

The Weekly Word
September 11-17, 2017

September 11 is a day that will live in infamy in the minds and hearts of most Americans. Where Septmeber 11 reminds us of what is not good in the world, the Bible is a source of strength for all who believe no matter life's circumstances. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 11: Nehemiah 3- Lord God, this work I am about to attempt is for You...

The rebuilding of Jerusalem was truly a community effort. Everyone pitched in (except for the nobles of Tekoa who would not put their shoulder to the stone). Artisans, priests, families and clans worked together and took a section of the wall and gates as their repair section. What an amazing undertaking.

As the chapter began I was grabbed by the fact that the high priest Eliashib and his fellow priests dedicated their work before they began. *Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They **dedicated** it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they **dedicated**, and as far as the Tower of Hananel (1).*

There is no indication that any other workers dedicated their work before beginning and yet this simple gesture leapt off the page at me. It spoke to me of faith and faithfulness. Eliashib and his fellow priests made a statement, 'God, this work I am about to attempt is for You'.

My mind spins with ways this insight speaks to me...

- Beginning my day with 'dedication'... Lord, the things I will do today are dedicated to You.
- At the beginning of a trip –a vacation... Lord, the things I will do and enjoy are a gift from You.
- At the beginning of a work trip... Lord, the work I am able to accomplish on this trip is for You.
- Mealtime... Lord God, this meal is a gift from You, use it to fuel my service of You.

Meetings, projects, and so on can be dedicated to the Lord as one begins. What a wonderful simple thought.

Thank You, Lord, for the simplicity of this thought. As I begin my day today, the work of my hands I dedicate to You. In Jesus' name and for the sake of Your fame, Oh, my God. Amen.

Lord, today is 9/11. Simply writing that name causes a flood of memories. Memories of 9/11/2001 and thoughts of all the things that have changed in this world since that day. I pray for my country that we could find our moorings in integrity, honesty and caring for all. I pray that the words on Lady Liberty would seep onto our psyche again.

I pray for peace... peace within our borders and peace outside our borders. I pray that I might be a man of peace, fueled by You and living for You. The only true peace is found in You, Lord. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, September 12: Nehemiah 4- Problems mount but the Spirit of the Lord in His people prevails...

The story of Nehemiah is the account of a leader performing a great work for God. Things will happen, opposition to the work of God will arise and leaders like Nehemiah must be willing to adjust to meet the present situation.

Nehemiah changed the work detail so that half worked and the other half stood guard. It slowed the project, but ensured safety. He established other safety protocols. His mind and ability to organize was constantly working.

The task was great and most of the people were not laborers, so as their energy flagged Nehemiah encouraged them. As he learned of plots against the project he planned, when taunts and ridicule came, he reminded them that the Lord was with them.

Nehemiah also worked alongside the people asking no more of them than he did himself.

As I consider Nehemiah I am encouraged. God puts the right people in the right spots to get His work done. People labored. Soldiers protected. Nehemiah led and prayed. The work progressed. It was difficult. Problems mounted but the Spirit of the Lord in His people prevailed.

So it is to this day... Problems mount but the Spirit of the Lord in His people prevails.

God has given us the great task of reaching the ends of the earth with the message of the Gospel. Making disciples of ALL peoples is the task of the Church. Yes, it means witnessing in our places and locations, BUT it also means going where the Gospel has never gone. Giving every people group an opportunity to hear about and respond to Jesus.

A church, the Church can never be satisfied sharing the Gospel and growing in its own community or region. We MUST have a global perspective, reaching out to the unreached so that every ethnic group hears the life-giving message of Jesus.

Wow, the Lord has taken me far from Nehemiah this morning as I sit with Him.

Lord, give me Your heart on this matter so that I orient my life around Your task and goal that disciples be made of ALL nations. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, September 13: Nehemiah 5- Living above reproach...

Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. ...Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. (14,17).

Nehemiah went above and beyond to make sure his life was an example. To do so he lived above reproach, not accepting the governor's portion and still feeding many at his table.

Too often leaders and people of prominence accept perks and at times flaunt privilege. Not so Nehemiah. He chose to live so that the average person would respect him and honor him.

Nehemiah sets a high bar to this day.

What does living above reproach mean for me in my life? For me it means living within my means. It means being transparent with my elders when a parishioner gives me something that might be beyond what that person would give anyone else. It means living in a way that if others emulate, the glory is given to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Living above reproach means living a life of integrity.

What does living above reproach mean for you? Think about it...

Lord God, may my life bring You honor and glory. Lord, may my life bring people into Your kingdom. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, September 14: Nehemiah 6- The natural-ness of prayer...

But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands" (9b). The three words, *But I prayed*, tackled my attention.

So much was going on for Nehemiah. The work was progressing, still the critical installation of gates needed to be completed, without them the town remained vulnerable. Knowing this the opposition turned up the heat. If the gates were not installed all the years of work were for naught. This was the project enemies' last chance. They knew it and Nehemiah knew it.

The stakes were high.

It is at this point that those 3 words appear in the account. *But I prayed...*

Prayer is an important weapon in the arsenal of God's people.

Nehemiah had wisdom, leadership abilities, savvy, connections, integrity all of which were important. What set him apart for God's work was that he believed in, worshipped and consulted with the Lord. Nehemiah knew where his strength came from so he regularly dipped his head to prayer.

At this critical juncture he prayed and God opened his eyes to lurking dangers.

A little later the story unfolds further and another moment of prayer slides seamlessly into the story. As Nehemiah's narrative progresses we read, *Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me (14).* This moment of prayer fits so naturally in the telling of the story, an indicator to me that Nehemiah himself slid naturally into prayer. Prayer was a natural and normal part of his life. Certainly he may have had formal times of prayer but clearly he also moved in and out of relational prayer as his day progressed. This is a sign to me that Nehemiah lived in relationship with the Lord and conversations (prayers) popped up as naturally with the Lord as with an associate.

Ahh, the power, the wonder, the natural-ness of prayer that springs from a relationship with the Lord.

Thanks, Nehemiah, for your example!

Lord, draw me close to You so that I grow in this natural-ness of prayer. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, September 15: Nehemiah 7- Faith during the mundane times...

This chapter had few, if any, sparks of devotion. The details recorded were pretty mundane without much direct spiritual importance. After reading, I reviewed it a couple of times, searching for my spiritual nugget for today. Still no sparks. Was it a spiritual battery dead?

I continued to muse...

My thoughts landed on the word 'mundane'. A small flicker of insight began... so much of life is mundane. Morning ritual of shaving, brushing teeth, showering, doing the laundry, cooking, cleaning up, straightening the house, putting clothes and things away, yard work, mowing, weeding, fixing a broken this or that, paying bills, shopping, and on and on the mundane goes. Even many of the tasks at work are mundane, repetitive, and usual,,,then there is commuting.

As I mentioned so much in this chapter is mundane, opening and closing gates, naming officials, and genealogical list of people and gifts... mundane, mundane, mundane. Yet God has included the mundane in His Word. Why? Historical record for sure. Additionally, this reminds me that the Lord is God of the mundane even as He is God of the spectacular and we, His people, serve Him during the mundane even as we serve Him during the special times of life.

So I began to wonder how do I serve the Lord. How do I display the Lord and how do I honor the Lord in the mundane?

Attitude... what is happening within me during the mundane. Do I see myself as a Christ follower as I do these mundane tasks? What persona do I radiate when I am shopping or driving or folding laundry or washing dishes??? What do I think about during these time and are the things I think about honorable in the Lord's sight. They don't have to be "religious" in nature but are they honorable and good?

How do I treat others while I am working the mundane tasks of life? Do I treat others with dignity as God would have me treat them?

Questions of faithfulness during the mundane tasks of life kept rolling within me. I am just as much a Christ-follower during the mundane times and tasks of life as I am during the special. Does my faith shine during these times, even if there is no other person to see it shine?

Turns out the mundane nature of this chapter led to a rich time with Jesus. Isn't that just like the Lord?!

Lord, I thank you for the mundane... for most of the hours that fill life. I thank You because they are full with YOU. You are just as much present in the mundane as You are in those special moments. Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul during mundane and special times... let all that is within me bless His holy name. In Jesus' name Amen.

Saturday, September 16: Nehemiah 8- Hunger for God's word...

This is one of those fascinating chapters for me as the people gather so attentively to the word of the Lord. I appreciate how everyone is involved Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priests and his fellow priest and the Levites who instruct the people in smaller groups. There is so much here to dwell upon.

But it was the small one syllable word 'they' that garnered my attention. Verse 1: *all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. **They** told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.*

It was the people who begged and asked for Ezra to read the Law to them.

This chapter represents a great move of God among His people. The people are not forced to listen to the Word, or coerced, or cajoled. They ask for it!

O that God's people today would long for and hunger for and desire the word as His people did back on that day.

God's word is our source of truth, inspiration, correction and blessings...

Lord, would You move again creating a desire for Your word in Your people. In every tradition and denomination, country and nation Lord, birth a hunger for Your word. Birth a desire to soak in Your word in order to live Your word more fully and completely until You birth Your new heaven and new earth and we reside with You directly.

Open Your word tomorrow among Your people and give the people attentive hearts to Your world as it is proclaimed around the world on Your Lord's Day. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Sunday, September 17, 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.