

The Weekly Word

July 14-20, 2014

I hope the lives of Solomon and other kings draw you into devotion. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, July 14: 1Kings 9- Living in the Land of "IF"...

Charmed is one word that came to mind as I read about Solomon.

Son of David, King of Israel... charmed life!

David secures the borders and Solomon inherits a peace-filled nation at the height of its power and influence... charmed life.

For the second time the Lord God appears and speaks to him... charmed again comes to mind.

And yet as I listen to God's Words to Solomon, there is a huge condition to the promises God makes to him. If you... if your descendants walk faithfully and obey my commands, etc.

IF means that the pressure is on Solomon and his descendants to fulfill their end of the bargain first before God is obligated to keep His.

IF is a small but telling word.

The Davidic covenant is governed by IF...

As I contemplated that, I realized all the more how blessed I am to be living under the New Covenant...

Praise God for the New Covenant in Jesus... a new and certain way, where assurance of salvation is part of God's gift to those who believe in Jesus... where the Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee of our inheritance... where grace abounds...

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Tuesday, July 15: 1Kings 10- Without self-examination...

Unimaginable wealth, that is what Solomon enjoyed. Knowing Solomon abandoned the Lord and His ways for much of his life, I found myself wondering if his wealth played a role in turning from the Lord?

The text here is silent on this. But elsewhere Jesus did say, "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Mt 6:24). He also commented that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich to enter the kingdom of God (Mt 19:24).

Clearly riches can be an impediment to faith.

I found myself wondering... wondering about my life because I am rich. By my country's standard I am middle (upper middle) class but on a world scale I am top 1%. Most of us in the US are. Everyday we enjoy clean water, reliable electricity –as much as we want, more than enough food, clothing, shelter, access to medical care. Need I go on? These basics are things many in our world only dream about having.

Back to my musings, does my wealth stunt my faith? Does it allow me to rely on myself rather than the Lord, which could be a first step to turning from the Lord.

At this point in my life I would say, no it doesn't seem to be... but I don't ever want to stop asking myself this and like questions. Because without self-examination, I could slip and fall just as easily as Solomon.

Lord, keep me steady, keep me strong. Keep me growing in You, because constant growth is the best defense against backsliding and turning from You. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, July 16: 1Kings 11- Finish Well...

Solomon is a negative example about finishing well. He did not finish well. As the text says he was led astray by his many wives to foreign gods. How sad. This brilliant man who began his journey as king wonderfully, lost his way.

The start of his error, it seems, was disregarding the Lord's commands about not marrying foreign wives. He didn't listen... and he and all Israel paid the piper because of his sin.

It is good to start well, but finishing well is far better still!

So what do I (you) need to be doing in order to finish well with Jesus?

Stay the course... when things are hard don't give up; push on.

Keep my nose in the Word of God. Read, study and meditate regularly and consistently.

Pray often, Paul even says to pray unceasingly.

Hand with people who are walking with Jesus. Find encouragement from brothers and sisters in the Lord.

These are some of the things I can keep doing so that I will finish well... If you have more thoughts send them to me!

Lord, Jesus, You stayed the course. You followed through and went to Calvary. Give me the strength to stay the course with You, no matter what You ask of me. I will need Holy Spirit strength, so please breathe the Holy Spirit into me again and again. Through You, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, July 17: 1Kings 12- Worldly wise but godly foolish...

Can you do something that is wise in the world's eyes but foolish in God's? Yes, you can and Jeroboam is proof of this.

God gave Jeroboam a chance to follow Him and be His king over Israel, but with his first major act Jeroboam dishonored the Lord and set Israel on a course away from the Lord!

Jeroboam assessed the worldly situation practically; if the people returned to Jerusalem 3 times a year to sacrifice, they may very well returned to Rehoboam. But if God was in the separation, then God could have protected Jeroboam. However, instead of trusting the Lord and living faithfully by attending to the pilgrim feasts at the temple, Jeroboam set up rival sanctuaries and rival feasts and rival priests to lead the people at the rival sanctuaries. In other words, Jeroboam set up his own god who looked like the Lord but was really a counterfeit! Jeroboam directly disobeyed God's Word and by doing so sealed his fate and worse... led the people astray!

God forbid that I or any Christ-following leader would do that today...

Lord, when I am tempted to go my own way, bring me to my knees! Please, Lord, I want to remain faithful to You and lead faithfully in Your church.

I am reminded of yesterday's devotion... help me to do those things so I finish well. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, July 18: 1Kings 13- A chance to change...

God offers Jeroboam an opportunity to repent... but he doesn't take it. A prophet all the way from Judah comes to pronounce judgment. But Jeroboam ignores God's Word... for the second time! The chapter closes with a stinging rebuke of Jeroboam. *Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth (33-34).*

How often do I, do we, pass on God's call to change, to grow, to repent? It is so easy to point a finger at Jeroboam, but like the modern proverb says, "when you point one finger, three others are pointing back at you!"

The text invites me to pause and listen. Is the Lord pointing out an area of life that needs to change? Think about this...

Open my mind and heart to You, Lord, that I might hear and obey Your Word. Through Jesus, the Living Word, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, July 19: 1Kings 14- The weight of leadership...

And he [the Lord] will give Israel up because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and has caused Israel to commit" (16).

As I read this chapter about judgment on Jeroboam, my heart cringed when I read verse 16 above. I cringed because I saw in it the obligation and responsibility of leaders to lead well. Jeroboam did not, and not only did he suffer for it, but the populous suffered as well. Jeroboam's sin-filled leadership led Israel astray and *caused Israel to commit* sin for which she would be judged! Such is the spiritual weight of spiritual leadership. When a spiritual leader leads poorly he/she can lead the people into error for which they will suffer God's judgment.

This hit me because as pastor I am a spiritual leader and the thought that the spiritual lives of my people rest in part in my leadership adds great weight to calling and job performance.

Am I leading well? Meaning, am I leading people in line with Jesus and the Word? Am I leading people to deep obedience to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Am I leading people to deeper faithfulness to God, the God revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? This is leading well. Am I?

If you are not a pastor or leader in God's church you might ask similar questions about your leadership... parents, are you leading your families well? Bible Study leaders, are you leading your studies well?

And if you are not a leader, are your leaders leading you well?

Think about it.

Oh, God, the weight of my call is heavy upon me. Encourage me, correct me, lead me, that I might lead Your people well. And, Lord, if I am off course, correct me or remove me that I might not cause anyone to sin and fall under Your judgment. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, July 20, 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.