

The Weekly Word
December 18-24, 2017

Wow, we are almost to Christmas and celebrating the greatest gift, Jesus. His Word is a pretty good gift, too! Happy reading
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, December 18: 1Peter 1- Our guaranteed inheritance...

After slogging through Song of Songs, 1Peter felt like a cool shower after a hard days work. It was refreshing simply to soak in the richness of the Gospel. Virtually every verse offered a truth worth meditating upon. In this vast sea of riches it was difficult to choose a verse or two for contemplation.

I decided to reread the chapter to bask one more time in it and to see if the Spirit brought any particular words to mind. He did, our *inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade* (4). God had secured for us an inheritance that will be unmatched and unrivaled by any worldly inheritance we could ever receive or even imagine.

Our inheritance being stored or kept for us in heaven is guaranteed by Christ's work on the cross and the Spirit's sanctifying work in all those who believe and are obedient to Jesus (see verse 2). Gift, wonderful gift from God.

And no matter what we might be going through here in this life, hardship or troubles of any kind (7) it cannot dim the wonderful inheritance that is ours. Alleluia!

I found myself being amazed and awed as I considered my (our) guaranteed inheritance.

I am traveling as I write and meditate this morning. Out my hotel window the city of Incheon has been coming into view as the morning dawns. With each passing moment the city becomes more and more clear... as if a Polaroid picture is developing in front of my eyes.

So, too, our inheritance guaranteed for us by the Lord... as I meditate upon it the gift and wonder and grandeur of our inheritance grows clearer and clearer. What a gift God has secured for us. In a world with few guarantees... except maybe death and taxes ☺... we, who are obedient to Jesus, have a secured inheritance that will last an eternity.

Oh, Lord God, I am feeling so blessed and so secure in You. Today's meditation gives me renewed vigor to live obediently and faithfully for Jesus. I pray, Lord, for the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit that I might have the strength, power and wisdom to do so. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, December 19: 1Peter 2- choose the way of Jesus ...

Again my heart melted as I read the words of this chapter... melted into the Lord and His goodness and His call for me and all who believe and obey Jesus. The deepest parts of me are at rest in my Lord. I am awed that the Lord would reveal Himself to me.

His Word challenged and comforted me this morning. And I didn't need to read far into the chapter to find the verses for me to meditate upon.

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1-3).

God's call and desire is that we *grow up in our salvation*. We own the responsibility to do this. It really isn't optional, but God will not force us. In chapter 1 Peter opened with our destiny to be obedient to God through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. We don't simply call out to Jesus to be Lord and then stop growing. We are called to follow Him, and that means learn from, emulate and become like Jesus. In other words, it means to grow up in our salvation.

Too many believers seem to stop growing. It is as if they gain a sense of their salvation and become satisfied. They forget there is a task for us to do and an enemy who is constantly trying to disrupt us by having us fall back into pre-Jesus behaviors.

Peter reminds us of this as he pens verse 1. *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk...* This takes effort on my part.

I have choices every day... more like every moment of every day... to live more like Jesus would have me live or to live more like the unconverted people around me live. Peter says choose Jesus, which means ridding myself of *all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, etc.*, things that resemble the fallen selfish world from which I was redeemed and saved.

Today God is reminding me to choose the way of Jesus, in my dealings, behaviors, thoughts and desires...

This is a good reminder for every day...

Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I delight in Your presence in my life and in Your Word. I bless You for the reminder. It is so easy to get caught up in my life that I miss and forget I represent You in everything I say, do and think. I pray that I honor You today. That glory comes to You because of things I say and do today. To You be the glory and the honor and the praise... forever and ever, Halleluiah. Amen.

Wednesday, December 20: 1Peter 3- Living a life that is worthy...

It is pretty clear by day three in 1 Peter that Peter is all about encouraging his people to live a life worthy of the grace and salvation they have received from God through faith in Jesus Christ. For the second time (see 2:11) Peter enjoins the people to live rightly even if they are punished for it. In verse 17 Peter writes, *For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil*. Even when we live according to God's way, people may still persecute us. Living according to God's way is not an exemption from problems or persecution. In fact as the world turns it back on the Lord, living as God would have us live might invite persecution.

This is not a fact I have to face living in my country, but things could change. But for people I know around the world, and many more I only read and hear about, this is true. Persecution for one's faith in Jesus is real throughout our world.

Despite that possibility or maybe more appropriately in the face of persecution as a possibility we are to live for Jesus. And this means adopting Jesus' manner of living. For example, following the way of Jesus affects how we treat our spouse (1-7) as well as our personal character. *Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing* (8-9).

These attributes take on even more significance if I overlay them with the idea of being persecuted for the faith...

Be sympathetic... how might that be lived out during persecution? Be sympathetic toward my persecutors, be sympathetic toward people who are suffering persecution... a 'persecution' overlay deepens the lifestyle Jesus is calling us to live

Likewise *love one another, be compassionate and humble...* have more drastic application when I think of times of persecution.

And then there is *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult...* this seems to be directly aimed at how I (we) are to interact with and treat our persecutors. I am not to retaliate, taking on the persona of my persecutors, but rather maintain a Christ-like attitude.

Oh, my... God is calling me (us) to a much higher way of living.

I need to pray that I am up to God's calling...

Oh, Holy Spirit, come and fill me. I cannot do this on my own or in my own human strength. I am not up to this calling on my own. I need You and Your constant filling to live above the fray of human fragility and live as Jesus, my Lord, would have me live. Come and fill me to live for Jesus today and every day, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, December 21: 1Peter4- Pray and love ...

Again there is so much here. God is so good feeding us a buffet of great spiritual food. After surveying the whole, it was verse 7 to the end of the section that drew me to closer inspection.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen (7-11).

Pray and love, that's how Peter begins. What a simple and helpful word. Pray and love...

Pray: remain connected to the source –Our God, Father, Jesus and the Spirit. Too often in life I operate in my own wisdom and strength. I do what I know to do rather than connecting first to the Lord and gaining His perspective and wisdom on the matter. Talk to the Lord about things.

Too often I view prayer as a formal set pattern, instead of the ebb and flow of a life in relationship and a life in conversation. As I meditate on this I am realizing that prayer as conversation and relationship is the essence of prayer. There may be formal times of conversation but also spontaneous in the moment connections and communication. The whole of this is what I believe Paul is inviting us to when he says *be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray ...*

Next up love: Love is a verb; it describes how we act and live. Love as Jesus makes clear is the primary of God's character traits we are to emulate. Everything else Peter mentions in this paragraph could be considered a practical activity of love. Offering hospitality is a facet of love. Using our gifts is a facet of love. And one of the beauties of love is that it *covers over a multitude of sins*. Love is the salve that heals and blesses the world.

And we, as Christ's followers, get to spread the salve of love on all the people we meet in our everyday life. Just imagine if every Christian spread love in every interaction we have every day... how much better would the world be.

Oh, God, may it be so with me... may I spread the salve of love one interaction at a time with every person I meet. Forgive me, Lord, when I slip from this ideal and let sin win, through a comment I make or a vibe I give off or a thought I entertain. Forgive me, Lord, and please correct me so that I may again begin spreading the salve of love as I live my life. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, December 22: 1Peter 5- God's mighty hand...

I am a bit sad to see the book of 1Peter come to its conclusion. The last 4 days have been particularly rich in God's Word, so with a twinge of sadness I pressed into chapter 5. As I read it for the 2nd time it became clear to me that verses 6-7 were my meditation spot for today.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (6-7).

Generally for me humbling myself is not easy. So words about humility don't usually grab my attention. But the imagery of verse 6 set so easily in my heart. I think it was the phrase *under God's mighty hand*. That imagery was particularly vivid for me today. God's mighty hand... the hand that moved the stone and carried Jesus from the grave. The hand that lifted Jesus from this earth and brought him back to His seat at the right of God's throne. The hand that parted the Red Sea and allowed Israel to pass safely through it and then pushed the waters back drowning the Egyptian army. Under that hand I have no choice but to humble myself.

That mighty hand is also the one that carried me out from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of Jesus (see Colossian 1:13-14). That mighty hand protects the church and will not allow her to be defeated by the devil. And that hand, reminds Peter, is the one that will lift us up in due time.

Oh, my, how can I not humble myself for my mighty God!

And in my humble estate, God invites me to *cast all your anxiety on him*. What an offer! What an invitation! I can cast **ALL** my anxiety on Him! I no longer have to carry those cares.

When I am bull-headed and refuse to humble myself, I have to carry all my anxiety alone. That is a burden that weighs me down and sucks the joy out of my life, but when I humble myself, God carries my anxiety for me. WHAT A GIFT!

So today as I draw to my conclusion... I bow before my Lord with the offering of anxiety for Him to carry for me...

Oh, God... I bow gratefully before You. You alone are Lord God Almighty. You alone can stop the sun, and part the sea and raise the dead! All my concerns about the future, and all my nervousness with the things of today, I offer them to You. Thank You. Bless You. Praise You, Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Saturday, December 23: 1John 1- Fellowship...

A significant word in this morning's chapter is fellowship... *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ (3).*

The word fellowship appears again in verses 6-7: *If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

So through faith in Jesus we have fellowship with one another and fellowship with God. Fellowship (Greek: *koinonia*) is a deep participation with another; it is a mutual participation with one another. John is expressing the deep living connection we have with one another and with God through our faith in Jesus. This fellowship is a 'living bond' between us and God and us and one another.

The kind of connection and participation that John and other biblical writers understand in the word 'fellowship' goes well beyond the small talk and "Hi, how are you" that characterize

most polite conversations after Sunday worship. John is talking about having a real deep inner connection and participation with God and others and the others and God with us.

Even though I am struggling to put into words what John is describing, I am feeling it within my soul. And as I sit here today I am sensing the deep connection and participation with the Lord through faith in Jesus.

God is with me... I know that down to the very depths of my being. And I hope and pray you know that, too...

Oh, Lord, I am so blessed to be in You and with You. You are the joy of my life and the rock upon which I live. I praise You, Lord. And pray through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 24, 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.