

The Weekly Word
Holy Week... March 25-31, 2013

May God's Word bless and challenge you as you move through Holy Week. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, March 25: Exodus 22– Laws, laws and more laws...

The Ten Commandments are the foundational laws for all of Israel, but hundreds of additional laws were given, applying and expanding upon those ten.

Today I found myself wondering what life must have been like back then that would require God to provide the laws mentioned today. So many of laws in today's chapter touch on stealing and conniving goods or animals from others. It makes me think that life in Egypt and life during that time was highly corrupt with people looking for ways to take advantage of a neighbor. It sounds like people were eager and willing to con a neighbor out of livestock!

Add to that the 'social responsibility' laws in verse 16-31. It certainly appears as if life was hard back then. I struggle with verse 19. How perverse were people that God had to put into the law, no sex with animals. I mean really! Was that going on in Israel? Was that the influence of Egypt or was that the kind of influence they would face from the peoples in Canaan? How depraved were people?

Whatever and whoever were the reasons for this law, it paints an ugly picture of the corruption of people then.

Have we really changed that much? A young woman, I know, just left for Asia to work with International Justice Mission working to free children, women and adults from sex slavery and other forms of human trafficking. And lest we think that is an issue over there, I am returning from a conference where I met another twenty-something young woman working in the Hamden, Virginia area with sex and human trafficking victims in that area!

My heart cries, 'How can this be?'

But no amount of laws can cure the human heart. Laws can restrain the heart but they will never cure the heart of its evil. Only Jesus can give a person a new heart. Only Jesus can recreate us from the inside out.

Those two women I mentioned above, have been made new by Jesus and now they both work to help others find freedom. Freedom from the human trafficking they are trapped in and freedom from the pain and emotional scars through faith and healing in Jesus.

If you are a Jesus follower, are you reaching out to others in need?

If you are not a Jesus follower, would you like to find freedom from hurts and scars? If you want to know more about Jesus, email me. I'd be glad to chat and help you...

Lord, I pray for people who have been scared by the hurt-filled actions of others. Help those who are seeking and hurting find You, Jesus, and find the help and healing that You can bring.

Lord, I pray, too, for the two women I mentioned. Strengthen them to help others. Protect their hearts from growing hard and calloused by the things they will see. And give them resolve to help others in Your name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 26: Exodus 23– Fairness...

I was surprised when I read verse 3, *and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit*. If anything, I expected God to express a favorable heart to the poor. The point seems to be 'judge fairly and don't show undue sympathy to someone simply because they are poor'. Then before I take a breath, God expressed the flip side, verse 6: *Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits*.

Don't show the poor favoritism or deny them justice.

I pondered what this duo of verses says and I recognized the God desires justice... doing what is right and disciplining what is wrong, regardless of the situation of the individual charged. There is a phrase that says 'justice is blind'... that justice treats everyone as equals before the law. Here in Exodus, as God lays out His law for His people, He is saying everyone is equal before me. Treat them as equals by being just.

Would that we could live that way today...

God invited me to ask myself a few questions. Do I favor one group or person over another, simply due to some human trait or circumstance? Do I tend to deny justice to one group or person simply due to some human trait or circumstance? Do I desire justice... 'blind' justice for all?

Some things worth thinking about...

Lord, pattern my heart to seek Your justice throughout Your world and to do what I can to bring it about. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, March 27: Exodus 24– Obedience confirmed...

There is something powerful about speaking an oath out loud. There is something powerful about hearing ourselves make the oath and doing it in front of others who hear us take the oath.

Twice in this chapter the Hebrews speak an oath of allegiance to the Lord.

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do" (3)

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey" (7).

Twice they confirm for all to hear that they will obey all the laws the Lord has given!

Will I make a similar statement? Will I follow all the Lord directs and asks of me in His Word?

Will I? Will you?

Can we do anything less as followers of Jesus Christ? Can we?

Lord, empower me to live up to my words to obey everything You have said. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, March 28: Exodus 25– ...

Verse 2 was my meditation place this morning. *"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give.*

The final six words grabbed my attention, *whose heart prompts him to give.*

One question dominated my meditation from that moment on...

What am I prompted to give to my Lord?

Beyond any regular and normal giving, after any giving spurred by duty or obedience, what am I prompted to give to my Lord?

O God, may I give you all... Amen.

Friday, March 29: Exodus 26– The tabernacle...

Good Friday!

I was struck by the detail of the plan and the provisions necessary to build the tabernacle according to God's plan...hides of sea cows, purple fabric, gold, and acacia wood. These people escaped from Egypt and were traveling by foot. The amount of stuff they were carrying with them is amazing. And what wasn't carried, acacia wood for example, must have been provided by the Lord in nature's environment.

The tabernacle is a wonderful picture of God's provision coupled with God's peoples' willingness to sacrifice and serve.

I rolled this thought around. God's provision... the starting point is God's provision. God provided the call to make a tabernacle, the plans to build the tabernacle and the supplies for the tabernacle. That which wasn't found in nature, the people had. And why did they have these supplies? Because God told them to ask neighbors for items before the Exodus and the text says they plundered Egypt (Exodus 12:36). So we have God's provision.

Additionally, the people had to be willing to sacrifice, to give back to the Lord some of the personal blessing they had and received as they left Egypt. Plus, they needed to serve the Lord by building, running, maintaining and transporting the tabernacle!

Provision from God and service and sacrifice to God... a formula for success in any age.

Think about it...

Lord, You have provided so much. All I need to do is Your will. Any break in the equation belongs to me. Help me grow in sacrifice and service. Help me conquer my selfish tendencies and surrender ALL to you. To you be the honor and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Saturday, March 30: Exodus 27– Once for all...

With Good Friday yesterday and Easter tomorrow all I could focus upon was the altar of burnt offering. From the very beginning God has been making a way for those He calls to find their way to Him. In the OT, sacrifice after sacrifice was offered, for the priests, for the people, for individuals... year after year and many times in between.

It seems a lot like what we have to do to keep our bodies clean. We shower or bathe, again and again and again. Soon after we become clean, we get dirty again by the world and our work in the world.

Imagine a world where you are clean forever. Well, being in Christ is kind of like that. Jesus died once for all (see Romans 6:10 and 1Peter 3:18); no sacrifice for sin need ever be made again. On the cross Jesus offered His perfect sinless life as a ransom, in exchange for our sin-dirtied lives. And in that exchange, which is accomplished when by faith a person puts his/her faith in Jesus, He pays the debt for our sin once and for all, plus He gives, to us, the merits of His perfect sinless life!

This is the wonder, the Good News, of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Lavish in these thoughts today as you await the celebration of Easter tomorrow!!!

Alleluia!!! Amen!!!

Sunday, March 31, 2013, EASTER 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.