

The Weekly Word
Feb 27- March 5, 2017

The Bible reading for this week turns much more hopeful. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, February 27: Judges 21- Human potential?!...

I am so glad this is the final chapter of Judges. The story, in my opinion, goes from bad to worse to even the worst. There is no thought. No asking of the Lord for guidance. No seeking guidance from the Law. The final words of the book sum up the book, oh so sadly. *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit (25).*

That is as low as it gets... doing as we see fit. No controls, just unrestrained human opinion.

This is a world without God. So sad.

This is human potential... people chattel for those with power. Life being worthless. Indiscriminant madness. Murder, kidnapping, wars over the slightest issue. No justice and lots of ruthlessness.

With all the education in the world we haven't been able to educate self-centeredness out of the human being.

Our only hope is a new heart; a new heart placed in us through faith in the Living God, faith in Jesus.

Oh, God, continue to renew me. Make those stoney parts of my heart new and fresh. Clean out my sin. Protect me from myself, just because it is natural doesn't mean it is good.

For the sake of others, self and advancing Your name, I surrender my life again to You, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, February 28: Ruth 1- God's presence in pain...

Naomi's story posed this question to my heart, "Can God be alive and active in our pain?" As the story unfolds, a straightforward answer emerges, "Yes."

But I am not to the answer yet so I am left with the question, "Can God be alive and active in our pain?" This sparked a review of my life, particularly thinking through the painful episodes of my life. I was not looking to relive the pain –I am not a masochist. I wanted to see if I could recall times and ways the Lord showed up and brought His presence in the midst of my pain.

I started with my most intense period of pain about 16 years ago and immediately I saw the faces of friends who were there by my side. Many knew the situation and they got in touch. I don't recall any particular conversations but I see the faces. God's voice, hug and presence communicated through each person. I didn't know how things would turn out, but I knew I wouldn't be alone.

I reviewed some other times of pain, over and over again God's fingerprint was visible. He was there. The pain still hurt and outcomes were uncertain but the Lord was there with me... often times through the touch of others.

I started thinking... are there people I know who are going through rough times? Could I bring the touch of God into their lives like some many others have done for me over the years?

Well, the time to pray has come...

Oh, God, would you use me as a conduit of Your love and presence in the lives of other people. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, March 1: Ruth 2- Providence...

Providence. God working in the shadows. God orchestrating things so that His Will is accomplished.

The story is simply the narration of Ruth's life upon her return with Naomi from Moab. In the details we see the fingerprints of the Lord. Ruth 'happens' to glean in Boaz's field. Boaz 'happens' to return at the same time and Boaz knows the story of what Ruth has done for Naomi. And so the fingerprints of God are all over the story.

If we were in a court of law God would be found guilty of creating favorable circumstances for Ruth.

Looking back over my life I see the fingerprints of the Lord as well. Oh, I know some might say, "Those are just circumstances, happenstances". And, yes, they are but I see the Lord's fingerprints all over those 'happenstances.'

I could spend hours reciting God-sightings in my life.

Recently I reconnected with a college friend who was instrumental in kindling my faith in Jesus. As we reminisced with a friend of his, I was able to tell my story of coming to faith and how instrumental my friend was. He didn't remember many of the details but I did, they led to a major life change for me so they are indelibly imprinted in my memory. My journey to faith was filled with many things that raveled and unraveled so that my friend would share his faith in Jesus with me. Then he invited me to faith. God's fingerprints are everywhere.

I can see God's fingerprints in my meeting and marrying my wife, changing from engineering to seminary, finding my first, 2nd, 3rd and present calls, teaching in Nigeria, being part of the PRMI ministry.

In fact I see God's fingerprints all over my life and I am forever grateful for God's providence.

Like Ruth I am who I am because of God's work in the shadows, orchestrating and wooing me to His side.

Lord, God, thank you for caring and working for me to come to You. May my life honor You, through Jesus Christ, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, March 2: Ruth 3-- The manner in which we live life matters ...

Honor, respect, dignity, appropriateness, these are words that came as I sat pondering this chapter.

While I do not understand the customs of this chapter, I realize that God's lines of sexual propriety were not crossed. In an honoring manner Ruth showed her willingness to become Boaz's wife. However, she did so in a manner that allowed him to accept or reject her invitation with his dignity in full tact. Hers would remain intact as well.

Reading relational situations is not always easy. Sometimes it is difficult to know how to approach another with a relational issue and every relational situation has the potential of going sideways. Boaz could have reacted angrily, however, Ruth's manner offered the best opportunity for success with honor.

And no impropriety was crossed. For me this is key, because God is honored in Ruth's endeavor to find a kinsman redeemer.

Human relationships are tricky... but this chapter reminds me that honoring God and maintaining one's integrity should top our list as we consider a course of action, closely followed by creating situations where all parties can maintain dignity. Another word could be 'discreet,' but this word can be used in an underhand way, which is not what I am hearing from the Lord as I consider Ruth.

The manner in which we live life matters. God is watching us. Are we people of faithfulness and integrity? Are we people who honor and care for the reputation of others?

Some life-characteristics to ponder...

Lord, how I live matters to You and my witness for You in the world. Being a hypocrite may be one of the worst labels for Your people. Oh, God, help me... give me wisdom and strength and desire and delight to walk Your straight and narrow. Help me be an effective witness for You because my life reflects Your character, the fruit of Your Holy Spirit. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, March 3: Ruth 4- A small act can have great returns...

Do you know the name Albert McMakin? Albert was a farmhand. And history probably wouldn't remember his name except sometime in 1934 Albert invited the owner's son to a revival meeting led by evangelist Mordecai Ham. The young man was converted at those revival meetings; his name is Billy Graham.

I owe my walk with Jesus to Karl, a fraternity brother who held a Bible study in his room in 1975. And my decision to switch from engineering to seminary was confirmed by the advice of my undergraduate professor of Materials Engineering, Dr. JJ McCarthy.

John Wesley and Augustine of Hippo own their religious fervor and conversion in no small part to the training and/or prayer of their faithful mothers. Augustine's mother labored in prayers for many years as her son pursued many sensual pleasures.

We may never know what the result will be to a prayer prayed, or a word shared, or a good deed offered in the name of Jesus. However, the Lord, often working in the shadows, will use our offering for His glory. (Sometime check out Matthew 5:13-16).

These thoughts were sparked by Boaz and Ruth's story. Boaz was living life when a young widower shows up. Over time they connect and as a near 'kinsman redeemer' Boaz seeks to redeem and marry Ruth. He is simply being kind and fulfilling his responsibility.

However in God's economy much more is going on. Their great grandson is none other than David the most famous and important OT King of Israel.

The Lord used a simple act of faithfulness and kindness to bring about His redemptive plan.

Today I will have numerous opportunities for kindness and faithfulness. Today we may have opportunities to invite someone to a Bible study, a revival meeting or simply enter our prayer closet and pray for someone. Only the Lord knows how our small acts of faithfulness and kindness fit into His eternal plan...

Let's all be faithful and kind and loving and God-honoring today. The Lord may use our small act in large ways to bring about His redemptive plan.

Oh, Lord, may that be so. May my life today play into Your eternal will. May my actions today be a simple link in Your plan and desire to tell the whole world about Jesus so that disciples will be made in every corner of this vast globe. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, March 4: 2Peter 1- A shoulder to the grinding wheel ...

What an opening. I couldn't resist including the first 7 sentences. I know it is far more than I can chew on in one sitting but it is glorious, full and rich in truth and inspiration for godly living.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (3-11).

I am staring at the first sentence... He *has given us everything we need for a godly life...*

Following Jesus is not simply a matter of knowing truth; it is LIVING the truth. Knowledge is important. It is an important step in living rightly... we need to know the truth in order to live the truth. However, just because we know the truth does not mean we are living the truth. The devil is the prime example. He knows the truth of God and about God but chooses NOT to live for God.

We can do the same thing. Knowledge is an important step but only one step toward living the truth. It is godly living, living according to the truth of God, which matters.

The Lord's not so gentle nudge for me this morning is to examine my living. Are my actions, words, attitudes, biases, desires, hopes in line with His truth and His manner and way?

No, not fully, I have to set my shoulder to the grinding wheel... making *effort to add to [my] faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.*

I have much work to do...

Oh, Lord, this morning I set myself to Your things... to add goodness and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and mutual affection and love to my life. May my life grow more godly and God-honoring over time so that I become more like You as I age in this world and prepare for the next. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, March 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.