

The Weekly Word
June 19-25, 2017

Solomon certainly lived a different life than David. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, June 19: 1Kings 4- For God's glory...

I read the organization that Solomon set up and I thought, "He was the right man for the job." Solomon clearly had the organizational skill to run an empire and God was the One who gave Solomon his wisdom.

This got me thinking... God gifts us for His callings! He certainly does. This has been my experience through all the twists and turns of my life.

God gifts us for His calling... I certainly have had to grow into and develop some of the gifts God has given. However, I still recognize that the gifts I have are from the Lord.

I found myself thinking about living into my God-given gifts and choosing to use the gifts God gave for His glory and honor. These are two separate aspects handling the gifts of God faithfully. I have had to grow in and develop the gifts God has given me. This takes time and attention. Additionally, I then have to choose how I will use the gifts I have been given and are developing. Solomon spread the worship of Yahweh all across the ancient Middle East. He used the gifts God gave to extend the name and fame of the Lord throughout the earth. I, too, need to make the decision to spread God's fame around the earth. *Go and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28) Jesus said. We are to spread God's name and fame across the entire face of the earth! A daunting task, but if we all use the gifts God has given us for God's honor and glory, then in God's timing we will make disciples of every nation, tribe, language and tongue. Halleluiah!

Oh, Lord, help me to use my gifts for Your service. Help me, Lord, to spread Your name and fame with heart and soul and passion. Praise be to You, Lord God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, June 20: 1Kings 5- Cost of choosing our own way...

Israel wanted a king. Now as the splendor of the nation grows and Solomon undertakes massive building projects Israel begins to 'pay' the price of a king. I was amazed by the number of conscripts for the building projects:

- 30,000 wood cutters to work in Lebanon 1 month on and 2 months off
- 70,000 carriers
- 80,000 stone cutters
- 3,300 foremen

This does not include the craftsmen who worked the raw materials into the temple and then his mansion.

Now I suspect that they were all paid something, but over 180,000 men were conscripted from their families to work these building projects. That's a lot of households without the male.

Israel is paying a great price for her desire to have a king. And these numbers don't include fighting men. Solomon reigns in a time of peace and prosperity but David's time was one of war and many men died in battle.

All of this prompted me to think about the ‘costs’ of choosing our own way rather than following God’s way. I do not know how God would have established His people if a king was not appointed, but I do know that all of these costs are directly attributed to the cost of their choosing a king.

When we choose to follow our own path, there are costs, costs we would not otherwise have had to pay.

Think about this...

Lord, help me to follow Your way and to discern when my way is not Your way. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Wednesday, June 21: 1Kings 6- A window into my soul...

All the detail about the temple shows me how important the temple was to the life of Israel and to Solomon.

We humans build. What we build often shows our priorities and our vanities.

Solomon and Israel built for the glory of God. The magnificence of this building mirrors the greatness of their God. Nothing was too extravagant. The Lord deserved the best.

In my life what have I built? What do I dream about building? These, I suspect, are windows into my soul. What do they show me? I need to take some time to gaze into my life through this window God is showing me...

Lord, so many of my dreams are about me... my needs, my family’s needs. Is this selfishness or responsibility to care for my family?

Do I make You and Your glory a priority? Oh, God, help me unravel the complexities of myself, so that I can grow to be more fully devoted to You. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Thursday, June 22: 1Kings 7- You cannot serve God and self...

The temple was a glorious house built for the Lord. The gold overlay and all the bronze items, including the massive sea, would certainly draw ‘ooohs’ and ‘aaahs.’ The glory Solomon was directing Godward was impressive.

However, I cannot read this chapter without noting verse 1: *It took Solomon thirteen years, however, to complete the construction of his palace.* What can be lost is that the final verse of chapter 6 notes that it took 7 years to build the Temple.

Yesterday I noted, “We humans build. What we build often shows our priorities and our vanities.” Absolutely Solomon was honoring the Lord greatly, but he was also honoring himself in the building of the palace. David had it in his heart to build the temple and gave Solomon the specs, but the palace was all Solomon’s. His self-aggrandizement was beginning to show.

I am back to thoughts about what I seek to build.

Building is one element of human legacy. So as I sit with the Lord this morning, He brings me to thoughts about my legacy. What are my dreams and hope? More deeply, who do my dreams and hopes honor? Do they honor me, my family or my Lord God?

David, with all his faults, deep down inside wanted to honor the Lord. Solomon it seems had much more self-motivation inside. What about me? At my deepest self, is it the Lord or me I want to honor? Jesus said, *You cannot serve both God and mammon* (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13). In a similar vein, **You cannot serve both God and self.**

So God is pricking and prodding my ‘hidden’ inner motives today as I sit with Him. Gentle, yet steady and firm, is the Lord’s examination!

Oh, God, send me Your results and show me Your treatment plan to make my heart more dedicated to You and less to me. I pray with John the Baptist, may You increase and I decrease... even within me! I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, June 23: 1Kings 8- The worship of God with His family is a precious gift...

As I read and re-read this chapter I found myself thinking about how the people must have felt during the pageantry and wonder of the Temple dedication. The ark and a tent-sanctuary had been Israel's for centuries since their exodus from Egypt, but now they would have a temple... a permanent home for the Lord in their land. How wonderful...

Then there was Solomon's prayer and all the sacrifices. What an event! The writer makes a closing comment: *On the following day [Solomon] sent the people away. **They blessed the king and then went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done for his servant David and his people Israel*** (66). The bolded words caught my attention...

That, I thought, is how it should be for people as they head out after worship each and every time the family of God gathers. We leave for home **joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done...**

The Lord *is the same, yesterday, today and forever!* (Hebrews 13:8). When Believers gather in the Lord's name, whether in cathedral or hut, sanctuary or storefront, God is present and His glory fills our gathering... the same glory that filled the temple.

I hope and pray that you experience the Lord's presence and power when you gather with others in His name. I hope and pray that your hearts are joyful and glad when it is time to go home. It is for me. The worship of God with His family is a precious gift!

Oh, God, thank you for manifesting Yourself during worship. You are real and You are good. My heart dances in joy because of Your faithfulness. Halleluiah. Amen.

Saturday, June 24: 1Kings 9- Offer your WHOLE life to the Lord...

Twenty years into his reign, Solomon has a second visitation from the Lord. The Lord was certainly with Solomon. God's message was similar to the first... stay faithful. You and your descendants stay faithful and I will be with you.

As the remainder of the chapter unfolds, it seems like Israel and Solomon were living the perfect life. Life is good. Things are going well for Solomon and for the country.

However, I have read his story many times and I know that as perfect as things may look on the surface there were problems brewing beneath the perfect exterior that will be visible in a few chapters.

I realized that we can construct wonderful facades that hide sad realities that exist underneath. How many times at funerals do we hear all the wonderful stories of the deceased but the narrative leaves out the 'other' parts? How many news reports have I heard that interviewed neighbors of some major criminal and they generally say the same thing, "Johnny was a nice man?"

The Lord's whisper reminds me that we are whole people. Our exterior life is important... doing good, observing God's decrees and so forth. However, our interior and unseen life is important as well... We need to live faithfully here, too.

We are whole beings, not only the part we show other people, and God's command is for us to love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

Oh, Lord God, I desire to follow You fully. Please deal with the parts of me that need changing and growth. Lead me and guide me to fullness in You. purge out my sin and enter in to all the corners of my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, June 25, 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.

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