

The Weekly Word

Dec 5-11, 2016

‘Joy to the World, the Lord has come’... to a messy world as we will continue to see in 1 Corinthians this week. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, December 5: 1 Corinthians 7- Contentment in life’s station...

In the midst of answering many of the Corinthians questions regarding marriage and faith, Paul makes a bold statement. Verse 17: *Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.* The immediate context is marriage but Paul applies it to slavery and circumcision, showing it to be a broader principle of faith. As he applies it to slavery, Paul says it is ‘ok’ to gain ones freedom, showing that the principle isn’t absolutely restrictive but explanatory.

I pondered the verse... *Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.*

It seems one of the big themes of the verse is contentment. God can and will use a person in whatever earthly or human position they are in. Where the world in general judges a person by outward standards, that is not to be the case within the church where there is neither male or female, slave or free, circumcised or uncircumcised (see Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11).

The letter to Philemon bears this point out as well.

So how do I bring this into my life? What situations might apply to me?

Job promotion... it is not wrong to seek or take a job promotion but to live for it, to be striving for it, to be putting everything I have into getting it can, and often does, undercut contentment and the ability for God to use us where we are presently.

Marriage... some people are so intent on finding a wife/husband that much of life is ‘blocked out from view’ and the sense that God is with them or God might use them in that state is never understood or lived into.

Childlessness... where one lives... and so on.

Believing that our lives are in God’s hands, whatever the station, is a deep and abiding truth of the Christian faith. Seek how you can serve the Lord in whatever station you are in rather than clamoring for the next ‘best’ thing, whatever that may be for me or for you...

Wow, this is something to chew on...

Lord, help me to feel content in the life You have supplied right now and to look for opportunities to be useful for You and Your kingdom rather than lusting after that next promotion or move or ...

I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Tuesday, December 6: 1 Corinthians 8- Knowledge, love and behavior....

On the one hand, this chapter doesn’t connect with my life. I don’t live in a world where meat in the meat market has been sacrificed to idols. However, I do live in a culture with a growing fascination with new age spirits and spiritualism. Maybe dealing with those issues is the

current day application for this chapter, at least it seems one possibility for me living in the 'modern' west.

This chapter deals with one issue and the entire issue is speaking to my heart, so it is difficult to lift out 1 or 2 verses. That said the heart of the teaching is in verses 4-7:

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled (4-7).

I know there is only one God and that idols are really nothing but others do not know this. They believe in spirits and new age energy and so on and so forth. Therefore I must not, for the sake of love, let my knowledge of the truth destroy someone who is not as knowledgeable as I am.

Ouch, here is what the Lord is whispering to me. My behavior can affect others who are watching me, so I will moderate my behavior out of love so that it doesn't negatively affect a brother or sister who does not yet know things of the faith God has taught me.

I travel to Africa and will not collect African art associated with African gods. This is not because the 'gods' are real or that they will bring an evil presence into my home, but because a sister or brother might think I recognize those African gods and get the wrong idea seeing my art.

So now God has me considering my life. Are there things I am doing that some others associate with 'idols' or 'gods' that could harm a weaker brother or sister? This will take some thought to sift through...

Lord, show me if there are areas of change I should adopt to protect others in my life who are newer on the journey of faith with You. This is my prayer... in Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, December 7: 1Corinthians 9- Put your heart into it ...

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (24-27).

Put your heart into it.

I love watching sports, sports of all kinds...Olympics, baseball, football. Even though I am not a basketball fan, I love March Madness, the College Basketball tournament, especially in the early rounds watching the kids from the lower ranked schools give everything they have in the hopes of one win is compelling. The hustle, the drive, the 'all out' pursuit of a win or two is extraordinary. It is like watching a Rocky movie, only real life.

Paul makes the case that this is how we should live our Christian faith, all out for Jesus. Holding nothing back, giving our 'everything' just like a runner straining for the victory tape.

What does that mean? It means using my resources and time, ability and wisdom to advance the Gospel through the gifts God has given me. Easy to type on a keyboard but much harder to put into practice.

And balance isn't generally the picture of an athlete in training. When training, an athlete is all out; sleeping, eating, training are all measured to produce the greatest output.

This makes me realize why Paul said a couple of chapters ago that a married person's life is divided and so he encourages singleness (7:32-35). And dividedness of life grows even more when children enter the picture.

I am realizing there is so much more I could be giving and that I have much to learn when it comes to giving my all for Jesus and advancing His kingdom.

Help me, Lord Jesus, to manage my life in a way that honors You, the Spirit, and the Father. I have so much to learn and so much more to give to You... it is hard and it is scary and it is counter-cultural. I cannot do this on my own. Help me, Lord. Help me. Amen.

Thursday, December 8: 1Corinthians 10- Life is connected...

We don't live life in a bubble. People have lived before us and people will live after us. We can learn from those who lived before us and we can be examples for those who come after us. Life is connected. History can be a great teacher, so long as we are studying good and godly history.

The Scriptures provide us a great deal of history that can teach and instruct us as people of faith. This is Paul's point.

Four times he references the example of Israel using the words *as some of them were* (7) and three times using the phrase *as some of them did* (8,9). In these cases Israel was a negative example. We are not to do as they did. Each example was a sin we must guard ourselves against... idolaters, sexually immoral, testing Christ, and grumbling. As Paul goes on to say, these are *a warning to us* (11).

I sit here today duly warned. The Lord has left us a legacy in Scripture of examples on how and how not to live. Will I learn? Will I be mindful of the examples God has given me?

Will you?

Today is a 'think about it' time in God's Word.

Lord, it is good and right to think and ponder Your ways and to listen to the record You have provided. Thinking about these things is important but even more it is important to LIVE wisely, thanks in part to the examples You have provided in Your Word and, to this I might add, in history.

So grant me wisdom, Lord, that I might learn from and follow those who have been faithful to You. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, December 9: 1Corinthians 11- Proclaiming Jesus died...

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (26).

Communion, the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper is our church's Sacrament remembering Jesus' death on the cross. When we take the bread and cup we *proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*.

I wonder sometimes why we proclaim Jesus' death and not His resurrection. Am I the only one who wonders this?

This morning my wonderings came into full view. Why would Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, say this? Because the cross is the defining moment of the Christian faith. On the cross Jesus defeated the enemy, Satan. On the cross Jesus paid the penalty for sin. On the cross Jesus

exchanged His righteousness for our filth... He took our sin and granted all who believe in Him His right standing before the Father.

The cross is the great work of God for our salvation and this is what we proclaim *whenever we eat the bread and drink the cup.*

The resurrection of Jesus vindicates His work, but it is the cross that was the salvation work.

The next time you partake in the table think on these things...consider all Jesus did on Good Friday to secure your pardon and to defeat the enemy, then partake in joy as one forgiven, redeemed, restored and loved.

*Thank you for this love, Lord
Thank you for the nail pierced hands
Washed me in Your cleansing flow
Now all I know
Your forgiveness and embrace*

*Worthy is the Lamb
Seated on the throne
Crown You now with many crowns
You reign victorious*

*High and lifted up
Jesus Son of God
The Darling of Heaven crucified
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb
Amen and amen.*

(The words of this prayer were written by Darlene Zscheck and published as the Hillsong song 'Worthy is the Lamb'.

A tremendous book on the Cross was written by John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*. An edifying and worthwhile read for all believers in Christ.)

Saturday, December 10: 1Corinthians 12- Part of a body...

Paul speaks at length about being part of a body, the body of Christ. Simply put, every person is akin to one part of a body and for the body to function every part must play its part.

It didn't take long for the Lord's Word to come alive in me this morning. Who am I in my local church body? Who are you? To not play our part is to create a void in the body system and to overwork other parts having them do what they were not meant to do. They may be compensating but are doing something they were not designed to do.

Okay, enough of analysis of the problem, who am I in my local church body? Who are you? Are we functioning as we should be?

Tomorrow the body, I am part of, will gather together in worship. I will look around and observe with this thought in mind, "Am I playing the part(s) I was meant to play?" Will you join me in seeking the Lord about this?

Lord Jesus, Father, Spirit, show me the part(s) in the body You would have me play and kick me out of my comfort zone if I am not playing the parts You intended me to play. This is my simple pray, prayed in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, December 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.