

The Weekly Word
January 8-14, 2018

As we head into winter may God's word bless you and fill you with the Son of God through His word.

Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, January 8: 1Chronicles 7- Peering into God's word is never wasted...

I am not sure what to say. I am struggling to find a nugget, any nugget that might strengthen my faith or devotion to the Lord. But reading all these names... for a week now... Oh my, I feel parched, thirsty for some spiritual fresh water...

It is days and readings like this that remind me about duty... doing something because it is right and good and not because I am stroked in the process.

It is reading chapters like today's that reminds me patient endurance is a characteristic of faithfulness. Patient endurance, slogging through the tough terrain so that you can find the hidden beauty of other vistas. I know if I give up reading now there will be insights in later readings that will light my soul on fire with passion and love for the Lord.

So I sit with the Lord today reading His Word. If God Almighty thought these words were worthy of being part of His written record, then I will be faithful enough to read and ponder them as best I can even if little discernable truth leaps off the page into my life.

I read and meditate because it is God's Word and sitting on His lap peering into His Word is never wasted.

Lord, thank You for meeting me in my quiet reading and wonderings this day. Thank You for always being available to and for me. Thank You for giving us Your written record, the Bible. I thank You for the exciting parts, the deep and rich parts, and the mundane parts. All are from Your hand and mind. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, January 9: 1Chronicles 8- God will remember ...

I was hopeful that there would be more in this chapter when I read the heading in the NIV translation, "The Genealogy of Saul the Benjamite," given that Saul was the first king of Israel. But, unfortunately, it was another list of names leading to Saul and at least a dozen generations following Saul.

I was amazed how detailed the genealogy was noting deportations and divorces. And these records would have to have been maintained since the time of the Benjamin. No one at the time of Benjamin knew that one of his descendants would become a king of Israel, so they were keeping these records for records sake. Hmmm.

Records, even in an oral culture like ancient Israel were important. I wondered how they maintained them and who kept the records. Obviously these records were important. I can barely recall 2 generations above mine. How the world has changed.

No matter how detailed or lacking our human records are, God knows the complete account. He knows everything... all the words I have spoken, all the sins I have committed, all the prayers

I have prayed and all the deeds I have performed that honor Him. God knows everything. EVERYTHING!

And He invites me, little insignificant me, into His presence and even more invites me to be part of His family. I am humbled by this thought.

My heart sinks into His embrace... I am loved. I am cared for. I am commissioned. I am delighted in. I am remembered. Long after traces of my life are forgotten by the generations to come, God will remember. Not only will He remember He will have ushered me into His eternal kingdom to live with Him forever! Oh my... the joy that gushes from my heart.

Oh, Lord, words fail me, but my heart pounds with love for You. What can I say but that I will serve You and love You all the days of my life. Through Jesus, my Savior, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, January 10: 1Chronicles 9- Gatekeepers...

I never thought about the position of gatekeeper, and particularly the gatekeeper of the temple. What an important position... needing honorable, faithful, honest men to protect the temple during the night, a time of vacancy. In one respect gatekeepers were the security system of ancient Israel protecting the country's most important asset.

While reestablishing the Israelite community back in Jerusalem after exile (see verse 1) returning gatekeepers to their former post would be a critical responsibility. So the chronicler gives particular attention to this detail.

Altogether, those chosen to be gatekeepers at the thresholds numbered 212. They were registered by genealogy in their villages. The gatekeepers had been assigned to their positions of trust by David and Samuel the seer. They and their descendants were in charge of guarding the gates of the house of the LORD—the house called the tent of meeting. The gatekeepers were on the four sides: east, west, north and south. Their fellow Levites in their villages had to come from time to time and share their duties for seven-day periods. But the four principal gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted with the responsibility for the rooms and treasuries in the house of God. They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and they had charge of the key for opening it each morning (22-27).

Gatekeepers protected the temple when it was most vulnerable. And as I mentioned above gatekeepers needed to be honorable, faithful, honest men zealous for the institution and articles of God at the temple.

I found myself bouncing from gatekeepers of old to God's gatekeepers today.

And who are God's gatekeepers today? Pastors, elders, bishops, deacons, leaders of God's church... the men and women charged with preserving the institutions and articles (the Word of God) of God alive in His church.

Sections of Scripture from the New Testament flood my thoughts; words about guarding and protecting the word, rebuking those who are wrong and building up those who are weak. Paul has a number of such words to Timothy and Titus in the Pastoral Epistles. But the first verses that came to my mind were Paul's comments to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

"Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore ... Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (25-32).

Unlike Judaism, Christianity doesn't have a physical temple. Instead, God's temple is God's people and the leaders of God's church are charged with protecting the people by maintaining its truth and correcting those who would seek to distort its teaching for personal or worldly gain.

So to myself and other church leaders I hear God saying... guard yourself and the teachings of My Word for the sake of My people.

Oh, Lord, I accept Your calling. Please give me a mind to comprehend and a heart to believe Your Word at studied face value. Help me to hold it first in my heart and then express it and protect it through my teachings and actions. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, January 11: 1Chronicles 10- ...

In 1Chronicles, Saul's 40 years as king is reduced to one paltry chapter, which details his death! Not only that, it has yet to mention that Saul was king... unless you consider the final sentence explaining the kingdom passing to David.

Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse (13-14).

Saul's life is reduced to the comment that he was unfaithful. How sad.

My thoughts jumped to my life. I know my life isn't over but when it is, what sentence would summarize my life?

How I live today will determine my summary statement. And I certainly don't want a summary like Saul's... remaining faithful today and everyday thereafter until the Lord brings me home will ensure my epitaph will read differently than Saul's.

May this be so, Lord, may it be so. I long for mine to speak of faithfulness.

Lord, I pray for strength that I might live for You, honor You and serve You all the days of my life until You see fit to bring me home to You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, January 12: 1Chronicles 11 - Things have changed but then again they haven't...

The account of the Chronicler seems to come to life now that David enters the picture. The text breathes with life, David is on the throne!

A glimpse of the times comes as the chapter unfolds and we read the list of David's mighty men and some of their exploits.

David's was a time of war and battle and enemies round about, so having a capable army and guard was imperative for establishing his kingdom.

Presidents and world leaders today still need their guard and army to secure their position. I guess some things never change.

My mind shifts to the church and the kingdom of God... we no longer need armies and guards. In fact when the church had them, like during the crusades, we got off track from God's mandate to reach the world with the message of Jesus.

As I think about the church and advancing God's kingdom, there remains a need for guards and an army. However, it is not of soldiers with military weapons, instead it is intercessors with the weapons of prayer and the gifts of the Spirit waging the spiritual battle against the invisible forces of evil in the world. *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of*

evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12). Additionally, the word says, *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds* (2Corinthians 10:3-4).

I am so thankful for the people who are intercessors praying for me and the ministry the Lord has graced me to have. They are my silent guard. Their prayers and discernment have protected me and saved me from many troubles.

I hope and pray that you have an army of intercessors –your mighty men and women –too.

And if you have the calling of intercession I encourage you to put your gift in play for the leader(s) of your fellowship.

Lord, thank you for the mighty women and men of prayer. Please, Lord, keep them strong and their prayers laser guided to accomplish the purposes You have for them. I pray this selfishly for those who intercede for me and more generally for those who intercede for all Your leaders. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Saturday, January 13: - 1Chronicles 12...

I am marveling at the mighty men who came to serve alongside of David. I was surprised to read the first group on names. First they came to David while he was at Ziklag, which means they came to him while Saul was still hunting him. The surprise is that verse 2 mentions that they *were relatives of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin.*

So people of Saul's own clan defect to serve David. Wow, that is amazing.

There was something about David that engendered loyalty, service and devotion that surpassed familial and kinship lines. Even Saul's own son, Jonathan, was devoted to David and pledged a willingness to serve David when he became king.

What is it about David that garnered this depth of devotion? The text is silent, so I am left to wonder and imagine...

Skill, integrity, honor, leadership, vision, commitment to the Lord, fairness, success, personal charisma, the anointing of God...??? I just don't know. Surely these were factors, and there were probably many others. Likewise, it was likely a mix of things...

Whatever it was David had it and people flocked to be with him.

At a time when Israel could have splintered, David became the rallying point for the nation.

I wondered about what character traits engender loyalty today... and then felt the impulse to pray for increased measure as I move into the closing third of my life...

Oh, Lord, I pray for character... God-honoring, Christ-like character. I pray this, Lord, so that I might in my remaining years continue to add to Your kingdom in increasing measure. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, January 14, 2018, 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.