

## The Weekly Word

Nov 28-Dec 4, 2016

Advent started yesterday... amazing how this year has flown by. There are few better ways to prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth than reading and paying attention to God's Word. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

### Monday, November 28: 1Corinthians 1- Other people matter...

Two portions of this chapter arrested my attention. Right out of the chute verse 2 caused me to pause and ponder. *To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:* It struck me how Paul connected the Corinthian believers with *all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Although I might worship with one congregation in one city, I truly am connected to all Believers everywhere. I can be so myopic, sometimes, thinking only of myself or my congregation. But Paul's words remind me to open my eyes and see that faith in Jesus connects all who believe, women, men, young and old from every continent and context. Human divisions don't count in Christ's body.

I'm sitting in an airport as I meditate. The people next to me are speaking French and the array of skin hues covers the spectrum. Faith in Jesus would connect me with everyone who loves and follows Jesus. What a beautiful picture is the church of Jesus Christ.

The second latch for me came in verses 26-29: *Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

So much of life is about making it, becoming successful, accepted, and respectable. And yet to build His church in Corinth, God chose mostly the down and out. As Paul put it: *God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things....*

I am wondering if He still does this. Am I not a down and outer? I am wondering if my striving to be accepted is counterproductive to building His church. Because God worked that way in Corinth doesn't automatically mean He does it everywhere and all the time.

These words certainly make me realize that in the church we must open our arms wide and accept anyone and everyone God brings our way, no matter if they are 'well healed' or not. God is not a respecter of status or class, God looks at the heart... and so should I.

Well, these words to the Corinthians are giving me lots to chew on... I hope the same is true for you.

*Lord, thank you for your family, Your 'world wide' family. Help me to grow to appreciate the whole of Your Church, the gifts, abilities and specialties of your church. Along with this, Lord, help me to not judge people by their 'human worth' but by the spirit within them... Your spirit within them. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## **Tuesday, November 29: 1Corinthians 2- Christ Crucified...**

*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified* (2).

Powerful words... *to know nothing... except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* The heart of the Gospel... knowing Christ crucified.

That God would come and die for us, for me...overwhelming... really and truly overwhelming. Let's face it, who am I; who are you that God would give His life payment for our sins?!!!

As a preacher, as an apostle, and I suspect, as a son of God, Paul strove *to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

Here is the core of the faith and the essential element that separates Christianity from all other religions.

Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, died carrying the weight and guilt of sin for everyone who believes and follows Him!

I am rejoicing and delighting, and at the same time, staggered by the wonder of this truth. My heart is exploding with thanks and praise to Jesus...

*Words cannot carry the praise of my heart... Oh, Jesus, Lord and Savior, I bow to You along with the Father and the Spirit. Thank You, Praise You... glory to You, Lord God. Amen and amen.*

## **Wednesday, November 30: 1Corinthians 3- Behavior matters...**

*Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? (1-3).*

Paul's chapters are so rich, so many truths about our God and living as a child of God. This morning it was the sentences above that penetrated my heart.

Some people in the church seem to be more mature than others. Sometimes it is due to longevity as a Christ follower. A new follower hasn't had time to learn and grow. Unfortunately, some long timers never seem to grow. And sometimes I get the impression that it is not 'right' to talk about this in church.

Paul, however, states it head on, and while he doesn't give a solution, I believe one will come to light as we move through the letter.

First, Paul confronts the Corinthians that they, in general, are not living as 'spirit-empowered' followers, rather they are still worldly, *mere infants* he calls them. His inference is that they should be far more spiritual than they are... it is as if he is saying, 'get on with growing'!

And his indicator is behavior... not conversions or outreach, not spiritual gifts and manifestations, but behavior. Now quite possibly he could have addressed other lacks but what he was confronting was a behavior issue. And in that behavior issue he saw their 'childishness.'

So this discussion took me to an internal place where God began probing my maturity. Am I a person of the spirit or am I still an infant in Christ? As I probed through the Spirit, God used the grid of behavior. Am I quarrelsome, need my own way, divisive, prideful, mean spirited or full of mean words... and the like?

How I behave toward and with people matters... and it matters a lot.

I have much to chew on and many places in my life where I need significant growth....

*Lord, open my eyes to how I treat people. Show me, Lord, my strengths and weaknesses that I may grow in the power of the Spirit in all aspects of my life as I live for You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Thursday, December 1: 1Corinthians 4- Examining self...**

*Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself ... (6)*

This almost hidden partial sentence grabbed me and pulled me in. The idea that Paul applied the lessons he is presenting to himself challenged me. Will I do the same? Do I do the same?

Paul, one of the great apostles, applied the teachings to his life. I mean, this is obvious but somehow these words spoke to me... I think they spoke to me because it is so easy to NOT do this.

I can study a passage and see a great truth or be convicted by a word and in the end not do a thing about it. As a teacher I can spout the wisdom of God but not faithfully live under it. Can't we all?

Paul's example raises the bar for me. These God-inspired words call to me, shouting, "Examine yourself. Look inside. Bill, are you applying what you know from My Word?"

As I sift these words through my mind and heart, I notice that they express a completed action. *I have applied...* It is a done deal. It is not I will apply or I would like to apply, but *I have applied!* I have done this.

This observation bounces back to me.... Have I? Is my devotion to the Lord filled with actions or merely hopes?

And so God's Word burrowed into my inner being... time has come to cease pondering the Word in its riches and to begin living the Word.

*Lord, I extend my hand and heart to You. Walk with me as I apply Your Word to myself.*

*Lord, I pray for mercy in those areas where I have fallen and repeatedly fall. I pray for courage as I apply and it hurts. I pray for joy as my life more and more closely resembles Jesus in my everyday living. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Friday, December 2: 1Corinthians 5- Am I proud of any sin in my life? ...**

Sex has been an issue of temptation for millennia. Submitting our sexual wants and desires to the Lord and His will and way does not come naturally. We are sexual beings and the drive is strong. Knowing this the Lord lays down His parameters for sex within His will. Sex is only for a married wife and husband. Acting on urges outside of this is wrong in God's eyes.

Corinth not only allowed sexual activity outside of God's borders, they were proud that it was occurring within their family!

Today's chapter scolds the entire church, not simply the offending party. Being proud of sin in our midst is NEVER in line with the Lord and His will.

I cannot help but think of the modern church. Many local churches and even denominations are falling prey to this same God-dishonoring pride that gripped the Corinthians in chapter 5.

*Oh, God, call Your errant church back to your side.*

But since this is my personal time with the Lord, it is time to look inside. Am I proud of any sin in my life? Pointing fingers at others is much easier than examining oneself. Back to the question of the day, 'Am I proud of any sin in my life?'

*Guide me, Oh Lord, in my interior examination. Give me courage to probe sensitive places. Bring trusted friends into my life who can walk with me and help me be honest with self and You.*

*I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Saturday, December 3: 1Corinthians 6- Lawsuits...**

The issue of lawsuits isn't exactly the most devotional of topics and yet, as I read the chapter, I kept coming back to that section.

I live in a litigious society and one that honors and defends the right of the individual. I am glad for these rights. There is a tremendous amount of freedom in my country because individual rights are honored. I have a right to my day in court.

This said, Paul's words cause me to take a step back. His first paragraph offers a deep concern that Corinthians are taking one another to court... in our language they are suing one another. Paul is appalled.

The context is one Christian suing another Christian, one church member suing another. The issues is NOT problems between a believer and a non-believers or corporation.

The major element of his words comes in verse 7: *The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?*

These words sting. ... *Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?* Wow. How important is body life? How important is the reputation of the church in the public eye?

The, "but I have my rights" part of me flares up at Paul (and God). And I have to check my spirit... God is it more important to me to assert my rights than to accept a wrong and simply move on?

At this point everything is hypothetical... and some issues I consider are much more significant than others.

My natural instinct is to assert my rights... that's what Americans do, right!?!

But the nudge inside of me is that God might expect me to act differently...

This exposes me... my natural inclination is to stand up for myself, not accept a wrong for the sake of the body. I still have a great need to grow in faith and trust and obedience.

*Lord, I don't have any immediate need to sue someone. But my reaction to the counsel of Your Word shows me that I have much growth still. Help me to take the servant stance that Jesus took. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Sunday, December 4, 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.