

The Weekly Word

April 18-24, 2016

Spring has sprung, new life is all around us. May God's Word bring new life to your soul.
Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, April 18: Exodus 31- Sabbath...

Why is sabbathing so hard? Why do people of all ages struggle to enjoy Sabbath, a day of rest, relationships and worship? Why is this so hard for us? Why is it so hard for me? Why? Why? Why?

I wish I knew the answer to this question.

When it comes to work, unions and people of all stripes have negotiated for 2 day weekends. We want time off. We long for time off. So why do we struggle when God says, "Take a day for nothing, a day to rest, recreate and worship?"

The commandments, I suggested back a week or so ago, are guardrails for life. One of those guardrails is Sabbath. I wonder why I (we) struggle so with having to take a day a week???

Is it because we are unsure we have enough so we want to work, work, work?

Is it because we don't want anyone to tell us anything, even take a day off?

I admit I struggle and I am not sure why I struggle. I understand less why people in general struggle with this.

I do know that when I do Sabbath, I feel better and my key relationships are stronger because I have taken that day to connect. And certainly my walk with the Lord is stronger when I take time to be with Him and the people of God one day in seven.

So even though it is a Monday, I am thinking about Sabbath... and the blessing that Sabbath is. Now I need to pray that the Lord will help me understand better and enjoy Sabbath weekly.

Lord, help me Sabbath. Help me see the gift that one day in seven is. Open my eyes to the gift Sabbath. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, April 19: Exodus 32- Standing with the Lord...

Reading the account of the golden calf, my heart sank. Oh, how sin destroys our connections with God. And how sin breeds sin... the calf, the lying, the revelry. How the Lord's heart must have broken.

What I saw in the account this morning was more than Israel's sin. I saw in this account a double event. It seems as if it was also a test for Moses. How would Moses react? Was he a God-honoring leader? I saw the heart of Moses emerge in this account.

Right out of the gate, as the corruption of Israel first comes to light, Moses' heart for the Lord, the people, and his firm understanding of God's Word shines brightly. And Moses speaks his piece respectfully and strongly to the Lord:

"LORD, why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your

servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever' ” (11-13).

Listening to these words, Moses exposes his heart which is tuned to the Lord. God's honor throughout the world was paramount. Moses' reaction was not driven by self, but by love for God, God's Word and God's people.

The Lord relents.

When Moses goes down the mountain and sees the corruption first hand we see his heart again. We read: *When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it (19-20).*

Righteous anger flares up in Moses. Discipline pours forth from Moses. Again Moses aptly stood in for the Lord and preserved God's righteousness and God's honor.

Moses, I would say, passed God's integrity test.

What I just wrote launched my personalization of the text as I sat with the Lord.

Do I pass God's integrity tests as they come up in my life? Do I honor the Lord as I live my day and APPROPRIATELY speak up when I have a voice? I emphasized the word 'appropriately' because I do not have the authority or the position to speak up every time a situation of sin or anti-God activity occurs. Sometimes the God-honoring thing to do is to hold my tongue and pray silently. But there are times when I should speak up and speak out in a manner that honors the Lord.

As I think about this I realize that both the words and the manner I use are important when I speak on God's behalf. Moses had a straightforward reverence when he spoke with the Lord and a fierce confrontation with the people who were running amok. By the way, Moses is never disciplined for breaking the stone tablets. His fiery outburst apparently came from a God-honoring heart!

Turning back to myself, God is asking me, will I stand with Him as I live my life? Will I represent Him in content, manner and character as I live my life?

Will you?

Lord, I have not been tested and proved like Moses. Nor have I the importance of call that Moses had, but in my circle of influence, I pray, Lord, that I will have the courage and strength to stand for You in any and every situation appropriate to me and my position. Oh, Lord, that my life honors You 24/7/365.

Praise be to You, Father, Jesus and Spirit. It is to You that I pray. Amen and amen,

Wednesday, April 20: Exodus 33- Mentoring in the faith...

I found myself wondering about Joshua, Moses' aid and junior associate. Verse 11 caught my attention, the only mention of Joshua in the chapter.

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

It seems that unless he was out on an assignment where Moses went, Joshua went. The verse above also indicates that Joshua accompanied Moses into the tent of meeting where Moses met and spoke with the Lord.

What caught my eye was the comment that when Moses left the tent to return to the camp, *his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.* The 'did not leave' seems to say that Joshua was there in the tent with Moses.

Did Joshua observe or listen in on Moses' conversations with the Lord? I pondered this. If Joshua did, he gained a unique understanding of Moses. He heard the conversations between Moses and God, thus he knew precisely what God said. He then got to watch and observe Moses as he took God's Words and brought them to the people. What a lesson of integrity that would have been! The views into Moses' heart would have been extraordinary.

- He would have heard Moses' complaints to the Lord about the people and God's responses.
- He would have heard Moses' arguments with the Lord on behalf of the people.
- He would have watched and listened to how faithfully Moses conveyed God's Words to the people.
- He would know when and if Moses cut corners and his humanity and sinfulness prevailed.
- If he saw all this, Joshua was never the source of a leak; he never once spoke of it!

It is little wonder that Joshua will eventually replace Moses as leader of Israel. He had shown himself faithful in many ways. He never disobeyed an order or discussed private details of God's and Moses' conversations. Plus he got to observe how a person connects and communicates with the Lord faithfully and honorably.

I began to think about the different people who have mentored me in my walk with Jesus, directly and indirectly. What a gift they have been... how much I have learned from them.

Next I wondered if I am faithfully mentoring others in their walk with the Lord. Hmmm...

Lord Jesus, Father and Spirit, thank You for every mentor You have brought into my life. Those who have lingered for years and those who have only walked with me a brief time. Each of these have helped form me into a disciple of Yours.

Please bless these people. Make Your face to shine upon them and give them Your peace.

I also ask and pray that I may be an apt mentor to others. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, April 21: Exodus 34- No other God's before me...

I have been using Operation World daily prayer guides to pray for the countries of the world for a few years now. If you want to help advance the gospel spread around the world through prayer this is an amazingly helpful, too. Check out <http://www.operationworld.org>.

Today I prayed for Brazil and here is a portion of the prayer need OW identified: Brazil is a spiritually open country, for good and for ill, and is probably more Spiritist than Catholic in underlying worldview. Although "non-religion" is actually the fastest-growing faith group, few of that category would be hardcore atheists. Most follow Afro-Brazilian cults (such as Candomblé, Macumba, Umbanda) derived from African animism and witchcraft, but "high Spiritism" (Kardecism) is more popular among whites. Only 1.3% identified themselves solely as Spiritist in the census, but around 10 million practice, and even one-third or more Brazilians visit Spiritist priests or guides; many quite happily practice Catholicism and Spiritism together. The ecstatic experiences, flexible practices and emotional mysticism give it great appeal to the Brazilian mindset. Pray for all spiritual falsehoods to be exposed as such and for Christ alone to be exalted as Lord in Brazil; pray for those in actual spiritual bondage to be delivered through Jesus.

What I read about with Brazil and the syncretism of the Christian/Catholic church with the indigenous religions of the area connected, I connected it with God's Word to Moses in verses 12-17.

Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same. "Do not make any idols (12-17).

When I was first reading these verses I remember thinking, "Wow, God is really strong on this issue." Then later when I read and prayed for Brazil, I understood why. A mixed faith is really no faith...

Our God is a jealous God. As Jesus said, *You cannot serve God and mammon* (xx). You cannot serve two gods at the same time.

This obviously drove into me... am I divided? Have any of the gods of my world wormed their way into my life?

How about you???

Lord, create in me a pure heart ,Oh, God, and renew a right spirit in me. See if there is any wicked way in me, and if so, Lord, root it out. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Friday, April 22: Exodus 35- It takes a community...

It takes the whole community to do the work of God. Without the gifts of the people and the work of the people, under the direction of anointed leaders, the tent of meeting and the tabernacle would have never become reality (4-35).

What was true in the dessert of Sinai for the Israelites remains true today for the people of God gathering in their churches around the world.

It takes the whole community to do the work of God. Only through the gifts of the people under the direction of anointed leaders will the work of God be accomplished, the evangelization of every nation, tribe and people in the world.

Are you part of God's family? Are you laboring for the spread of Jesus' name worldwide? Are you pulling your weight in your church? Am I?

Think about that...

Lord, show me places I can serve. Open my wallet to give. Use me for the sake of Your Gospel spread across this globe. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Saturday, April 23: Exodus 36- That the world might know Jesus...

Is faith in the hearing or the doing? The doing, right?! Jesus told the parable about the two sons (Matthew 21-28ff). The father says go and work in the field. The first son says, 'No' but then changes his mind and does what the father told him to do. The other son said, "Yes, Dad" but never bothers to go out to the field to work. Jesus makes the point that the first son was the obedient one.

In today's chapter, Israel demonstrated her faith in the Lord. People gave liberally. In fact they gave so much Moses had to order them to stop giving! And beyond giving, the people rally to weave, sew, butcher and build all the things God directed them to do to build the tabernacle.

Today's chapter is an example of faith in action and what can happen when people set to do the things God directs them to do under the direction of the leaders God places over them.

My heart traveled to the church... that today's church would be as faithful as Israel of Exodus 36. The tabernacle God wants us to build today is a globe where every tribe and nation and language and tongue hears the name of Jesus and where all peoples have an opportunity to put their faith in Jesus.

May this be so in our lifetime... and may you and I labor tirelessly to that end.

Oh, God, empower, stir Your people to do the work You have for us to do, so that Your glory will fill the earth as water covers the sea.

Oh, this I give my life... Halleluiah. Amen.

Sunday, April 24, 2016, 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.