, and thus God's passion for the church...

Lord, Your Word today is challenging my 'take care of me, live for me' mindset. I am far from Your desire and ideal. Keep working on me. Holy Spirit, infiltrate the darkest, neediest places of my life and change me from the inside

out. I need Your help, Oh God... so that my life might emulate You and live for You and Your body, the church. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, September 25: 1Corinthians 15– Who is influencing whom?...

In the midst of the most extensive teaching on the Resurrection in the Scripture, there were two verses that caught my eye. Even at his theological best, Paul always has a practical spin. For Paul theology affects living. Thinking about God and God's Ways is supposed to influence how we live.

Verses 33-34 were the ones that caught my attention, *Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God--I say this to your shame.*

Loosing sight of the resurrection, thinking that maybe it was not going to happen, opened the door for the some Corinthians to dive head long into sin. Why live God's Way? It doesn't matter anyway?" might have been their thinking.

I love Paul's direct words. *"Bad company corrupts good character."* The quotation marks suggest this was a proverb from his day. Proverb or not, it is true! *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning,* Paul pleads!

Who we hang with matters. God doesn't want us to withdraw from the world and people who don't know Jesus. We are to be a light to them. BUT who is influencing whom?

This is my meditative thought for today. Who is influencing whom... who is influencing me?

If certain people are a negative influence on me then I need to eliminate the bad influence and the sin I am embracing because of it.

"Bad company corrupts good character." As I mull on this, I realized that in our digital age, *bad company* can have a digital facet. And the *bad company* need not be physically present in our digital age. A person's music, movies, webinars, blogs, YouTubes, Twitter feeds and the like can be corrupting me if I am giving them more credence in my life than say, the Word of God or brothers and sisters in Christ.

I need to consider if any *bad company* I am hanging around is influencing me away from Jesus and godly living. And if so, I need to end the relationship and/or turn off the digital connection for the sake of godliness.

Think about it...

To You, Oh Lord, and to none other have I sworn allegiance. Show me chinks in my armor where I am letting 'bad characters' unduly influence me to sin that I may cut off the sin-filled influence and live more wholly for You. In Jesus' name and for Your sake, Oh God –Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thursday, September 26: 1Corinthians 16– Be on guard...

Paul closes his letter with a brief word about giving. I find reminders to be faithful in giving helpful. I drift so easily into a 'take-care-of-me' lifestyle that significantly reduces my ability and desire to give generously...

It was in the midst of his final personal remarks that I discovered my devotional-nugget for today. *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love* (13-14).

Guard, stand firm, be courageous, strong, and love... what tremendous words and thoughts to ponder as I start my day and live throughout the day.

In fact, as I thought about these words, I copied them into an email, which I sent to myself to arrive later today as a reminder to continue to mull them over and over throughout the day.

- Guard, stand firm, be courageous, strong, and love...
- Guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus...
- Stand firm in the Lord as the day continues and the temptations come...
- Be courageous and strong as I live out my faith openly and boldly...
- Love others as Jesus Christ loves and as I love to be loved.

My 'Jesus Following' to do list for today.

Lord, God, I choose to steep my life in these actions today. For Your Honor and Gory I live this and every day. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, September 27: 2Corinthians 1– Every experience useful...

I often marvel at the ways of the Lord. This summer I met a man from India with an extensive ministry to orphans throughout his country. As I sat and listened to his story I learned he was an orphan. Now he is being used by God to help orphans!

I read about a person stricken with AIDS who runs a ministry to people with AIDS.

I love the way no experience is wasted in God's economy. Paul writes, *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God* (3-4).

We endure difficulty and find God's peace and presence in the midst of it. Thank You, Lord, for your presence and care... but there may be more. God may be aligning things so that the comfort we receive we can give to others.

I know a cancer survivor, who for years when returning to the hospital for regular checkups, would talk with others who were facing what she faced.

Processing Paul's comment about the Lord, *who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God*, I am drawn to reflect. I am wondering what comfort and experiences I have had with the Lord that I might offer back to Him by passing along what God gave to me to others. In this way I will live the Scripture and not merely meditate upon it.

Lord, thank You for never leaving or forsaking me. Thank You for my 38+ year journey with You. Thank You for all the things You have brought me through and for all the ways You have shown Yourself to be faithful. I bless You and I praise You...

Lord, I offer my life to You as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). Use any and every detail of my life to touch others with Your Love and Comfort and Care and Peace and Redemption. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, September 28: 2Corinthians 2– the fragrance of Christ...

As I allow the word 'fragrance' dance in my thoughts, smells and fragrances from my life pop like popcorn.

- Fresh stew simmering or bread baking in the kitchen,
- roses given to my wife,
- the stench of sewage (I once had an incident allowing sewage to back up into the basement of my house. Yuck!),
- walnut wood being worked in my shop,

- my gym locker room
- an ocean breeze

Smell, scientists say, is the fastest sense to retrieve memories from the brain. And it is interesting how some smells have a universal response. But for other fragrances the smell is personal and individual.

Paul writes that we are to be the fragrance of Christ. *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him* (14). For some people we will be a wonderful fragrance for others we will stink. *For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life* (15-16a).

Peoples' responses to us will be similar to peoples' responses to Jesus. For some Jesus was hailed Lord and Savior, for others He was a nuisance to be gotten rid of.

The final thoughts now tumbling in my brain ask me if I am living as a fragrance for Jesus. Does my life leave a presence –an aroma of Jesus-likeness– behind?

How people respond is their call.

Am I leaving a Jesus fragrance-trail as I live my life 24-7-365?

Lord, Jesus, tomorrow I get to recharge my spiritual batteries in worship. I pray that the fragrance of our worship is pleasing to You and I pray that my time with Your family will instill in me strength and energy to live another week for You, bringing with me wherever I go, Your Fragrance and Your Love. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, September 29, 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.