

The Weekly Word

August 21-27, 2017

Oh, the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer sings the old song. Well, we are in the midst of those lazy, hazy, crazy days and I hope you can enjoy them. I also hope you are enjoying and being challenged by your Bible reading, too. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, August 21: Colossians 1- Jesus did it all...

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him **all** things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all** things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him **all** things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in **everything** he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have **all** his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself **all** things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (15-20).*

What a description of Jesus. Oh, my, glorious staggering and supreme. Jesus, Creator of all things, holds all things together. Head of the church, firstborn from among the dead. Fully God and reconciler of all things through the cross. I scan back through this description and notice all uses of the word 'all' and one 'everything'... It is clear Jesus is Supreme...

Following this description, Paul turns immediately to us. We are in trouble alienated from God, but Jesus who is Supreme over everything comes to our aid...

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant (21-23).

While Jesus is Supreme over us, He suffered and died for us. His physical death on the cross paid our reconciliation fee so that we can be *holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation*. What more we could hope for or desire? Jesus has done it all.

We have but one task, to continue in our faith... to hold on and to stay true to Jesus. After all Jesus did for me, how could I not do that for Him?

Jesus, I put my stake in the ground... I stand with You. You are sovereign and I declare my full allegiance to You and You alone. Together with the Father and the Spirit, I will worship You, divine Trinity, as the one true God. Alleluia. Amen.

Tuesday, August 22: Colossians 2- Christ and Christ Alone...

The words played in my mind like a song, "We will worship Christ and Christ alone..." That's what Paul is saying in Colossians 2. Not human traditions (an apparent reference to Judaism and any other 'works based' approaches to God). Not elemental forces (which today

comes in the garb of New Age spirituality and other power from this world kind of Eastern or Native American spirituality). NO, for Christ-followers, it is Christ and Christ alone.

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. **See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.** For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead (6-12).*

Immediately the Lord began probing my life. Have I consciously or unconsciously adopted any add-ins to Christ and Christ alone?

Obvious ones like horoscopes, searching for the right Chi, filling my house with certain crystals, following the way of the Buddha, or checking in with a shaman, or tribal healer or... or less obvious ways like seeking 'portals' where God is present or believing holy mountains or particular shrines are filled with God's power. These are ways elemental powers can creep into our lives.

Then there are human traditions, whether they be things like certain feasts, which must be followed or praying in certain directions and at mandated times or the veneration of other human beings. When these forms and practices become rules and laws then Christ has been moved off the center displaced by these human teachings and traditions. When this happens we have ventured into dangerous territory.

God brought me back to verse 8: ***See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.***

I am left to wrestle with this thought and see if I have fallen prey in any way to human traditions or elemental spiritual forces...

How about you?

Lord, it is so easy, especially unconsciously, to add in other things to Christ and Christ alone. Keep me safe. Keep me pure by keeping me close to You and Your world. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, August 23: Colossians 3- A new bucket list...

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (1-2).

Right out of the shoot this morning I began considering what it means to set our hearts (1) and our minds (2) *on things above, where Christ is, seated.*

Many people mention their bucket list, those things they want to do before they die. If my mind and heart is set on things above, namely Christ, then that should affect what I place on my bucket list. Right? It seems to me that our bucket list should be more than places I want to visit or novel experiences I want to undertake. Our bucket lists should include things for and about Christ and His mission that I want to accomplish

Well, honestly I have never thought about this. I do not have a bucket list in the first place. Maybe I should have one, if it is something that keeps me moving forward... moving forward in Christ that is.

So if my head and heart are set on Christ, what might that lead me to do?... hmmm
Fund Gospel advances on every inhabited continent?
Serving Christ and His church until my dying breath?

I am not a bucket list kind of person. Continuing this will take some time. Ideas do not flood my thoughts.

How would setting your heart and mind on Christ shape your bucket list?

Lord, sit with me and help me examine my aspirations and through that lens help me see areas of my life that I still need to surrender to You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, August 24: Colossians 4- Make the most of every opportunity...

Always with a practical eye to kingdom living, Paul concludes with these words. *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (5-6).*

How thoughtful and simple.

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. How we act toward others says a great deal about who we are inside as people. Let's be honest, what do you think of someone who is belligerent and unfriendly? Have you ever stood in a shopping line or been stuck in an airline seat or been seated at a restaurant near someone who is caustic toward the server, attendant or check out person? It is uncomfortable and embarrassing, even when you do not know the offender. And if they are a Christian, any chance of sharing the love of Jesus is gone, caput!

Be wise... make the most of every opportunity Paul lives to be a witness. Being wise and kind and faithful is a first step toward faith living and faith sharing. His life, as has become apparent these last weeks, is all about living for Jesus and seeing the Gospel of Jesus spread throughout the world.

Paul's example and teaching chides me to 'amp up' my living for Jesus. Making the most of every opportunity, seasoning my conversations with grace and living in such a manner that people wonder what makes me tick. That provides avenues for me to share my faith and love in Jesus.

Lord, conversation does not come easily for me. Help me to grow in relating easily with people so that I can shine for Jesus, be living wisely, looking for opportunities and speaking with grace. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, August 25: Philemon- Friendship and relationships...

Paul prayed for Philemon, *...that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ (6).*

This verse spurred thinking about my friendships and relationships. Does hanging around me have a similar effect on others? Does the faith of others grow because they are somehow connected to me?

This is not an easy question to answer, partly because I do not know what is going on inside of other people. It is also hard to know because I do not see the other person throughout the day, in all manner of life situations.

However, on the other hand, some of what I just wrote is an excuse not to have to consider the opening questions that began today's devotion. Does hanging around me have a similar effect?

I fear my "I cannot tell" is a cover up because I am concerned that the answer is really 'no, not really'.

This is not good. I recall yesterday's time in the Lord; *be wise... make every opportunity... season conversation with grace.* Maybe I am not living up to Paul's injunction and my desires as best I can.

I believe I need to go into the 'examination closet' for some interior work...

How about you? Does hanging around you help other people grow in Jesus?

Lord, it is too easy to close my devotional and get on with my day, in essence forgetting what we have been talking about this morning. I pray that will not be, but throughout today You will continue to speak with me about this and other areas of my life that need more maturity. Through Jesus, my Savior, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, August 26: Jude- The best defense...

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (17-23).

Problems will come; false teachers and scoffers will try to dissuade us from the truth. Our best defense is to know the faith and be strong in it. Jude writes *build yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love... Be merciful to those who doubt; save others...*

Build yourselves up in the faith... work at it. *Study to shew yourself approved* (KJV) writes Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15. *Be transformed by the renewing of your mind* is a similar thought from Romans 12:2. God's Word reminds us over and over again to strengthen our 'faith muscles'... read Scripture, meditate on Scripture and study Scripture.'

Pray, pray in the Spirit, speak with God, listen to God, follow the Lord's lead, share your needs and listen for the Spirit's response. Pray for strength to stand and wisdom to know truth from error. Don't live your life on your own; live it in concert with the Spirit of the Lord.

Keep yourself of God's love... stay connected with the Lord, especially when tempted to drift away. Remember God's love and care and bask in it.

Reach out to others... don't keep the faith to yourselves, use it to help others. *Be merciful to those who doubt.* Who hasn't doubted? Encourage those who doubt and wrestle with things of faith. Help them. Discuss with them in a gentle way. Point them to God's Word.

Save others. Share your faith through words and good deeds that others may see Jesus and be drawn to Him.

Jude packs plenty of practical faith living into these few words. God reminds me, "Now do it and in doing so, protect yourself from error."

Hour by hour, Lord, show me how to live these practical words of faith and maturity. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Sunday, August 27, 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.