

The Weekly Word
January 30-Feb 5, 2017

This week we reach February and in our reading we make it to Judges. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, January 30: Joshua 21- The promises of God are sure...

All Israel has received her inheritance. Every tribe has their land or their cities. And so the chronicler of Israel's memorializes God's great deeds with these words:

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every-one was fulfilled (43-45).

My heart alights to this sentiment... *Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every-one was fulfilled.* I, too, feel so blessed. I have not yet received my ultimate inheritance—eternity with the Lord in the glory of heaven. But every promise short of that one has been received.

I know the joy of God being with me... His burden is light. Nothing in life has been able to separate me from the love of Christ Jesus, my Lord. The trials I have endured have worked for my good and my growth. I have seen doors open allowing me to spread His light that I never could have imagined. I have felt the blessing of God in countless ways.

Yes, I pronounce with the author of Joshua, *all the LORD's good promises [have been] fulfilled.*

God has kept His **W**ord...

Have I kept my promises to the Lord? This question erupts within me. It sparks moments of self-evaluation...

Lord, search me and know me. It is so easy for me to justify me. I need the pure light from Your heart to show me my true self. ~~Let~~ To see how much I truly need You, my ~~S~~savior and my Lord. I fall so far short of Your desire. I don't measure up; I sin and still You love me, care for me, fulfill Your promises to me and forgive me.

I will sing of Your blessings. I will sing of Your love and mercy and grace. I will sing of You who saved my life, who redeemed me from the pit and adopted me into Your family.

I will sing of my Lord God—Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Halleluiah. Amen.!

Tuesday, January 31: Joshua 22- Lessons in the art of living...

As I was reading this account I observed some mini-lessons in the art of living... The Israelites were people just like we are people and the problems that plague us plagued them and vice versa.

The problem of assumptions... there is a lot of assuming going on in this story. The 2.5 tribes assume that the rest of Israel might forget them so they acted in a way that seemed reasonable to them. They built an altar of remembrance. **However, But** the remaining tribes saw the altar and assumed it was for sacrifice not remembrance and almost went to war to destroy the assumed evil. Assumptions are like that, they create problems that are not present or they read situations

through a lens that isn't accurate. Had the tribes spoken about the issues instead of assuming and reacting, this entire chapter could have played out very differently.

The power of face-to-face communication... Fortunately the tribes on the west of the Jordan chose to send the priest and tribal leaders to confront and talk with their brothers rather than simply react. Talking saved the day. War would have been devastating to the people of God. But in talking –true listening and speaking –they heard the truth and were able to let go of their assumptions and allow cooler heads to prevail.

Face-to-face communication doesn't always save the day. Sometimes deep differences exist and sometimes these differences cannot be easily settled. But when the differences are built on faulty assumptions repair is generally readily available.

As I step back from these thoughts I realized that the Lord was speaking to me about the importance of relationships. Whether in families or church or small groups there are people problems and God is reminding me that talking them out and working to repair is always the best solution. Acting on assumptions and rushing to judgment never helps diffuse situations.

God longs for us to live in relationship with one another and with Him. And relationship takes work!

Are there any relationships in your life that need to be repaired? God is asking me this question, too...

Lord, Thank you for the people You have placed in my life. Help me to do everything I can to keep those relationships healthy. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, February 1: Joshua 23- Help people obey the Lord...

The basic charge the Lord gave Joshua back in chapter 1 as he began to lead the people was:

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go (1:7-9).

Joshua now gives a very similar charge to the leaders of Israel, as he prepares to step down as leader:

Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now (6-8).

As leader there is one basic charge from the Lord, help the people to obey the Lord's **W**ord. Keep God's **W**ord near; learn and grow from it. And do not mix God's **W**ord with any-thing else. Keep it pure.

WAnd what was good for Joshua and for the leaders after him is good for me and all Christ-followers still today. Keep God's **W**ord near, lean on it, learn from it, trust it and obey it. And don't let yourselves become polluted by any worldly human philosophy. Trust in the Lord **a**-And He will be with you always...

A good word to ingest and meditate upon...

*Gracious **G**od, thank You for giving Your **W**ord. Help me to treasure it, study it, ~~and~~ live by and obey it. I pray through Jesus Christ, my **S**avior and Lord. Amen.*

Thursday, February 2: Joshua 24—Clean up your life...

Where yesterday Joshua directed the leaders who would come after him regarding the essence of their 'job', ~~t~~ Today we read Joshua's final challenge to the people of Israel...

"Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (14-15).

A little later Joshua reiterates, *"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."* And the people said to Joshua, *"We will serve the LORD our God and obey him"* (23-24).

A summation of the message can be simply stated, "served the Lord and only Him."

An interesting element of Joshua's charge caught my attention, one I don't recall pondering before. That element was removal of foreign gods. Joshua has been leading Israel in their conquest for 20-25 years. And before that Israel lived for 40 years in the desert after leaving Egypt and yet they still have kept foreign gods!?! This surprised me...

How tenaciously we hold onto to the past, ~~and~~ the sins and the gods that entangled us before we began following the Lord. Was Joshua (and Moses before him) patient with the people or permissive???

Joshua had called the people to consecrate themselves to the Lord prior to entering the Land. See Joshua 3:5. Yet Joshua needed to address foreign gods that still needed to be removed...

The pull away from the Lord is great... life, society around us, worship of other gods, the sinful nature within all, seek to derail our following of the Lord wholeheartedly.

I must be vigilant, we must be vigilant, in keeping our way pure and wholly dedicated to the Lord.

Here is God's Word to me today... throw away any foreign gods or behaviors unbecoming a Christ follower.

Help me, Lord. Bring a Joshua into my life to speak to me and show me where I cling to false gods... In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Friday, February 3: Judges 1- The need to pump up my faith and a few helps...

I found myself wondering about a number of issues as I read this chapter.

How did they inquire of the Lord in verses 1 & 2? Was it through the priests or the clan leaders? I suspect it was through the clan leaders because each tribe seemed to act independently of the others. There was no unified response to the Canaanites remaining in the Land.

I wondered why so many tribes did not oust the Canaanites, instead opting to allow them to stay?

I wondered about the significance of the statements that certain tribes didn't attack the Canaanites but when they became strong they pressed the Canaanites into forced labor (see 27-28).? Does this mean that those tribes were fighting in their own strength rather than relying on the Lord and His might?

I have many questions and few answers...

We, humans, are a mixed bag, faithful one moment and not the next. And it seems that the drag toward unfaithfulness is stronger so that if we don't pump in faithfulness along the way we drift away from the Lord.

The tires on my car and bicycle need to be checked regularly and air needs to be added from time to time to maintain correct pressure. My faith walk is like that; I need to regularly pump up my faith if I want to remain faithful. Reading and meditating on Scripture, weekly worship, intentional faith conversations, prayer, acts of service and putting my faith into practice, each of these pump up my faith allowing me to maintain my walk with Jesus day by day, month by month, year by year.

This morning the Lord has reminded me how important regular faith practices are...

Lord, as I sit in the stillness this morning, I feel Your presence. I feel the life You are breathing into me as I allow Your Word to settle upon and within me. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, lead and direct me. I am Yours, gratefully and humbly. I am Yours... Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, February 4: Judges 2- ...

The Bible has many wonderful verses and some devastatingly sad verses. Today's chapter has one of the devastatingly sad verses. After recording Joshua's death, the author notes, *After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel* (10).

I find this verse terribly sad. After all Israel has seen and experienced –the deliverance from Egypt and conquest of the Promised Land –this next generation neither knew the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. As bad as it is to not know the Lord, this generation apparently had not even been told and taught the stories of the Lord! This means that Israel wasn't truly celebrating the various feasts of the Lord, since the feasts, particularly Passover, tell the story of God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt. And the Passover tells the story in the first person, not as a past event but as a present ongoing event, so every Israelite 'experiences' God's deliverance!

So sad... the adults who witnessed the great works of God didn't tell their children and grandchildren!

This is a warning to me and believers everywhere. We are always only one generation away from extinction. Those of us who know the Lord and have seen His works are obligated to tell the next generations. --- Whether they believe and come to know the Lord is on them, but we must tell them... in the most compelling ways we can.

Am I, are we... telling the young ones about what God has done?!

Oh, God, forgive me if I have neglected the younger generations.... I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, February 5, 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.