

The Weekly Word

January 9-15, 2017

There is likely nothing better for our spiritual growth than time in God's Word. May God bless you through His Word the year! Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, January 9: Joshua 3- Joshua's journey of faith begins...

Joshua has been tapped by the Lord to lead Israel into the Promised Land. He apprenticed under Moses for 30 years. He's had his own vision-calling. He directed spies into the Land to gain first-hand information. All this is wonderful training and preparation. Now the time has come to step out and go.

Every journey requires a first step. Faith requires action to be true faith.

With the order to move out, Joshua went from apprentice to leader, by God's grace a faith-filled.

Joshua's story reminded me of many times when faith in the Lord required me to step out and do something... Leave engineering and go to seminary; aAccept a pastoral call in rural western PA, then suburban NJ, etc.; tTravel on mission trips to Nigeria; sStep into a classroom and teach seminary students; oOn and on the list goes. Add to these a myriad of small steps; calling a person based on what I believed was a prompting of the Spirit; gGiving sacrificial gifts at the nudge of the Lord...

Faith to be faith requires actions... aAnd every action requires a first step.

LAnd looking back on my life, God doesn't call us to act only once... eEvery step of faith requires another and another... Joshua will take many faith steps in the coming chapters. I will have many more faith steps in my life.

At this point the urge to pray surfaced... my prompting is to pray for the strength and courage to take my next faith step...

Will you join me?

O God, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, to be Your man, Your follower I pray for courage and strength to step out in faith every time You ask... S... show me Your way, Lord, and lead me on my journey of faith. MAnd may You receive all the honor and glory. Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, January 10: Joshua 4- Watch and remember what the Lord can do...

When a person steps out in faith at the direction of the Lord, God shows up. For Joshua and Israel, God showed up in a dramatic way, aAllowing all Israel to pass through the Jordan River on dry ground!

In my experience God isn't always so dramatic, but He is always there leading, guiding, opening doors, so that the things He has told us to do gets done. Obedience and faithfulness allow us to see God's hand at work.

One of the features in this account I appreciated is how Joshua builds the altar from stones carried from the middle of the Jordan. Even more than the act itself I love his reasoning.

He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your

God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God” (21-24).

That altar became a visual aid in Israel of the mighty works of the Lord. That altar was a bookmark in the corporate memory of Israel. It is very easy to forget events that happen in the past. Joshua understood the importance of Israel remembering.

On Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, Christ-followers remember and retell the amazing story of our faith. There might not be an altar of 12 stones, but through these celebrations we pass on to succeeding generations God’s story.

See what God has done; remember what God has done... two thoughts I glean from this chapter. I have seen God work throughout my walk with Jesus, I need to grow in remembering and retelling what He has done!

Lord, help me to do a better job remembering and retelling Your mighty acts. Help me to build into my lifes the custom of telling others what I have seen You do. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Wednesday, January 11: Joshua 5- Obedience and worship...

The events of this chapter surprised me. Joshua and Israel are on a military campaign to conquer the Promised Land. Militarily they have just participated in a miraculous invasion of the land. The people of the land are fearful, f. From a human vantage point now would have been the time to strike, while the people were fearful.

But, n, Joshua stops the advance to circumcise the people. Why they didn’t circumcise the boys as they were born along the way I do not know. Understanding the importance of circumcision, Joshua put his people in an utterly defenseless situation until the men of fighting age could heal! Had the people of the land attacked Israel in the days after the mass circumcision was performed, Israel may have been destroyed!

For Joshua, faithfulness was more important than tactical advantage, ---. Why? Because God was fighting for them. The victories, Joshua understood, was not about Israel’s strength or genius. Victories would come because the LORD fought for them and through them! And Ffaithfulness was a prerequisite!

I And then after people are healed from their surgery, Joshua calls for the Passover! That must have been some Passover. Not only were they commemorating the Passover deliverance from Egypt but and remembering all the exploits of the Lord to save them like:

- Being spared the plagues and the death of the first born
- Receiving the plunder of their neighbors
- Passing through the Red Sea
- 40-years of survival in the desert

Additionally they have just passed through the Jordan River, just like their fathers² passed through the Red Sea! Talk about a moment ripe for worship and remembrance!

O And only after the obedience of circumcision and the worship of celebrating the Passover does God reveal his presence to Joshua.

Obedience and worship. Those words jump off the page at me.

Obedience and worship... they are at the very heart of our faith in God.

How am I doing with my obedience and worship? And so I sit, quietly with the Lord... listening for His voice, encouragement, correction... His love.

Lord, thank You that You are with me... guiding me, and showing me the way to maturity and service. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, January 12: Joshua 6—Tis a strange battle...

As I began reading and listening to God's strange orders, immediately this verse came to mind. *'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty (Zechariah 4:6).*

God's plans and ways are not our plans and ways. But God's ways open up the storehouse of God's power.

I imagine that the Israelite fighting men felt quite strange marching around Jericho silently for a week. I imagine that seasoned fighting men were chomping at the bit to attack. And when that time came there would be no storming the gate... they were told the wall would simply fall down. I'm sure there was more than one, "Yeah, right!"

Also, as spiritual as it was to march silently for 7 days, when the fighting broke out, each soldier had to be his fearsome self and kill all the people of Jericho. Following the Spirit of God and leaning on His power does not mean that people become redundant. Jonah had to preach after his 'whale of a ship ride'. Daniel had to witness to and serve the king ~~spend~~ before and after ~~spending~~ his night in the lions' den². Paul continued to preach and teach in spite of the beatings and shipwreck (read 2Corinthians 13).

Living by the Spirit opens up God's power but we still have to act, think and do what it is that God would have us do.

Obedience is the door to godly living and the power of the Spirit blazing through us...

Hmmm think about this. I will

Lord, OBEDIENCE... teach me OBEDIENCE. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, January 13: Joshua 7- God knows...

This is a frightening account on a number of levels. Here are three observations I made.

1. God knows the secret things we do.
2. God will punish the secret things we do.
3. The secret things we do affect other people.

I consider them one at a time.

The secret things we do affect other people. 36 Israelites were killed in battle and Israel was defeated. In addition to Israel's loss of life and defeat, Ai's victory certainly would embolden other peoples of the land against Israel making future battles more difficult. And then there was the death and destruction of Achan's entire family. Were they co-conspirators? We do not know, but I find it unlikely that all his family knew. Achan alone committed the crime. Maybe some family member knew after the fact, but it is hard to believe that they all knew, particularly the daughters who were pretty low on the social pecking order. ~~Sadly~~~~Sadly~~, his family paid dearly for his crime. The secret things we do affect other people.

God knows the secret things we do. This is the frightening part of the chapter. God knows! God always knows. God knows everything I do, every thought I have had. I cannot hide what I have done from Him. I am only fooling myself if I think I can hide from God ~~a~~. And ~~He~~~~God~~ plainly sees my wrongs ~~athend~~ I can expect that...

God will punish the secret things we do. If there is one take-a-way from today's ~~chapter~~~~chapter~~, it is that God will punish our wrong doing someday. Achan got away with it for a day or two, ~~b~~. But eventually God decided the day of reckoning had come.

If it weren't for Jesus on the cross and my faith in Him than Achan's fate would be mine. But thanks be to God, Jesus offers a way out from the weight of my sin... Himself and faith in Him.

Do you believe in Jesus?

Think about this...

*Ob, Lord, ~~Thank~~ you for Jesus and the cross and salvation and redemption and ...
Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

Saturday, January 14: Joshua 8- God's orders, Joshua's tactics...

Over and over in the Bible God empowers people to do great things in His name. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. Jonah preached in Nineveh. ~~and~~ Joshua captained Israel as they took the Land. Sometimes God gave explicit orders how to do something. Other times God gave the objective and left the tactics up to His people.

This is true to this day.

The Lord had given His Church the objective to disciple the whole world. ~~The plans to accomplish this~~ He has left ~~to~~ us plans to accomplish this.

In today's reading, God told Joshua to take the whole army and attack Ai; He, the Lord, would deliver Ai to defeat. Joshua came up with the tactics of ambush to execute God's objective.

Being a person of the Spirit does not mean we are automatons who act only as robots for the Lord. God has given us gifts, abilities, ~~and~~ talents and a brain, which are at our disposal as we follow the Lord. Yes, the Lord may provide the tactics as well, and when He does we are to follow and obey. ~~However~~ ~~But~~ when He does not, we are to use our best judgments.

So what objectives has the Lord placed on your heart? How can you use your abilities to advance God's kingdom around the entire world?

Are we listening for the Lord's leadings and then, most importantly, are we willing to step out and work to meet His objectives?

Think about it...

Ob, Lord, what can I do today to advance the cause of disciplining all the peoples of the world? Give me strength and determination to apply myself to Your will. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, January 15, 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.