

**The Weekly Word**  
January 15-21, 2018

As you snuggle inside during the cold, maybe this journal will help you in your time with God's Word. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, January 15: 1Chronicles 13- God guards His honor ...**

The story of Uzzah is troubling and enlightening. Certainly Uzzah should have known better than to touch the Ark. Not only that but he should have know better than to have it travel on an ox cart. The ark was to be carried by long poles. That's how it traveled for all those years in the wilderness. Israel lost sight of the Word; in their zeal to do something wonderful –bring the Ark into the city of Jerusalem –they looked past God's Word and did things 'their' way. Uzzah, as priest, was complicit in all this. He ended up violating God's holiness and honor by touching the ark. *When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God (9-10).* God instantly struck Uzzah with His wrath.

I am trouble by God's exacting punishment... but I surrender to God's Will. God decides, not me. One thing I cannot do is say God is unjust; He is not. This is a just punishment for Uzzah's sin. But it is so rare that God judges instantly. I think this is why I am so surprised and troubled. Uzzah's story is akin to Ananias and Sapphires account in Acts 5.

As I consider Uzzah's story, I am reminded not to mess with God's honor. The Ark was the 'seat' of God on earth, to dishonor it was to dishonor the Lord God. God guards His honor. This provides a lesson for me. Do not undermine the Lord's honor and don't defame what is His.

What is the equivalent today of the Ark in David's day. Hmmm, I guess the closest thing would be the church, the temple of God. When we defame the church –God's people –we are messing with the presence of God on earth. And we risk His wrath.

I have to allow this thought to germinate more.

*Father, I honor You by honoring Your people. May I do that... honoring Your people by honoring Your Word and treasuring You, Jesus, and the Spirit. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 16: 1Chronicles 14- My sheep know my voice...**

I am encouraged by David's desire to receive the Lord's guidance coupled with his ability to hear and follow the Lord when He speaks. It is clearest in his attacks against the Philistines.

*So David inquired of God: "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hands?" The LORD answered him, "Go, I will deliver them into your hands."*

*Once more the Philistines raided the valley; so David inquired of God again, and God answered him, "Do not go directly after them, but circle around them and attack them in front of the poplar trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army." So David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army, all the way from Gibeon to Gezer (10,13-16).*

One thing I love is that this is so much more than a yes/no response from the Lord that David could have gotten from the Urim and Thummim. The nature of David's connection to the Lord is particularly visible in the second battle where David is told to circle behind and to wait for a specific sound. This suggests an intimacy of connection that I find encouraging.

God speaks... this is the first thing the Lord reminds me of this morning. I notice, too, that the Lord can give specific directions when needed.

The Lord is not some distant God disconnected with our lives. He is there for us! He will lead and guide us... really lead and guide us!

I don't know that I have had this level of specific direction from the Lord. I have much to learn and grow but I have been blessed over and over in my life with the strong sense of God's leading. I have never heard an audible voice from God. I don't know that David heard one either but David was sure of God's leading and I have been sure of God's leading as well.

Everyone who follows Jesus has access to the Lord for direction and guidance! As Jesus says, *My sheep know my voice...* (John 10:27).

*Oh, Lord, I am so grateful that You speak and lead. Teach me the art of listening and create in me an ever deepening desire to hear from You, Lord. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, January 17: 1Chronicles 15- Correcting mistakes and owning failure...**

David's heart was to have the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem so after some time he determined to bring the Ark into the city. This time he inquired of the Lord how it should be done.

*Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD (11-15).*

The errors of the first attempt were corrected. David was a leader who learned from his mistakes. None of us will bat 1000; learning from mistakes is the mark of a great leader. David learned.

Two observations are particularly poignant. He relinquished control that he should not have had and he owned his responsibility. The Levites exercise their rightful responsibility for transporting the Ark. David should not have made the arrangements the first time so he handed it back over to them. Yes, he was miffed they didn't assert their responsibility to do so the first time. At first reading he seems to place the responsibility for the failure on them but in the next breath he owns his role in the debacle with the simple word 'We.' *We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way.* They, as leaders, had missed the prime rule of living with the Lord... inquiring of Him. The Lord would have told them the right thing to do.

Not only as a leader, but even more importantly as a child of God, there are practical lessons in this passage. I, too, will blow it and sin and get things wrong. I don't want to do that, but it will happen. I, too, need to learn from my mistakes.

Learning to inquire of the Lord **first** is a life goal that will save much heartache if I can master it. God will lead the way if I only learn to ask. God wants us to succeed as sons and daughters and He will show us the faithful way to life.

Owning responsibility in failure and sin... my first reaction to a mistake is to blame... somehow I have built this pattern over years of practice. However, I need to re-pattern this to take responsibility if I am to grow in the Lord. I have been working on this for years and this morning's text is another reminder from the Lord that I have much growing to do. Thankfully the Lord is full of mercy and grace.

Relinquishing control of things I shouldn't control... I can be a control freak, letting go appropriately is another life-long lesson on which I am working. I am not there but by God's grace I am growing. Again, this passage is a gentle reminder to keep on working at giving up control of things over which I should not have control.

Today was highly practical as I sat with the Lord. I hope it was helpful for you as well.

*Thank You, Lord, for Your reminders. Give me strength to practice those things I heard in Your Word today. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Thursday, January 18: 1Chronicles 16- Remembering your past...**

I was touched by David's gift of food for each adult who was at the celebration. How generous and caring. *Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman* (3). I was trying to imagine a national celebration where as people leave each one is given a dinner meal! Extraordinary generosity.

I decided to read about this event. Apparently David and Solomon were the only kings to bless everyday people in this way. There is even a discussion about the meaning of the words translated by the NIV as 'cake of dates.' Apparently it can be translated 'portion of meat.' If this is so then David's gift is truly extraordinary because meat was an uncommon rarity for people in those days.

Either way, this it gives me a glimpse into David's heart. He was a common man before becoming king and he apparently never forgot his roots. That is a striking thought for me.

As life progresses, many of us find ourselves in better positions later in life and it is easy to forget what our leaner times were like. David channeled his remembering into generosity. I love that. In fact it is sparking me to pray...

*Lord, increase my generosity. You have blessed me, Lord, in so many ways, health, family, even materially. May I never lose sight of the truth that everything I have is a gift from You. God, may I have the grace to enjoy Your gifts but also to generously share with others who have needs. Oh, Lord, increase my generosity. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Friday, January 19: - 1Chronicles 17- Dreams for God...**

The chapter begins, *After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent"* (1).

David had this dream to build a house, a temple, for the Lord. The temple was to be something glorious, a physical testimony to his God. Alas, as the chapter unfolds God instructs that David is not to build this temple, but his son will do it.

The thought that captured me as I was reading goes like this, "What wonderful dreams do I have to honor the Lord?"

Sadly, I couldn't think of any.

I have an abiding desire to live faithfully, to be generous and to be a devoted Christ-follower, but I don't honestly have dreams to do anything great for the Lord.

Should I? Is God calling me to something more?

I am not certain. I am left to ponder, pray and listen for the leading of the Lord...

*Oh, God, my prayer today is straight forward. Give me ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart to grasp, and the strength of will to enter every door You open. May my dreams and desires honor You. Big or small, may I accept with joy every assignment You give to me, that Your honor and fame may increase near and far. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.*

### **Saturday, January 20: - 1Chronicles 18 doing what is just and right for all people...**

Certainly David is being remembered by the Chronicler as the archetype king of Israel and while he is not perfect, the Chronicler leaves out some of David's great foibles and highlights the good he did.

My eyes and heart were drawn to verse 14 and a declarative statement made about David.

*David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.*

The idea of *doing what was just and right for all his people* (emphasis mine) paints a marvelous picture of David as king. While this sounds wonderful, which it is, it is so difficult to actually do. Maybe the world was simpler back then, but governing fairly, doing what is just and right for all people, seems so impossible today.

Washington, Munich, London, Beijing, Moscow, Abuja... I know of nowhere in the world where we could say that today. The news everywhere highlights how this or that law favors one group over another. Maybe the world is too complex these days? Maybe legislation has gotten too specific or maybe analytics have become so finely tuned that differences, unnoticeable in the past, are magnified now. Maybe the Chronicler was overly zealous in his appraisal of David. However, even if the latter is true what a wonderful sentiment it conveys.

As I watch our world, I am not sure that *doing what was just and right for all his people* is the goal of governing anymore. It seems like 'special interest groups' rule the day.

Ahh, I have slipped from devotion to current news analysis and opinion...

I force myself to return to the text... what a wonderful goal David establishes for governing... *doing what was just and right for all his people.*

That's what God longs to see, all the people cared for justly and righteously!

I know I am not a governmental official. What do I take home from this morning in God's Word?

- 1) I need to check my attitude regarding how I think about and mentally treat various people... 'all people' in my head. Am I bigoted, prejudiced, or biased toward or against any particular group of people?
- 2) Am I so interested in myself that I don't have eyes for others? This is similar to the above but invokes a slightly different slant on things.
- 3) In my country, where I have the right of voting, do I hold candidates to this standard?

Things to chew on... I am sure more will emerge as I ponder further.

*Oh, Lord, I pray for men and women in office. I pray for a heart that emulates David's, seeking to do what was just and right for all their people. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen*

### **Sunday, January 21, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.