

**The Weekly Word**  
July 3-9, 2017

For readers in the US, Happy July Fourth week. Savor your freedom and use it to serve the Lord. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, July 3: 1Kings 16- From very bad to much, much worse...**

The chapter begins with a word from the Lord. *Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani concerning Baasha: "I lifted you up from the dust and appointed you ruler over my people Israel, but you followed the ways of Jeroboam and caused my people Israel to sin and to arouse my anger by their sins. So I am about to wipe out Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat (1-3).*

Ok, it is a word of judgment, but the Lord is still speaking with Israel and maybe I am overly positive in my assessment but it seems if I read behind the lines. The Lord speaks, there was a glimmer of hope for Israel if Baasha chose to follow the ways of the Lord rather than the ways of Jeroboam. However, the glimmer is moot since Baasha followed Jeroboam.

This is the only word from the Lord in the chapter, from this point forward things spiral out of control with murders and assassinations. Israel is a real mess careening further and further from the Lord. The result in this one chapter is Ahab of which it says, *Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him (30-33).*

It is as if the Lord withdraws His hand and the kings of Israel left to themselves grow worse and worse.

This causes me to wonder how elite thinkers of the world today can still believe that humanity left to itself will 'grow better and better, kinder and kinder'? With all our sophistication and advancements the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the bloodiest and most murderous in recorded human history. And the 21<sup>st</sup> century with all the terrorism and regional skirmishes is not looking any better!

Left to ourselves the world, like Israel, is in trouble.

The only answer is renewed hearts through faith in Jesus!

The history of Christ followers is certainly not perfect. There have been times when we Christians have gone off the rails and acted little if no better than non-Christ-followers but there is no other solution to the human sin problem than Jesus.

Let's pray for an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, squelching our blood lusts and bringing peace and hope where there is little today...

*Come, Lord God, come. Pout out Your Spirit, draw all people to You. Come, Lord Jesus, restore Your kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven. I pray in Your name, Jesus. Amen.*

## **Tuesday, July 4: 1Kings 17- What are you doing for the Lord?...**

Elijah bursts on to the scene speaking prophetically to Ahab king of Israel. No rain for years... (1). Ahab must have thought Elijah was a nutcase. Immediately the Lord whisks Elijah to places of safety to care for him. First he is fed by ravens then miraculously by a widow. Miracles begin to flow through Elijah.

We know nothing of his back story. Did he realize he had prophetic gifts and was to be used mightily by the Lord, or did he grow in his giftings as the account unfolds? We simply do not know. One thing we do know, by the end of the chapter, the woman knows Elijah is a strong man of God. The chapter ends with these words, *Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth"* (24).

In the narrative of the text this statement functions as a declaration of Elijah's calling and position.

Thinking about Elijah, his gifts and calling pointed me to think about my gifts and callings. I am certainly not an Elijah, but the Lord has endowed me (and you) with my own gifts and abilities. For me to be faithful I have to grow into using them for God's honor and glory. Am I doing that? Do others see God's gifts in me... not because I am showy, but because I am using them to further God's agenda and kingdom?

This morning is one of those mornings where I am asking myself if I am doing enough for the Lord with what God has given me... How about you? Are you serving faithfully for the Lord?

*Lord, I begin by offering me today. Use me today to make a difference in my world that honors You. As today blends into tomorrow may the same thing be true. May I make a difference for You in my world. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.*

## **Wednesday, July 5: 1Kings 18- What's my assignment for today?...**

This is one of the fantastic stories and amazing miracles in the OT. The Lord shows himself to be God, God above all gods!

It amazes me that Ahab does not immediately repent of his ways, which is a reminder to me that a hardened heart is a stubborn thing!

It is time to do a heart check... It is time to look inward and be honest with ourselves. Is your (my) heart open to the Lord or not?

If it is, how is God leading you these days? What is the Lord revealing about your life? Where does the Lord want you to grow? Being open to the Lord isn't just a matter of having prayed a prayer sometime years ago. It is about rising each day and asking the Lord what's my assignment for today. It is serving and loving in Jesus' name routinely as part of life.

Think about it... I am.

*Oh, Lord, show me what You have for me today and tomorrow. What big things would You like me to do for You, Your people and Your world? What small ways can I shine the light of Jesus into my world today? Reveal Yourself to me when I am faint... I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## **Thursday, July 6: 1Kings 19- Move past fear and do...**

As a continuation of the Mt Carmel story, the miraculous nature of this account continues. Elijah travels by foot from Mt Carmel to Jezreel about 15 miles. After learning of Jezebel's intentions, Elijah flees 95 miles to Beersheba, and then another day's journey into the Negev

wilderness. After a bit of refreshment by the Lord, God directs Elijah on a 40 day journey to Mt Horeb where the Lord meets him.

I love the accounts... God is not in the wind. Then came an earthquake... God is not there either nor is God in the fire, finally God arrives in a gentle whisper (12). The Lord could have been in any of these... but in this instance He chose the whisper.

I pondered why... I cannot be certain, but these thoughts emerged.

God had shown up in power on Mt Carmel. Elijah knew that side of the Lord. I wonder if it was the contrast. As if the Lord was saying... Elijah I am... everything. I am strength and I am in the quiet. I am who I need to be so that you will see ME and worship Me and follow Me.

The Lord had things He needed Elijah to do.

God has things He wants me (us) to do as well. People to witness to, injustices to speak out against, hurts that need healing and lives that need touching. To do God's bidding we have to be connected to Him. God needed Elijah to let go of his fear and embrace once again His Lord. God needed Elijah's attention and God got it by revealing Himself in the quiet whisper.

How is God revealing himself to you today?

I saw God today in the smile of a little one, an upgrade on a long flight and deep rest in the afternoon.

God is good and always there...

*Oh, God, thank You for revealing Yourself to me today in many ways. I love You and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Friday, July 7: 1Kings 20- Ahab and deep seeded sin...**

I can certainly understand why some people do not honor and follow the Lord. Many have not heard of Him and many others may have heard only a bit about the Lord but have no meaningful connection and no interaction with Him. However, I struggle wondering why someone like Ahab who has seen the Lord work countless times and ways doesn't believe the Lord.

I guess I don't understand a hardened heart?!

Ahab witnessed Mt Carmel, lived through the drought which was spoken and then the rains which were predicted. Now in his battles with Ben-Hadad, the Lord has proven himself faithful twice. Yet the moment he receives an offer of tribute and pledge of a treaty that provides him with trading access and wealth, Ahab says, "Yes."

Yet another example of Jesus' line, "*You cannot serve both God and mammon*" (Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13). Apparently the pull of money, riches and power were so strong over Ahab, they blinded him from seeing these great and obvious works of the Lord.

Ahab's story begs the question, "Is there anything blinding you from seeing works of the Lord and following Him?"

Like Ahab it could be the pull of money, fame and power or it could be a more subtle version, 'comfort in life.' I have met people who have varying decrees of wealth, on some scales some of these people might be considered at or near poverty. But they are comfortable. They know what they have and are 'enjoying' their life and they do not want to change. Personal comfort hides the call of the Lord to faithfulness.

For others, family could be the pull. Giving themselves and children opportunities in life crowds out room for the Lord. Sport activities happen 7 days a week and it is more important for children to participate than worship or go to youth events. The ultimate prize might be 'greatest

parent' award or building your child's resume so they get into the best college and become successful –i.e. make lots of money. There's that mammon again!

It could be simply fun... filling life with all things fun –toys, hobbies, travel, you name it – that any desire for God or things of the Spirit are crowded out.

I walk past a small patch of lawn. It was sodded beautifully six or so years ago, green and lush. Weeds eventually found their way, but could be controlled by pulling one here and one there. Over time more invasive weeds came. A pull here and there sort of worked; nothing systemic was every used. Apparently in the soil the weed roots were gaining strength starving off the lawn roots. And the weeds are green so driving by one can't really tell. I don't know if the mildness of this past winter was the final blow or not but this spring there is virtually no grass. It is all weed! It is too late for systemic weed killer, there is no grass left.

If we don't deal with the early signs of mammon worship or fun worship or resume building worship or any other worship it will eventually kill off any vestige of God's work in our lives.

Am I, are you, allowing any weeds of sin to linger and live in our lives? If so we better deal with it now before it becomes too strong and like Ahab, we cannot see the obvious works of God around us...

*Oh, Lord, do the interior work in me. Spread Your Holy Spirit through me so that His light and life kills off every vestige of original and embraced sin in me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Saturday, July 8: 1Kings 21- Leadership at its worst...**

Ahab, oh Ahab, how terrible a scoundrel you were. You were the antithesis of David, the great king of Israel. Where David was a servant leader, you were a whining despot under the thumb of your vile wife Jezebel.

Your dealings with Naboth, reveal so much about what NOT to do as a leader, asking for his vineyard was fine, but everything after that reveals your vile character.

When Naboth, a man of character, says 'no', you whine and sulk. Some leader you are. You act like a little child who doesn't get his way. Lead, make a counter offer, or look for another field but don't whine! Babies whine, not leaders.

Next it is almost like you whine so that your wife takes notice, because you know she will do something. You allow her to work her plan, knowing it will be devious and vile. She is acting in your name so all she does reflects on you and by allowing her free reign you are complicit. As a leader, you bare responsibility for all who are under you. You, oh king, do not get a free ride. You are a murderer for personal gain!

Worse yet, when the Lord sends Elijah to call you on your actions, you never own your guilt. You continue your whining charade.

David was not perfect but when confronted by his sin he admitted his guilt and accepted God's judgment. Not you, there is not one indication in the text that you admit anything or even speak directly to the Lord or his prophet about your guilt. Yes, you take out the sackcloth, as one caught, but where is your confession, your admission of guilt?

You are a man who will do anything to save your skin and get your way, but as far as a change of heart, NOTHING! You are the kind of leader who throws his subordinates under the bus to protect self. Despicable.

Ahab is a man of unprincipled character... but who, asks the Lord, am I? God's Word is meant to teach and train me and all people of faith. How will I allow Ahab's story to speak to me? This is where I spend my quiet time with Jesus this morning.

*Form in me, Jesus, the humble, Father-honoring character that David displayed. Purge out my selfish traits and train me in godliness. As a leader let me lead with integrity and a servant's heart. Yes, that is my prayer, but Lord, even more I pray that my entire life be built on humility before You and a desire to serve You and model Your character in everything I do, in every sphere of my life. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## **Sunday, July 9, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.