

**The Weekly Word**  
March 19-25, 2018

The march toward Easter moves on. This week ends with Palm Sunday and we get to be reading about the great Gospel of Jesus in Romans as we travel toward Easter. Wonderful. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, March 19: Romans 2- Ominous Words...**

Paul begins this chapter with the words, *You, therefore, have no excuse...* ominous words!

None of us have any excuse when we stand before God. None of us can say, 'I didn't know' or 'I did my best' or 'the devil made me do it'. We have no excuse... as Paul goes on to say, *All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law* (12). And if it isn't clear already Paul will say in Romans 3:23 that *all have sinned...* Since we have sinned we are guilty and we are without excuse.

I shudder at the thought of standing before the Lord and being pronounced guilty! Thankfully Jesus came and took the guilt and shame and punishment of everyone who puts their faith and trust in Him. There is no other way to find peace with God because we all are without excuse...

Have you put your trust in Jesus?...

*Thank You, Lord Jesus, for saving me. I bow to You, my Lord and my God. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 20: Romans 3- Law breakers we are...**

I had a friend who thought that Romans 2:14-15 - (*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.*) –indicated that Gentiles who didn't hear about Christ had a chance of salvation if they kept the law of themselves. While theoretically true, Paul reminds us that keeping the law is something no human does.

[This is a great reminder for me that we must be careful to keep texts in context. Isolating a verse from its context leads to problems. We always need to read the surrounding verses and sometimes surrounding chapters.]

Back to my musings... verse 20 makes our human situation clear: *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin* (20).

Whether we follow the law of God or the law written on our hearts, we will do so imperfectly. Therefore will break our law and fall short of the glory and will of God, thus we all need a savior. We cannot save ourselves because breaking any element of the law breaks the entire law.

But there is good news to balance the bad news of our lawbreaker status. Romans 3:23 states the problem: *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* And the next verse states God's solution: *and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

We are justified through Jesus... through faith in Jesus. Alleluia. Now that is a verse I can sing about.

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, my Savior and Redeemer. I lift Your name and sing Your praise for saving me and all who believe. Thank You, Father. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Holy Spirit. In Your name I pray. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, March 21: Romans 4- God my savior...**

Like an artisan hammering gold until it is so thin it can cover and overlay a chest, Paul is hammering away on the Gospel spreading its radiance as it covers all people who believe. He sums up in the last two sentences of the chapter: *The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him [Abraham] alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (23-25).*

There it is... belief in God, in Jesus the Savior who died for our sins and was raised for our justification, is our credit of righteousness. We cannot earn our own righteousness, we destroyed that opportunity the moment we first sinned. The only way righteousness can be restored to us is through the work of Jesus—His death and resurrection. And we 'appropriate' that work by faith in Jesus. This is a gift offered to anyone and everyone whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. Faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation.

As I sit and ponder this, I am awed and relieved.

Awed that God would do this for sinful people like me. Awed that God would pay my (our) ransom price. Awed that God would reveal the beauty of this truth to me... little old nobody like me. AWED!

I am also relieved. I don't have to try to earn my way back into God's good graces. I could never do that and the weight of trying was killing me. I am relieved of that burden by believing in Jesus. RELIEVED... Alleluia!

So I revel this morning in God my Savior!

*Praise to the Lord my Redeemer... He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood. He carried me across the threshold of salvation when I couldn't walk myself. Thank You, Savior. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Thursday, March 22: Romans 5- Glory in suffering???**

As my eyes lit onto the page it seemed so natural to meditate on the *peace we have with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (1)*. Yet as I continued to read it was in verse 3 that I found the impulse to meditate. *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (3-5).*

The counter cultural sense of verse 3's opening—*Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings*—forced me to stop and wonder, marvel even.

I would never have written those words. I live in a world where I grow upset if I get in a traffic situation that costs me 5 minutes. At the beginning of a headache I have a choice of multiple types of pain meds. Where have I ever suffered, in life or for faith? Where?

So I am trying to wrap my head around Paul's base line thought, *we also glory in our sufferings...* To glory in suffering first means you have to have endured suffering? And it seems

reasonable that Paul is referring to suffering for his faith in Jesus. He offers quite a list of sufferings in 2Corinthians 13.

I have no such list. So I am struggling. I don't know what to do with this statement. My faith in Jesus hasn't cost me in this way. Oh, there are likely some costs. But honestly I cannot kid myself... what costs, what suffering have I faced in my Jesus-following life?

So I sit here wondering, 'how do I process these words'?

I am sure God isn't saying, "Bill, look for suffering"... or inflict suffering upon myself as some ascetics once did. I trust these words are true. If God ever asks me to suffer for Him I guess I will learn the depth and truth of these words in a way that a non-faith-sufferer can ever know.

*Lord, I live for You. However, if Your road for my life includes suffering for my faith, I pray for the strength to suffer well in the name of my Savior Jesus who suffered for me. Amen and amen.*

### **Friday, March 23: Romans 6- No longer can we say, 'The devil made me do it.'...**

No longer can we say, 'The devil made me do it.'

Paul makes it clear as a redeemed Christ-follower, 'I am no longer under the power of sin. I am now free to say 'No' to the sin impulses in my life'. This message rings out of the chapter constantly and strongly.

*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace (11-14).*

Even as I read and consider these words, I recognize that I—a Spirit-filled Christ follower for more than 40 years still sins. Ugh! And if I am reading this correctly, I can blame no one but myself.

In Christ I am *dead to sin and alive to God* and yet much of my time I live as if sin still has a grip on me. I allow sin to reign in my mortal body. I must own this. Because in owning it, I can now give it to the Lord and pray for strength and the power of the Holy Spirit within me to stop living for sin but instead live for God.

Excuses only allow me to continue to allow sin to reign in my life.

There are enough scriptures in the New Testament to remind me that I will never succeed in living a perfectly sinless life this side of eternity. BUT to not reckon myself dead to sin and live into the life I now have in Christ is a failure to grasp the power of Jesus' redemption in my life.

So as I sit at the beginning of my day I grab hold of Paul's admonition to offer myself to God, to offer every part of myself to Him as an instrument of righteousness... right living.

*So Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I bow my head to You and offer to You my day, my life, my body, my will, my thoughts, my hopes, my dreams, my all. I avail myself to You. May my living spread Your righteousness in my world. May I do deeds that honor You.*

*Holy Spirit, may I follow Your lead and promptings and live in Your power... the power of a resurrected life... a life alive to my God—Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Through Jesus Christ, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

### **Saturday, March 24: Romans 7- Alleluia...**

Yesterday I recognized that I continue to sin, even though I no longer live under the power of sin. Paul battles a similarly in chapter 7 coming to the recognition, *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?* (24)

I live there, too... what a wretched person I am! Who will rescue me?

It is that sentiment that drew me to Jesus and that sentiment that continues to draw me to Jesu?. I need help. I need someone to save me. I need Jesus!

On this eve of Palm Sunday my heart cries with the crowds, 'Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is Jesus my Savior!

*Oh, Jesus, I am nothing without You. You loved me and saved me. You redeemed me and gave me a family. You gave me a hope and a future. And You allow me to partner with You in helping others find life, faith and salvation in You. Alleluia. Amen.*

### **Sunday, March 25, 2018, Palm 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.