

**The Weekly Word**  
July 18-24, 2016

I hope you are enjoying the summer. Helping you keep up with your Bible reading.  
Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, July 18: Numbers 25- Sex and worship...**

Verses 1-3: *While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.*

So many betrayals begin with sex. Sex is a root from which so many people drift or turn from the Lord. I thought about so many clergy fallen on the sword of illicit sex. Even more I contemplated the link between sex and worship. More than mere intercourse, this sex was somehow connected to Baal worship, to sacrifices to Baal of Peor and in indulging, the text says, they had yoked themselves to Baal of Peor.

The Greeks, too, mixed sex and idol worship.

Maybe it is the self-abandoning of sex or the intimacy, two becoming one, that conjoined sex and worship for the ancients. Maybe as one of the strongest appetites, demons know sex is an easy lure for hapless humans. I don't know. Certainly other possibilities exist. I am left to wonderings because Scripture is silent as to the connection.

As I close my eyes and wander between pondering and prayer, I see so many lives and many a person's faith destroyed on the bed of illicit sex.

As my culture strays further and further from God's design for sex (one woman + one man in marriage for life), I see the pile of damaged lives growing exponentially.

A faint smile grows on my face as my thoughts shift to God's warnings, Do not commit adultery, do not covet, flee sexual immorality and so on\*\*. The Lord warned us of sex's lure and danger. God erected a fence to protect us but we climb over, we tunnel under, and lately we work to dismantle God's fence.

My redeemed heart and eyes see God's rules, His laws not as cages to contain us but guardrails to protect us from tragedy and even death –physical and spiritual.

In my heart grows gratitude for God who loves me, loves us...

*Oh, God, who is love, my heart sings Your praise. Thank You for protecting me... forgive me for the many times I misunderstood your protection and scorned You for 'rules'. Help me to see the beauty of life lived Your way. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

\*\*7<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> commandments, 1Corinthians 6:18 and so many more places in Scripture)

**Tuesday, July 19: Numbers 26- Standing the test of TIME...**

An unnamed actor in the last 13 chapters of Numbers (since chapter 13) had been Time. Without ever mentioning it, 40-years of time has passed. As Israel stands again on the threshold

of the Promised Land, God takes a census of the people. According to verses 63-65 the faithless generation, who first stood on the edge of the Promised Land, were dead and buried.

*These are the ones counted by Moses and Eleazar the priest when they counted the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho. Not one of them was among those counted by Moses and Aaron the priest when they counted the Israelites in the Desert of Sinai. For the LORD had told those Israelites they would surely die in the wilderness, and not one of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.*

Time is always on its silent march. Day folds into days, weeks, months, years and decades do the same. Time never stops, never rests, always ticks...

Israel paraded for 40 years. Babies were born, others died. Two of the original escapees from Egypt held to their faith in the Lord...Caleb and Joshua.

The examples of Caleb and Joshua burned into me... men who kept the faith, brothers who held onto the truth, examples who show it can be done. They have years to go, people to lead, and cities to take.

Time marches for all of us. I have recently crossed the 40 years 'walking with the Lord' mark. There can be no letting up, no placing life in neutral. To keep the faith I, too, must march forward and take on every task my Lord will give me. What they will be I do not know. What I do know is that the Lord, who has been with me, will be with me and by His Spirit I will have the strength and the wherewithal to do everything He charges me to do.

I want to be a Caleb or Joshua, a person who stands strong in my faith through every obstacle, living into every promise and blessing God has for me. To do so I need to live each day, one faithful day at a time.

*Lord, give me strength to be faithful today... and then all of my todays for Your honor and glory. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, July 20: Numbers 27-Faithful to the end; a heart for the people...**

Reading the opening books of the Old Testament and following, in particular, Moses, I am blessed and amazed how deeply faithful Moses was a leader and man of God. Years ago he blew it and sinned. At the time God told him that he would not see the fulfillment of God's promise. He would not cross into the Promised Land. Moses never pouted, whined, or complained. He understood sin had consequences and that the Lord is right and righteous in His judgments.

Moses continued to lead the people with a heart for them and for the Lord.

Now on the edge of the Promised Land God's judgment is about to be meted out and Moses learns this is his end. Again, no whining, complaining or back talk, Moses' sole comment is for the people, that God would appoint someone to lead them. These are the people who complained, challenged Moses' call and leadership, and who never appreciated Moses for all he did. And yet Moses was magnanimous as he went to his grave...

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain in the Abarim Range and see the land I have given the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honor me as holy before their eyes." (These were the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin.)*

*Moses said to the LORD, "May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd" (12-17).*

Moses inspires me, a man of faith, a man of conviction, a man of honor and forgiveness...

*Lord, I sit this morning asking You to grace me with an abundance of character You gave to Moses. Lord, by Your sovereign call I lead a band of Your people and I pray for the character of Moses in leading, despite being human and making mistakes. I will honor You and Your judgments in all things, that I will accept any and all consequence of my own sin with utter humility before You, that I will be faithful all the days of my life and that I will love and care for the people You have placed under my care until my last breath. No matter what Your hand ordains for me... I pray to be Yours without reservation. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

#### **Thursday, July 21: Numbers 28- Continual offering of praise...**

As their days in the desert wind down, the Lord begins to prompt Moses to remind the people of important practices of the faith. In today's chapter the reminder is about sacrifices.

The heart of piety in Israel was her sacrifices and offerings. The Lord deserved constant praise. God did then and does today.

Today we don't have to sacrifice animals, those blood sacrifices ended when Jesus offered His life as the once for all sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9:26).

However, we are right in continually offering praise to the Lord... praise in the form of worship, prayer, devotions, Scripture, meditation and service...

*Lord, I bow before You, Maker of heaven and earth. You deserve all honor and glory. May my life be a praise offering to You. Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

#### **Friday, July 22: Numbers 29- Beware complacency...**

The recounting of feasts continues. It is important for Israel to maintain her connection with the Lord as she enters the Promised Land, the feasts and sacrifices are her connection with the Lord.

It hit me that when our hopes and dreams come true, when God provides what we imagine and more than we can imagine, that we can fall prey to satisfaction and complacency. Implicit in reiterating these sacrifices and feasts, God is saying to His people, "As you come into the land, don't forget about Me."

I have seen this happen in the present day, too. People walk with the Lord and then financial and personal prosperity comes, the good times arrive, and need for and thoughts of the Lord dwindle and sometimes cease.

How sad it is when God's blessings move us away from the Lord rather than toward Him.

Today's reading is a warning for me... stay close to the Lord. Don't forget about the Lord as my station in life and my security in life increases...

This might be a word for those who read this chapter, too.

*Lord, may my life and service continue to be a pleasing aroma to You. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Saturday, July 23: Numbers 30- A tough chapter...**

My, has the world changed for the better in this regard, I hope but it has certainly changed. I do not know how to handle this chapter personally.

In its ancient context of a patriarchal world it makes perfect sense and offers good order and clear understanding. However, connecting it to today and my life... not so much.

I am so glad that I am a Believer in the Second Covenant, the Covenant of Jesus, where there is no distinction due to ethnicity, gender or social status. (see Gal 3:28). Each and every person will stand before the Lord and be evaluated for their own life and behavior.

While it seems appropriate that children, both male and female, are under the care and guidance of their parents, the goal of parenthood, as I understand it, is not to control. It is to mold their children into God-fearing, wise adults who make good decisions and take responsibility and ownership for their own actions.

*Lord, I pray that my wife and I succeeded in the parenting adventure. I pray for my children, all adults, that the faith planted would be owned and guide them. I pray that they be responsible, loving people who add value to their world and live lives empowered by You yielding Your fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) all the days of their lives. Amen*

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

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.