

The Weekly Word
Aug 31-Sept 6, 2015

September already, where does time go? Wherever time goes, God is in control and His Word, being eternal, will be there. So... Happy reading as you plant God's Word into your heart...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, August 31: Colossians 1- Faith and Love...

Paul prays for the church in Colossae... *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you (3-6a).*

My heart warmed and was drawn in by the phrase, *we have heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and of the **love** you have for all God's people...*

Faith and love seem to be connected, like two sides of a coin together representing one whole. This **faith** and **love** spring from the gospel that lives in God's people of Colossae.

I found myself thinking and musing, "What a beautiful picture of our life in Christ this pair paints."

Too often I watch people, myself included, separate faith and love. (I admit it is often easier to see the trait in others than myself. When this happens I need the courage to look in the mirror and see if this trait I noticed in others' lives in me.) We speak of faith as if it is the precepts we believe, as if faith is the knowledge stuffed in our heads. Sadly, this 'information-based faith' is often divorced from how we live. So I can say, "I believe in Jesus," but remain a bigot or remain uncompassionate about people in need and so forth.

Paul's prayer highlights for me how delighted Paul is that the Colossians do not do that. They keep faith and love joined tightly connected.

Interestingly, as I muse, it is not love alone either. As if 'all you need is love, love, love is all you need', like the Beatles sang.

Love and faith, faith and love are joined together to create a life that pleases God. And the Gospel, presented correctly and growing rightly, ought to produce **faith** and **love**.

I came to that moment of my morning when it was time to hold the plumb line of **faith** and **love** up against my own life.

Does my faith in Jesus produce a generous portion of love in me... *love for all God's people?* Is the love obvious, can it be demonstrated in my calendar or my check register, in my words, behaviors and attitudes?

It is wrestling with questions like these that connect me with my Father as I sit with His Word....

Lord, search me and know me, examine my heart that my life might be a gift and offering of love to You, My Lord and my God.

Purge out all evil and self-centeredness that remains in me so that there might be plenty of room for Your character and fruit to prosper and grow in me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, September 1: Colossians 2- Jesus is God...

Colossians gives us one of the richest pictures of Jesus Christ in the Epistles. Colossians lauds Jesus Christ as fully God. I was drawn to this truth as I read today.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority (9-10).

Can there be a more wonderful time of devotion than pondering the wonder of Jesus Christ, my Savior?!

In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form... While Jesus walked this earth He was totally human and fully God. Amazing.

Honestly trying to comprehend this is a bit much for my finite mind. I believe it, I take it by faith but I really can't fully comprehend it. How can all of God be crammed into one finite human body? This is beyond me to understand.

I am okay with this mystery of the faith. In fact it actually gives me some comfort because if I could fully comprehend God, then that god would have to be a mighty small god!

I wonder sometimes what it was like for the disciples and people who met and knew Jesus to learn that in addition to being Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, He was also simultaneously God of the universe?!? That is Paul's message.

And if we don't get Paul's point with the first clause, he continues:

He [Christ] is the head over every power and authority... I want to circle the word 'every.' Think of any power or authority in this world and in every world, Christ is over every one of those authorities. Isn't this is another definition of God... that which is over everything thing else?

Jesus, my Lord, is my God. Jesus, my Lord, is THE God. And Jesus invites me to sit with Him and get to know Him. Jesus invites me (you, anyone, everyone) to walk, learn, follow and be His representatives in the world. Wow! I am blown away!!!

Bless You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me and for revealing Yourself to me. Alleluia. Amen.

Wednesday, September 2: Colossians 3- Changed forever...

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (1-2).

This is the essence of God's Word to us through Paul in today's chapter. As believers we are filled by God in order to live differently. And the differences will be noticeable.

The 'Do's and Don'ts' of our new living are no surprise. In fact they are spoken of elsewhere. Very little is original to the Colossians.

Even now, centuries after these words were penned, the 'Do's and Don'ts' remain pertinent.

I think of the 'Don'ts' as guardrails on the highway... they protect me from careening off the path and crashing.

I scan the 'Don'ts' again (5-11); they are not the character traits I look for in friends. This makes sense. I don't want these traits in my life so why hang around people who have them? I don't feel as if they are shackles. Generally speaking life would be better if everyone guarded their lives from these 'Don'ts'... and prisons would certainly be less crowded!

Similarly the 'Do's' (pretty much the rest of the chapter, verses 12-25) make sense. And the world again would be a much better place if everyone lived as these verses suggest.

What I recognized is that God's way, accessible for all who are in Christ because we have God's Spirit and power within us, isn't some kooky way to live; it is a beautiful way to live.

Now on to living it...

I re-read the 'Do's' and set my heart to live this way... today and all my todays. I know I will be imperfect in this living. Yet may God be glorified as I do.

God help me to live as You call me to live... through Jesus, by the Spirit's power, for your glory, Father. Amen.

Thursday, September 3: Colossians 4- Counter-cultural living...

I love all the greetings and the 'I'm thankful for this person and that person' that so often ends Paul's letters. I understand that communication was more difficult, as was maintaining relationships over large distances, back in Paul's day. Even so there is a special quality to these greetings that touches me.

Paul is not a 'lone ranger Christian'. Even though he is generally on the move, he remains connected with people who genuinely love and care for him.

And ministry is never about him. Paul is encouraging, calling, blessing and greeting others constantly, inviting them into ministry, spurring them on in ministry and so forth. And when some glory comes his way, he deflects it appropriately to Jesus.

Ministry for Paul is about God's glory and the work of God's people.

These were the qualities that seeped into my soul today...

Do I give all glory, laud and honor to my God –Father, Jesus, Spirit?

Do I lift others up?

Do I crave honor and recognition for myself, or am I willing to share it with others?

Simple ideas, yet so counter-cultural in the 'me-focused' world in which I live.

Lord, I pray that my life is a glory producer for You and never a life that steals glory for myself. To You all praise and honor belong. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, September 4: Philippians 1- Faith begets faith...

The influence of an example can be powerful.

I saw this in what Paul writes: *Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear (12-14).*

People have seen Paul's boldness and effectiveness and it encourages them to be bold. People see the need. Paul is not as free as he once was to proclaim the Gospel, so they step in and fill the gap.

Faith begets faith.

Iron sharpens iron.

A good example spurs on more good examples.

I began thinking... Who am I watching, learning from, and patterning my life after? Who are my examples?

How they live will affect how I live; this cuts both ways. Good examples can breed good behaviors and bad examples can breed bad behaviors.

Next I began wondering who is watching me? Who is patterning their lives after me? This led to the inevitable question. Am I a faith-filled, God-honoring, example?

How I live... how you live matters...

Think about it.

Lord, give me strength to be like Paul, a positive example for You and the advance of Your kingdom to the ends of the earth. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, September 5: Philippians 2- Keep at it...

“Keep at it,” those were the words that came to me as I began to process this passage, particularly verse 12, which is the verse that drew my attention.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

Continue... keep at it... press on... push yourself... these phrases seem to tumble out of my thoughts. It seems like Paul was playing the role of the personal trainer providing that voice saying, “You can do it. One more rep, one more sprint...”

I absolutely believe God will see us through to the end (Romans 8, Ephesians 1) but we are not absolved from doing our part. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling...* I have a role in my sanctification. I have a role in my maturity.

Emphasis is on **a** role. Neither is my maturity and my sanctification ALL about me. The sentence continues in verse 13, *for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

God is at work, too! Our working out of our salvation is a cooperative work with God.

My thoughts flip back to the word, continue. I have work to do... God desires that I work on deepening, strengthening and growing my faith. Seems to me this means continuing to read and study the Word (filling my mind with the things of God), praying (keeping my relationship with the Lord open and flowing), and living my faith in the way I speak and act (exercising faith muscles).

Clearly, I have things to do today and all my tomorrows...

Lord, show me how to live today. Show me things I can do that will make a difference for You in the world...open my eyes to people who need a word and good deeds I can do, anything that will help me grow stronger and bless You, my Lord and my God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, September 6, 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.

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