

The Weekly Word
Dec 26, 2016 -Jan 1, 2017

It is Christmas week, what a wonderful time to spend time with God in His Wword.
Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, December 26: 2Corinthians 4- God's power brings life...

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

There are days when my body aches a-And I can definitely tell that things I could do when I was younger are getting harder to do.

I love my summer travel to Africa and the mission work I do in Jos, Nigeria. I have been traveling to Jos each summer for the last 10 years and I definitely notice that it takes more time for my body to adjust returning home.

I can definitely tell my body is a 'jar of clay.' So my heart shouts 'Yes' when I read Paul's response to his jar of clay!

Yes! It is not about me, it is about the *all-surpassing power* [which] *is from God*.

God certainly is powerful. God created everything from nothing! There is no greater demonstration of power than that, in my estimation.

And yet, reading this passage creates a strange juxtaposition in me. Yesterday we celebrated the birth of Jesus... that helpless baby is another demonstration of God's *all-surpassing power*! God became a human to lead us back into relationship with the Father. In the birth of Jesus I see how God's power is also demonstrated in ways that are so counter to what I would normally associate with power!!!

While death is at work in my 'jar of clay' body, God's life is at work in and through me.

Lord, may my life make a difference in this world. May it make the kind of difference that brings life and love and faith to many people. I pray this is Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, December 27: 2Corinthians 5- Begin with the End in Mind...

About a month ago I took part in a parenting seminar with my wife. Wand we tried to layout some overarching thoughts before we spoke about specific parenting issues, like discipline, responsibility, etc.

One of the Big Ideas we emphasized was **Begin with the End in Mind**. As I have thought about that phrase it is a pretty good Big Idea for many facets in life.

This morning I heard echoes of this Big Idea in Paul's words to the Corinthians. *So we make it our goal to please him [the Lord], whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (9-10).*

Paul lives life everyday mindful that someday he will stand before Jesus Christ face-to-face and have to answer for the way he lived. He lives with the end in mind.

I don't get any sense from Paul that this is some morbid, 'God is going to get me' kind of life. Nor is this the only 'End' he keeps in mind, but this 'End' certainly informs him day to day.

My heart is stirring. I am hearing some godly wisdom through Paul's words that can help guide my life... "Bill, keep in mind someday you will face the Lord and be accountable for how you lived."

I wonder how this will guide me today?

Lord, I long to hear those words of Matthew 25 as I make the transition from this life to eternity, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Come and enter your Father's happiness." This word from Paul is helpful to guide and lead me there.

Jesus, help me to honor and live by this world. I pray in Your name. Amen.

Wednesday, December 28: 2Corinthians 6- Co-workers with God...

As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ... I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (1-2).

The opening 3 words of the chapter grabbed hold of me. They wouldn't let me go, so I returned to them after my reading and sat with them before me and allowed the Spirit of God to speak.

As God's co-workers... I don't know that I realized this when I put my trust in Jesus but at that moment I became God's co-worker. I had to let that sink in. By the grace and call of God, I am God's co-worker. I work with God to see that His aims and goals are being accomplished here in the world. This is a staggering thought... at least for me.

Choose the biggest names in business, government or art and attached the same wording to a person that comes to mind...

I am Barack Obama's co-worker. I work with Barack to see that his aims and goals are being accomplished here in the world.

I am Bill Gate's co-worker. I work with Bill to see that his aims and goals are being accomplished through The Gates Foundation here in the world.

And so on and so on...

Bill and Barack are certainly important people in the world today. and if I truly was a co-worker helping them accomplish their goals that would be something for which I would be proud of and for which I would work hard ~~for~~. I think of the Gate's Foundations goal to eradicate malaria and other major diseases in the world; this is certainly a worthy goal.

As great as that would be, I am not Bill Gates' co-worker.

I am, however, God's co-worker and that is even more impressive. God has commissioned me to see that His aims and ways are spreading and taking hold throughout the world. That's my commission... and it is the commission of every believer in Jesus.

We are God's co-workers and I, for one, have to make God's aims and goals my priority if I am going to fulfill God's desires for me as His co-worker.

Wow, this is a lot to chew on...

God give me strength... give me courage... give me wisdom to live as Your co-worker. Sold out to You and Your will and way. I pray in the name of my Lord, Jesus Amen.

Thursday, December 29: 2Corinthians 7- Make room in your hearts...

Real people... I just could stop thinking about the fact that Paul and the Corinthians were real people.

This chapter contains a great deal of 'inside' information. Paul is communicating on a heart level with the Corinthians. There is much self-disclosure, expressions of concern over a letter sent and realization that though it was a tough letter, it, by God's grace, affected a positive outcome.

I found myself thinking that I live in many real relationships, too. Sometimes they go swimmingly well and some-times not so much. But the ability to keep communication open and to talk through the rough patches is a gift from God and takes relational work.

I hear Paul modeling this in measure. His says volumes in a simple sentence, part of verse 2. *Make room for us in your hearts.*

That is the essence of friendship... all parties must make room in their hearts for one another. And that room leaves space not only for mistakes, but also for repair.

God has me thinking about friends... I'm wondering if there are repairs I need to make or if there are some relationship in which I have to make more room...

I'm wondering...

How about you?

God, thank You for the people You have placed in my life. Help me to treasure them and open my hearts to them... and to be willing to enter their hearts as well.

Thank You, Lord, for the people You have brought into my life... I am richer for them and more faithful because of the brothers and sisters who speak words of life into my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, December 30: 2Corinthians 8- Global concern...

It was the international aspect of the giving that caught my attention this morning as I read this passage. Paul was advocating for the church in one area of the world to complete an offering to help the church in another part of the world. And from Paul's perspective this was a mutual caring for one another. *Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little"* (13-15).

Paul is not advocating a wealth redistribution plan so that everyone has an equal amount of money. Rather Paul advocates one heart breaking for another brother or sister in need. It is mutuality of love across country borders. It is caring for someone because they are in Christ. It is the body imagery of 1Corinthians 12 expanded to a global perspective. It is not law but mercy and grace...

Personal contact, integrity of love, care for God's family... these are phrases streaming into my consciousness as it ponder this passage. The Lord is reminding me I am part of His world-wide global body and my care and love is not limited by proximity... only the size of my heart.

Ouch, this last line hurts.

Work on my heart, Lord. It can be so rigid and hard.

Forgive my selfishness and work on my heart, Lord. Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, December 31: 2Corinthians 9- Generosity...

Over and over again this morning the theme 'generosity' called me to meditate.

For some reason, I often equate generosity with spontaneity. I don't know why and I don't think that is right. A generous person may, on the spur of the moment or at the invitation to a particular, timely need, ~~may~~ prove her generous spirit by giving sacrificially. But as I read this chapter I saw generosity as planned giving.

The Corinthians, when they heard about a need, 'pledged' a bold generous amount to help the Lord's people. It was a gift ~~that~~ that necessitated time to pull together. It was a generous pledge that required time to fulfill. Meanwhile Paul was using their pledge of a gift to spur on others, particularly people in Macedonia.

Now Paul was writing a reminder that it was time to collect on the pledged generosity.

I see in this example that generosity can take a habit... giving regularly, proportionally, consistently, faithfully, and cheerfully over a long time leads to generosity.

As I mull over this observation, it hits me that everyday regular people can cultivate generosity. The Corinthians were ordinary people, many were even poor, and yet, because they regularly gave proportionally, their gifts proved to be generous.

I could do that. If the Corinthians did that anyone can do that.

Generosity is cultivated through regular habitual faithful giving.

Lord, stir me to deeper generosity to Your work and work that honors You and cares for people in need.

Jesus as 2016 ends this evening and 2017 dawns, place a resolve in me to cultivate generosity in the New Year. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, January 1, 2017, 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.