

**The Weekly Word**  
June 29 – July 5, 2015

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians continues... Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, June 29: 2Corinthians 7- Purify yourselves...**

This chapter opens with a direct comment about our calling to purity, holiness and faithfulness. It is here that I spent time refreshing my soul.

*Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (1).*

Purify ourselves... myself... from everything that contaminates body and spirit.

God's Word gives me this charge... purify myself, wash myself, cleanse myself.

When I wash my hands, I actively scrub off the dirt. By analogy, if I am going to purify myself, I must actively scrub off all things that contaminate. I take an active part in this. I must identify contaminants and then find the cleanser to wash them away.

When I work in my woodshop, normal soap won't do, I need something with a degreaser as well as cleanser. Sexual contaminants takes one kind of cleansing, pride takes another and so on.

All cleansing requires identification of the sin area and then confession. But beyond that, purification of some kinds of contaminants takes a commitment to avoid certain activities or places, others take disciplines of the heart more so than life. God calls us to engage in whatever we find necessary to purify our lives... all of it, body and spirit, mind and heart, all of it.

*Lord, I cannot do this without the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, revealing and convicting me of my sins and sin patterns, and then giving me 'the where with all' to attack these areas in the power of the Spirit and replacing them with godly Jesus-honoring behaviors, actions, thoughts and desires. O, Lord, help me, guide me, strengthen me to be Yours, totally and wholly Yours. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 30: 2Corinthians 8- Excel in giving...**

The letters to Corinth are often associated with spiritual gifts, although Paul addresses quite a number of issues. This morning's reading is all about giving. And verse 7 resonated with my spirit so I lingered on it after completing my reading of the chapter.

*But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

In a subtle way Paul plays hardball with the Corinthians. They love spiritual gifts (see 1Cor 12-14) and knowledge so Paul plays to their desires and uses that to drive them to the grace of giving.

Were he writing to me, he might have written, 'since you excel in everything—in family and parenting, in work and profession—excel also in the grace of giving.' In effect, Paul says excel in giving as you excel in those things you do best and give your attention to!

Those things I excel in are the things I have worked hard to master. I have studied them, I have worked on them, I have learned them, even 'mastered' them and Paul says do the same with giving.

Some people excel in sports, tennis and golf come to mind. Some excel in music, playing, singing, performing and teaching. Where I live, some excel in boating. They master the way of the sea, in sail or motor boats. Whatever it is that you excel at, apply the same diligence and effort to your grace of giving.

How do I do this???

Giving takes a change of heart and Romans 12:1-2 tells me this comes by the renewing of my mind. I have to allow God, the Holy Spirit, into this part of my life to break my stinginess and open my heart to the needs of others. Then there is practice, I have to start giving. Like someone learning tennis, I have to practice my swing until it begins to be a natural reaction on the tennis court. Likewise, I have to give generously, whatever that is for me at the moment. Then as I grow in this area, I will do it with more and more effectiveness and power. And so generosity will well up in me and become much more 'natural' or automatic.

Giving and growing in the grace of giving is learned.... And God bids me to learn it so well it would be said of me that I excel in it.

*Okay, Lord, let the adventure of excelling in the grace of giving begin... Holy Spirit, lead me. Reduce my selfishness and increase my desire to grace others with all that you have given me. I pray in Jesus' name and for the sake of living the love He has given to me. Amen*

### **Wednesday, July 1: 2Corinthians 9- Generosity...**

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously (6).*

How could I not spend time considering this verse? It just grabbed and pulled me in.

Generosity has many ways to be expressed. Paul moves directly to money, riches and giving, calling the Corinthians to complete the gift they promised.

The verse challenges me. Am I giving generously? If I am being stingy with what God has given me, life has a way of being stingy back. This is not some dollar for dollar exchange so much as a holistic way of seeing things.

But as I think about the law of sowing and reaping, I see its application in much more than just money.

Time... the more I use my time to glorify God, the more time I seem to have available.

Relationships... the more I give myself to relationships the more these relationships pour back into me. In my profession I see many couples, and as the years go by, they give less and less to their relationship. Maybe work gobbles up all their time. Maybe they focus on the children rather than maintaining their couple relationship. Maybe this or maybe that, but as the years mount, they give less and less to their couple relationship. Before they know it, they move past the children years and all of a sudden they find they have no relationship with one another. Someone calls this 'married singles'... to people still married who have little or no relationship because they neglected to sow into their relationship for years.

When you sow generously, you reap generously...

As my time with the Lord winds down today, I am pondering how I might make generous use of all the Lord has given me...

My money, finances, and stuff,

My time,

My relationships,

My gifts, talents and abilities...

*Lord, how might I use these for Your honor and glory? Lord, how might I use these to reflect Your goodness in my life? Lord, how might I sow richly into Your kingdom advance? I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Thursday, July 2: 2Corinthians 10- We are in a battle...**

I found myself thinking about verse 3: *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.*

My thoughts ran in a number of directions. First, we are in a battle. We are.

Our culture is working overtime to drag us into its mold. Advertisers are battling to have us spend our dollars on their products. And the enemy of God is working overtime to keep us from becoming effective ambassadors for Jesus in the world.

We are in a battle!

Secondly, I thought about our weapons, which are not the world's weapons and our manner of battle is not the world's manner.

Our weapons are spiritual in dimension not this-worldly. We have the weapon of prayer... calling out to God for heavenly support. We have God's weapon of His authority. We live and move and battle not from a position of weakness but strength... not our strength, mind you, but God's strength as we live in His name! Our weapons are the various spiritual gifts that God gives us to use and we have the weapons of Spirit-Fruit, too. A character of living and battling that the world simply cannot access because they know not God, Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit.

Not only that, we wage our battle from our 'knees' in prayer and humility. Humility, which is born of strength not weakness. I am thinking of the attitude of Jesus that Paul commends to us in Philippians 2:5-8...

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

Sadly, too often I resort to the world's ways and forget that *we do not wage war as the world does.*

*Lord, help me to rely on You and Your ways not my ways... please. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Friday, July 3: 2Corinthians 11- A true disciple's resume...**

When needing to 'defend' his apostleship, Paul boasts... to match the boasting of the so-called super apostles, who were really false apostles. What struck me was the aspects of ministry that he boasted about. I suspect Paul's boasts were quite different, even opposed to the boasting of the super apostles.

It is not that Paul regularly boasted about his ministry. He didn't. Normally his only boasting was in the cross of Christ, his Lord (Galatians 6:14a *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...*) but to counter the dangerous influence of these false apostles Paul needed to counter their boasting with his own.

Paul, then, boasts about sufferings and hardships he endured for the sake of the Gospel. Paul mentions that he supported himself and had other churches cover his living rather than burden the Corinthians with supporting him. In essence he said, 'I preached free of charge'.

As God's Word burrowed into my thoughts and heart, I replayed typical pastor conversations at conferences. How large our church is, how big the budget, how many converts, staff members, visitors, yada, yada, yada...

My thought is that these conversations sound much more like the boastings of the false super apostles, than they do Paul.

Now I do not think we should boast at all, except in the cross of Christ, our Savior and Lord, but in the quietness of my devotions this morning I am wondering if I have a resume of devotion that is akin at all to Paul's. Are there any places where I have truly sacrificed for Jesus, the Gospel or the advance of God's kingdom? Reading back over Paul's list, it confronts me with costly sacrificial effort in the name of Christ. And I see nothing that comes even remotely close in my life.

I feel some shame and sadness rising in me...

*Lord, I am finding words difficult right now. You gave everything for me. Philippians 2, Jesus, You left the glory of heaven and the perfection and majesty of the Godhead to become human... and to die on a cross for me, for the world. What have I given to follow You?*

*The weight of this thought presses upon me. All I can do is bow in adoration before You and pledge my life anew to You. Praise to You Father, Jesus, Spirit. Amen.*

#### **Saturday, July 4: 2Corinthians 12- Counter-cultural way to live...**

In my world we strive for power, for recognition, for titles. We work hard to be strong and climb as high as we can. Then we trust in ourselves and in our strength and abilities.

This morning Paul turns this way of thinking and living on its head.

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (9-10).*

In Christ, our strength is in the Lord and what He can do in and through us. I do not believe for an instant that Paul is suggesting that we do not apply ourselves and learn our craft and grow in competencies. No, but I must remember that my real strength and ability is not in my own power but in God's power within me...

This means I must be about God's will. The Lord will not strengthen me for tasks that are not for His glory.

It means that I must operate in a Christ-like manner, because I do not believe that God will empower me to live in ways that are not His ways.

I believe this means that I should spiritually stretch myself... moving at His beckon call to places beyond where I feel naturally able to operate in His power.

God will do immeasurably more through us than we ever imagine if we live for His will and the advance of His glory.

*Lord, I believe Your grace is sufficient for me and I pray that I will advance Your will with all my strength and then beyond that because I operate truly not in my strength but in Your strength. To Your honor and glory I pray. Amen.*

#### **Sunday, July 5, 2015, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.