

## The Weekly Word

July 11-17, 2016

It is so nice to be back home after a long trip to Nigeria. But no matter where I am God is the same and He is mighty. Happy reading of His Word...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

### **Monday, July 11: Numbers 19- We have a calling and commission...**

I don't truly understand the cultural need for cleansing after coming in contact with a dead body, maybe it had something to do with prevention of disease. It also seems as if some of the Canaanites had superstitions about the dead but none of these connect with me and my life.

I can certainly understand that it was important to make sure everyone understood the rules about dead bodies since quite a few people died only a few chapters earlier. So the issue was likely on the minds of the people and the author.

Still devotional connection with this chapter is scant.

In attempting to understand more of the background, one author referenced Hebrews 9:13-14, which reads: *The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

Now there is a word that speaks to my heart.

All the cleansing rituals in this chapter make a person outwardly clean, but Jesus' sacrifice makes us inwardly clean. Jesus' sacrifice washes away sin and its affects. What a glorious truth!

No amount of outward cleansing can ever clean the inside of a human person. However, what we cannot do for ourselves, Jesus can do for us when we place our faith in Him.

What a blessing! What a gift!

Here we have the beauty of the Christian faith... cleansing of sin, "*acts that lead to death.*"

I love that the author of Hebrews goes even further. Not only does Jesus cleanse us from acts that lead to death, He does so, so that we can serve God, our Father. Through faith in Jesus we have a calling and a commission to love and serve God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Thank You, Oh, God, for all You have done for me. Fill me with Your Spirit, so that I may serve You with vigor and excellence. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Tuesday, July 12: Numbers 20- The story behind the story...**

As I was reading today, it occurred to me that the author gives us only the barest of information. Chronicling the amount of history that Moses did, we couldn't expect otherwise. But still we read only snippets of what went on.

I wondered, for example, how a scriptwriter or a novelist might fill in the account we read about in verses 2-5: *Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! Why did you bring the LORD's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to*

*this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!”*

I tried to imagine the story behind the story, pondering these questions:

- How did the people gather in opposition to Moses? Were there late night gatherings speaking against Moses? Did the leaders of clans confront him? Were there crowds of people chanting and yelling at him? Was the opposition ruly or unruly? Was it one large demonstration or a series of demonstrations? Was it a day, a week?
- And as for the quarreling, we hear only the briefest of conversation. What was it like? Was there shouting, yelling and screaming? How did Moses reply? Did he yell? Were there violent threats? Did Moses fear for his life? Did the people bring clubs?

And so my musings went, trying to get into the story.

However the full account played out, there was more to it than a couple of sentences can convey. Very likely Moses' heart was still beating fast as he stood before the rock. Adrenalin may have been flowing; latent anger against the people may have been brewing. After all, the text says they came after Moses and they certainly seem angry.

Trying to catch the back story, I feel for Moses and I understand how in a moment he and Aaron could have cried out, *“Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?”* (20)

I am not condoning Moses' sin, just understanding it.

Those same kind of self-preservation instincts rage in me and when I feel threatened I, too, lash out. I can justify it with my mind, but yet Jesus' Words about turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39) should apply.

I am human and I have weaknesses. Moses was human and he had weaknesses. In our weakness even the best of us sin and this is why we need a savior. Because we cannot live perfectly righteous on our own. We simply cannot, sin is mixed into our DNA.

Identifying with Moses, I am so thankful I live under the New Covenant covered by the blood of Jesus through faith in Jesus...

*O, O praise Him. O, O praise Him. Halleluiab. Halleluiab. Halleluiab!*

*Yes, Jesus, I will praise You with every fiber and every breath because You are my Lord and God and Redeemer. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, July 13: Numbers 21- A picture of life...**

Pausing after reading this chapter, I thought, “What a picture of life... victories, failures, and movement from one place to another.”

It can be exhilarating when we get it right and the ‘battle’ goes our way. We feel as if we are on top of the world but life never stays static. As much as we may want to bottle a particular moment, season or time, life never stands still. Life is always in motion.

Israel defeats Arad, annihilates them literally. This must have felt wonderful especially after the disastrous defeat after they sinned against the Lord by not believing Caleb and Joshua.

But they can't stay there, so they move on and the next season is not so good. Impatience breaks out and whining erupts as supplies dwindle and hardship grows. God judges them.

Isn't that life? We feel like we are on the top of the mountain and the next step we are knocked down... whether through personal failure or meeting up with a stronger opponent, we find ourselves flat on our back.

Movement comes; we don't stay in any place forever. Oh, it might feel like forever, especially when it is a place of failure or defeat... but eventually movement comes. Our movement might be slow and almost imperceptible or dramatic.

Life always involves movement.

As I rolled these thoughts around in my head, questions regarding faithfulness formed. During the movements of my life...

Was I faithful? Did I honor God in all things? Did I thank God for the victories and confess my wrongs in failure? Did I recognize God's grace when victory came even when I was not so brilliant or when failure and defeat could have been so much worse than it turned out to be? Did I ask for and rely on God's presence in my life or try to manage life on my own?

Was I faithful to my God in all seasons?

Life will change. Ebbs and flows will occur. One constant is the Lord. Will I honor Him through all my days?

This is where the Lord took me this morning. Where did the Lord take you?

*Oh, God, Father Almighty, Lord Jesus, my Savior, Holy Spirit, my counselor, thank You for never abandoning me or forsaking me. Thank You for offering Your counsel and wisdom in all times, whether I reached out and accepted it or not.*

*I sit still before You this morning, honoring You above all and rededicating myself and my life to You, Who are Lord of All. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

#### **Thursday, July 14: Numbers 22- Looking for answers?...**

Today a small feature of this story caught my attention. Verses 4-5 read: *The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field."* **So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me.**

The words I bolded and put in red caught my attention. While no one is quite sure where Pethor is located, most scholars put a probable location on the Euphrates, as the text says about 400 miles from Moab. Four hundred miles requires 3+ weeks of travel.

Two things hit me. Balak was frantic to find a way to combat the coming Israelites and Balaam's reputation had traveled far and wide.

It never ceases to amaze me to what lengths people will go to contact some medium or spiritualist who can help them "know" the future or affect the future. Today people don't call for Balaam, but they look to horoscopes and mediums; they dive into 'religions' like Scientology (while on vacation in Amsterdam I walked by a bookstore with a huge display of Hubbard's introductory book Dianetics.) A recent expose reveal how fraudulent Scientology can be. Other people will travel to a guru in India in search of meaning.

How sad I felt, because the God of the Scriptures has all the answers we need for life here and in eternity. We don't have to travel to exotic places in the world or spend gobs of money, all we need to do is reach out to Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). He alone has everything a person needs.

If you are searching for peace and answers, reach out to Jesus today... I did 40+ years ago and I have been walking with Jesus ever since. He won't let you down.

*Thank You, Jesus, for finding me so many years ago and for being with me every day since. I love You. In Your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen*

### **Friday, July 15: Numbers 23- The Lord's protection...**

There is an interesting line to open Balaam's first message. *Then Balaam spoke his message: "Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. 'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.' How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced? (7-8).*

Balaam, speaking words for the Lord says, *How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?*

There are things of the Spirit I wish I understood better than I do. One is the idea of blessings and curses. And this line has me wondering about curses. I know words carry certain power. People who constantly speak negatively about themselves, or people who have had a parent, for example, constantly speak negative words to them carry deep wounds, wounds which affect their lives negatively. It is not uncommon for these people to require prayer ministry and counseling to gain victory over these wounds.

Is this negative speech 'cursing' and, if so, how can I understand this cursing in light of the word the Lord spoke through Balaam?

I work regularly in Africa among people who were raised in African Tribal Religions filled with witchdoctors, incantations, and various cult and occult practices. These tribal healers have power, not power from the Lord, but power nonetheless.

Does today's sentences from God's Word mean that as a child of God, I am protected from curses... particularly the curses of people who want to harm me? It certainly seems as if this is so.

Wisdom reminds me not to be reckless and to venture into or take on spiritual powers that are beyond my spiritual maturity. But this passage offers a counter truth, reminding me that God's protection is over me as a follower of Jesus and heir with Jesus of God's Kingdom (Romans 8:15, Ephesians 1) and I need not fear the curses of the enemy, *How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?*

*Lord, I trust that You have my life in Your hands. Even though I do not fully understand curses and how they work, I hold on to this word You spoke through Balaam's lips. I will not fear the curses of those who seek to war against You and harm me in the battle. I will maintain my strength in You, trusting You, living and serving You, who reigns forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Saturday, July 16: Numbers 24- Absolutely sovereign...**

I marvel at the way the Lord can use even pagan priests, like Balaam. For his first 2 oracles, Balaam used divination or sorcery to get his word from the Lord, something specifically forbidden for Israel (see Lev 19:26). And yet like Cyrus, the pagan Persian King, God can move any heart to His bidding.

So today I see the sovereignty and power of God at work.

Our God is the one true Sovereign Lord of the Universe. My heart and mind is drawn to awe and wonder for my God.

No profound 'ah-ha', no new learning or thought, but a wonderful solidification of God's supremacy and sovereignty, a wonderful devotion and thought on the eve of weekly worship.

*Thank you, Lord, for the reminder of Your absolute might and power. Your will, will be done because you have so decreed. And Your Word is dependable. Thank You and bless You, through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

**Sunday, July 17, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click [here](#) for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.