

The Weekly Word
Aug 24-30, 2015

This week we read the Letter to the Ephesians, a rich and wonderful read. May God bless you as you read this awesome letter. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, August 24: Ephesians 1- Loved...

I was gripped immediately by 2 words... ***In love*** *he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... (4b-5).*

Love motivated God to adopt us. Love drove Jesus to come. Love is why the Holy Spirit marks us.

In love, out of love, because of love, driven/motivated/moved by love, God acted to save us – us being all who are ‘in Christ.’ As Paul goes on to say in verse 13, you (we) *were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him ...*

Believing in Jesus marks our journey of faith and all the fruits of salvation are given to us when we believe. They are guaranteed by God, the Holy Spirit, who then stamps our adoption papers final and completed!

Believing is the beginning of our faith story and it guarantees our successful end as well because we are marked by God Himself.

I sat and marveled as my salvation... which God did for me IN LOVE. All I needed to do was believe...

The hymn writer wrote centuries ago, *O the deep, deep love of Jesus...* Yes, it is true. And what is true of Jesus is true for the Father and Spirit as well. We are loved.

Bask in that love today. Believe in God’s love today. Live because of and out of God’s love today and every day.

Think about it.

Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, because You loved me, I am able to love You and others. Because You loved me, I am adopted and bear Your name. Because You love me I have all the blessings I need to do everything You ask and require of me. Because You loved me, my faith is guaranteed by the Spirit. Because You loved me, I can live and live life to the fullest... which means I get to live it for You. Amen. Alleluia.

I want the world to know of Your Love!!! Amen and Amen.

Tuesday, August 25: Ephesians 2- wonderful truth, Jesus did it...

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (13).

Those words were spoken to me and every non-Jew in the world. The blood of Jesus, the sacrifice of Jesus, the cross of Jesus has repaired the breach sin created and enables all people a way back home into God’s family. Yeah, God! Yeah, Jesus!

Estrangement from God no longer needs to be my (our) lot in life. We can be connected and restored to the relationship we were designed to have when the world was created. We can be forgiven and set free for all bondage and sin that ensnares us. The blood of Jesus, the sacrifice of

Jesus, the cross of Jesus guarantees this for every person, no matter his/her race or language or color, or nationality, gender, age, education, etcetera, etcetera. All a person needs to do is open their hearts to God's grace (see 1-10) and believe in Jesus.

What a gift.

I am so thankful for Jesus. I hope and pray you are, too.

Thank You, Jesus, for the cross... for offering Your life, Your blood for me, to pay the penalty for my sins. I love You, Jesus. I really do. And I will serve You with all of my life and energy and intelligence and imagination and love. All glory to the Father, to You, Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Wednesday, August 26: Ephesians 3- God's marvelous plan for the Gentiles ...

As soon as I opened this morning's text, the title that the NIV editors put above chapter 3 grabbed my attention... "God's marvelous plan for the Gentiles."

God cared for the whole world. God cared and cares for all people. Yes, God had a special relationship with Israel for millennia; now through the Gospel, God's special relationship is open to all. No longer is a special relationship with God built on bloodlines of human ancestry; now it is built on faith in Jesus Christ... *through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (6).*

The words 'in Christ' are key, I thought. Faith in Jesus Christ is the key to the Gospel Paul and others preached.

And now we who live for Jesus today are bearers of this Gospel and we have a task to do. *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (10)...* We are to declare God's Gospel to this world and to God's enemy in the *heavenly realms*.

OMG, I thought. God has placed all His chips on the church –you, me, all who believe in Jesus –to fulfill God's desire to declare His amazing Gospel to the world!

I thought and prayed...

Lord, what is my role to help advance Your Gospel? How am I to help the Gospel advance? Give... generously to Christ's cause world wide, particularly to His Church.

Pray... marshal the forces of heaven to God's causes. As Paul soon breaks into prayer for the Ephesians, I am to pray for believers around the world to be filled to play their part.

Go/Do... I cannot be an armchair participant. I still have life in these legs and strength in this voice. I need to be declaring myself...

OMG... God wants me in the battle!

Lord, I am honored to bear Your call and receive Your enlistment. Lead me, train me, send me, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, August 27: Ephesians 4- Living God's new life...

How does God want me to live? Verses 25-32 provide part of the answer I seek. I bolded the verbs because they are the action-communicators of the sentences. *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get*

rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (25-32).

With Paul's writing style it was harder to pinpoint the action-words than I anticipated. Much more of the sentences ended up bolded than I anticipated. Still, this exercise helped me see the key behaviors on which God desires me to work.

Speaking truthfully and honorably builds up others with my words. (Paul mentions our words 2 or 3 times in these few sentences. Our words and how we use them on others are VERY important.)

Controlling my anger so that bursts don't hurt people. (I think of the Fruit of the Spirit... as I ponder this see Gal 5:23).

Working honestly, not stealing, in order to be helpful for others. (Working isn't merely for my sake, it is for the sake of others, too... very 20th and 21st Century counter-cultural).

Don't grieve God, the Holy Spirit. (Keep my heart and ears open to the Lord at all times, following His lead all my days.)

These few sentences offer many places where I continually need to work to keep my life in line with God's will.

I have much homework for today and the rest of my life. How about you?

God, purge me and purify me that the dross, the sin and selfishness, of my life is burned off and what remains is only that which honors and glorifies You. Through Jesus, my Savior, I pray. Amen.

Friday, August 28: Ephesians 5- Living God's wisdom...

Wisdom... who doesn't want to be wise? I do and I am sure most of us want to know what to do in the various situations in which we find ourselves.

Wisdom can mean having the better answer for a problem or knowing how to act in a certain situation. Wisdom means different things in different contexts and situations.

In verse 15 Paul writes, *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise... Be careful to live wisely. And this statement comes in the middle of a section about living, as God would have us live, not like 'unwise' people or people who live in 'darkness.'*

How would wise people live? Well, they would avoid behaviors like sexual immorality, impurity, greed, drunkenness and debauchery. Instead, wise people will do fruitful deeds for one another and will encourage one another with songs and words that lift the heart and bring brothers and sisters closer to Jesus.

As I mused on all this... I found myself leaning into prayer... prayer that God would grant me the wisdom I need to live rightly with and before Him.

Here is how I opened my prayer:

O, Lord, would You steady my living with Your wisdom? I can get so caught up in my world and say and do things that reflect the people who live around me rather than reflect You and Your Spirit within me. Unclog my ears so that I hear You better. Fill my mind and thoughts with Your Word rather than human drivel. Give me Your wisdom so that Your life shines through me in every day living...

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, August 29: Ephesians 6- Every structure committed to Jesus...

The end of yesterday's reading and the opening of today's chapter hit me. For the person in Christ, every human structure is to be lived out in a new way, a God honoring manner that reflects God's values and design.

Marriage; the most basic of family structures find mutual support, love, caring and respect. Each party recognizing marriage is not about oneself, but mutually seeking the good of the other.

Family/children is about bringing the next generation of the human race into being and nurturing them to wholeness in life and in Christ. Human dignity and respect travels both ways appropriately.

Work, production of goods and services for self and world; slaves made the ancient world run and God said even in that structure there is a godly way filled with honor and dignity. We no longer have slaves but a business world of owners/leaders/managers and workers we can apply similar godly ways of dignity, honor and appropriateness of resources.

As I thought about these things, it hit me that God's ways should instruct and infect every human structure in which we find ourselves engaged.

If I carry Christ in me, then wherever I am I should bring Christ and His character with me. Jesus should be guiding me and all believers in how to act within every structure and situation.

Following Jesus is meant to impact every aspect of life... every aspect.

I began thinking where I could bring Jesus today... to my home, work, gym, meetings, friendships... etc., etc.

Lord, may I be an apt and winsome carrier of Jesus everywhere I go today. In Jesus' name and for the sake of You, my God –Father, Jesus Spirit. Amen.

Sunday, August 30, 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.