

The Weekly Word

July 2-8, 2018

July 2018 is half over. Time flies... may your time in God's Word be a blessing. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, July 2: 2Corinthians 12- Messy lives...

Paul's description of the church of Corinth is not pretty, and that is being polite. The closing words of the chapter describe Paul's fears about what he might find when he goes to Corinth.

*For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be **discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder**. I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over **many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery** in which they have indulged (20-21).*

My bolded words highlight what Paul fears he may find. Uuugh.

Still these people are the Church of God in Corinth. He opens the letter writing, *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia* (2Corinthians 1:1).

My thoughts fly all over the place. On the one hand they, and we, are called to live better. We are called to be holy. On the other hand, we remain imperfect human beings. We in the church are not to lower our standards; what God calls sin remains sin. But it also seems that we need to keep calling back to the Lord those who name Christ as Lord yet fall into sin.

This is a difficult balancing act... holding holiness as the goal yet understanding that sin happens. However, redemption and forgiveness is always open.

Personally, I must continue to examine myself in the light of God's Word, confessing sin and seeking God's strength to gain victory over sin so that I might grow in maturity and holiness.

No easy task...

Lord God, I have much growth needed... MUCH. Help me, lead me, guide me. For Your sake and the advancement of the Gospel. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, July 3: 2Corinthians 13- Practical steps to deepen your faith...

Paul has a way of calling readers to deeper faith. *Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you* (11).

Rejoice... take time to recognize all the ways God is with you and has blessed you. The fact that we have breath in our lungs and know the love of the Savior is reason enough to rejoice!

Strive for full restoration... I am not sure what 'restoration' to which Paul is referring. But it seems plausible that Paul is calling us to strive for full maturity, full renewal in Jesus. The word 'strive' calls me to put my 'back into it,' to give my faith effort and will power, to work at it. I enjoy watching sports and the best athletes are always working and practicing and receiving coaching to become better. That's what I hear in the word 'strive' => work to grow in your faith. Give it effort!

Encourage one another... an interesting element of encouragement is that I often find myself encouraged. When I spur others on to love and good deeds, God seems to work in me to spur me on to love and good deeds as well. Giving myself away to others, God never fails to replenish me.

Be of one mind, live at peace... focus on Jesus. He is our center and our hope and thinking upon Jesus we can all be of one mind; His mind. Live at peace; don't be a rabble-rouser; don't stir up trouble, instead be a calming influence on the people around you.

Do these things and God will be with you. Ahh, to know the presence of the Lord in the midst of life. This will certainly lead me to rejoice. And so I find myself back where I began... Rejoice!

Simple, practical, helpful is Your Word to me today. Now, Lord, help me to strive to live it. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, July 4: Proverbs 1- The gift of Proverbs...

Proverbs opens with a statement of purpose.

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair (1-3)...

I pause to ponder this statement. What a gift the book of Proverbs is. If it can fulfill its purpose then it is a book everyone should read and devour!

My hope and prayer is that each day there will be one or more Proverbs that I can latch onto and grow with.

After the purpose statement, Solomon gives the heart of the Proverbs, verse 7. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Fearing God, says Solomon, is key to wise living.

So simple, and so profound.

Fear God... yes, recognize that God alone is great and awesome and I am not. I am no match for God. Should God choose to slay me, I am slain. Should God choose to crush me, I am crushed. I am defenseless before God.

Remembering this. Keeping a clear understanding of God's greatness and my smallness always in my mind, this is the beginning of knowledge. It is the beginning because now I have the correct footing and foundation from which to explore the world and learn the ways of the Lord.

Yes, the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...

Lord, pound this truth home to me. Press it into every fiber of my being. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, July 5: Proverbs 2- Dedication, resolve, determination, and attention needed...

Proverbs continues to pound home the truth that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.

Chapter 2 opens: *My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding— indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God (1-5).*

The challenge to us, as the son –the apprentice, the learner –is conveyed in the verbs used. Accept, store up, turn to, apply, call out, cry aloud, look for *then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God*. The pressure is placed squarely upon us to seek after God's knowledge and understanding. We are to apply ourselves to the task of discerning and learning from the Lord.

The tenor and resolve embedded in these verbs tells me the task will not be simple or easy. It takes application and determination.

I have a son who just graduated from law school and is now studying for his Bar exam. For 6 or 7 weeks studying is his full time work. Eight or so hours a day he works, taking notes on lectures, completing practice exams and writing sample essays. In this span he will take off maybe 4 days. Dedication, resolve, determination, and attention is needed to pass the Bar.

So, too, should we apply ourselves to apprehend the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord. Unlike studying for the bar we cannot cram our learning into a few weeks... pursuit of God is a life long endeavor.

Will I give it my best? Will I give it my all? The Lord deserves nothing less...

Strengthen my spine and will power, Oh Lord, so that when I am tempted to slack off or quit, I don't give in. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, July 6: Proverbs 3- A person of love and faithfulness...

So many potential lines to ponder. Ah, the riches of Proverbs.

I found myself drawn to verse 3-4, so after completing the chapter I returned to those verses. *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man (3-4).*

Love and faithfulness seemed like words I should dig into a bit more deeply.

Love (Hebrew 'Hesed') is a most important OT word meaning "kindness," "mercy," "loyalty" or "steadfast love." Often used to describe an attribute of God, it becomes a key theological term for understanding the nature of God as presented in the OT, especially in relation to being faithful to covenants and true to His Word. In the verse at hand it is an attribute that should characterize ourselves as well. Thus we are bidden to be people of kindness, mercy, loyalty, and steadfast love. We should keep our word and be faithful to the ways of the Lord.

Faithfulness as a singular noun, denotes the qualities of "firmness," "faithfulness," and "truth." So our word should be solid and true. We are firm in our convictions, which in the grand scheme of the scripture, means firmness is living as the Lord would have his son or daughter live.

The proverb goes on to say that we must tie these character traits to our very being. We are to secure them to our lives so that they guide us in all we do.

Interestingly, if we live this way, not only will God honor us but people will as well. There is truth here, because people appreciate men and women of integrity, mercy, kindness and love!

So reflecting on my associations and relationships, am I a person of love and faithfulness? Can I be counted upon for kindness and mercy, love and truth? Am I firm in my convictions yet tempered by love?

Am I?

Are you?

Think about it... I am.

Oh God, to reflect You to my world is an honor and hard work. Forgive me when I fall short and help me grow in love and faithfulness. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, July 7: Proverbs 4- Guard your heart...

Wisdom and understanding continue to be Solomon's prime topics. Find them, keep them, do not stray from them is his repeated refrain.

Without mentioning his two prime topics, Solomon puts an exclamation mark on his words with verse 23: *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

Solomon is not talking about guarding our physical heart, but rather 'heart' refers to our inner person, the core and essence of who we are. One lexicon says of the figurative meaning of heart, "'heart" became the richest Biblical term for the totality of man's inner or immaterial nature."

I am to guard who I am, my inner self, my real self because everything *flows from it*. To guard my heart in need is to wall it off from evil or bad influence. Then I have to install in it good things, like wisdom and understanding. Verses 24-27 give practical mechanisms to guard one's heart.

Mind your tongue... keep it from perversity and corrupt talk (24). Control your eyes, look ahead... don't gaze to the right or left. Don't gaze into the shadows where evil lurks (25). Monitor your path... beware traveling with the wrong crowds or into the wrong areas. Stay as they say, on the straight and narrow (26-27).

Following this advice will certainly guard our hearts and lives... practical thoughts for living as God would have us live.

Lord, this is easier considered than followed, even Solomon slipped on his own advice. Help me, Lord, for it takes more than will power to live faithfully before You. Help me... In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, July 8, 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.