

The Weekly Word

Feb 17-23, 2014

It has been 2 weeks since Phil saw his shadow... hopefully Spring is on its way! Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, February 17: Judges 17– Without the Word...

It is amazing how messed up, confused and off base we can become. It appears that the people in this story think that they are living faithfully to the Lord and yet, from the start, they are dishonoring God and His Word.

It opens with thievery. Then the one redeeming moment occurs when the son admits he is the thief. From this moment forward sin begets sin begets sin...

The mother begins the sin-downfall when she dedicates the returned money to the Lord to make an idol (3). Yes, that summary is correct. Israel was forbidden to make graven images and to have other gods, but somehow mom does it anyway. Micah compounds the sin by adding the ephod to a shrine he has and then installs a son as priest. Only Aaron's descendants were priests and they were to minister only before the Lord's tabernacle.

Then a Levite, who should have known better, happens by and becomes a priest for hire by this man.

Verse 6 sums of this chapter and the state of Israel at the time, *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*

No one followed the Word. No one obeyed God's Word. *Everyone did as he or she saw fit.* This is what happens when people forget about God's Word. And it can happen today just as easily as back then.

My only guard is to keep my nose in God's Word regularly. Like food I eat or air I breathe, God's Word must be a constant source of inspiration and information for me.

The same is true for every believer individually and as importantly for the church (Capital 'C' and lower case 'c' church) as well.

Today I rededicate myself to reading and studying God's Word... will you?

Lord, teach me Your Word, that I might not sin against You as these Israelites did. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, February 18: Judges 18–...

Yesterday we saw how sin can beget sin particularly when the Word of God is absent.

In today's chapter, yesterday's sins grows into sin that will beset an entire tribe.

Notice the concluding words of the chapter, verses 28-31: *The city was in a valley near Beth Rehob. The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there. They named it Dan after their forefather Dan, who was born to Israel--though the city used to be called Laish. **There the Danites set up for themselves the idols, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land. They continued to use the idols Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh.***

Notice the words I bolded. These sins plagued Dan until ‘the captivity,’ that is throughout the entire time of the kings of Israel. Dan never shook this sin. In fact they embraced this sin, which because of its nature, is paramount to rebellion from the Lord!

Dan, apparently, never engaged in a time of introspection and measuring oneself against the Word of God. For hundreds of years, Dan persisted in this sin.

I hear a warning. Do not repeat the sin of Dan. Don’t remain in known sin.

Cure... planned and regular times of self-measuring against the Word of God. Times of self-examination leading to times of confession and repentance.

It seems this is good for individuals as well as groups.

Hummmmm... I have some pondering and planning to do.

Lord, show me how I can take the learnings of this lesson and incorporate them into my life. In Your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen

Wednesday, February 19: Judges 19– No Word + No God-honoring Leadership = Disaster and Rebellion!...

For me this is one

of the most troubling accounts in the Old Testament. Many aspects of this story sicken me.

I thought back of the lessons of the last two days. Sin has a way of burrowing into our lives and when it does it, often grows more and more depraved.

Israel has sunk to despicable lows. The sins of these men are as bad, if not worse, than the pagan peoples Israel was supposed to replace.

I found myself thinking about what happened. I noticed two important factors.

One, Israel was leaderless. They had no king and no judge, the heads of the tribes who should have been the patriarchs and protectors of their clan are absent, too. There is no one to direct the people in the ways of God and goodness.

Two, Israel is Wordless. The word of God is absent from Israel’s conscience existence. We haven’t heard of the Word since Joshua’s days. The scrolls of God’s Word are collecting dust within the Tabernacle somewhere. The priests, the feasts, the worship, nothing connected to the Word of God is mentioned.

We should not be surprised that Israel has degraded to this...

No Word + No God-honoring Leadership = Disaster and Rebellion!

I flipped to 2014. God’s people still need these two pillars. Ask yourself two sets of questions.

- 1) Personal questions: Are you attending to God’s Word in your own life? Do you guard yourself by reading, studying, meditating upon God’s Word? We are a fortunate people who can all read and write. Are we using these gifts to strengthen our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord?

If NOT, what will you do about this?

If YES, where are you growing and where might the Lord want you to grow in the next few months?

- 2) Community questions: Are you part of a faith community where the Word of God is honored above all else as the VERY Word of God? Is every page revered by your church leaders? Do your leaders strive to lead and direct your portion of God’s family to deep and more faithful following of God’s Word?

If NOT, start praying for your leadership that God would get a hold of their hearts. And as you pray ask the Lord if there is more you can/should do about this.

If YES, praise and thank God for your faith-community leaders. Pray for them, support them and follow them as they lead you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, thank You for Your Word and for the ability to read and study it. Thank You for the Holy Spirit who You have sent to lead us into all truth and who will teach and guide us! What a gift!!!

And Lord, thank You for the men and women You have sent to be our faith community leaders. Endow them with Your Holy Spirit that they might lead us well and closer to You. Give me ears to hear Your directives through them. This I pray in Jesus' name and for the sake of Your church and Your mission to reach the world with the name of Jesus. Amen

Thursday, February 20: Judges 20– A stark realization...

Horror overshadowed me as I read this chapter. Adding up the numbers....40,000 Israelite men and 25,000 Benjamite men were cut down in 3 days of battle. 65,000 men in three days... the cries, the pain, the families. Oh my! This does not include the destruction of the town of Gibeah.

I found myself thinking: God judges sin. Eventually God judges sin.

Reading this and other passages, some people respond, "How could God sanction all of this killing?" My thoughts go in a completely different direction. I think about how God judges sin. Evil behavior garnishes God's wrath.

Evil behavior is not limited to the despicable behavior of the men of Gibeah and how they mistreated the man's concubine. Evil behavior from God's point of view –which is the only point of view that truly matters- is any behavior that breaks God's law.

As I think about this, I find my life in jeopardy. I have broken God's law. I deserve God's wrath. And, yet, thanks be to Jesus, I have been saved from God's wrath through faith in the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. And so I sit this morning thanking and blessing the Lord for His gift of salvation...

Lord, my fate could be like that of Gibeah... death and destruction. And not merely physical death but also eternal death and destruction. But thanks be to You I do not fear the grave, because my Savior, Jesus lives! And He will bring me with Him into glory when I breathe my final breath here on earth.

Lord, to You I offer my life today and daily. I pledge to live in such a way that people near and far hear about You and when I fall short of Your will, I will turn to You and confess my sin, receiving Your gift of forgiveness as promised in 1John 1:9.

Praise be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Friday, February 21: Judges 21– We can be so bad...

I am glad that the book of Judges is over. It seems things go from bad to worse. The mess of the last few chapters is "cleaned up" through more pain and mess. More violence and families being destroyed, women being kidnapped. *Oi vey!*

The epitaph of the book is spot on. *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit* (25). Israel has fallen far from the ideals established in God's law.

The lessons of the last few days are hammered home. Without the Word of God to stabilize and reign in the human heart, humankind can go berserk. Society implodes into all manner of selfishness. The rule of law, once honored, falls apart.

How can people possibly say that humans are basically 'good.' I see no evidence of this in the Book of Judges or the newspapers. Oh, for sure not every human being is as bad as bad can be... but left to ourselves we certainly don't love our neighbor as self or love our enemies.

I find myself thanking God for Jesus and the gift of a new heart through faith in Jesus. And I find myself thanking God for the general grace He shows us, tempering our sin so that we don't become as abased as we could.

Lord, God, I thank You and bless You for You... for Your grace and general revelation... for Jesus and salvation, redemption and mercy... for Your Holy Spirit, Who leads and guides those who believe closer to You. Amen.

Saturday, February 22: Ruth 1– Naomi's belief in God...

Naomi's faith in God, despite her difficulties impressed me.

Naomi saw God's hand at work in the calamities of her life. She believed that God was in control and that He orchestrated life events. Listen to her honesty and her pain.

[Life] is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" ...

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." (13, 20-21).

Naomi felt God's heavy hand in the death of her husband and then of her 2 sons. In her world, Naomi was destitute with no one to take care of her. Yet, she never cursed God or said anything unfaithful. Instead, she accepted the lot God dealt her.

Naomi's faith impressed me. In our world when good things happen, people may thank God or they may take credit themselves. But when tragedy strikes people cry, "Why would God do that? How could a loving God do things like that?" People have been known to quit on God because of tragedies and difficult times.

Not Naomi, like Job, she accepted what God sent which, in her case, was heartache and pain.

I see, in this lady, faithfulness of a kind that I don't often see in my world or in my life. She inspires me.

Lord, Thank You for Naomi, a woman of intense and wonderful faith.

Lord, I pray for the kind of faith Naomi had. The kind of faith that accepts whatever You see fit to send my way. Lord, in all life circumstances, may I trust what comes from Your hand and live faithfully. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, February 23, 2014, 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.