

The Weekly Word
June 18-24, 2018

Happy Summer. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, June 18: 1Corinthians 16- Do everything in love. ...

It was only a few days ago I read the wonderful “love” chapter. I remember it was a rich and full morning contemplating the importance of love. I think my heart is still primed by those contemplations. So today, as I read Paul’s closing words to his letter, verse 14 burrowed directly into me. *Do everything in love.*

How important is love? The most. *Do everything in love.*

Not some things or most things but *do everything in love.* This is an all-encompassing directive.

Greet your neighbor in love.

Do your grocery shopping in love.

Speak with your boss/coworker/subordinate in love. And remember this stands when you are angry, tired, happy or perplexed. No matter how you are feeling speak in love.

Fire someone in love; discipline in love. “Everything” is endless. It includes the things I like to do and the things I loathe to do.

Do everything in love.

I am wondering where life will take me today and all my todays. Everywhere life takes me is a place to love.

Lord, I know I cannot do this on my own. I can only do this in Your strength. Thank You for living inside of me. Help me to listen and obey as You lead me in doing everything in love. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, June 19: 2Corinthians 1- Learning to surrender...

Life for the follower of Jesus is not always one of joy and delight. Every human, both in Christ and out of Christ endure difficult times. And sometimes Christ followers endure difficult times because of their faith in Jesus. God is with us and for us in every situation.

Paul’s words struck me: *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many (8-11).*

First the extent of the pressure Paul felt so that he *despaired of life itself* hit me. Paul realized there are no guarantees. God may come through with deliverance and God may not. Seriously, if he knew God would deliver him, why despair?!

Paul was beyond his ability to change his circumstances, *far beyond our ability to endure*, or even his human ability to endure. So apparently he released control to God. God was the keeper of his life and outcome.

To release or relinquish control to the Lord is never easy for me. I doubt it came naturally to Paul either. But he had learned to cede control to his Lord.

One measure of a disciple is that we all learn to cede control to the Lord and trust Him with our lives.

It also stuck me that Paul didn't go it alone, he turned to the body for their prayers. *On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

This statement is not a prescription for some 'magic elixir' that makes everything always turn out wonderfully. Again, there are no guarantees, but being surrounded by and carried by the prayers of the faithful is a beautiful thing.

On countless mission trips I have known the sustaining power of the prayers of God's people. During my present surgery recovery I know the sustaining power of the prayers of God's people. I wish things always turned out as I hoped and dreamed... but God's will is not always what I hope and will. And that is a truth I must master if I am truly to learn how to give over my will to His will and surrender my life to my God.

Lord... continue teaching me and continue leading me to deeper trust and surrender to You and Your will. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, June 20: 2Corinthians 2- Aroma of Christ...

Smell, we are told, is the fastest sense to recall memory. This thought about the fast access scent has to memory came to mind as I read Paul's admonition that we are the aroma of Christ in verses 14-15. *But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing (14-15).*

God... uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere... The aroma of Christ, what an interesting word picture. Growing up my mom was a great cook; when I would come in from playing the house was filled with the aroma of whatever she was cooking that day. Simply walking in the house I was engulfed by the smells of dinner cooking. It filled every nook and cranny of the house, and was delightful. Those are wonderful memories.

I have experienced a similar delight walking into the church sanctuary on Easter when multitudes of beautiful and aromatic flowers adorn the sanctuary.

A pleasant aroma delights and lifts life.

We are to be the aroma of Christ filling the world with His aroma! What an interesting thought. As I live, I am to fill the world around me with Jesus' aroma.

The word 'aroma' leaves me with thoughts of pleasant smells. What can I do, how can I live so that the pleasant smells of Jesus wafts in my wake?

I loved coming home to my house filled with the aroma of dinner. I love entering the church sanctuary filled with the aroma of flowers on Easter. How can I live so that people long to enter and enjoy the pleasantness of Jesus aroma experienced though my faithful living?

Lord, may I live so faithfully to You that people see and meet Jesus in my living. I pray this in His name. Amen.

Thursday, June 21: 2Corinthians 3- The gospel according to YOU...

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone (1-2).

Immediately as I began reading the idea of being someone's letter of commendation grabbed hold of me. And I was reminded of a poem I ran across years ago.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day.
By deeds that you do, by words that you say
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true.
Say, What is this gospel according to you?

Men read and admire the Gospel of Christ.
With its love so unfailing and true:
But what do they say, and what do they think
Of the gospel according to you?

Tis a wonderful story, that Gospel of love,
As it shines in the Christ-life divine,
And oh, that its truth might be told again
In the story of your life and mine!

You are writing each day a letter to men;
Take care that your writing is true.
'Tis the only gospel some men will read,
This gospel according to you.

The poem caused me to consider how well my life mirrored the true gospel of Jesus Christ
Lord, may my life point people to You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Friday, June 22: 2Corinthians 4- Earthen vessels...

Years ago when I was married, my wife and I chose an earthenware pattern for our dishes. They were nice, but over not too many years they began to chip and break. Earthenware can be fragile. And that is Paul's point in verse 4. *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

I have read this chapter and these words yearly since 1975 but recently they took on a more visceral and literal meaning.

I have been blessed with a healthy body. Then about 2 months ago there was an indication that I had an issue and a month ago tomorrow I had surgery to remove cancer in my prostate. Now I am recuperating. It is taking weeks for my body to heal. I am very fortunate that the cancer was removed and I should be fine going forward. But I still need to heal from the surgery. And presently I am limited in what I can do. My body tires quickly.

My 'earthen vessel' is breakable.

These post-surgery days of recovery are reinforcing how fragile life can be. Am I making the most of the life I have been given? Am I regularly and continually thankful to the Lord for the

vim and vigor I have. Were it not for God's *all-surpassing power* and His gift of grace and mercy, I might have no breath at all.

It is so easy to fall prey to thinking that my life and health is all about my effort. And while it is important for me (us) to take care of ourselves and our bodies, God has the ultimate say. God alone grants life and God calls us home.

Paul goes on to write, *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal* (18). Paul's not so subtle reminder is that we are to constantly (hence *fix our eyes*) be looking to our God –Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit –and not concentrate solely on the things of this world, which like us, are temporary.

Lord God, I thank You for my health and for this body and life you have given me. Lord, I want to take care of it as a way to honor You. Even more, I pray Lord, that I might use this earthen vessel, as dinged up and cracked as it may be, to point people to Your glory. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, June 23: 2Corinthians 5- Appointed ambassador...

This chapter is a feast of meditative inspiration. Lord, where would you have me pause and ponder?

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (20-21).

An ambassador is appointed by the head of state to represent her/him in dealing with the people to whom the ambassador is sent. The ambassador's voice is not his/her own, rather the ambassador is to speak as the regent would have them speak.

In the USA's political system senators and representatives are elected by the people to vote their (the elected official's) conscience. Not so an ambassador. An ambassador does not speak his/her mind, but rather is a mouthpiece for the regent.

We are Christ's ambassadors, therefore we represent Him. The words we speak should be His words. Our actions should be His actions. It is as if looking through us, people see Christ. As Paul says, it is *as though God were making his appeal through us*. What a responsibility! Christ is making His appeal to the world to believe in Him through us!!!

Thursday's poem, pops back into my mind... 'Tis the only gospel some men will read, This gospel according to you.

Today, as I go about my life, I am representing Christ. Today as I live, I am an ambassador for Jesus. And the same is true tomorrow and the next day and the next... This is a 24/7/365, for the rest of my life, responsibility... for all of us who call Jesus Lord.

Oh, Lord, only in Your power can I do this. Only by staying close to You can I know what to say and how to act so that You are seen and heard in me. Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, help me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, June 24, 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.