

The Weekly Word
September 30 – October 6, 2013

The sweet smell of Fall is in the air. I pray the sweet aroma of God's Word fills your life as well. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 30: 2Corinthians 3– Impacting others for Christ...

In Paul's day you might send a letter of recommendation for a friend as they were traveling. The letter would introduce them to your friends who would show them hospitality as they traveled. Paul says that the Corinthians were his letter of recommendation. In other words, their faith testified to Paul and his ministry.

My mind spun... and I wondered who would be the 'letter of recommendation' for my life as a Christ-follower? Whose life and faith testifies to my ministry, my love, my living for Jesus? In other words, who am I impacting for Christ and His Gospel?

How about you? Who have you impacted for the cause of Christ?

Lord, today I dedicate afresh my life to You and impacting others to turn to You. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 1: 2Corinthians 4– When hard times come...

Life can be difficult. Whoever says that if Christians we are faithful they are supposed to have the 'good life' is peddling a version of the Christian faith that doesn't match with Scripture.

Today in verses 7-11 Paul gives a picture of his life. If any human being was faithful it was Paul, yet for Paul hardship abounded. Listen... *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

Troubles of this world come and they can come in bunches, but these troubles are not the end of Paul nor are they the end of us... *hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned...* Note all of the 'but nots.' Stuff happens but God is there buoying us amidst the storm. These words are so true. I have witnessed this in my life and the lives of countless saints in my decades with Jesus!

So what should be our response to hard times when they come? *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal* (18). Fix our eyes on Jesus, the Father and the Spirit!

Lord, when the road gets difficult and life is painful and hard and when holding to our faith costs, help me to stare at You, to look to You. And Lord, when during these times I am tempted to look away from You, please remind me of this Scripture and today's prayer and direct me to gaze at You. I pray in Your name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 2: 2Corinthians 5– Would your actions convict you?...

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (10).

How's that for a verse upon which to meditate?

What will God see in my life? What good, what bad?

I believe it was Lloyd Ogilvie who once asked, of the congregation he pastored, "If you were placed on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Hmmm, food for thought for today...

Lord, am I doing enough for You? Not to earn my salvation, I could never do that. But am I doing enough to make good use of the gifts You have given me to serve You alone, who is Lord and God? Am I serving You well? This is my prayer this morning. Please speak... Your servant is listening. Through Christ, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, October 3: 2Corinthians 6– A look within...

As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.... I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (1,2b).

How can we receive God's grace in vain? Why would Paul be urging 'God's fellow workers' that now is the day of salvation?

Paul seems concerned that the Corinthians are slipping back into their former way of life... not living for the Lord but rather living for the world. The next paragraphs bear this out, particularly the second paragraph where Paul instructs the Corinthians not to be yoked with unbelievers.

Paul's message- we enter salvation now, which means a new way of living, God's way of living. Why continue to dabble in or court the former way of life???

The Spirit turns the table and begins to have me probe my life, to recognize places in my life where I am still dabbling in or courting my former way, the way of the world.

Self-examination never comes easily for me. And yet the Lord calls me (us) to it regularly. And although I often resist, it always turns out to be for my good in the end. I need to remind myself of this today, because in myself, I am not up for self-examination today. ...

Lord, help me. Help me to put down my defenses and trust You. Help me to honestly look within and face what is there. Help me to stop playing games with myself, justifying myself and so continuing to leave unattended areas that need growth and maturation in my walk with You.

Lord, I break off areas where I may still be yoked to the world and ask You, Oh Holy Spirit, to yoke me to Jesus. I pray this in His name. Amen.

Friday, October 4: 2Corinthians 7– 1-part work of God; 1-part work of individual...

Last night I cooked dinner as my wife took our son for a vaccination. When you follow a recipe, you add ingredients in the correct proportions, 2 cups diced chicken, 2 Tbs oil, fry in the wok. When chicken is cooked, add 1 cup celery and red peppers (diced) and sauté adding some water. Next add one bunch of scallions diced and pea pods... etc.

As I read verse 1, I heard the basic recipe for Christian living... 1 measure of God's Grace and 1 measure of human effort leads to a life of improving holiness. *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Since we have these promises... the promises of God. That's what God has already done for us in Christ, by giving the Holy Spirit and grace and mercy and... God's part always comes first. It might be described in different ways, highlighting different aspects of God's incredible gifts to us in Christ. But the recipe is always the same and it always begins with God!

Let us purify ourselves from everything... to what God has done for us, we add our effort. Our effort to resist the devil, to resist sin which still lives in us, to avoid those things which drag us from God and to do those things that honor and draw us to God.

This recipe is repeated many times in the NT... check out Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 12:1-2, for starters.

Thinking about this 'recipe,' I can affect the second half of the equation. How much effort am I am going to put into growing in my faith?

My musing on the text stopped abruptly at this point, as the Spirit led me to examine my life and my effort to grow in Jesus. Am I all in? What areas of my life should I concentrate on during this season of life? And questions like this.

Lord...

Saturday, October 5: 2Corinthians 8– Follow through...

And here is my advice.... Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means (10-11).

Now finish the work... how often do I start something, but run out of gas before I finish? I have watched some golf lately. The golfer's follow-through is critical. And so is ours, particularly when it comes to keeping our word or pledge to the Lord.

The Lord's clear Word to me is 'finish well'. Follow through. Complete what you started.

I made a commitment to read the entire Bible this year... keep reading!

I made a commitment to pray for the world using Operation World's daily prayer guide... keep at it, today and every day, pray for that one country (check our www.operationworld.org if you would like to pray for the world).

I made a commitment to love my wife... do it today and every today!

Paul writes, *Now finish the work...* Something I must do, too.

Lord, I give You today and each today... I give You each promise I have made and I give it to You by completing it today.

I pray for strength and mental toughness to do today and each today those things I have committed to do. Lord, I pray that I will finish well and in so doing honor You. In Jesus' name and for His Kingdom's sake, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, October 6, 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.