

The Weekly Word

Sept 7-13, 2015

This is a memorable week in US history... Memorial Day on the 7th... is a day to remember those who have died while serving in our armed forces. Then there is Sept 11th... 9-11, a day of sadness and pain. Despite the bad things in this world, God's Word 'abideth still.' Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 7: Philippians 3- A citizen of heaven...

On this day that remembers the men and women who died while in the US armed forces, I found myself drawn into the text by the phrase, *our citizenship is in heaven* (20)? I found myself thinking about this phrase and what it suggests are far as my living.

Our citizenship is in heaven... well, it means my citizenship is NOT here on earth. It seems to mean I should not focus my life around things of this world. Clearly I cannot step out of this world, I am part of this world but I cannot focus all my energies on the good things or bad things of this world. Life in Jesus is not about where I live, what my house is like or my cars or my retirement account, or even my family or my health or my politics, etc. Obviously these are important but they cannot become my total focus. *My citizenship is in heaven*.

On the positive side, I should consider what the important character traits of heaven, God's world, are and focus on them. Loving other people and God and honoring God; these are 2 important traits of heaven. How can I incorporate these into my living? How can these become the focus of my living?

Somehow I feel like I am not even scratching the surface of this word...

Lord, keep burrowing this thought into me! Lord, keep piercing me, reminding me that my citizenship is with You and in You, not here. I don't think I really get this, Lord... help me. Teach me. Show me. Lead me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, September 8: Philippians 4- People problems...

Isn't the church supposed to be perfect? Aren't all Christians supposed to get along? How can it be that these two women are having problems? How is it that their problems are so significant that Paul chooses to address them directly and enlist the help of people in Philippi to mediate?

Even in the church... stuff happens.

Even in the church good people have issues with one another.

Listening to Paul address Euodia and Syntyche, it struck me that Christians are people just like everyone else. We have our weak spots, hurts and concerns. We are filled with the Spirit sometimes and very human the next.

Paul writes: *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life* (2-3).

Despite our humanness Paul anticipates that these two women can work through their problems and become *of the same mind*. This phrase reminds me of Philippians 2 where Paul directs us to have the attitude of Christ... (see Philippians 2:6-11). Clearly these women were not living this way.

I wondered, do I?

My honest answer is ‘sometimes’. Some days and with some people I can live the attitude of Christ. Some people and some days bring anything but that attitude out of me. I could be Euodia or Syntyche.

I also thought about how much God values healthy appropriate relationships. The fact that verses 2 & 3 are in Scripture speaks to the reality that the Father longs for us to maintain healthy and appropriate relationships.

As I was typing this last line God seemed to speak, “Bill, are there relationships you need to repair?”

Hmmm...

I ask the same question of those who are reading this blog.

Lord, help me to maintain my relationship well. Teach me humility when needed and also the courage to fight for health in all of my relationships. Lord, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, September 9: Philemon- Refresh God's people.....

I was captivated by the imagery in verse 7: *Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.*

I wondered what it means to *refresh the hearts of the Lord's people*. I tried to picture this in 21st century living.

Did he give liberally to the church? I doubt that was what Paul was talking about. He may have done this but the imagery seems much more people centered.

Was he one of those people who moved around after the worship, checking in with folks, speaking a good word here, lending a listening ear there? This could certainly be part of it.

Was he one of those people in the fellowship who everyone knows you can go to when you have a problem or issue? He holds confidences and seems to have wisdom for all situations.

I know a number of people who live in these ways. When I think of them a smile comes to my face because I know how many sisters and brothers in the church they have been there for... quietly refreshing hearts without any fanfare or acknowledgement. These folks are the backbone of health in the churches I have been associated with and they are a wonder to behold.

It seems Philemon was one of these folk and Paul honors him for being a refreshing brother in the church.

I wonder what I could be doing to be a Philemon within my church family?

How about you?

God, I have been refreshed by others... a word, a gift, a listening ear. Open my heart to others... that I might provide a word, gifts, listening ear, or what have you to sisters and brothers in my church family. Amen.

Thursday, September 10: Psalm 58- How do you pray when you see evil in the world?...

How do you pray when you see evil in the world?

In today's Psalm, David gives us a VERY strong prayer; in part he prays:

Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;

LORD, tear out the fangs of those lions!

*Let them vanish like water that flows away;
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.
May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along,
like a stillborn child that never sees the sun (6-8).*

Compared with this, most of my 'against-evil' prayers are quite tepid.

I am sure some people might be upset by this prayer... "Not very Christian and certainly not very politically correct".

I don't think this Psalm advocates for this kind of prayer all the time or even any time someone hurts or disses us. But in the face of injustice in our world where leaders look the other way for expedience sake or collusion sake... that kind of vile behavior begets prayer of equal viscosity.

This prayer shakes me, charges me, and humbles me all at the same time.

God, teach me to pray... I mean really pray! God, give me Your heart; Your heart that loves and Your heart that hates evil and injustice. Teach me, Lord, to pray from Your heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, September 11: Psalm 59- Who do you rely upon?...

In our 'I rely on me, I did it my way' age we are our greatest strength. But David presents another way of living... The way of reliance upon the Lord.

The Psalm opens, *Deliver me from my enemies, O God; be my fortress against those who are attacking me* (1). And from that point on David is calling upon the Lord to come and be his strength, his protector.

David lives life leaning on the Lord rather than on his strength, his smarts or his army.

I considered this as I meditated this morning...

Upon whom do I rely? Is it all about me and what I can do or do I rely on God to have my back and be there for me when enemies assail me?

How about you? ...

Lord, help me take this Psalm to heart... to do more than meditate and ponder but to bring it into my living. As it says elsewhere, some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but I will trust in the Lord, my God.

May this be true of me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, September 12: Psalm 60- ...

David again cries out to the Lord for help. He understands that God is his only true source of help. Verses 11-12 put this into words: *Give us aid against the enemy, for human help is worthless. With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.*

I noticed that the intro to the Psalm says it is "For Teaching" which got me thinking about what this Psalm teaches me.

My first thought was that it reminds me that God is my true source of help. It is easy to fool myself into thinking that "I can solve all my problems!" Or that government will save me or my friends or...fill in the blank. While one or more of these entities might provide for me in a time of trouble, David helps me see that the hand that moved those who come to my help is the Lord. God is the one who deserves my trust and this is a truth I must never forget.

Another learning is that I can be honest with the Lord. David feels that the Lord is angry with him (them –the people of Israel) and he says so. Too often I mask honesty with God through pious words. David blurts out his hurts to God and David's honesty is refreshing. I am thinking that too many prayers are sterile... and the Lord knows my heart is not sterile!

Another learning as I considered this Psalm is that I can learn from other people's prayers. And learning from Scriptural prayers is even better because God inspired these prayers!

It has been a good day in the Psalms.

Lord, Your Word has engaged my thoughts and mind. Please engage my heart, too, because an engaged heart is when I truly learn and grow. And this, Lord, is what I desire. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, September 13, 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.