

The Weekly Word
June 11-17, 2018

Happy June! The weather is warming and gardens have come alive with vegetation and growth. I pray your life is growing too as you read God's Word regularly. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, June 11: 1Corinthians 10- An interesting list...

There is so much in this chapter... likely it warrants many readings and much thought. For this sitting I was attracted to the 'do not' warnings in the second paragraph (7).

- Do not be idolaters.
- Don't commit sexual immorality (8).
- Do not test Christ (9).
- Don't be grumblers (10).

This is an interesting list to consider. Of all the 'do not's possible for Paul to choose from, these are his list for now. Wow, the Holy Spirit is addressing some interesting behaviors.

No idolatry... don't put anything, any practice, any wrong thinking before God and His correct thinking. That's one all-encompassing command. All God, all the time... no time wasted on other ways, truths, belief structures and the like.

No sexual immorality... we are sexual beings and God is clear: one man and one woman, that's it. Any behavior outside of that is not God's way. Watch yourself; their culture and our culture pushes a different ethic. Don't fall prey.

No testing of Christ... where did this come from? What's going on and what does this mean to me? I am not sure at this time what God is saying to me...

No grumbling... this is an interesting inclusion in the list. As I ponder this one I realize that grumblers tear down and dishearten. Grumbling destroys unity, undermining trust and connection. Generally we grumble against someone, hence the destruction of trust and connection.

There is LOTS to chew on.... So I conclude with Paul's summary comment. Verse 13:
No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Lord God, help me to take Your admonition to heart. Please, Lord, help me. Through Christ I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, June 12: 1Corinthians 11- No dividing peoples...

I find it interesting that in the same chapter where Paul upholds the custom of head coverings for women in worship, Paul upends the custom of wealth having privilege over poor. I am struggling to make sense of this; when is human custom honored and when is it not?

As I sit and consider, one large lesson seems to emerge. Does the custom put a certain group down, thus creating some kind of a divide... one better than the other?

While some may see the head covering issue dividing people, it did not set up two classes of humans, one more important and one less important. Instead the head covering issue is about

how women can fully take part in church gatherings by praying and prophesying. In the ancient culture where women were second class humans, inviting women to pray and prophesy in mixed gatherings of men and women was so incredibly counter-cultural. I suspect that wearing the head covering was a non-issue for women; the fact that they were able to fully participate in the gathering even by filling speaking roles was enormously honoring. As such, this teaching may have been a pretty significant blow to the “men’s club” of the day.

In the communion paragraphs Paul directly takes on the rich and their arrogance against the poor. I agree with Gordon Fee’s interpretation that ‘discerning the body of Christ’ in verse 29 refers to paying attention to the community of faith gathered at the table rather than the elements of bread and cup on the table.* Given the whole of the Lord’s Supper discussion, Paul is correcting the church who are playing favorites, which is belittling those who are poor. Paul, directed by God’s inspiration, will have none of this. Favoritism and putting down the poor is a topic God corrects throughout the scripture, Old and New Testaments.

We are all one in Christ; old-young, rich-poor, male-female, Jew-Gentile. We should not make distinctions in the church.

So today God is pounding me... no favoritism, no distinctions, treat all people equally. This thought does not come naturally to me. I certainly have blind spots and weaknesses. There are times I have to battle racial reactions and thoughts. Another concern for me can be in the education area, I have to beware judging based on education level, which I notice in speech patterns.

Oh, Lord God, I still have so much grow and maturity to go. I need Your strength to gain victory in these natural, human reactions I have. Help me, Lord, to set down my sin-tainted humanity and pick up the Holy Spirit empowered life. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

*Gordon Fee discusses this in his NIV Commentary on 1Corinthians and in other places.

Wednesday, June 13: 1Corinthians 12- ...

Being part of a body... it is a life giving concept. I am needed. I am necessary. The church is not a one person or few persons’ show. The church is everybody, doing what they have been gifted by God to do. And every part is important, every part is needed... every part.

God is making a huge statement in this chapter. His design is that everyone is critical to the mission of being the body of Christ... everyone.

Now comes the personal questions. Am I filling the roles I was designed to fill? Are you who is reading this?

As a pastor I can be tempted to answer yes too quickly. Yes, I am fulfilling certain pastoral functions, but what I need to query is, are there other gifts/functions/ways the Lord wants me active in the life of His church? This is a question we all need to be answering. Am I doing all God would have me do in His body?

Lord God, show me the things You have for me to do in Your church. Help me to be the best body parts I can be for Your glory and the success of the church’s mission to take the name of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Through Christ I pray. Amen.

Thursday, June 14: 1Corinthians 13- LOVE...

Love... just seeing the chapter designation primes my thinking. Possibly the greatest definition of love ever put on paper. And while I was primed to consider love as I set my eyes to the page, I was taken back by the statements of the opening paragraph.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing (1-3).

It is not simply the definition of love that is so powerful; it is also the place of love in the world's economy.

More important than any eloquence, more important than the deepest understanding, more important than the deepest faith or than the highest sacrifice to give ones' life for someone else, is that these great deeds be done with love.

I let these thoughts soak in.

Love is the paramount action, bar none! Love is the definition of a life well lived. I looked back now at the definition of love given by Paul... and soaked in it...

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (4-7).

Oh, God... to be Your disciple is to be a person formed by and for love. Lord, when my life draws to a close and I am ushered into Your eternity... may it be said of me, 'He loved.'

God lead me to be such a man, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, June 15: 1Corinthians 14- It is not about me (you)...

Some mornings I find myself pondering specifics from in my Bible reading. Other mornings I find myself considering more about the whole statement. Today is a latter morning.

There is much in this chapter that can be parsed and dissected. Still after completing my reading and a few silent moments I noticed two larger themes.

As I see it we, Christ-followers, have a seminal decision to make. We can seek the 'show,' displays of power and spiritual gifts that while potentially helping others is more about elevating self, showing off or gaining honor as a 'spiritual person.' In this chapter this attitude is found in people who speak on and on in tongues in worship, having their euphoric moment and appearing to all the others as spiritual, but not actually spurring others on to love and good deeds (1-14). In this chapter this attitude is found in people who speak prophetic words, ignoring that the Spirit has moved on from them to others who have God's anointing to help the body (29-31). Even the issue of women speaking and asking questions can be understood in this light. While I do not understand the cultural ethic at play, the point seems to be that these women were disrupting things, creating a display or show and not actually helping the body grow in understanding God's way and will.

To each of these behaviors that place personal displays above the body, learning and growing or new people coming to faith, Paul counters with 'consider the body' and 'consider the seeker.' The underlying principle in this chapter seems to be the body gathered together is more important than any personal recognition. The learning and growth of the body is more important than any personal recognition or display of gifts. Seekers being convicted of sin and coming to

faith is more important than personal wants or displays of spirituality. Finally, life in the body of Christ has each member doing her or his part rather than a few showing off.

Recalling the flow of chapters 12-14 a consistency appears. Chapter 12, gifts given for the common good (12:7), and all parts of the body are important (12:12-31). Chapter 13:4-8, the way of love *patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud does not dishonor others, and so on.* And today's chapter, see the other people in the gathered assembly, live for the others in the gathered assembly...

Moving to my life, the Spirit begins to query, "How much of the gathered assembly, Bill, do you want to be about you? Focus your eyes on those I bring to the gathering and help them grow. Use what I have given you for their good, not your pleasure."

I am stopped in my tracks...

Oh God, Oh God, may I never do things for show or personal gain, especially things in Your name. I pray through my Savior, Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, June 16: 1Corinthians 15- Resurrection...

Resurrection is central to the faith. Paul makes an incredible statement in verse 19. *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.* If there is no resurrection, Paul says we are the ones who should be pitied.

Pitied... yes. If there is no resurrection we have lived a lie, preached a lie, and witnessed to a lie.

Resurrection sets things straight. Those in Christ live with God forever. God's justice prevails. Evil is finally and decisively defeated.

Most people live life without thinking much about death and afterlife. We live as if this life is the only life. Most do this, that is, until they near the end of life. I have seen it dozens of times, faced with one's mortality our questions change. We wonder and think, is there more???

Not long ago I stood at the graveside of a dear Christ follower. Her family hung to her faith believing, they as believers, will see her again in eternity. And they will! If I am wrong, if she and her family are wrong than *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

But don't pity me... because Christ was raised from the dead! And I, along with all who put their faith in Jesus Christ, will be raised, too!

Halleluiah. Amen! Thank You, Lord. What a delight to contemplate resurrection! Amen and amen.

Sunday, June 17, 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.