

The Weekly Word
June 30 – July 6, 2014

I pray God's Word blesses you this week. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, June 30: 2Peter 2– Study to know God's Word, it is our best defense...

This chapter opens with the sternest of warnings. *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves* (1).

False teachers... this is a sad yet truth filled reality in our world today as it was back in Peter's day. The only remedy I can prescribe is to stay close to God's Word.

Too many people want to reinvent The Word, saying this passage or that passage are no longer relevant today. This is a frightening road to start down. Once we begin determining what parts of the Bible are true and what is not, we teeter on the edge of danger, in fact we may have fallen over into the pit.

The whole of the Bible is God's Word; understanding it is key!

If you can stand a plug, I think the best book out there for the general public to learn solid biblical interpretation is Gordon D Fee and Douglas Stuart's, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. An updated edition is due to be released right around now. It has 13 chapters and is perfect for an adult Sunday School class or study group. If you haven't read it, do yourself a favor and read it. For those who are part of my church, we will begin a Wednesday evening study of this book on September 10th. It will be a tremendous class. Faithful orthodox Bible understanding is within your grasp.

And faithful orthodox Bible understanding is our best defense against the false teachers who are everywhere around us these days.

Lord, thank You for Your Word. It is truth. It is life. It is YOUR Word to us. I pray for myself and others that we would study it well, so that our faith is grounded and strong, so that we are not vulnerable to all the false teachers living, preaching and available today. Through Jesus, who is The Way, The Truth and The Life, I pray. Amen

Tuesday, July 1: 2Peter 3– Wholesome Thinking...

What a great way to enter my day, reading Peter's opening line... *Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking* (1).

Stimulate you to wholesome thinking... that instantly went to deep places. What a wonderful goal. Would that all of my blogs *stimulate readers to wholesome thinking*.

And what does Peter write about? The gospel message... that God loves the world, yet there are scoffers in the world, so beware and be on your guard so you are not pulled off the path. The Gospel, the whole Gospel, the Word of God is a perfect way to stimulate people to wholesome thinking. Thank you, Peter.

Additionally, I appreciate his understanding of how human life works. Our thinking moves and controls our life. So wholesome thinking will move us to wholesome living and loving (Paul, too, understands this... see Romans 12:1-2 and Philippians 4:8).

So as I start my day I am going to stay my thoughts on wholesome thinking,

- on Jesus and His gift of life given to me and all who believe on the cross,
- on the Father... I will observe nature and marvel at God who created all things,
- on the Spirit who breathes life into me...

Lord, God, thank You for today's prompting to wholesome thinking... what a beautiful way to live throughout the day. Help me to fight distractions and senseless noise so that I can fill my thoughts with wholesome, beautiful admirable things. I pray in and through Jesus, my Lord. Amen.

Wednesday, July 2: Jude— Help those who doubt...

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 (22-23).

When I open The Word, I am blessed when the text offers a practical word on living faithfully. Today is one of those days.

Despite the problem with false teachers, Jude advises us to *Be merciful to those who doubt*. Particularly when troubles circle, it is easy to write off those who doubt. But Jude counsels, **DON'T DO THAT**, *Be merciful to those who doubt*.

Doubting is a part of faith. Many of us—at one time or another—doubt; in those moments we need a brother or sister to come alongside and encourage us. Jude says be that person.

As I penned this, my mind shifted to people I know, particularly people I know who are doubting... my thoughts went like this:

Lord, what can I do to help my brothers and sisters who are in a tough place right now? Give me patience to listen without critical judgment. Give me wisdom to know what to say that encourages and builds up when speaking is appropriate. And Lord, give me a heart to pray for them, long after the conversation has faded into a memory.

In Jesus' nam, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, July 3: Philemon— the gospel works ...

My immediate thought whenever I open my Bible to Philemon is “the Gospel works.” Yes, it really works. It changes a person's heart.

It seems plain to me that the only reason Philemon is in the Bible is because Philemon, himself, shared this letter with the church. Therefore he must have welcomed Onesimus back as Paul asked.

That being the case, Philemon did something completely counter-cultural. As a run-a-way slave, Onesimus had no rights and virtually no hope. His crime, which seems to have been compounded by the stealing of something, carried the maximum punishment, death. The law thought, what else would deter others' slaves from doing the same thing?!

Paul appealing to the fact that Onesimus was now a convert to Christ and therefore a brother in Christ, asks Onesimus be received back and anything 'owed' be written off as if it were a gift to Paul.

Absolutely Radical... was the request and the positive response. Through the Gospel, hearts can be changed and forgiveness can be granted as a new people of God are constituted as both family and the church!

If the Gospel worked back then, it can still work today!
Where have you seen the Gospel work in your life?
Is there someone you need to 'receive back' with forgiveness?
Think about it... I am.

Lord, I sit here this morning blessed because Your Gospel works. I can and am a new person as I allow the Holy Spirit to work in me. Lord, I still have many places that need cleaning up. But thanks be to You, other places have been cleaned up. Praise You and thank You!

Come, Lord Jesus, work in my life. I pray through Your name, so that You, the Father and the Spirit may be praised through the actions and attitudes of my life. Amen.

Friday, July 4: 1Kings 1– God's in control...

David's family life is tragic, filled with plots, intrigue and backbiting. How sad. And yet in the midst of chaotic and convoluted family life, God remains in control and God's will prevails. Despite the latest attempt to coup the throne, Solomon, God's choice as the next king of Israel, prevails.

The story of Israel is a story of very fallen human beings being used of God to bring His salvation will into history.

I could say that the story hasn't changed greatly in 3000 years. God continues to use very fallen human beings to spread His message of salvation through out the world.

And because this is true, God can and will use me (and you) to spread His message of salvation through out the world. Every Christ-follower is part of God's grand design. Every Christ-follower has a part to play. Every Christ-follower has gifts, abilities and talents to help spread God's name around the world.

Yes, we mess up. Yes, evil forces attempt coups to stop the spread of God's name. Yes, we get off track and distracted. But none of this undoes God's grand design. Adonijah's coup couldn't stop God's will that Solomon become king and neither will any person or force stop the nations from hearing the name of Jesus.

Be of good cheer, God is at work and part of God's work is using you and me to spread His name and fame to the corners of the globe.

Let's get to work...

Lord, use me to spread Your name. Use me to push back the darkness. Lord, use me today and tomorrow and all my tomorrows that Your name and Your fame and Your wonder be know throughout the world. In Your name – Father, Son and Holy Spirit- I pray. Amen.

Saturday, July 5: 1Kings 2– a word from father to son...

Chapter 2 is the account of Solomon securing the kingdom under his reign. It is filled with retribution and blood. In the end Solomon is uncontested as king and all internal threats to his reign have been eliminated.

The chapter opens with David's final words to his son before his death and these provided my connection with the Lord this morning.

"I am about to go the way of all the earth," [David] said. "So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do ... (2-3).

What incredibly wise and straightforward counsel to his son. I am not planning on ‘going the way of all the earth’ soon, but I hope and pray that I live a life worth of the Lord and so earn the right to speak words like this to my children before going on to be with the Lord for eternity.

I thought about David’s words and put them into my own words, which might go something like this: “Be a man. Follow the Lord. Obey Him and keep His ways and your life will prosper.”

Great words from father to son...

Lord, as I wrap up in prayer this morning, my first petition is that I live a life worthy of speaking these words with integrity. I pray, too, for my children that they will be living in a spiritual place so that they will accept this counsel. And finally I pray, Lord, for a healthy relationship with my children all of my life so that I have the opportunity to speak final words of blessing upon my children before You take me home.

Though Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, July 6, 2014, 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.