

The Weekly Word
Sept 14-20, 2015

The year is flying by, it is already mid September! Thanks for reading Scriptures along with me. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 14: Psalm 61- The Lord my God...

David's prayer caught me. My body sighed in rest and relief as his words and faith settled around me. I felt like I was nestled in the arms of my God. My heart/soul/body feasted on verses 3-4. *For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.*

God has been my refuge now for decades. Throughout my entire adult life I have known and delighted in the guiding of the Lord's hand. He has led me places I never thought I would go. I have seen and experienced His wonder and been engaged in His bidding. I have met His people from many places of the world and they, like me, delight in the Lord.

I have served, prayed with and been blessed by African and Latin American brothers and sisters. I have sung choruses and hymns with German brethren and even though we didn't understand each other language, there was a bond of brotherhood that is beyond description. God has opened my eyes to His work in the world and given me a small role to play. I am blessed.

Like David I long to live in the Lord's tent forever and I know I will when God calls me home to my eternity with Him.

So I sit this morning, relishing that God called me and saved me and loves me. I am His and He is mine. Alleluia... my heart is warm with love for the Lord.

Delighting in You Lord. Praising You Lord with thoughts and words. You are my God and I will serve You all the days You give me. Alleluia. Amen.

Tuesday, September 15: 1John 1- FORGIVEN...

Many Sundays we hear these words spoken from up front after a time of personal or corporate confession, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness* (9). The 'he' is God. And just a sentence or two earlier, John reminded us, *if we walk in the light, as he [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin* (7).

Two words clicked in my thoughts... fellowship and forgiven.

Walking in the light, walking in faith with the God of the Bible, which comes through faith in Jesus Christ, gives us access to total and unconditional forgiveness. The blood of Jesus washes us (purifies us) for all unrighteous and all sin. What a gift. There is no way in our own strength or ability we could have done enough to merit total and unconditional forgiveness! Gift... this is the great gift of God through faith in Jesus.

Being forgiven opens wide the door to fellowship with God, a total and open relationship with God, the maker of heaven and earth. No hiding necessary, no pretending necessary... we can know God and be known by Him.

O my, the gift of Jesus and His forgiveness is the gift that just keeps getting better.

Alleluia, what a Savior. Alleluia what a friend...

Jesus, thank You for the cross and the gift of forgiveness that comes with faith and belief in You and Your atoning gift on the cross. I am blown away by being totally forgiven and the incredible fellowship we have with You, the Father and the Spirit because we are forgiven and redeemed by You.

Bless You, Jesus, Father, Spirit. Praise You, one God—three in one. Alleluia Amen.

Wednesday, September 16: 1John 2- Live your faith...

There is so much in this short chapter. And having recently read Augustine's Confessions, Augustine has an interesting and worthwhile section on verse 16, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...*

But as I sat with the Word before me today, it was the overall tenor of the text that got me. John's opening target seems to be LIVE YOUR FAITH. I see many parallels with John 15 and his plea about remaining in the vine. And the proof is LOVE... as we love we show ourselves to be Jesus' disciples. *Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble* (10).

Our loving of others is our proof that we are living in the light of God. Well, this causes me to look at the way I live. Am I loving? Am I kind? Am I patient with others, particularly those in God's family? Do I forgive readily? Do I harbor hurts? The questions to probe my inner life keep tumbling out, spawned, I am sure, from the love definition in 1Corinthians 13.

It is so much easier for me to ask myself these questions than to honestly answer them. And my answers are mixed depending upon whom I 'see in my mind' when I consider my answers. It comes much easier to love some people than others. I am not sure why. But why isn't really all that important right now. What is important is that I face my failings and grow in Jesus and His love toward all people.

God help me... I am calling to You. It is clear that I cannot do this on my own. My human heart is wicked in spots, still stained by sin. Forgive me and Lord, do surgery on my sin-filled areas that I may be Yours fully and more totally. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, September 17: 1John 3- Better to please God than...

Two very different verses drew me in. I'll take them in the order I read them.

Verse 6: *No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.* Reading 1John can give me the impression that to sin in any way is an ultimate 'no no.' I realize that John is making the point that sin is not good, but sometimes my personal 'guilty meter' gets pegged with some of his sin verses. The phrase in verse 6 *continues to sin* actually gives me comfort. My sense is that John is drawing a line differentiating when I fall into sin and when I embrace it and continue to do it... maybe because 'Ahh, God will forgive me anyway!' For me, at least, verse 6 places an element of not caring about sin or as I said above, intending to sin in full mind and thought!

I am far from perfect and I do sin and do so regularly. But generally I don't dismiss it or even look for it and continue anyway. This verse says to me that there is a difference between sin and recurring, wonton, willful sinning. No sin is good and I will always be a sinner in need of grace. However, a redeemed heart and life filled with the Spirit shouldn't look to sin but should look to live for Jesus and advance Christ's cause in this world...

The second verse for me today was verse 13: *Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.* It took me by surprise. And the surprise showed me how soft I have become

for the Gospel. I am surprised when I am disliked (I don't think I am hated for the Gospel's sake) because of my various stands built on the Gospel. I guess there is still a part of me that has the 'fairy tale' notion that as a Christ-follower everyone should at least like me. This has never really been reality for God's people, except maybe for a few centuries when the entire Roman world seemed to be Christian. I am realizing more and more lately as my world passes into post-modernity that being loved by my world is not possible unless I capitulate on key Scriptural teaching.

So why do I believe this? And why do I fool myself into thinking everyone should love me when I stand with Jesus? And worse yet, why do I question when people don't love me? Even as I think about this, I realize that I am called to love others and if they are hating me because they are reflecting back to me my hatred for them... then I have a problem. But if I am living in a loving, Christ honoring manner and have to take a tough stand and am hated for it... I need to live with that. Better to please God as opposed to other people

Well, I have certainly traveled interesting paths in my reading and meditations today. May it be for the glory of God and the refinement of my life according to the way of Jesus...

Thank You, Lord, for Your Word... life for my heart and soul and mind. I praise You and pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, September 18: 1John 4- Love...

God's first touch came this morning through the simplest of phrases... 'Dear friends.' God inspired John to have such an easy going style in this letter. I come away with the sense that this is a fireside chat between friends. John, the older wiser friend, is imparting his seasoned wisdom to his younger buds. There is no harshness in this letter, no confrontation. Instead it is filled with genuine concern... Here's what I know. Here's what I have learned. Here is truth about God and God's way.

This speaks to me.

An older, wiser person in the faith clarifying things of the faith to younger folks in the faith...

I am the younger person in the faith and John's words are piercing right to my heart. And John clarifies understanding about Jesus and the importance of love.

Jesus is real, He came in the flesh and is from God and is the son of God. And love, particularly for one another in the faith, is to be expected. Love is how God deals with us and love is how we should deal with others. LOVE... which first comes from and is modeled by God... is the way we should live.

Love is the hallmark of genuine faith in the genuine Jesus.

Wow, there is my one sentence take away for today... Love is the hallmark of genuine faith in the genuine Jesus. That's a statement I can chew on for the day...

Thank You, Lord God, for the simple truth of Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, for expressing and living Your Love for us, asking us in turn to love You and others in gratitude for You already loving us. Thank You and praise You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen and Amen.

Saturday, September 19: 1John 5- Whoever has the Son has life ...

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ... Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the

testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1,10-12).

Whoever has the Son has life... this Word tethers me to my faith. I have life because I 'have' the Son, Jesus. I believe in Him. I worship and adore Him. I believe Jesus is the one and only Son of God who 'tabernacled' among us for a while. I believe Jesus is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. And by believing these things I believe I have been born again and been adopted into God's family. I have been redeemed and made new by God's grace and Jesus' atonement on the cross.

I sat and marveled today about God's Grace saving someone insignificant like me. I sat and considered how blessed I am...

Then I thought I have a great responsibility to tell people about how wonderful Jesus is! God is sooooo good everyone needs to know.

Thank You, Lord God. Thank You for saving me, for giving me life in Jesus. Thank You for the rich heritage of the faith, for Your Word and the people who have lived by and with Your Word for millennia. May I be a faithful link in the chain of faith that stretches back in time to John and the other Apostles. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Sunday, September 20, 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.