

The Weekly Word
October 31-Nov 6, 2016

Hey everyone, Daylight Savings Time shows up on this Sunday, Nov 6. Don't forget to change your clocks and to continue your Bible reading. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, October 31: Romans 1- We are in BIG trouble...

Where to pause and meditate? There is so much content, so much teaching, so much unveiling of God's way...

The Gospel message; people are in BIG trouble and our only answer is faith, faith in Jesus.

There will be no excuses when we stand before God at the end of our lives. Creation declares God's eternal power (20). But people have suppressed the truth (18); suppressed pictures pressing down an intentional denial of the truth about God.

As a result, God has given humanity over to its lusts, its desires and humanity is reaping the just desserts of our suppression of God. *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy* (29-31).

Turn on the news and you will see how true this statement is.

The only way out from under this load is acceptance of the Gospel of God through faith in Jesus. And the Gospel is offered to Jew and Gentile alike.

God's remedy for our sin dilemma is Jesus and this message will unfold as we continue reading this letter.

For today I marvel at how loving God is to send Jesus to people who have suppressed His truth. Though we turned our backs God did not walk away from us but pursued us with the Love of Jesus.

Thank You, God, for not giving up on humanity. Thank You for unveiling my eyes that I might take to heart Your Gospel message and put my faith in Jesus. Use me to tell others about your great Gospel. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, November 1: Romans 2- Not a pretty picture...

Paul continues the sad tale of humanity. We are in trouble. Verse 12 sums it up: *All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law* (12). The scary word for me is 'all.' Whether under the law or not all who sin, which is everybody, will perish. Like I said this is not a pretty picture. Humanity is in trouble.

But thinking in terms of 'humanity,' buffers the blow of this verse. Humanity is a sea of people, a nameless glob of people. Humanity is not personal. It is a statistic that doesn't connect with real life or my life.

I read about an advertising study. Advertisers raised more money for a cause when they told the story of one person in need than when they talked about the thousands or millions who were in the particular predicament. The inference of the study is that we cannot or do not relate with

large numbers. However, give us one situation and ask us to donate and hearts are penetrated and funds come in.

Sensing the truth of this study, I moved from considering humanity to considering one life, my life. I am not a Jew so I do not live under the law. But verse 12 says of my situation *All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law...* That's me. I have sinned and do sin 'apart from the law' so I will *perish apart from the law*. That is my fate; that is your fate.

Everybody will perish for the sins we have committed.

I am in dire straits... and this is where the story ends in chapter 2.

Fortunately, I have read Romans before. I know this is not the last word. And I know that the last word is Jesus, faith in Jesus to be more precise. While I was a sinner Jesus died for me (Romans 5:8). But this is getting ahead of the story.

I return to the predicament... I am in trouble. My sin will cause me to perish and there is nothing I can do because I have already committed my sins. I am doomed. No amount of being good or even perfect from this day forward will help because the sin I have already committed is enough for me to perish as a punishment for my sins.

I am so thankful that Romans doesn't end here...

I can't help it, as my time with Jesus closes, I thank Him for the message of Romans and all He did to save me while I was a sinner with my back turned on Him.

Thank You, Jesus. Thank You. Amen

Wednesday, November 2: Romans 3- Jesus the way of salvation...

After reading about how much trouble we are in, Romans 3 begins to provide God's answer to our dilemma... faith in Jesus Christ.

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (21-24).

Righteousness here means 'right standing'... it means one lives in connection with God not separated from God.

Reading the righteousness of God comes *through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe* warms my heart. The Gospel is a message of hope for ALL. Unfortunately, we humans want to carve up humanity, Jew/Gentile, Old/Young, Male/Female, Rich/Poor, Educated/Uneducated, Skin Color, Voting Preference, Continent or Nationality of Origin. No matter how we carve up humanity, Jesus is the answer for everyone... *through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe*. Only faith in Jesus Christ brings God's righteousness.

Jesus provides the way of salvation... faith in Jesus puts a person on the way...

Thank You, Lord Jesus... You saved me. Alleluia. Amen.

Thursday, November 3: Romans 4- The wonder of Jesus' gift...

Paul concludes this chapter, *He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification* (25).

What a gift God has given to humanity in Jesus. Faith in Jesus opens the gift and here is what we find... a two-dimensional gift.

First, we find forgiveness for our sins. *Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins*. Jesus paid the penalty that our sins earned us. It is as if I am sentenced to death row for some crime and Jesus steps up to the Judge and says that He will take my punishment for me. I go free and Jesus goes to death row and the cross in my place. I mean this is amazing, who does that for someone else? And yet that is what Jesus did... such love and sacrifice!

After receiving and opening this gift we learn there is a second dimension to it. In the above scenario I am still a convicted criminal. I was found guilty; it was just that someone else paid my penalty. Here is where Jesus' gift goes from good to greatest ever, Paul continues *and [he, Jesus] was raised to life for our justification*.

Justification and the verb justified are legal terms from the ancient world. An easy way to catch the essence...justified is this word play; justified... 'just as if I'd' never sinned. Not only does Jesus take on our sin for us and nails it to the cross, He also bequeaths to us His righteousness and this is sealed at the resurrection.

Paul sums it up in his one sentence *He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification*. What a gift! What an incredible gift!!!

Father God, I do not deserve to have any connection with You. I forfeited that when I sinned, and sinned and sinned. And yet for me, a sinner, You send Jesus. Thank You.

Jesus, you became a human to save me and people like me, people wallowing in sin unable to do anything about our own sin problem. Oh, Jesus, how can I truly say 'thank You' sufficiently or adequately?

Holy Spirit, You opened my heart to Jesus. Because of Your work in my life I opened my cell doors to Jesus and invited Him into my life. Thank You, God, the Holy Spirit.

I praise You Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. I praise You as the only great God. Alleluia. Amen.

Friday, November 4: Romans 5- At just the right time...

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly (6).

How often in my life does God show up *at just the right time*?! Over and over again God does this...

Paul reminds us that *at just the right time* Jesus died for you and me. My thoughts fixated on the phrase *at just the right time*... That's the Lord for you. Showing up just when I need him.

And as I sit with this verse it reminds me that God shows up at just the right time not because I deserve it, or I am so special that God is somehow compelled to show up. No, God showed up at just the right time for people who were powerless. We had no options unto ourselves. We were in a frightful state... powerless is the way Paul described it. But then God showed up. Christ died for us... 'the ungodly.'

A few weeks ago I looked out at my pool and a leaf seemed to be spinning in circles. As I looked closer it wasn't a leaf... I went out to the pool and saw it was a frightened, soaked, chipmunk swimming in circles, no way of escape. I have no idea how much longer it could have held out. I grabbed my leaf-skimmer on a long pole and scooped him up and put him on the safety of dry ground.

At just the right time God plucked me out of my sin predicament and brought me to Himself, forgiven and justified (yesterday's lesson).

What God did for me and millions of others He will do for you... call out to Jesus and He will save you.

What a great God we have!!!

Thank you for your gift of salvation, Lord! Thank You for coming to my aid when I wasn't even looking for You. I praise You and thank You for Your wonderful, unearned salvation. Great are You, Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Saturday, November 5: Romans 6- Vigilance...

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! (1-2^a, 15)

One of the battles I face emerged in chapter 6. It is the battle to be vigilant against sin in my life. I can grow liase faire regarding sin. "Oh, it doesn't really matter, it is only a small thing and God will forgive me." I am not proud but I sometimes have this kind of an attitude.

Paul drives home that we not continue sinning. I realize I will never be perfect, sin does creep into my life, and sometimes it is more like a full-on assault rather than a 'creep.'

What my heart hears God, the Holy Spirit, saying is that I MUST never become comfortable with sin or justify my sin. Sin is always abhorrent to God. And even though God in His grace saves us while we are yet sinners, we must not ever allow ourselves to justify any personal sin. Instead, we should seek God and offer ourselves to Him for doing good.

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness (13).

A question on the positive side of these thoughts emerges, "How am I offering myself to God as an instrument of righteousness?"

How are you?

Think about it...

Here I am, Lord, use me. Use me to bring peace to someone troubled, truth to someone confused, love to someone who feels unlovable. I offer myself to You. Use me for Your good. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, November 6, 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.