

The Weekly Word
January 7-13, 2019

2019 pushes on. This week we will conclude our reading of Hebrews Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, January 7: Hebrews 8- God's new covenant...

All things are made new...

Do Christians need to follow the laws of the Old Covenant? This was a major decision early Christ followers had to figure out. Did a person need to follow the Jewish law in order to correctly follow Jesus? From Acts 15, the writings of Paul and now Hebrews 8:13, the answer is 'no'. The New Covenant, the covenant of Jesus, has replaced the old Mosaic covenant.

The Old Testament is God's Word... it is the story of God rescuing a people, giving them a land, nation, way of life. And from its soil sprouts the New Covenant. Verse 13 explains, *By calling this covenant "new," he [God] has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear* (13).

People are no longer bound to follow the dietary and sacrificial laws of the OT to be cleansed from sin. Faith in Jesus has replaced those former laws. New and better has replace old and obsolete. *But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises* (6).

Life with God Almighty is now all about Jesus... loving Him, serving Him, following Him, learning from Him and living like Him.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the answer to life's deepest spiritual questions.

Lord Jesus, fill me with Yourself. Draw me deeper and deeper into Your life, so that by being renewed myself, I can share You with others. I pray in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, January 8: Hebrews 9- On our behalf...

I usually read the NIV translation, but today I inadvertently switched to the New Living Translation as I read my chapter. The last 3 words of verse 24 caught my attention. *For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf.*

Jesus entered the true tabernacle in heaven to appear in God's presence **on our behalf**. Those three words, 'on our behalf', hit me with the force of a sledge hammer. Jesus did what He did – became human, died a horrible death, descended to the dead... He did it on our behalf. He did it for us. He did it in our stead. Those three simple words communicate so much. *On our behalf...* Jesus did what He did *on our behalf*.

I sat quietly being refreshed by the Spirit through this reminder of Jesus' care and love for us –us being all who are in God's world. Images of different peoples fill my head... people from different parts of the world I have met, people from different parts of the world I have seen in pictures and movies. Jesus did what he did for **all of us!**

How blessed we are and how sad it is that so many people do not know how much they are loved by God. So many people do not know what Jesus did for them.

On the one hand I am feeling so blessed. Then on the other hand I have feeling sad for those who do not know and those who reject what Jesus did because they are blinded by some internal desire or the evil work of the enemy.

As I turn from meditation to prayer, again I am sent in two directions...

Lord God, I am so grateful for what Jesus did on my behalf. Incredible, amazing. I am awed by Your gift that I thank and praise you.

I also pray for people who do not yet know. I pray that they might be drawn to Jesus, that obstacles and unbelief will be overcome by the power of Your Holy Spirit. That they might see and embrace Jesus and His love for them. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, January 9: Hebrews 10- God's timing; impeccable...

It never ceases to amaze me how to-the-point my daily Bible reading can be. How it can touch places of the heart. I received some crappy news this morning. On the scale of major life issues, it is not all that big. Still I am wounded, frustrated, angry... a jumble of emotions. It is something I cannot really talk about beyond the vagaries of what I just wrote.

It was an early morning happening, so my Bible reading happened after the event when I got home. And what do I read, Hebrews 10! While the particular situation was very different than my personal situation, the bottom line connected directly with my heart. As the NIV heading above verse 19 put it: A Call to Persevere.

That is just what I needed. A bit of my heart was ripped out, but it was not time to devolve into a pity party or get sidetracked. It is time to persevere in Jesus. Knowing that He alone can heal wounds. He has tasks for me as His ambassador. He has good works for me to do, that I am strategically placed to do on his behalf and I need to keep on.

Through the pain –not avoiding the pain –Jesus has things for me to do.

Verses 35 and 36 stuck to me. *So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*

When my heart gets ripped my confidence flags. These words remind me not *throw away [my] confidence*. Were they ever timely. As was the writers rejoinder to *persevere*. The will of God needs doing and at the end of this life God has promised me His eternal life and there is no prize, no delight better than that.

Lord, I am re-upping my pledge to be Your son, Your ambassador, Your agent, Your... in the world. Use me. Bandage my wounds and send me back out into the work. I pray in Jesus' name and for the sake of the elect... those who need encouragement and invitation. Amen and amen.

Thursday, January 10: Hebrews 11- By Faith...

The event of the other day still stings, I wish you could have seen my face when I realized that Hebrews 11 was my reading today. The famous FAITH chapter was my reading this morning.

It did not disappoint. Two words, 'by faith,' crossed from the page into my heart. We live by faith...

People back in the day, the original recipients of the letter to Hebrews, and Christ followers like me today live by faith. Yes, we live by faith.

This thought touched me in my hurting places. Disappointments, hurts, persecutions, illnesses, and the like last for a season. Sometimes these seasons are long and arduous continuing

through our earthly life. Still we live by faith in this world and the next. In fact faith opens the door to the next eternal life.

Many of the people named in this chapter went through arduous times. Faith helped them persevere. And faith carried them to their reward; a reward never fully realized this side of eternity.

My personal pain right now is nowhere on the scale of many named in this chapter... still the reminder that I live by faith not circumstances was a God-gift for my aching heart today.

By Faith... my work, my relationships, my everything is lived by faith. It is time to look to Jesus the author and finisher of my faith rather than wallow in my disappointment of the hour.

By Faith... I choose to live by faith in Jesus

Thank You, Lord, for this simple word –By Faith –to me today. Your gift is a blessing. Thank You. Thank You. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday, January 11: Hebrews 12- Take one more step...

After saying that Jesus endured the cross and scorned its shame, the writer goes on to admonish believers writing: *Consider him [Jesus] who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart* (3). Jesus remains our example as one who perseveres in the call of God.

The writers point is when I grow weary, when I am tired of the walk of faith, look to Jesus and draw strength from His example. Take one more step forward, like Jesus needed to do as He carried his own cross to Calvary. Take one more step forward like Jesus did as He pushed through the jeers and insults of the crowd. Take one more breath like Jesus needed to do on the cross so He had the strength to forgive those who persecuted Him.

Take one more step faithfully following God’s will. Take one more breath faithfully living God’s will. When tired and fed up, take one more step in the name of Jesus, your Savior. *Consider him [Jesus] who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Lord, there are days I am exhausted from following Jesus, when I don’t want to love that enemy or that neighbor, when I don’t want to forgive, when I want to seek revenge, when I want to strike back rather than turn the other cheek... Oh, God, I have those days.

First, please forgive me for choosing the low road rather than Jesus’ way. Lord, when those selfish, sin-filled desires rise up within me help me to look to and see Jesus. Burn on my retinas Jesus on the cross, Jesus forgiving those who taunt Him... and I pray, Lord, that through the aid of Your Holy Spirit those images of Jesus will soften my hardened heart helping me to choose Jesus’ way rather than my own. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Saturday, January 12: Hebrews 13- ...

The writer ends his ‘letter of exhortation’ with a series of practical final thoughts. Any one of them pondered serves the Christ follower well. My heart was drawn to verses 5 & 6.

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

I am a planner. I have to do lists. I make plans and check plans. I like to think things through before I do something. Many of these are good traits, at least they work for me.

I save for the future and know that someday I will retire from working for an income. And some days I question myself, "Have I stewarded my income well enough to be able to retire." With stock market news ubiquitous on news outlets, particularly as 2018 closed out, I can easily get sucked into concern about retirement and if my stewarding of resources has been wise enough over the years to cover the years of retirement ahead.

Verses 5-6 are a great reminder for me that the Lord is my true security net. Yes, I am a steward of the resources the Lord gives me, but He is my bedrock. He is my future. He is my confidence. He is my life.

Confidence in Jesus doesn't mean I will be healthy, wealthy and wise all of my life. The Lord's plans can have strange twist and turns. I am reminded of Paul's words in Philippians 4:12: *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

Contentment in whatever situation the Lord deals to me is the goal. And I am able to find contentment precisely because the Lord never leaves or forsakes me? He is my Helper so I need not fear what humans or life will deal to me.

Hopefully my stewarding will provide for my life when I do not earn a paycheck. This seems to be the way of wisdom, but no matter what happens, God is with me and He is all I truly need.

Thank You, Jesus, for the peace that comes knowing You are with me. Give me ears to hear Your voice so that I stay in step with You and do not stray from You. I pray in Your name Jesus. Amen.

Sunday, January 13, 2019, 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.