

The Weekly Word

Dec 19-25, 2016

Christmas week. May the Light of God, the Father; Faith in Jesus, His Son; and the presence of the Holy Spirit fill you this week as you read God's Word. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, December 19: Psalm 148- Praise the Lord...

Praise the LORD.

*Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.*

*Praise him, all his angels; praise him,
all his heavenly hosts.*

*Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.*

*Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies (1-4).*

I have had an emotionally rough last few days. To open the Bible and see the words *Praise the Lord* repeated so often brought calm and peace to my heart.

My heart just relaxed with thoughts of the Lord; after all the Lord is in control.

I know I know this, but Psalm 148 was a perfect reminder for me to *Praise the Lord*. Praying this Psalm not just reading it, caused my heart to focus on the Lord. I cannot say that the stresses of the recent days are completely gone but I have renewed perspective. Praising God reminds me that God is in control of my life and the affairs of my world. This is no guarantee that all things will work out as I would like, but I submitted my will to the Lord's will many years ago. And I have no plans to renege on my submission to the Lord and His will and way.

Some days I am realizing it is just plain good and right to *Praise the Lord*. And today in one of those days...

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord for his goodness and presence.

Praise the Lord for his faithfulness and love.

Praise the Lord that He is with me on good days and bad,

When emotions are on overload and when things are calm.

Praise the Lord.

Yes, I will praise the Lord. Amen and amen.

Tuesday, December 20: Psalm 149- A whisper regarding humbleness...

This Psalm seems to have 2 parts and I struggled to connect with the harshness of the second, so when my meditation time came I chose (was led?) to meditate on the first 5 verses and particularly verses 4-5:

For the LORD takes delight in his people;

he crowns the humble with victory.

Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor

and sing for joy on their beds.

I keep looking at and pondering the first couplet. His people and humble seem to be paired, as if His people are to be humble people. Humility is not a virtue I see in great quantities these days, in the church or anywhere. And humility and victory rarely seem to go together. I am working to process how to piece these together and particularly how to piece them together in my life. I have so few living examples, I guess this is a road I must plow for myself.

The second couplet goes:

*Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor
and sing for joy on their beds.*

Rejoice in what honor? Probably that the Lord delights in us, his people, humble people who have been granted victory. But it could look back to the gladness expressed in the king (2). Possibly the two are connected in that Israel has won a victory and the people are rejoicing in God over the victory.

I struggle to step into this Psalm... I return to verse 4, *For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory.* I sense a whisper from the Lord calling me to humbleness... a ceasing of puffing out my chest coupled with the deepest sense that all I have and am comes from the Lord.

This recognition pulls me to my knees in prayer, praise and thanks to the Lord God Almighty... my Lord and my God.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the God of creation, who bends an ear to me, who lifts me from the muck and mire, who has given me favor when I deserve none.

Lord, I thank and bless You for all You have given. I pray that I use my resources, my intelligence and my life speaking out for You and Your Gospel around the world. I pray this in and through Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

Wednesday, December 21: Psalm 150- Praise...

What a simple and fitting conclusion to the book of Psalms... *Praise the Lord.*

While praising the Lord is not some magical elixir that heals all ills, it certainly reorders a person's life. Somewhere in the midst of many (most) Psalms was the invitation or solace of praising the Lord.

In this final Psalm of the psalter, we are reminded that praising the Lord is an expressive action. And while my 'go-to' thought about praise is verbal praise, this Psalm reminds me that instruments of all kinds, as well as dancing, can also be acts of praise.

And verse 2 reminds me that the Lord is the focus of our praise and we praise Him *for his acts of power and his surpassing greatness.*

It seems fitting that I turn from thinking about praise to praise itself...

Praise God from whom all blessings flow...

Amen.

Thursday, December 22: 2Corinthians 1- Quiet space...

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace (12).

What a great word. May I be able to say this as my life ebbs towards its conclusion. And the best way to work toward this outcome is to examine myself and see if I am living this way today.

Have I conducted myself in the world with integrity?

Have I lived with godly sincerity?
Do I rely on worldly wisdom or God's grace?
Piercing questions that require thought and quiet space, not pounding on a keyboard.
Oh, God, meet me in this quiet time; challenge and love me I pray... Amen.

Friday, December 23: 2Corinthians 2- ...

We are in the middle of the holiday season, Thanksgiving through New Year. What a joy this time of year is...festive, social and full of delicious foods we don't enjoy much the rest of the year. I love walking in the house from the outside to smell turkey roasting in the oven, or the aroma of fresh baked cookies cooling in the kitchen, or the hint of cinnamon in hot apple cider. Add to that the pine scent of a Christmas trees or the crackling sound and smell of a roaring fire. Wonderful aromas fill the air this time of year.

I also love the way Paul says that we are to be the pleasing aroma of Christ in the world.

*For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ
among those who are being saved and those who are perishing (15).*

I allowed that imagery to dance in my thoughts for a while...

What does it mean that our lives are to be a pleasing aroma? Thoughts that spring to mind...

- Christians' presence should make life more pleasant.
- We should remind people of good things.
- We should mask the stench of decay and violence.
- We should put a smile on faces.
- Our presence (influence) should permeate all the corners of the world like a kitchen aroma can waft through the entire house.

This is a tall order. Also, it is something that is just happens as we live. You don't roast a turkey to fill the house with aroma, the aroma is a pleasant result of cooking. Our living should leave behind the pleasurable result of our life.

I am thinking about how I am living. Does a pleasant aroma follow where I have lived? How about you???

Lord, may my life bring comfort to many. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, December 24: 2Corinthians 3- Being transformed...

And we... are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (18).

The thought of being transformed into His (Jesus') image captured my thoughts as I sat with this chapter open before me.

It is Christmas eve, in a few hours I will gather with my family and church family to celebrate Jesus' birth so long ago. It is easy to sentimentalize the baby in a manger, but Jesus grew and His words, death, life and teaching changed the world.

And in a brief stroke of a pen, Paul explains the goal of the Christian faith... to be transformed into Jesus' image.

With thoughts of the manger foremost in my thoughts today, humility rises as a first character trait into which I should be transforming. There are so many more traits of Jesus in which we need to grow.

In these silent moments on this Christmas Eve, God whispers, “Watch my Son, study my Son, read His words, understand their meaning... this is the best beginning to a life that emulates my Son.”

Oh, Father, may I live up to Your bidding. Supply in lavish amounts Your blessed Holy Spirit in my life that I might have Your power and voice within to guide me in my transforming. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, December 25, 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.