

The Weekly Word
September 5-11, 2016

Today as we celebrate Labor Day in the USA. The calendar cries summer is coming to a close and autumn is nearing. Our walk with Jesus never ends, like the seasons it just changes colors. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 5: Deuteronomy 25- A living wage...

Though I weary a bit from reading all these laws, I did find verse 4 intriguing. *Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.*

I guess since this is a written law people would in fact muzzle oxen as they were working. Not having worked on a farm I don't know about this practice. Do oxen eat much of the grain they are treading?

Interestingly Paul cites this verse twice, in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. Both times he uses it to make the case for paying a fair wage to those dedicated to the Gospel ministry. Paul uses it more as a general principle than its specific intention. This got me thinking about it as a general principle.

Pay people a fair wage, or another way of stating it might be, let people earn a living from their work.

There is a growing debate in my country about what constitutes a livable wage. I don't know the economics of the debate and I certainly wouldn't attempt to speak on that topic. However, it seems that an extension of this general principle is that workers should receive a fair wage for their work.

In the 1 Timothy 5:4 passage Paul continues that *the worker deserves his wages*. Paul's word targets those who preach and teach, but again it seems like a statement that can be extrapolated to the general workforce.

I am wondering if we, who are Christ followers, shouldn't be leading the vanguard for fair and livable wages for workers...

I don't know, maybe I have strayed too far in my thoughts today, but it seems like we Christ followers should be the ones who sacrifice a bit of our grain to make sure our workers eat.

Lord, correct me if I have strayed from Your heartbeat today. Reinforce my understanding if I am close to Your heartbeat. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, September 6: Deuteronomy 26- Declaring ones fidelity to the Lord ...

When I think of the tithe, I think of giving 10% of my income to the Lord. And while that is at the heart of the tithe, I was intrigued by the declaration that the tither made to the Lord as he gave his tithe.

Then say to the LORD your God: "I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them. I

have not eaten any of the sacred portion while I was in mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor have I offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything you commanded me. Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

The comments regarding obedience really grabbed me. *I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them. ... I have obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything you commanded me.* I don't think I ever realized that as one was giving the tithe she/he declared their fidelity to the Lord and His commands.

This gives the tithe increased significance for me. Not only is the tithe a monetary dedication to the Lord but is accompanied by a vow declaring fidelity to the Lord.

If I truly open my heart to this new insight it should affect me each time I place my tithe in Sunday mornings offering plate.

How about you?

Lord God, continue to show me the depth of what You were teaching Israel about the tithe as a statement of fidelity to You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, September 7: Deuteronomy 27- I belong to God...

Powerful words. When my eyes lit upon them immediately my heart stirred. So strong was the stirring that I immediately read them again. *“Be silent, Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the LORD your God. Obey the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today”* (9-10)

What a profound statement; *You have now become the people of the LORD your God.*

We are God's people, I am God's person... that is what streamed into my heart like water over Niagara Falls. Because of faith in Jesus I have been brought into the Kingdom of the Son (Col 1:13-14, 1Peter 2:9-10, and many more places in the NT).

Oh, I know this but to read it spoken so plainly, so simply, so directly it grabbed hold of my heart. I belong to God!

Equally stirring was the straightforwardness of the next sentence. *Obey the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees...*

With great blessing comes great responsibility!

I have to live out my new identity in God. It seems to me that this is both command and invitation. My new identity offers me both the calling and ability to live into my new heritage.

With great blessing comes great responsibility!

Today I sit marveling at my heritage and the call of that heritage to live for the Lord.

Oh, God, my heart cries Alleluia. I am Yours... Your possession, one person in Your vast people. I have no words that can respond to my great adoption. I am Yours.

Give me the strength and wisdom, Oh Holy Spirit, to live faithfully honoring You, the Father and the Son, my great God... THE GREAT GOD above ALL gods. Amen and Alleluia.

Thursday, September 8: Deuteronomy 28- The strong pull of sin...

When I step back from this chapter I think, who would not opt for the blessings rather than the curses. The contrast between the two is immense and so polar opposite.

Reading the blessings, I thought I would sign up for that; in fact I wondered who would not. And then when I read the curses, I was, “No way. I would avoid that like the plague.”

I wondered what would possess anyone not to seek the blessings and avoid the curses. I looked back at what I had written and the word ‘possess’ struck me. Sin has a hold over us...

In Romans 7:19 Paul writes *For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.* Such is the power of sin. Israel may have wanted to follow the Lord, but the pull of sin, sinister and often subtle, pulled them and pulls us off track.

Israel had no chance fully obeying the Lord.

It was as if God tapped me on the shoulder and said, “The power of sin is still that strong. Don’t underestimate the power of sin”..

Then in the next moment the Father reminded me that I am not alone in my battle with sin. Through faith in Jesus I have been given the promised Holy Spirit. I now have the power of God within me to defeat sin.

I remain a very fallible human being but God, the Holy Spirit, is with me helping me to grow and defeat sins schemes. I am a work in progress but thanks be to God I am not alone.

Lord, I am so grateful for Your Holy Spirit who leads and guides and empowers me to follow You, Jesus. I know I have much to learn about listening to and following His voice. But I am growing and I ask You, God, to help me grow more and more until my dying day. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friday, September 9: Deuteronomy 29- Everything I need to know for faith to flourish...

The final words of this chapter drew me in. *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (29).*

These words hold truth to this day. *The secret things belong to the Lord.* He is the Master of all things and all knowledge. This is why the devil was lured into the trap of killing Jesus and thus assuring his defeat. God knew the secret things. God knew that Jesus' atoning death would defeat the devil and his ways.

But the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of [God's Scriptures]. Yes, my task is to know what I can know, which is to know God's Scriptures. It alone contains what God has made known. It is everything one needs to live in harmony with the Lord; it reveals Jesus Christ who is to be confessed and worshiped as Lord. And the Scriptures are not ours to keep to ourselves; they are ours to make known to our children and the peoples of the world.

There are things about God that I will never know this side of eternity. However, everything I need to know to have faith and believe in Him has been revealed in the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible.

Lord, I pledge my life to knowing Your Word and, therefore, knowing all You have revealed for me to know about You. Praise to You, Lord God, the one God who is, who always has been, and always will be. Amen and Amen.

Saturday, September 10: Deuteronomy 30- the Lord is my life!...

I love the line I bolded in the midst of the closing paragraph.

*This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. **For the LORD is your life**, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (19-20).*

For the Lord is your life! What a rich truth. Oh, to fill my thoughts with this Word. The Lord is my life. The Lord is my life!

I just keep chewing on these words... the Lord is my life. Not 'part of my life' or 'connected to my life.' The Lord **IS** my life. He is the totality of my life. I turned the sentence over and over. Without Him I have no life.

Eventually I even reversed the order: My life is the Lord. Somehow this emphasized my responsibility in making the Lord my life. I had to own the truth...

I continued to tumble this around. The wonder of this truth filled me and praise began to break forth

Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name...

The Lord is my strength and my song, He has become my victory...

The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in love...

The Lord is my light and my salvation...

The Lord is my everything. Alleluia. Amen.

Sunday, September 11, 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.