

# Days of Praise



September ♦ October ♦ November 2023

# Days *of* Praise

Daily Bible Readings and Devotional Commentaries

**September • October • November 2023**

*“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest,  
and cold and heat, and summer and winter,  
and day and night shall not cease.”  
(Genesis 8:22)*

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the King James Version of the Bible.

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**Introduction to**  
**DAYS OF PRAISE**

*“And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose.” (Acts 26:15-16)*

Dear Christian friend,

What a joy to know that so many faithful Christians are joining us this fall to meditate on God’s Word in daily devotions. Thank you for trusting us in the exposition and application of these Scriptures.

The last person that Saul of Tarsus expected to meet on the road to Damascus was the Lord Jesus. What amazing grace Jesus demonstrated in seeking out one who had expressed hatred for Him by cruelly persecuting His people. The Lord’s love not only saved Saul from his sins, but He also gave him a new name, Paul, as well as an altogether new purpose for living. Likewise, the Lord Jesus has a purpose for each one of us.

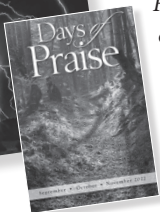
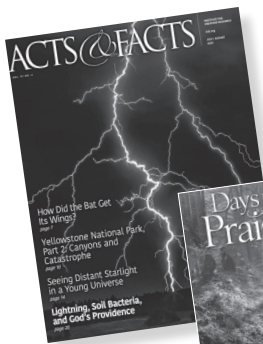
I pray that the Holy Spirit will use these brief Bible studies to reveal that purpose and lead you to a deeper love for the Lord Jesus and our good heavenly Father.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Randy J. Guliuzza, President

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Friday, September 1

## **Author of Peace**

*“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)*

Although these words were written with respect to church order, they express a general principle. “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated....And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:15-18).

Our world and our natural lives seem perpetually in confusion, turmoil, and strife, and the source is the evil one—“the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The only one who can bring true peace is the Author of peace.

This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, for only “he is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14). He is the Author of peace, just as the devil is the author of all confusion and strife. Note the other titles of our great Author of peace.

He is called “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus” (Hebrews 13:20). He is also “The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Melchizedek, who was at least a type of Christ, if not an actual pre-incarnate theophany of Christ Himself, is called “King of Salem, which is, King of peace” (Hebrews 7:2). In 2 Thessalonians 3:16, He is “the Lord of peace.”

He is the Author of peace, the Lord of peace, the Prince of peace, the King of peace, the very God of peace! He is our peace! Someday, “he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth” (Zechariah 9:10). In that day, “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20), and “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7). HMM

Saturday, September 2

## Knowing Him

*“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)*

John uses two words for “know” in this short letter, both of which are used in the final instruction to his readers. The Greek word *ginosko* is used 25 times throughout this epistle, stressing knowledge that is gained through personal experience. The other word, *ei'do* (or *oi'da*), is used an additional 17 times, emphasizing mental understanding and comprehension.

### *The Intellectual Confidence*

We “know [*ei'do*] that he was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5). We “know that we have passed from death unto life” (1 John 3:14). We “know that [we] have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). We “know that we are of God” (1 John 5:19). We “know that the Son of God is come” (1 John 5:20). All of this “head knowledge” is, of course, straight from the Word of God. These are the basics of our belief in the work of Christ.

### *The Personal Experience*

We “know [*ginosko*] that we know [*ginosko*] him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). “There [are] many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18). “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (1 John 5:2).

Thus, our intellectual “knowledge” of God’s Word is “experienced” as we “work out [our] own salvation” (Philippians 2:12). Being “born again” is just the beginning. We should “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). HMM III

Sunday, September 3

## Desiring Our Lord and His Word

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” (Psalm 19:1-3)*

In Psalm 19, David focuses our attention on Yahweh’s stunning creation. However, there’s so much more in this passage. Verse 7 links creation to a believer’s deliverance from sin, a recurrent theme in most texts describing God’s powerful role in creation. David then notes what’s critical for our spiritual transformation—a steady diet in the Word of God.

The transformative work of God’s refining Word is traced in Psalm 19:7-9.

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.”

“The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”

“The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.”

“The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever.”

“The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.”

Yahweh’s God-breathed words (2 Timothy 3:16) are “more to be desired...than gold, yea, than much fine gold” and “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psalm 19:10).

Lastly, we are reminded of the role of God’s Word in keeping us mindful of God’s requirements and of the reward for those who keep them (v. 11). It’s easy to be influenced by the outward pressures of compromise, but may His words influence our inner conviction and may our daily meditation “be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (v. 14). CCM

Monday, September 4

## The Gift of Labor

*“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:15)*

When God first created man, He gave him work to do. Although “the LORD God planted a garden” for man (Genesis 2:8), it was up to man to take care of it if he would continue to eat its fruits. Thus, having to labor for one’s living is not a divine punishment for man’s sin as people sometimes interpret it, but rather a divine benefit for man’s good.

Similarly, even in the new earth, when sin and suffering will be gone forever, there will still be work to do. “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him” (Revelation 22:3).

We don’t know yet what our assignments will be *there*, but they will somehow be commensurate with our faithfulness in serving the Lord *here*. “My reward is with me,” says the Lord Jesus, “to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12).

It is, therefore, a God-given privilege to be able to do useful work, whether that work consists of preaching God’s Word or improving God’s world. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do” (whether being paid for it or not), “do it with thy might; for there is no work...in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). As Jesus said, “The night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

No matter what the job may be that has been provided for us to do, it is important to remember and obey the admonition: “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24) and “your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). HMM



Tuesday, September 5

## **Behold, My Servant**

*“His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” (Isaiah 52:14)*

The last three verses of Isaiah 52 begin the well-known Suffering Servant passage (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). The passage begins “Behold, my servant” (Isaiah 52:13) and uses abrupt topic changes. It says “he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (v. 13), then without transition switches to today’s text. This doesn’t read with much flow, but God through Isaiah had a reason.

The sudden change makes the reader pause. The text jolts us into reading it again. Like a preacher who lifts his hands in a moment of passionate conviction, Yahweh wants us to behold His Servant with a double-take.

What’s so important that it deserves a closer look? The next verse tells us: “So shall he sprinkle many nations” (v. 15). The very act of the Servant’s disfigurement is the means by which He will fulfill His purpose to “sprinkle many nations.” The apostle John saw those future nations. “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne...saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9-10).

What could He sprinkle that would redeem such a throng? Surely this is Jesus’ blood, “which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He sprinkles His blood over us now. His shed blood is the only way to remove our sins. His death means our life. Now, that’s worth beholding. BDT

Wednesday, September 6

## Believe Our Report

*“Who hath believed our report?” (Isaiah 53:1)*

In Isaiah’s Suffering Servant passage, the last lines of Isaiah 52 belong with Isaiah 53: “Kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider” (Isaiah 52:15). The very next verse contrasts the seeing and considering of kings—and presumably of their nations’ inhabitants, as suggested in Revelation 7:9-10—with an implied shock over how few are believing “our report.”

What’s going on here? On the one hand, “he shall sprinkle many nations” (Isaiah 52:14), with those nations’ kings seeing and hearing some revelatory thing. On the other hand, nobody seems to be listening to a certain report. The incongruity vanishes if the kings’ experience occurs at a different time than when so few believe the report.

So, where might these two events fit on a timeline? History has no record of kings seeing or considering a Suffering Servant—at least, not all at one time. If Revelation 7 describes this event, then it remains future, closer to Jesus Christ’s second advent. Meanwhile, the history of His first advent recorded in the gospels confirms that few indeed listened to the report. What report? That Immanuel has come to pay our sin debt and rescue us!

“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (John 12:37-38). And yet, some did believe. And some do even now. “He that believeth on him is not condemned” (John 3:18). Believe our report! Trust in Christ. BDT

Thursday, September 7

## Esteem Him

*“He was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:3)*

In this, our third consideration of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant passage (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12), we learn that people looked down upon Him whom the Lord will exalt. The expression “for he shall grow up before him as a tender plant” (53:2) likely refers to a sucker limb. These scraggly sprigs grow straight out of the side of tree trunks. Homeowners find them annoying enough to pay tree services to cut them off. That’s just what the world did to the Savior (53:8).

“As a root out of a dry ground” (53:2) lies poised to trip an unsuspecting pedestrian, so the religious people alive at the Savior’s first coming saw Him as a danger. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

At the same time that “we hid as it were our faces from him” (Isaiah 53:3), the Father esteemed Him by giving Him a new title. Irish Hebraist J. Alec Motyer did well to translate Isaiah 53:1 as “Who believed what we heard? And Yahweh’s Arm, to whom was it revealed?” The title Yahweh’s Arm refers to His Servant’s abundant strength.

Isaiah reveals tension between Yahweh’s high esteem for His strong “Arm” versus the people who “esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:3). What led His own, especially the religious Pharisees, to despise the same Servant who “shall be exalted and extolled” (Isaiah 52:13)?

Was it not pride? Like the Pharisees, our pride persuades us that we have no need of God, that we need no correction or rescue. Pride even keeps us from seeing our own pride! Humility is the remedy, for “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isaiah 57:15). With humility, we can see our need and esteem Him. BDT

## The Chastisement of Our Peace

*“The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)*

Contrasts continue within this Suffering Servant sequence. Even while “we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4), He was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). He knew the truth that our sinful souls like to deny: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). He knew, even as He endured His tortured journey toward the cross, that He would die for us “while we were yet sinners” (Romans 5:8).

What a moment of wild contrasts that Isaiah foretold here. The self-righteous Jewish high priest said of the sinless One, “Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death” (Mark 14:64). Christ did not go to the cross because He committed blasphemy. He went to the cross to save even those who had wrongfully accused Him of blasphemy.

What marvelous love He shows to all! He owes us nothing but righteous wrath as we rebel in both heart and deed against His will and ways. He endured the chastisement that the law requires as payment for our sin. He now offers advocacy for us in the heavenly court (1 John 2:1), plus everlasting life and so much more!

Truly, He paid a debt He did not owe, but one we couldn't possibly pay. The suffering of Yahweh's Servant took care of that debt for you and for me. What a glorious contrast. Our Savior permitted sinners to sacrifice His sinless Self so He can dwell with them one day. He will commute anyone's ultimate sentence when they act with “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). BDT

Saturday, September 9

## Cut Off

*“For he was cut off out of the land of the living.” (Isaiah 53:8)*

The prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus, as “My servant” (Isaiah 52:13), would be despised. Sure enough, religious mobs sneered at Him. Now in Isaiah 53:8-10, our Lord’s coming death is described. What a pivotal moment for God and for us!

The text adds glimpses into what Yahweh had in His mind for this event. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb [silent], so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). His silence and willingness to be led to His own slaughter shows us His grim resolve. He didn’t protest or try to avoid it. He knew exactly what He was doing, and here’s why: “For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Isaiah 53:8).

Daniel later used the same phrase to foretell the same event: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself” (Daniel 9:26). If not for Himself, then for whom would He die? “[He] gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4).

“And he made his grave with the wicked....Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isaiah 53:9-10). He was buried as though He deserved death! How could Yahweh feel pleased with this? It was so “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10). He has earned our praise forevermore through this ultimate sacrifice. BDT

Sunday, September 10

## Dividing the Spoil

*“He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death.” (Isaiah 53:12)*

In Isaiah’s Suffering Servant passage, Isaiah 53:8 relates that the Servant would die. Isaiah 53:9 then relates how He would be buried. So, how can it be that “he shall prolong his days” (v. 10) or that “I will divide him a portion with the great” (v. 12)? Evidently, He must rise from the grave, and after His resurrection, the Servant would receive “a portion with the great” and share His inherited “spoil” (v. 12). What will that look like?

Other prophecies detail this future. For example, the Lord will share a land inheritance with a resurrected Abraham. “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:8).

That future will include kingship over the entire earth shared with the Old Testament King David. “For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (Jeremiah 30:8-9).

Why not add some more traditional spoils? “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee” (Isaiah 60:9). The Servant’s sufferings have purchased a glorious future for those who trust in Him. BDT

Monday, September 11

## A Response to Threat

*“He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor the arrow that flieth by day.” (Psalm 91:4-5)*

Today we remember the unprovoked attack on America by Muslim terrorists. Despite attempts to make the country more secure, the threat remains scarcely abated. What should the Christian’s response be? In our text above, we see we have no cause for fear. The physical danger may be real, but our Lord promises protection in tender words likened to a mother bird’s care for her young. Our ultimate deliverance is guaranteed by His sure promises. Trust in His power and truth sustains us as surely as a shield and buckler.

Our hope cannot rest in military might. God does not promise temporal safety to all, for millions have succumbed to undeserved violence. Our last hope is of a different order, firmly grounded in “the LORD, which is my refuge” (Psalm 91:9). He responds to our trust and worship with the promise “with long [better translated as ‘eternal’] life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation” (v. 16). Much more interested in our response to troubles than in our deliverance, He desires us to believe and serve Him, trusting Him even in perilous times.

A New Testament application of this principle is in 1 Peter 3:14: “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.” The remedy? “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

Jesus Christ is our example and inspiration. “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:3). Fixing our eyes upon Him, we have no cause for fear. JDM

Tuesday, September 12

## The Remarkable Psalms

*“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” (Acts 13:32-33)*

Here is a clear instance in which the gospel (“glad tidings”) was preached in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit, through the psalmist David, promised that one day the Son of God would rise from the dead—the “first born from the dead” (Colossians 1:18). The Lord Jesus actually used certain psalms to prove His own deity, quoting Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:43-45) and Psalm 82:6 (John 10:34-36) in support of His claims.

This unique passage in the book of Acts offers another fascinating item of information that is often overlooked. By identifying the *second* psalm as such, the writer (guided by the Spirit) tells us in effect that the chapter divisions of the book of Psalms were there by divine ordination right from the first. Furthermore, since each of the psalms is a poem, with clear-cut verse divisions, this longest book in the Word of God was evidently subdivided into chapters and verses by divine inspiration. Similar divisions were later added to the other books by biblical scholars in the Middle Ages, but they were in the psalms from the beginning. It is not surprising, then, that we can find many remarkable examples of design in the very structure of the book of Psalms (e.g., the 22 stanzas of eight verses each in Psalm 119).

This second psalm is the first of the so-called Messianic psalms, but actually the Lord Jesus Christ and His glorious gospel of salvation are clearly present in every one of the 150 psalms. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2:12). HMM



Wednesday, September 13

## Reconciliation

*“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:10)*

It is interesting to note that as important as is the doctrine of the atonement in Christian theology, the word itself occurs only once in the King James New Testament. It is in the very next verse after our text. “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (v. 11).

The Greek word is translated “reconciliation” in 2 Corinthians 5:18: “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” Thus, the doctrine of atonement is the doctrine of reconciliation. Men are separated from our holy God both by their sin nature and also by their actual guilt of committed sin. But through the substitutionary death of Christ for our sins, “we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” That is, God has already reconciled sinners to Himself by the sacrificial death of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem is that sinners are not actually reconciled to God until they personally accept this free gift of God’s love to them.

But we who “have now received the atonement [that is, reconciliation]...joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:11). A part of that joy should be in the fact that God has now “given unto us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Thus, it has become our great privilege to tell others that they can be completely forgiven and eternally saved. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). HMM

Thursday, September 14

## **Do You Believe Genesis?**

*“[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:2)*

The only source of knowledge detailing how God created the universe is revealed in the clear and inspired text of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). We can learn generally “about” God by examining His marvelous creation. As the psalmist wrote, “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:2-3).

However, we cannot know the specifics of how our Lord Jesus Christ created His awesome creation unless we listen to the words of Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning [time] God [source] created [energy] the heaven [space] and the earth [matter].” So, in order to truly know God, how He created, how He operates, and how He redeems, believers must look to all 66 books of the Bible. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

Moreover, the apostle John, being moved by the same Holy Spirit, wrote, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). This excludes evolution and a progression of life through natural selection.

Hebrews 11:3 affirms that “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Either you believe in Genesis, or you don’t. CCM

Friday, September 15

## The Pragmatic Life

*“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.” (Luke 19:13)*

This “parable of the pounds” indicated to Jesus’ disciples that they should not wait idly for the second coming of Christ, thinking “that the kingdom of God should immediately appear” (Luke 19:11), but that they should stay busy, using whatever abilities and opportunities they had in the Lord’s service until His return. The word “occupy” is an unusual word, the Greek *pragmatenomai*, from which we derive our modern word “pragmatic,” meaning “practical,” and it only occurs this one time in the New Testament.

There is another related word, however, also occurring only one time, in 2 Timothy 2:4: “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” Here the word “affairs” is the Greek *pragmateia*, and Paul is cautioning those who would be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ” against becoming involved in the pragmatic affairs of civilian or business life, if they would really be pleasing to their commanding officer.

At first, there seems to be a contradiction. Jesus says to stay busy with the practical affairs of life until He returns. Paul says not to get involved with pragmatic things.

There is no real contradiction, of course, if motivation is considered. Whatever may be our vocation in life, as led by the Lord, we are to perform that job and all the other daily responsibilities of life diligently and faithfully, for His sake.

If we allow these things to become an end in themselves, however, or use them for other purposes than for His glory, then we have, indeed, become tangled up in the affairs of this life, and this displeases Him. He desires that we be diligent in whatever He has called us to do until He comes, but to be sure it is for Him, not for ourselves. HMM

Saturday, September 16

## Three Worldly Powers

*“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father; but is of the world.” (1 John 2:16)*

This well-known passage identifies three fountainheads of ungodly power that will, if unchecked and unguarded, ensnare a believer into a sinful lifestyle.

Sensual power (lust of the flesh) is a body-oriented and emotion-driven reaction to fleshly appetites that can never please God (Romans 8:8) and is in constant warfare with the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:17). We are told to “flee” these “youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22) that are a “corruption” (2 Peter 1:4) of the “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) God-designed human body.

Visual power (lust of the eyes) is an intellect-oriented and imagination-driven stimulation of wishful thinking that will take control of behavior (Matthew 6:22-23) if not carefully curtailed (Job 31:1; 2 Peter 2:14). Although impacting men more than women, this kind of “lust” will “conceive” sin instead of merely reacting to it (James 1:13-15).

Personal power (the pride of life) is a self-oriented and ego-driven desire for dominance that has no ethic or limiting factor other than the praise of men, not God (John 12:43). Such pride, dominated by the “natural mind” (1 Corinthians 2:14) and a “deceitful” heart (Jeremiah 17:9), spirals into a self-love that twists and distorts human behavior into a litany of ungodliness that loves pleasure rather than God (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Giving in to these “worldly” powers may grant us pleasures for “a season” (Hebrews 11:25), but will surely make us an “enemy of God” (James 4:4). May our Lord Jesus grant that we stay armed against such “wiles” (Ephesians 6:11), covered and protected with the “whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:13-17). HMM III

Sunday, September 17

## The Name Above Every Name

*“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” (Philippians 2:9)*

Three primary names for God are used in the Old Testament: *Elohim*, *Jehovah*, and *Adonai*. In the New Testament, both *Jehovah* and *Adonai* are translated as “Lord” (Greek *kurios*) and applied to Christ. This word is also applied occasionally to human “lords” but is specifically used as a name or title of God or Christ no less than 663 times.

His human name was Jesus (“Jehovah is Savior”), but this is used by itself only 22 times in the epistles—always with special emphasis on His humanity. Although it was the common name used repeatedly in the gospel narratives, it is significant that the disciples and other believers almost always addressed Him personally as Lord, never simply as Jesus. Unbelievers and demons, on the other hand, *never* addressed Him as Lord.

The name Christ means “anointed one” and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*. Thus, Christ is His divine title as God’s anointed prophet, priest, and king; Jesus is His human name, as our example and Savior; Lord is His title of spiritual relationship to those He has saved. All three names are of paramount importance. Thus, Peter said: “God hath made that same Jesus...both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). His “full name,” so to speak, is therefore “the Lord Jesus Christ.” This complete name is used over 100 times; Christ and Lord are used even more.

In the great testimony of His coming exaltation, Paul says He has been given “the name” (the definite article is in the original) above every name. At this “name of Jesus” (with the “of” indicating the possessive—that is, “the name now belonging to the man Jesus who died on the cross”), every knee must bow, and every tongue must someday confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10-11). HMM

Monday, September 18

## Identifying Antichrists

*“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” (1 John 2:18)*

Evangelicals expect “the” Antichrist to be revealed in the future, yet there are more warnings about “many” antichrists who are currently and actively plotting evil. John lists two specific identifying factors that enable us to spot these “anti” Christs.

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22).

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist...and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:3).

This much is clear. Anyone who refuses to accept the incarnated Christ as the Son of God is *anti*-Christ. Perhaps we need to see this term in its simplicity. Those who are “anti” Christ (oppose, reject, against, opposite to, before, instead of, in place of) *are* antichrists!

Peter warns that false prophets and false teachers are also “anti” Christ—and that they may well come from among the Lord’s visible Kingdom.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1).

Thus, we are told that Satan’s “ministers also [are] transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:15). No wonder we should have caution. This is the last time (days), and we need to be alert! HMM III

Tuesday, September 19

## To Die Is Gain

*“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)*

Although the glorious resurrection bodies that have been promised all believers must await the return of Christ, even the spirit-existence after death is better than this present life for the believer. Paul himself expressed “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23)—“to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Thus, it is “gain” when a Christian dies! Since Christ, in His resurrection body, is in heaven at the right hand of the Father, the spirits of “sleeping” Christians are also there. The intermediate state is somewhat analogous to the dreaming state, in which the consciousness travels to various places and experiences while the body is asleep. In fact, death is called “sleep” for the Christian (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

However, in some amazing way, these conscious spirits of believers are still distinct and recognizable. Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:3), as well as Samuel (1 Samuel 28:12-19), were identifiable in their spirit-form, even by people here on Earth.

One of the greatest blessings of dying and going to be with the Lord will be the joy of returning with Him “at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1 Thessalonians 3:13). “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him....And the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16), just before the “rapture” and glorification of the saints who are still living. As wonderful as it might be to live until Christ returns, it will be even better to be with Him!

The death of a Christian, therefore, may be a time of loss and grief for those left behind, but it is a time of joy and blessing for the one who dies, including a happy reunion with those who have gone before. HMM

Wednesday, September 20

## Whom Do You Know?

*“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)*

A person who *thinks* he is a Christian, or *hopes* he is a Christian, probably *isn't* a Christian. One should know, when it comes to this most important of all questions. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). It’s a matter of *who* you know, not *what* you know. Paul said: “I know *whom* I have believed”—that is, he knew the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But just *how* can we know that we have eternal life? In the first place, we know because He has said so in His Word. Furthermore, He knows us! “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).

We also “know...that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13), which “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). If the Holy Spirit truly has become a part of our lives (as He surely has if we genuinely came to Christ as lost sinners, trusting Him alone for forgiveness and salvation, and yielding our lives and eternal souls to Him), then we will also come to love the Word which He inspired. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.... But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 John 2:3, 5).

There are many other things we can know when we know we are saved. Best of all, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). HMM



Thursday, September 21

## **The Similitude of God**

*“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.”  
(James 3:9)*

Here inserted within a very sober condemnation of the misuse of our God-given privilege of speech is what seems almost an incidental reference to the image of God in man. It is not a trivial reference, however, but very significant.

It tells us that even though the image of God in man has been severely marred by sin, it is still there! That is, man is eternal just as God is eternal, and we will all continue to exist forever, either in the presence of God, or away from His presence. That “image” is not shared with animals, even the higher animals. The latter do have a body, soul (in the sense of mind), and spirit (in the sense of breath), but they do not possess “the image of God” that was specially created in man alone after all the animals had been created (note Genesis 1:21, 27).

Another implication is that the word “similitude” includes the meaning of a physical resemblance. While God in His full essence is omnipresent and therefore invisible to human eyes, it is still true that, when God became man, He took on an actual physical body. Furthermore, our Lord Jesus, God the Son, still is “that same Jesus” and therefore still in that body (note Acts 1:11; 1 John 3:2; etc.).

Since His incarnation and His work of salvation were planned by the triune God “before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20), man was apparently created in the image of that body that Christ had planned to take on when He would eventually become man.

That being the case, our bodies are even more sacred than otherwise we might have assumed, and it is indeed a serious matter to misuse the tongue or any other member of the body, which is made after the similitude of Christ. HMM

Friday, September 22

## Propitiation

*“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)*

Most words in the King James Bible have one or two syllables. Our text verse, for example, has 21 such short words and only one big word; but that word, “propitiation,” has five syllables, and so has elicited much complaint from folks who don’t like to use dictionaries. What does “propitiation” mean?

The Greek word is *hilasmos* and occurs just two other times. These are as follows.

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Romans 3:25). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

As an aside, note that these two verses contain two words of two syllables, three of three syllables, and 48 of one syllable. But both also include “propitiation,” and that seems to be a problem. Nevertheless, propitiation is certainly the most accurate word to convey the meaning of the original. The dictionary gives “expiation” and “conciliation” as definitions, but that probably doesn’t help much.

In any case, the action of the Lord Jesus in submitting His body to be a substitutionary sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins and to endure God’s wrath against all the sins of the world, thereby enabling Him to be reconciled to us, with Christ’s perfect righteousness credited to our account, is seen in these three verses to be a basic theme of this great truth of Christ’s propitiatory work on the cross. And surely, as John says: “Herein is love,” that God would so love us that He would offer up His Son, and Christ would so love us that He would die for us. Surely, this is love! HMM

Saturday, September 23

## What Do Fig Trees Do?

*“Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”*  
(James 3:12)

The answer to these rhetorical questions obviously is “no.” A fig tree cannot become an olive tree in one growing season, or in a million of them. Nor can a grapevine evolve into a fig tree, no matter what happens to it (grafts, mutations, chemicals, radiations, anything).

In the very first chapter of the Bible, each kind of plant God created was given the genetic information by its Maker to reproduce only its own “kind” of plant, not to diverge into some other kind, although its offspring could develop into many varieties of the parental kind (but even that only within strict limits). The same was true with the animals. Ten times in Genesis 1, God, in five verses, tells us that each created kind of plant and animal was coded to reproduce just its own kind (Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24-25).

Just in the event that some skeptic might reject Genesis 1 as factual, the same theme is reiterated in the New Testament, not only in our text but in Paul’s great chapter on death and resurrection. “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds” (1 Corinthians 15:38-39).

This biblical truth is confirmed by every scientific observation ever made on plants and animals—whether living, dead, or fossilized. No one has ever seen a frog evolve into a prince, or a vine into an olive tree, either in the present or in the fossil record of the past. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that man should fear before him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14). HMM

Sunday, September 24

## **Boldness in Prayer**

*“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” (Ephesians 3:12)*

There is a wonderful exhortation and promise in Hebrews 4:15-16: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted [that is, ‘tested’] like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

We aren’t to come *presumptuously* or *arrogantly* to God in prayer, but we *can* come *boldly*! This is not by virtue of our own merits but because Christ Himself has opened the way for us. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Because He has been fully tested yet free from sin, and because of the shed “blood of Jesus” and the opened veil “through his flesh,” if we come “by the faith of him,” we do have “access” to God’s “throne of grace” and can boldly present our petitions. These must, of course, be dependent upon His will, for “this is the confidence [same Greek word as ‘boldness’] that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And...we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

But, whether a particular request is granted or denied in accord with God’s greater wisdom, or whether the answer is delayed until God’s more propitious time, we can always “find grace to help in time of need.” He is our great high priest, our mediator, our advocate with the Father, our intercessor, and we can surely pray with “boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” HMM

Monday, September 25

## How to Know the Will of God

*“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

The key to knowing God’s will is willingness and determination to follow it before knowing it. “If any man will [literally ‘wills to’] do his will, he shall know” (John 7:17).

The best indicator whether one is really willing to follow God’s will is whether or not he is now following that part of His will that is *already* known as revealed in His Word. This requires first knowing and believing, then obeying the Word, especially those portions dealing with God’s general will for all Christians. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). Then, if one indeed is following the revealed will of God, he may ask in confidence (1 John 5:14-15) for the Lord to indicate His will in a specific matter on which there is no explicit biblical teaching (see also James 1:5-6).

God will then answer, though it may not be immediately. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). It may not be in accordance with our preferences or personal judgment, but it will always be for the ultimate best. “For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit...maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:26-28).

God will lead in two ways in the absence of specific Scripture guidance (which must always take precedence, of course). One is by providential circumstances, the other by inner witness of the Spirit, and these two must agree. Then, if all the terms have been met, one should proceed to follow God’s will as best he can, knowing that God will redirect him if he has made a mistake. God does want us to know His will, and He will “direct our paths.” HMM

Tuesday, September 26

## But When You Sin

*“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1)*

There is no suggestion anywhere in Scripture that any person can be sinless. “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23), the Bible boldly declares. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Repentance toward God (Acts 20:21) and salvation by God (2 Corinthians 7:10) eternally settle the issue of the sinful *condition* inherent in us (Ephesians 2:1-8). However, even though we have been “made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21), we still commit sinful acts (1 John 1:8-10).

Hallelujah for the *Advocate*! What a blessed promise it is that is recorded for us that the same Jesus Christ who died for our sins, who rose from the grave in glorious victory over sin, “is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

Although our security in the completed work of Christ Jesus is “for ever” (Hebrews 10:12), our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14) stands ready to rebut the constant efforts of Satan to flaunt our sins before the holy throne of God (Revelation 12:10). We have no standing there on our own. Our life, even though forgiven and rescued from sin, still is tainted with the deeds and consequences of evil choices. Even the body in which we live houses “no good thing” (Romans 7:18).

Were it up to us to be holy, we would quickly be defamed by the reality of our life. The child of God, though redeemed by “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19), has no ability to plead Christ’s work in person before the throne. “Wherefore he [Jesus] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). HMM III

Wednesday, September 27

## Our Eternal Bodies

*“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:21)*

Only those religions that believe in special creation—that is, orthodox Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—also believe in a bodily resurrection. Of the three creationist/resurrectionist religions, however, only the Christian faith acknowledges that the resurrection can be possible only when the Creator Himself becomes the atoning Savior, dying for sin and thereby defeating death.

When Christ arose from the tomb, He could proclaim, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Revelation 1:18). His resurrection body was the same physical body that had been in the grave, able to be touched and even retaining its crucifixion scars. Nevertheless, it was different, a “spiritual” body (1 Corinthians 15:42-49), controlled by spiritual forces. Our present “natural” bodies are controlled by natural forces, but the resurrected Christ could move quickly from Earth to heaven, and could pass through closed doors (John 20:17, 19, 26).

But *our* resurrection bodies will be like His someday, according to the “working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:19-20). By that same “working,” He is able to subdue all things, for He is the Creator of all things (Colossians 1:16). Our “vile” bodies will become “glorious” bodies, no longer subject to sickness and aging, or lusts and evil passions. “This corruptible shall have put on incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:54). “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). This is the blessed hope of the genuine Christian. HMM

## The Seven Pillars of Wisdom

*“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.” (Proverbs 9:1)*

The foundation of the house of wisdom is “the fear of the LORD...the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). One does not finally reach the Lord through much study and the acquisition of much wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the very “*beginning* of wisdom.” Without a reverent trust in the God of creation and redemption, there can be no *true* wisdom. “For other foundation can no man lay than...Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Then, erected upon this foundation and supporting all the superstructure of the “house of wisdom” are seven mighty pillars or columns. But what are these? The answer seems to be found in that New Testament book of wisdom, the book of James, where it is said that “if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). Then, “a wise man and endued with knowledge...[will] show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13).

Finally, the seven great pillars seem to be listed in James 3:17: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” The first in the list or central column, carrying more weight than any of the other columns in the structure, is *purity*. Then there are six outside pillars. One is *peaceableness*; the next is *gentleness*; then comes *reasonableness* (“easy to be entreated”). The next phrase, “full of mercy and good fruits,” connotes *helpfulness*. The term for “without partiality” actually means *humility*, and then the final pillar is *sincerity*.

Thus, a life of genuine wisdom is a life founded upon the fear of the Lord and supported by genuine purity, peaceableness, gentleness, reasonableness, helpfulness, humility, and sincerity. Such a house will never fall! HMM



Friday, September 29

## **The New, Old Commandment**

*“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment....Again, a new commandment I write unto you.” (1 John 2:7-8)*

On the surface, this passage appears to be a real problem. The easily seen focus of the “commandment” is love for the brethren (vv. 9-11). The difficult wording lies in the “old” and the “new” side of the same thought.

The “old” sense of the command to love is as eternal as the very nature of God Himself. Whatever love we express in our human nature derives its source from God, who *is* love (1 John 4:16). Even “from the beginning” (1 John 2:7) humanity was charged with the commitment of marital love (Genesis 2:24), which is the earthly example of God’s love for His church (Ephesians 5:25).

Then as God codified His “rules” for those who would submit to His authority, God insisted that we were to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18). Centuries later as the apostle Paul commented on the Mosaic Law, it was noted that “love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

The “new” side of the commandment has its “beginning” with the institution of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:13) and the commissioning of the apostolic leadership (John 13:34). The new focus would be on the spiritual kingdom rather than the earthly nation, and the “brethren” would not merely be genetically related but have a spiritual “new birth”(Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28).

Since “the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (1 John 2:8), “he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him” (1 John 2:10). This new command goes beyond marriage and nation to the entire family of God. HMM III

Saturday, September 30

## **Bearing and Helping to Bear**

*“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ....For every man shall bear his own burden.”*  
(Galatians 6:2, 5)

This is one of the most commonly cited Bible “contradictions,” the apostle Paul commanding us, almost in the same breath, to bear other people’s burdens and yet to bear our own burdens. There is, however, no real contradiction, and both commands are equally valid and important.

The problem is partly one of translation. There are two Greek words used here, *baros* and *phortion*, respectively. The first means “heavy load,” the second “responsibility.”

When a Christian friend has been stricken with a great burden—whether sickness, financial need, death of a loved one, or even a grievous sin in his life that he has been unable to overcome by his own strength (see v. 1)—he needs desperately the love and support of his Christian brethren. The Scripture assures us that when we help relieve this burden, we “fulfill the law of Christ.” The previous chapter also notes this: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Galatians 5:14).

At the same time, the privilege of having Christian friends who will share and help with an otherwise unbearable load does not at all absolve us from the responsibility of doing our own part in carrying out our God-given responsibilities. There is no place in the Christian warfare for Christian beggars or Christian crybabies. “Study to be quiet, and to do your own business....That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

The preceding verse (Galatians 6:4) had urged that “every man prove his own work.” Since God has both created and redeemed us, we can be sure He is concerned about us and will not allow trials, or place upon us duties, that are greater than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). HMM

Sunday, October 1

## The Ministry of Reconciliation

*“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18)*

The great work of reconciling lost men to a holy God has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ, yet He “hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,” through which we, as His ministers (i.e., “servants”), urge men, “Be ye reconciled to God” (vv. 19-20).

This wonderful “ministry of reconciliation” is outlined in 6:1-10, under three subcategories, totaling 28 characteristics. First, there is a tenfold *ministry of suffering*. “In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings” (vv. 4-5). On the other hand, it also encompasses a ninefold *ministry of godliness*: “By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (vv. 6-7).

These attributes of suffering, combined with the characteristics of godliness, produce what might be called the ninefold *paradox of the ministry*. “By honor and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (vv. 8-10).

The central paradox of these nine is the great central theme of the Christian life, centered in Christ: “As dying, and, behold, we live!” This is the ministry of reconciliation, for “they which live should...henceforth live...unto him which died for them, and rose again” (5:15). HMM

Monday, October 2

## Holy Anointing

*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” (1 John 2:20)*

The word “unction” in our text is translated “anointing” the other two times it is used (1 John 2:27). That term, and a companion word, are used only seven times in the New Testament, but all refer to the same essential concept often spoken of in the Old Testament.

Both things (tabernacle, temple, vessels, offerings) and people (priests, Levites, kings, ambassadors) were “anointed”—often ceremoniously—to identify them as consecrated or honored for a special service or position. Once anointed, the person or object was to be held in great respect by everyone.

Thus, we who are the “children of God” (Romans 8:16) have been anointed by God Himself (2 Corinthians 1:21) in such a way that the anointing abides, teaches, and is truth (1 John 2:27). This anointing is, obviously, no ceremonial oil demonstrating an honor (Psalm 133:2) but rather the “pouring out” of the Holy Spirit Himself onto and into our earthly bodies, consecrating us to be the very “temple” of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

This “unction” further designates us to be “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6) who will one day “reign on earth” (Revelation 5:10). We are called “lively stones” (1 Peter 2:5) being built into a spiritual house for the Lord.

Furthermore, we are to be seen as “chaste virgin[s]” (2 Corinthians 11:2) who are ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), having been set apart as a “vessel unto honour” (2 Timothy 2:21) in the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). We are to know all these things. HMM III

Tuesday, October 3

## The Vanishing Serpents

*“For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.” (Exodus 7:12)*

Like the future image of the beast, which will seem to have life, these magician-induced serpents can only have been “lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Neither men nor demons can really create life; this is a prerogative of God alone, who “created every living creature” (Genesis 1:21). However, both human magicians and demons can generate hypnotic mental states and occult hallucinations that ungodly people like pharaoh may be deceived into seeing as real physical entities.

When their demonstration was over, however, nothing was left. Even their rods (not “serpents”) were gone, for Aaron’s genuine serpent had made a meal of them. In a true miracle of creation, Aaron’s God had transmuted the dead atoms of a wooden stick (just as He later made it to produce blossoms and almonds, Numbers 17:8) into a living serpent, capable of consuming other sticks that only appeared to be serpents.

The deception of the magicians was revealed when they were unable later to imitate Moses’ miracle of turning dust into lice throughout the land of Egypt (Exodus 8:18). Interestingly, many people believed for many centuries that similar phenomena—which they called “spontaneous generation”—occurred naturalistically, but this notion was scientifically demolished by Pasteur over a hundred years ago. Only the living God can create life!

The miracle of Aaron’s rod is also a parable. Aaron’s rod of life took on the nature of the serpent, just as Christ was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). But then it swallowed up the other serpent-rods, and the sting of “that old serpent” was put away. Thus, “death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). HMM

## The Teacher

*“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” (2 Timothy 2:24)*

Patience and gentleness are invaluable Christian virtues in any occupation. Teaching, however, involves other attributes as well, and these are effectively set forth by Paul in the second letter to young pastor Timothy. Consider just four of these important exhortations to God-called teachers.

*Be straight.* Sound doctrine is absolutely essential, the most vital criterion of all. “Hold fast the form of sound words.... Shun profane and vain babblings.... Preach the word.... Exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.... Endure sound doctrine” (1:13; 2:16; 4:2-3). Straight doctrine is the basis of everything.

*Be strong.* One can, of course, be strong and gentle at the same time, and this is what God requires. “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2:1). A non-gracious Christian leader is a disgrace to his calling.

*Be studious.* The Lord has given us His inspired Word and a “sound mind” with which to study it, as well as “the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (1:7, 14) to illuminate it, and He expects us to be diligent in its use. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2:15).

*Be steadfast.* As he concludes, Paul foresees the awful spiritual and moral conditions of the last days—surely enough to intimidate and discourage any Christian. “But,” he then says “*continue*...in the things which thou hast learned” (3:14). This exhortation is followed by the strongest passage on the full divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Scriptures to be found in the Bible. Regardless of circumstances, a Christian teacher must maintain sound doctrine, be both strong and gracious, be diligent in handling the Scriptures, and just “live there” in the Word of God. HMM

Thursday, October 5

## **Our Lord Shepherds His Children**

*“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” (Psalm 23:1-6)*

Psalm 23 is our tutor, instructing us to praise Yahweh’s care for His redeemed. He is the supreme Pastor, Sustainer, Preserver, and Savior of His beloved children. With supreme exhilaration, David joyfully shouts aloud for his beloved Shepherd, who is none other than Yahweh—the Creator of both heaven and Earth. Employing the most intimate metaphor found in Scripture, the eternal Shepherd lives with His flock, devoting everything in His caring arsenal of benevolence to minister to us as our personal (not distant) guide, physician, and protector, for His glory and honor.

At the psalm’s beginning, the Lord’s name occupies the emphatic starting point. Next, the word “my” reveals an unbreakable pledged relationship which even “dares to link” our Lord and His child with contentment’s result—“I shall never want.” Everything else emphasized in this psalm rests and flows from these nine foundational words.

Let these words sink deep into your soul, especially if you have not yet embraced our Lord in salvation. The Creator of the universe cares for you, and He is willing that none should perish. Repent of your sin and place your faith and trust in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. CCM

## Abiding

*“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” (1 John 2:28)*

There is nothing sophisticated or subtle about this Greek word, *meno*, used many times in the New Testament. The various shades of “remaining” or “staying” are easily understood from the context and always focus on a consistent and even permanent situation.

So it is in our text. The Christian is expected to “stay” in a relationship with the Lord Jesus—implying both a permanent relationship and a “normal” relationship. We are to abide in Christ so completely that we would be like a branch growing out of the vine—thus making “fruit” possible (John 15:4-5). We are to continue in His Word so thoroughly that our prayers will be in synchronization with His will (John 15:7) and our behavior will be in synchronization with His commandments (1 John 3:24).

The steadfast “dwelling” in Christ promises to produce a confidence in our eternal relationship—the word choice especially emphasizes freedom in speaking, an unreservedness in speech. As Peter freely spoke at Pentecost (Acts 2:29) and the disciples received boldness to speak the Word of God (Acts 4:31), so our “plainness of speech” (2 Corinthians 3:12) in witnessing sets the stage for our “boldness in the day of judgment” (1 John 4:17).

Ultimately, of course, the lifestyle of abiding *in* Christ while on this earth builds the sanctified relationship *with* Christ that we are to enjoy for eternity.

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35-36). HMM III



Saturday, October 7

## The Doctrines of Salvation

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)*

The great theme of “salvation” (Greek *soteria*, Hebrew *yeshua*) is prominent in both Old and New Testaments. It basically means “deliverance” and can be used for local and specific “deliverances” from perils, as well as for the eternal deliverance of one’s soul. In the latter sense, it is used for deliverance from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin in daily life, and from the very presence of sin in the future life.

Salvation, of course, is found only through the Lord Jesus Christ, whose very coming into the world was to “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus means “salvation.” In fact, His name really was *Yeshua*, the word that often is translated “salvation” in the Old Testament. Devout Simeon, after waiting for many years, took the infant Jesus in his arms, exclaiming by the Spirit, “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30).

The theme of salvation is “so great” (Hebrews 2:3), it embraces many major doctrines of Scripture. As a very sketchy summary, one may note that it includes the doctrines of *atonement* (Leviticus 17:11); of *substitution* (Isaiah 53:5); of *imputation* (Romans 4:6-8); *propitiation* (1 John 2:2); *redemption* (1 Peter 1:18); *remission* (Acts 10:43); *justification* (Romans 3:28); *adoption* (Ephesians 1:5); *reconciliation* (Romans 5:10-11); *regeneration* (Titus 3:5); *sanctification* (Hebrews 10:9-10); and *glorification* (Romans 8:30). When a person is saved, the blessings implied in every one of these great doctrines of salvation become his, whether Jew or Gentile, whether found in Old Testament prophecy or New Testament fulfillment. No wonder Paul was not ashamed of this great gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, and neither should we be! HMM

## I Will Build My Church

*“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)*

This is the first of 115 occurrences of *ekklesia* in the New Testament—three times translated “assembly,” all other times as “church.” It is a compound of *ek* and *klesia*, thus meaning “called out” from their previous locations to meet together as a body for some purpose. The three times it is translated “assembly” refer to the town meeting in Ephesus (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Once it refers to the congregation of Israelites in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), leaving 111 times when it refers to a Christian church or churches.

Of these 111, at least 86 clearly refer to local churches, each meeting as a body in specific times and places. Individual local churches may come and go, but the institution of the local church will continue at least until the return of Christ. In the Bible’s final chapter, after outlining the entire future of the world, Jesus said, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches” (Revelation 22:16). All churches of all times and places, as well as the seven representative churches of Asia (Revelation 2 and 3), which have long since died out as distinct local churches, are thus intended to hear of the world’s prophetic future.

This is the last mention of churches, but the first, as cited in our text, has eternal dimensions, for even the “gates of hell” cannot prevail against it. This church actually will be in heaven itself. “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:22-23). HMM

Monday, October 9

## Scattered Abroad

*“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4)*

God has given two great commissions to His people, both of which would require worldwide effort to accomplish. Both, however, were so resisted that God Himself had to step in and force His people to be obedient.

Immediately, after the great Flood, God gave the following command: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1). This was an extension of the Edenic mandate given to Adam in the beginning, a commission to fill the earth and exercise dominion over it under God (1:28). Noah’s descendants, however, decided to stay in Babel and “make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” As a result of this rebellion, “the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (11:4, 9).

Over 2,000 years later, the Lord gave His disciples another great worldwide commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Then followed the coming of the Holy Spirit, and soon “the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly” (Acts 6:7).

But they remained in Jerusalem instead of spreading out to “the uttermost part of the earth” (1:8). Therefore, God once again intervened, and “there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad” (8:1). Then, finally, began their full obedience to the great commission, for “they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word,” and eventually some “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” will stand in saving faith before the Lord (Revelation 7:9). HMM

Tuesday, October 10

## Teaching Universe

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” (Psalm 19:1-2)*

This familiar psalm, extolling God’s creation (vv. 1-6) and God’s Word (vv. 7-14), begins with a beautiful summary of the testimony of the physical universe. “The heavens” and “the firmament” are synonymous (Genesis 1:8), both being equivalent to our modern scientific concept of space. The “glory of God” refers to His infinite power, or energy, and “his handywork” implies the infinite variety and complexity of physical systems, or matter, in the universe. This interaction of matter and energy occurs everywhere throughout space, but also has to operate and be understood in the context of time, “day unto day” and “night unto night.”

The entire marvelous complex of space/time/matter/energy is continually “uttering speech” and “showing knowledge,” teaching men and women of all times and places that there is a great Creator God who made it all. “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen” (Romans 1:20).

The boundless space, the endless time, the infinite energies, and the innumerable complexities of the matter of the universe all unite in irrefutable testimony to the God of creation. The most fundamental principle of science, as well as the most universal rule of human experience, is the Law of Cause and Effect, stating that no effect can transcend its cause. Thus, the great cause of the universe must be infinite, eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient. And since we as living, feeling persons are able to think about all this, that cause must also be a living, feeling, thinking person. This is the great lesson engraved on the textbook of the universe for all to read and learn. The whole creation, indeed, declares the glory of God. HMM

Wednesday, October 11

## Seven Outgrowths of Faith

*“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” (2 Peter 1:5-7)*

“Having escaped the corruption that is in the world” (v. 4) through our “faith” in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we must now grow spiritually, conforming our nature and practice to His. We must put to use the divine nature we now possess, recognizing that He has provided all the resources we need.

In this passage, Peter assumes we already have “faith,” thus here our spiritual lives must begin. Peter instructs us to “add to” that faith seven character traits: virtue, knowledge, temperance (self-control), patience (perseverance), godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (*agape* love).

There seems to be, both in the text (i.e., “add to”) and in practice, a progression here. New Christians should strive for *virtue*, eliminating sinful actions and thoughts from our lives, as the Holy Spirit brings conviction. A commitment to growth in *knowledge*, first the basics of the faith and then deeper doctrines, enables us to exercise wisdom in life’s choices. A *self-controlled*, disciplined lifestyle exercises *perseverance*, even strength in the face of adversity, which in turn produces *godliness*—an attitude of reverence toward God that strives to please Him by developing His attitudes and priorities. Our relations with others will thus be marked by *brotherly kindness* toward believers and *agape* love (self-sacrificing, undeserved love) for all.

Such spiritual growth does not come without effort. He has provided all we need, but we must “give all diligence” to the process, much more than simply allowing the Holy Spirit to reside in our hearts to work on our character and habits. Any lack of spiritual growth is *our* fault, not His. JDM

Thursday, October 12

## **The Whole Armor of God**

*“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13)*

This modern age of terrorism, drugs, sexual license, rampant crime, and worldwide unbelief is surely an evil day; and each Christian urgently needs “the whole armour of God” to stand against the devil’s wiles today. This armor is clearly described in Ephesians 6:14-18, but it seems that Satan’s wiles have confused it in the minds of many Christian educators. Paraphrasing this passage, their view might be expressed somewhat as follows: “Gird your loins with an open-ended search for truth, and have on the breastplate of value sensitivity, your feet shod with the gospel of academic tolerance; above all, taking the shield of accreditation and legal protection, with the helmet of economic security and the sword of evolutionary thought, praying always to the Department of Education and your academic peers.” Such Christian compromise is no armor at all.

How much better to be undergirded with revealed truth, founded on creation and biblical inerrancy, than by a “search” for truth! The true breastplate is righteousness, both imputed and practiced, and the true peace of God through Christ adorns the beautiful feet of those who carry the gospel. The shield is faith, which must be exercised first of all in special creation (Hebrews 11:3). The helmet, protecting the mind, is the genuine hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8). With no armor for the back, since the Christian is “to stand,” not to retreat, the chief offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God that meets each particular need. Finally, insistent prayer is both an offensive and a defensive weapon. The “weapons of our warfare” are “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Corinthians 10:4). HMM

Friday, October 13

## Day of Fire

*“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.” (Deuteronomy 32:22)*

The Bible clearly teaches that the Lord will judge Earth with fire. The Lord promises to make a new earth where those who humbled themselves to receive His righteousness can live without fear of evil. To do that, He will first rid this fading world of those who are bent on wrongdoing. “The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). This is not mere metaphor. The very foundations of the mountains will burn.

Mountains are rooted in continental crust, which reaches far below the earth’s surface toward the deep mantle. Such depths are already broiling, as lava reveals, but its temperature will intensify, according to Scripture.

Isaiah did not mince words, warning repeatedly of fire to come. “And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day” (Isaiah 10:17). “Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire” (Isaiah 29:6).

Those who reject these warnings will be caught willfully unaware when the day arrives “when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Romans 2:16). Whoever will accept this message can prepare for this day of fire. For those who seek salvation, “ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire” but “to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” (Hebrews 12:18, 24). BDT

## Keep On Keeping On

*“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 1:20-21)*

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, gave his “beloved” readers an essential list of four timeless habit-building patterns expressed in four parallel Greek participles—building, praying, keeping, and looking.

1. *Building*. Personal edification (“building yourselves up”) comes from growing in the knowledge of “your most holy faith.” The faith “once delivered unto the saints” (v. 3) also includes the teachings of the apostles that were added to the Old Testament and gospels.
2. *Praying*. Believers pray in God’s Spirit. One exposition of Jude 1:20 described it as “praying out of hearts and souls that are indwelt, illuminated, and filled with the Holy Spirit” (George Lawrence Lawlor, *Translation and Exposition of the Epistle of Jude*).
3. *Keeping*. Preserving oneself “in God’s love” (v. 21) means being nurtured by keeping occupied in obedience with God’s love.
4. *Looking*. We patiently wait (Greek *prosdechomenoi*) for the blessed hope of the return of Christ for His church. We will then enjoy never-ending eternal life in God’s presence (v. 21).

Jude concluded his epistle by reminding us it’s the Lord Jesus Christ who ultimately “keeps” His child. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (vv. 24-25). CCM



Sunday, October 15

## The Throne of David

*“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”*  
(2 Samuel 7:16)

No other ordinary human being, not even the greatest of men, was ever given a promise like this promise to David. It can be understood, however, when one realizes that David is a type of Christ and that, in terms of His human genealogy, Christ did indeed inherit the right to David’s throne. As the angel Gabriel told Mary: “The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever” (Luke 1:32-33). The coming Messiah is identified as this promised Son of David in the Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7).

Without attempting to discuss the eschatological implications of these great prophecies, it is remarkable just to note the striking typological relation of David to Christ (and, correspondingly, of Saul to Adam). Saul, like Adam, had a wonderful physique and every natural advantage; he was given dominion over a new order of things under God; he received God’s Spirit, and his seed would have reigned forever had he not failed by intruding into a forbidden sphere. He was then rejected by God because of his disobedience, and finally the Spirit of God departed from him.

David, however, is a beautiful type of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. Though anointed, he was not accepted by his brethren; he was a shepherd and performed great services for his people before becoming king, but he was rejected and condemned to death. God delivered him, but even then he was only accepted by a few, until suddenly all Israel accepted him, and he was promised an eternal kingdom. Christ now claims: “I am the root and the offspring of David”—both Creator and heir of David—“and the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). HMM

Monday, October 16

## Water and Blood

*“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (1 John 5:6)*

John’s writings are replete with examples and illustrations that focus on the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of John is built around seven great miracles of creation demonstrating the unique power that only the omnipotent Creator God could wield (John 10:25).

In his first epistle, John uses the word “know” 28 times to emphasize the behaviors and evidence that assure us that we have a living faith in Jesus Christ and are in truth the sons of God. In today’s text, John lists three “proofs” witnessed in history that verify the incarnation of the God-man Jesus Christ.

The water refers to physical birth—the amniotic sac that surrounds and cushions every human child until just before birth. This common experience was used by the Lord Jesus to help Nicodemus understand the necessity of the second (spiritual) birth required to enter the Kingdom of heaven (John 3:5-6).

The blood is either a reference to Christ’s death on Calvary “for the remission of sins” (Romans 3:25), or, perhaps, the fulfillment of the many prophecies that this Messiah would be of the lineage of David (Luke 1:32). Either way, this poignant evidence was both visible and verifiable.

The “Spirit” witness is obviously the time when the Holy Spirit visibly descended like a dove on the Lord Jesus at His baptism by John the Baptist, and the voice of the heavenly Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (John 1:33; Matthew 3:16-17).

There is thus a threefold witness to Christ’s incarnation: human physical birth, royal bloodline with the shedding of innocent blood, and heavenly confirmation. “This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). HMM III

Tuesday, October 17

## **The Valley of Blessing**

*“And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.” (2 Chronicles 20:26)*

The name Berachah means “blessing,” and the people of Judah surely had much reason to bless the Lord. The armies of the Moabites and Ammonites, and many others, had invaded their land, and King Jehoshaphat had no forces sufficient to oppose them.

But Jehoshaphat had already led his people back to the Lord, and now he prayed for their deliverance, acknowledging that the Lord was “God in heaven...so that none is able to withstand thee.” Therefore God replied, through the prophet Jahaziel, that “the battle is not yours, but God’s...stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 20:6, 15, 17). God then set the invading armies against each other until all were slain, and God’s people were delivered without even lifting a sword. No wonder the people “blessed the LORD”!

The Hebrew word *berachah* (“blessing”) is used some 68 times in the Old Testament, the first being God’s promise to Abraham when he followed the Lord: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2). God’s promise to Abraham has been abundantly kept, though there is much more to come. We, like the people in the valley of Berachah, have much for which to bless the Lord, for we also have seen the salvation of God: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

Therefore, “bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name” (Psalm 103:1). HMM

## God's Final Word

*“The LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.” (Zechariah 14:9)*

God cannot be defeated in His creative purpose for this earth and its people. In the beginning, there was only God. In the ending, there will be one Lord, and His name one.

In the meantime, He is working out His great plan of reconciliation, as revealed in His Word. In the magnificent book of Revelation, especially the last two chapters, we are carried forward in the Spirit into the never-ending glories of the renewed earth, with the great Creator and Redeemer dwelling there with His people eternally.

But in that final chapter, there are some final words from the Lord to guide and warn us until He returns. There is one final invitation, for example: “And let him that is athirst come” (Revelation 22:17). Then there is a final warning. This completed book of Scripture contains all that man will ever need to know concerning salvation, the Christian life, and God’s great plans, so let no man “add unto these things” or “take away from the words of the book of this prophecy” (vv. 18-19). There is no salvation except through His Word.

Next, there is a final promise. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly” (v. 20). Of all the promises of God, there is none more “exceeding great and precious” than this (2 Peter 1:4). In response, there is a final prayer, teaching us that this should be the climax of every believing prayer: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (v. 20). This is our greatest need!

Lastly, there is a final benediction, the same as the close of each of Paul’s epistles, and the most wonderful of all the words of a holy, yet loving, Creator, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (v. 21). It is fitting that God’s Word, which began with His creation, should end with His saving grace! HMM

Thursday, October 19

## The End

*“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17)*

As Peter wrote his first epistle, foremost in his mind was a desire to encourage the believers to stand firm in the face of suffering and trial. On four occasions he used the term “the end,” focusing his readers’ attention on the final resolution of all things. A study of these occurrences gives us a glimpse of the tenor of the entire book.

The first use followed an explanation of the nature and benefits of the various trials in a believer’s life. The result would be a pure, effective faith now, as well as “receiving *the end* of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1:9), the final ultimate deliverance of our whole person.

Meanwhile, “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to *the end* for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:13). Our minds should be completely (“to the end”) ready for action, sober and expectant, focused on the ultimate resolution of all trials.

This ultimate resolution could come at any time: “*The end* of all things is at hand” (4:7). Our responses should be to “be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” To be sober is to be of sound judgment, making careful decisions, not based on emotion; especially watchful as we pray, with eternity in mind.

Our text gives us the last occurrence of “the end.” The time of final judgment on both Christian and non-Christian looms nearer and nearer. But God’s cleansing of His people has already begun, and it at times is not pleasant, although beneficial. His judgment on those outside “the house of God” will be much more severe, with no opportunity for reconciliation. This warning should motivate us in our ministry to the unsaved. JDM

Friday, October 20

## The Father of Lights

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)*

God Himself is both author and finisher of everything we have that is good. This, of course, is the testimony concerning His creation in the beginning, which was both “very good” and “finished” (Genesis 1:31; 2:1). The unique name “Father of lights” seems to suggest a remarkable scientific insight. Since light is the most basic form of energy, and yet is equivalent also to all other forms, and since literally *everything* in the physical universe is energy in *some* form, it is singularly appropriate to speak of the totality of all God’s good and perfect gifts in creation as “lights.” And, since all these energies are not now being created (only “conserved”), their original source can only be from the *Father* of lights!

There even seems to be a hint of both of the great laws of science, energy conservation as well as energy deterioration. The term “variableness,” used only here, means literally “transmutation.” Just as God is immutable, the total amount of His created “lights” is conserved—neither created nor destroyed. The Second Law states that, in all energy conversions (that is, in everything that happens), the entropy of the universe increases. “Entropy” means “in-turning,” coming from two Greek words, *en* and *trope*—the second of which is used in this verse. Entropy is a measure of disorganization, and its inexorable increase is a result of God’s curse on the creation following man’s rebellion. Thus, although the total energy of the universe is conserved (by the First Law), the available energy is decreasing (by the Second Law). Nevertheless, God Himself is not bound by this law that He has imposed, for a time, on His creation. With Him is not even a “shadow” of any “turning” (*trope*). God never changes, and His purposes can never be defeated! HMM

Saturday, October 21

## The Vine

*“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:4)*

In Scripture we find many references to vines and vineyards, but there are three major passages that together reveal three aspects concerning the character of God and His love for His people.

The first, Isaiah 5:1-7, includes our text. Here we find that God, the owner, planter, and caretaker of the vineyard, cannot contain His disappointment, for despite the loving care showered upon the vine, it has brought forth improper, worthless fruit. In this parable, “the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant” (v. 7), the chosen people who had seen more clearly than anyone else His abundant provision, but who had chosen to reject Him and not bear Him fruit. To them, and to those of us who reject His cultivating grace, He says, “I will lay it waste” (v. 6).

Psalms 80:8-19 gives us a picture of the abject desolation of the unfruitful vineyard once it is abandoned by the vinedresser. It is ravaged by enemies, wild animals, and fire, utterly helpless. The “vine” (Israel) may cry for help and restoration, but there are consequences to be paid. What a graphic picture this is, and what a reminder to believers today that we cannot for long ignore His will for our lives.

The last and most precious passage is found in John 15:1-16 and concerns fruitbearing. “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (v. 5). Here are found the secrets of the believer’s growth and fertility in glorious union with Christ. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (v. 8). JDM

## Carest Thou Not?

*“And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38)*

There are times when we have great problems and God seems to ignore our prayers, and finally we begin to wonder if He cares about us at all. There is no need to wonder. God cares about the sparrow, and He surely cares about His own dear children. If there is not some clear reason why He fails to answer (such as sin in our lives), then perhaps it is simply (as in Job’s case) a test of our faith.

When the disciples thought Jesus didn’t care, He rebuked them thus: “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40). Mary and Martha sent word that their brother Lazarus was deathly ill, but then Jesus “abode two days still in the same place where he was” (John 11:6). When the sisters complained about His delay, He replied: “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (John 11:40).

One day a woman of Canaan cried out to Him for mercy on her for her demon-possessed daughter, “but he answered her not a word.” He seemed not to care, but she kept calling on Him and worshiping Him, until He finally said to her: “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt” (Matthew 15:23, 28).

The disciples, the sisters of Lazarus, and the Canaanite woman all wondered at His seeming lack of concern, but He did care. He finally calmed the storm, raised Lazarus, and healed the daughter. His delay was in order to test and strengthen their faith.

Can He not also test us, “that the trial of your faith...though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7)? HMM



Monday, October 23

## Confident Prayer

*“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (1 John 5:14-15)*

This is the classic conditional promise. Confidence in prayer is tied directly to the qualifier: “If we ask anything according to his will...” It is, therefore, important that we understand “what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17).

Many surveys have verified that most people pray. All of those studies, however, note that a good portion of the prayers are directed toward an unknown “higher power.” It may seem obvious, but the first requirement for coming under the will of God is to “believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). Before God will respond to our “petitions,” we must be “born again” (John 3:3).

Jesus was once asked what the greatest command was. His response, quoting from Deuteronomy 6, was: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). That internal and invisible love of the heart is expressed by obedience to the commandments that God has given. John records it this way: “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

Thus, a simple formula appears. If we obey what God has commanded us (starting with faith in the saving work of Christ), then we are assured that God will hear us when we pray. Once our confidence is secured, we can know that God will respond to what we desired from Him. The psalmist states the formula this way: “Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psalm 37:4).  
HMM III

## Jephthah's Daughter

*“Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.” (Judges 11:31)*

The story of Jephthah has been a stumbling block to many who interpret it as teaching that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to God as a burnt offering. As he prepared to face the Ammonite armies, he made the vow recorded in our text, if God would only give him the victory. His only child, a beloved daughter, was then first to meet him at his return, and so it was she who had to be offered.

It should be remembered, however, that Jephthah was a man of true faith (Hebrews 11:32-33), and he would never have vowed to disobey God’s prohibition against human sacrifice. The problem is that the Hebrew conjunction *waw* (translated “and” in our text) is very flexible in meaning depending on context. Here, “or” is better than “and.”

That is, Jephthah vowed that whatever first came out to meet him would be dedicated to the Lord: If a person came out (Jephthah was probably thinking of a servant), he or she would be dedicated to God’s service at the tabernacle, as Hannah later dedicated Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11). Or if an animal from his flock came out, it would be sacrificed.

His daughter, out of love for her father and gratitude to God for his deliverance from the Ammonites, insisted her father keep his vow. Since that meant that she, as a perpetual servant at the tabernacle, could never have a husband and children, she “bewailed her virginity” (not her impending death) and then “returned to her father” so that he could keep his vow, and throughout her life “she knew no man” (Judges 11:38-39). Instead of a strange tale of human sacrifice, this is the story of the love of a God-fearing father and daughter for each other and for their Lord. HMM

Wednesday, October 25

## Jesus Owns It All

*“[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:2)*

The book of Hebrews exalts the Lord Jesus’ ownership of all things, including us. Four reasons support this.

First, all things are destined to become the Lord Jesus’ inheritance. Second, He created it all. Of course, He did not create it independently of His Father or His Spirit. Working together, for example, they said, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). The New Testament reiterates Christ’s creative activity. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16).

The writer of Hebrews continues, “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). Thus, the Lord Jesus also has full rights over all creation because He sustains it continually. The moment His powerful word ceases to uphold them, all things would cease.

Last, Christ owns it all because He redeemed it through His selfless sacrifice. He did all the work necessary to buy His cosmos back, as though He did not already own it by right of inheritance, creation, and sustaining power. Moreover, His purging of our sins on the cross was so perfectly complete that the Lord is sitting down—for now.

The Lord Jesus has the right of inheritance, of creation, of sustenance, and of redemption over all things. He owns us four times over! What kind of worship ought we to give Him? BDT

## **Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake**

*“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” (Luke 6:22)*

“Blessed” means “happy,” and it would seem paradoxical to try to find happiness by being persecuted. Most Christians are extremely reluctant to do anything that might make them less popular with their peers, let alone anything that might lead to social ostracism or even physical suffering. Yet, Jesus said that this is the way to find true happiness.

He did not say that blessing comes through suffering for foolishness’ sake, or for carelessness’ sake, or for sinfulness’ sake. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matthew 5:10). The principle is amplified by Peter: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye....But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:14-16).

It hurts, of course, to be “cast out—as evil” when one is sincerely seeking to do right and to honor God. This was the experience of the blind man to whom Jesus gave sight. The religious authorities responded to his testimony with: “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out” (John 9:34). Nevertheless, he now could see! Likewise, the religious leaders “raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.” Nevertheless, “the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 13:50, 52).

The situation exists today in many countries—soon perhaps in America. If so, may the Lord enable us to honor His name in suffering with joy and without compromise, for “Christ also suffered for us” (1 Peter 2:21). HMM

Friday, October 27

## Renewed to Walk in His Statutes

*“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”*  
(Ezekiel 36:24-27)

Ezekiel prophesied God’s unilateral promise to redeem repenting Israel (Ezekiel 18:30-32), but only after they embraced their Messiah in faith, turning from their sin to serve the living God (Jeremiah 31:31). In the book of Ezekiel, the phrase “they will know I am Yahweh” is repeated 35 times to refer to punishment.

But beginning with chapter 34, Ezekiel’s tone turns from severe judgment to unilateral new covenant blessings. “They will know I am Yahweh” is repeated six times to denote Yahweh’s blessing of steadfast love (Ezekiel 34:27-30; 36:11, 38; 38:23; 39:6, 28). But don’t miss Yahweh’s reason for this deliverance—that His children would now walk in His statutes and follow His rules (36:27).

Likewise, grafted-in believing Gentiles are also recipients of these same new covenant promises (Romans 11:17). As former slaves to sin, believers in Christ become slaves to righteousness with changed hearts (Romans 11:26-27). Each day, we now awaken and pray that Yahweh would cause us to walk in obedience.

What a privilege and wonder that Yahweh states to His children, “Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:28). CCM

## Satan's Strategic Plan

*"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3)*

The magnificent book of Genesis sets the foundation for Scripture, revealing the "Roman numerals" upon which the rest of the Bible's message is built. Apart from the actual events of the creation week, the fall of Adam and Eve, and the subsequent horrific growth of sin and the awful judgment of the Flood, the gospel message would make little sense.

Paul's warning showcases the importance of Satan's strategy to ensnare humanity in the same trap. The Devil's tactics change with time and culture, but the strategy remains the same.

First, Satan always attempts to make us *doubt* the Word of God (Genesis 3:1). If we question the accuracy, the meaning, the authenticity, the historicity, or any other shade of "all scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16), then we begin edging onto a slippery slope that will only lead to the next stage.

Second, Satan always confronts the doubter with a *denial* of the Word of God (Genesis 3:4). When one begins to deny the authority, the capability, or the will of God to carry out His Word, the slide into the final phase is inevitable.

Third, Satan ultimately heaps *denigration* on the Person of God Himself (Genesis 3:5). Once one embraces the thought that the Word of God is not trustworthy and that God either will not or cannot do what He says, it absolutely follows that God is either a liar, a hypocrite, or a capricious and whimsical ogre.

May God protect us from the "wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). HMM III

Sunday, October 29

## Prayer for All Men

*“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”*  
(1 Timothy 2:1)

The book of 1 Timothy consists of various charges (1:18-19) to Paul’s disciple Timothy. The first charge (2:1-8) concerns prayer in the church. The fact that Paul mentions it “first of all” (v. 1) indicates that he felt it of primary importance. Note the four types of prayer in our text verse.

*Supplications*, or perhaps *petitions*, referring to one’s personal needs: We must recognize our continued dependence on God’s provision. “The effectual fervent prayer [same word] of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

*Prayers*: This is a general term with a number of applications, but foremost it indicates reverence for and worship of the one to whom the prayers are offered. “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8).

*Intercessions*: This word implies a personal bequest on an intimate basis, as child to father. The only other occurrence of the word regards the eating of food that “is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:5).

*Giving of thanks*: When we give thanks, we recognize that our blessings are undeserved. “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever” (Revelation 7:12).

These types of prayers, which should probably be understood as representing all types of prayers, should be made “for all men,” specifically those in authority (v. 2) and for the unsaved (v. 4). Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will present our prayers to the Father (v. 5) and ensure that He will answer them as He sees best. JDM

## Man's Grief and God's Compassion

*“For the LORD will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” (Lamentations 3:31-33)*

The five chapters of the unique book of Lamentations, written by Jeremiah in his grief over the destruction of Jerusalem, are all written as acrostics, with each verse of each chapter beginning with successive letters of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet. That is, verse 1 of each chapter begins with the letter *aleph*, verse 2 with *beth*, etc. (like A, B, etc. in English). The middle chapter is written in acrostic triplets (the first three verses beginning with *aleph*, and so on). Thus, chapter 3 contains 66 verses instead of 22.

The three verses of our text are right at the midpoint of this middle chapter, comprising the final triplet of the first half of the book, and thus uniquely constituting its central theme. As such, it could well also be the heart cry of every saint in any age experiencing God's chastening hand.

Although Jeremiah himself had not sinned, his nation had grievously sinned, and thus all Israel had finally come under the rod. Nevertheless, the prophet could assure his people that God still loved them and would renew His compassion even in the midst of their grief. God does not willingly send affliction, for He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

When we suffer, or our nation suffers (as it surely will if it continues its present rebellion against God), it is well to remember His promise. “He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever” (Psalm 103:9). It is true that “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11). HMM



Tuesday, October 31

## **The Just Shall Live by Faith**

*“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4)*

This great principle—“the just shall live by faith”—was the Scripture that so inflamed the soul of Martin Luther that it became the watchword of the Reformation. It occurs first here in the small prophecy of Habakkuk, but is then quoted three times in the New Testament. The term “just,” of course, means “justified” or “righteous.” God says a person is enabled to live righteously by his faith.

The nature of this faith is clarified by three quotations. The first is Romans 1:17: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” The phrase “from faith to faith” means “from the beginning of faith to the end of faith,” and the context indicates that the foundational item of faith is faith in “his eternal power and Godhead,” which “from the creation of the world are clearly seen” (Romans 1:20).

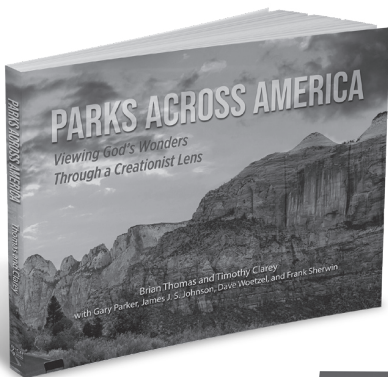
Similarly, in the last occurrence: “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38). Then the writer notes that the basic item of faith is special creation: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

The middle occurrence is Galatians 3:11: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.” Paul’s lengthy explanation to the Galatian legalists begins with Galatians 2:16: “Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.” Thus, justifying, saving, living faith begins and centers in Jesus Christ, first as Creator of all things, then as the Savior who “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Galatians 3:13). HMM

**NEW!**

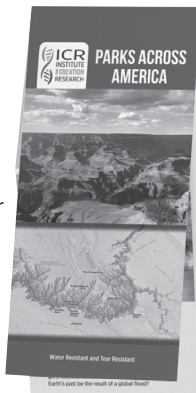
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Wednesday, November 1

## **An Ear to the Master's Voice**

*“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.”*  
(Exodus 21:5-6)

This unique ordinance of the Mosaic law is significant as being the first one given after the Ten Commandments. It (and the following ordinances) centers first on the most humble members of society (that is, the slave—recognizing the universal existence of slavery at the time and ameliorating its practice), then on other people, then on property—thus establishing God's priorities.

Here also, right at the beginning of the dispensation of law, we are given a picture in miniature of the coming Servant of the Lord, who would come someday to bear the penalty of the law for us, saving us by His grace.

The servant pictured here, with full right to be set free in the sabbatical year, chooses rather to do the will of his master forever, listening to his voice only—this commitment symbolized and sealed by the opening in his ear. Just so, the coming Savior would say: “Mine ears hast thou opened....Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:6-8). The fulfillment of this prophecy is described in Hebrews 10:5-10. There, the opening of the ear of the servant is interpreted as the preparation of His human body “to do thy will, O God....By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:7, 10). Out of love for the Father and for those who would share the Father's house with Him, He offered His body to accomplish the saving will of God. HMM

## Belief and Behavior

*“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” (Job 1:8)*

Job was blameless. But since “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), how could he avoid bearing blame? His friend Bildad had the same question. He asked Job, “How then can man be justified with God?” (Job 25:4). Bildad assumed that Job based his self-proclaimed right standing with God on his own good works. It appears that blamelessness through God’s grace never entered Bildad’s mind.

According to God, however, Bildad and his two like-minded “miserable comforters” (Job 16:2) “have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath” (Job 42:7). The three men apparently thought that righteousness arises from behavior, not belief. But for God to see sinners as blameless, He must pardon them by grace alone.

Did Job believe blamelessness comes by faith and through a sacrifice? He did think his family’s sins required blood sacrifices, since he “rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all [10 children]” (Job 1:5). Good works don’t earn right standing before our holy God. Job must have trusted that God transfers sin and blame to an appropriate sacrifice, a promise that would be realized with the death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. After we believe, we find inspiration for right behavior from our newfound freedom in forgiveness.

God directed Job’s friends to “go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering” (Job 42:8). The Lord points out that belief in Him, not behavior, is our necessary source of blamelessness. Good behavior follows faith. BDT

Friday, November 3

## The Truth

*“...God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)*

The verses preceding our text encourage believers to be in prayer “for all men” (v. 1), including “all that are in authority” (v. 2), that our own lives might be “quiet and peaceable,” as well as for their salvation.

God, who abhors and promises to judge sinful individuals, does not desire to punish anyone. His desire is for “all men to be saved,” and He has done all that is necessary to bring this about, by paying sin’s awful penalty of death. While not all will avail themselves of this opportunity, choosing instead to continue in their sin, our prayers somehow are used by God to bring some “to the knowledge of the truth.”

The truth necessary for salvation follows: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all” (vv. 5-6).

In order to be saved, we must embrace the fact that there is only “one God” who alone holds the key to eternity, and that there is only one way by which we can reach that God, “the man Christ Jesus.” We, in our natural state, are at war with God, estranged from Him, and separated by the presence of sin in our lives. Christ Jesus, acting as our mediator, our peacemaker, our advocate, being both fully God (i.e., “one God”) and fully man (i.e., “the man”) bridges the gap between the Father and all men. As Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

How has He bridged the gap? He “gave himself a ransom for all” (v. 6). The Bible teaches that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) but that “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Since He willingly “gave himself” as a punishment for our sins, we can stand before God the Father in Christ’s sinlessness. JDM

## Sanctified, Preserved, Called

*“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” (Jude 1:1)*

Although the Scriptures have much to teach about each of these precious terms, Jude is the only New Testament writer to use them together in sequence. This is also the only passage that identifies specific roles for the Persons of the Trinity in the lives of believers.

God the Father is said to “sanctify” us (separate, consecrate), but He apparently does this through the Holy Spirit based on the Father’s foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:2). We are not told all that is involved, but our sanctification does include our “belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13) and the “offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (Hebrews 10:10), who “was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20).

Jesus Christ “preserves” us. The common use of this term in the New Testament is to “guard” or “watch” over something or someone. The believer is most often the subject of this verb—e.g., we are to “guard” our obedience to the instructions of God (1 Timothy 6:14; 1 John 2:3). Jude’s use, however, highlights the special attention our Lord gives to each of us so that our “whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The sanctification and the preservation come with the “calling,” the invitation that is issued from God to those who are “the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). It is a “high calling” (Philippians 3:14) and a “holy calling” (2 Timothy 1:9), and once we are “called,” God will “justify” and “glorify” (Romans 8:30). The twice-born of God are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that [we] should shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). HMM III

Sunday, November 5

## Lord of Hosts

*“And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.” (1 Samuel 1:3)*

This majestic name of God, “LORD of hosts” (Hebrew *Jehovah Sabaoth*), occurs almost 240 times in the Bible, first of all in our text above. It is noteworthy that Elkanah, the father of Samuel, understood this name of God better than did the wicked priests, the two sons of Eli. The name occurs only once in the New Testament, speaking of oppressed laborers crying to “the Lord of sabaoth” (James 5:4).

A similar name, “God of hosts,” occurs nine times, the first in Psalm 80:7: “Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” The combined name “LORD God of hosts” is used about 25 times, first in 2 Samuel 5:10: “And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.”

In all these 270 or so references, the name is used to emphasize the mighty power of God and His great host of angels “that excel in strength, that do his commandments” (Psalm 103:20). Not only is God Himself omnipotent and omniscient (after all, He is the Creator of all things!), but He has “an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22) at His call. Occasionally, some of these mighty hosts have actually been seen by men, as in the days of Elisha (2 Kings 6:17) and at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:13).

There is evidently an angelic hierarchy among these heavenly hosts. There are the cherubim and seraphim (Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2), for example, as well as “Michael the archangel” (Jude 1:9) and “Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19). However, the great “captain of the host of the LORD” (Joshua 5:14) is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He, and He alone, is the true “LORD of hosts.” HMM

Monday, November 6

## Rest with Us

*“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7)*

The Christians in the young church at Thessalonica, very soon after accepting Christ, underwent severe “persecutions and tribulations” (v. 4). The apostle Paul wrote to commend them that God had thus judged them to be “counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (v. 5). That is, the kingdom of God was being persecuted when they were persecuted, and God would certainly repay their tormentors in kind. The believers’ tribulations were from men. Those who were being troubled would receive “rest with us” from God (“rest” here is a noun, not a verb).

The Thessalonians must realize, however, that this righteous recompense—at least in its full measure—must await the return of the Lord Jesus. They must resist the temptation to repay their persecutors in kind if the opportunity should come. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). They must simply continue to “endure” and “suffer,” so that “our God would count you worthy of this calling, and ...That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 11-12).

The Lord Jesus Himself is our example, “that ye should follow his steps:...Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:21, 23).

“In the last days...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:1, 12), and latter-day Christians may very well have opportunity to put this ancient counsel to the Thessalonians into present practice. If so, may God give us the grace to endure as they endured! HMM



Tuesday, November 7

## The Common Salvation

*“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation...” (Jude 1:3)*

The description of our salvation as “common” does not mean that salvation is “ordinary” or “normal” but rather that salvation is available to anyone who wants it. The term is translated “unclean” several times in passages that speak of items that are accessible to everyone rather than specialized foods or ceremonies available to just a few (Acts 11:8; Romans 14:14; etc.).

Right after Pentecost, the Jerusalem church experienced a quick growth in converts, many of whom were poor and needed practical help. The bond of the new church was so strong that “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). That is the sense in which Jude speaks of a “common” salvation.

The salvation is available to all. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). None are excluded from the possibility of salvation—except those who refuse to believe what God has provided through the substitutionary death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2).

But this salvation is also necessary for all. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It has become popular today to couch the gospel message in moderate terms, making the message appear optional or a “personal” belief system. No, it is the only salvation, even if it is “common.” “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). HMM III

## Taste the Goodness

*“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.” (Psalm 34:8-10)*

Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm, with its 22 verses beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in sequential order. It emphasizes the believer’s eternal redemption—both in deliverance from sin and in God’s faithful guidance as we walk through our lives in anticipation of our eternal home (Romans 8). We are invited to put our trust in the Lord, since Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our Provider, Protector, and Sustainer (Psalm 23).

Moreover, His people are commanded to taste and see that the Lord is good. “Taste” is not a bite-size, taster-spoon sampler. Rather, “taste” is a full-size meal that completely spiritually satisfies.

Believer, do you taste the sustaining nourishment of Scripture? Ezekiel ate Yahweh’s words, which were “in [his] mouth as honey for sweetness” (Ezekiel 3:1-3). The result of consuming His words is complete contentment in fearing Him and wanting for nothing (Psalm 34:9). “Good” (pleasant, pure, practical) is repeated four times for emphasis in this psalm (vv. 8, 10, 12, 14). Yahweh’s words of Scripture are good and “sweeter than honey” (Psalm 119:103-104).

We can conclude with the apostle Peter, who wrote, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2-3). Are you satisfied consuming His Word? Consider this an invitation to the feast. CCM

Thursday, November 9

## Exalting the Anointed One

*“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.” (1 Samuel 2:10)*

This is a remarkable prayer, uttered under divine inspiration by Hannah, thanking God for the miraculous birth of Samuel. It contains the first explicit reference in the Bible to the Messiah (“anointed,” in the Hebrew, is *Messiah*, equivalent to the Greek “Christ”). Hannah’s prophetic prayer predicts the ultimate exaltation of Messiah over all the adversaries of the Lord to the very ends of the earth.

Hannah also prophesied the coming of the Lord’s great King. Yet this was during the time of the judges, long before the people of Israel even began to request a king.

In fact, the entire prophecy is the first of many similar prophecies throughout the Bible that look forward to the return of the Lord “out of heaven” to judge all nations, to destroy His enemies, and to establish His anointed one as King of the earth.

There is nothing comparable to this prophecy in the earlier books of the Bible, but it is a theme often emphasized in the Psalms and in the books of prophecy, as well as in the New Testament. For example, note David’s great prophecy: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed.... Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath.... Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.... and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psalm 2:2, 5-6, 8).

There are many similar later prophecies, but it is significant that the first one also contains the first mention of Messiah, and that was from the lips of a humble, but devout, mother. HMM

## Filled and Fulfilled

*“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” (Colossians 1:9)*

In this prayer, Paul sought for the Colossian Christians the full knowledge of the will of God. For the Christians at Rome, he prayed they might be filled “with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13). For the Ephesians, he prayed they “might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19), and then urged them to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). He wrote to the Philippians, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; ...Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11). For the Colossians, he also prayed for their “full [same as ‘filled with’] assurance of understanding” (Colossians 2:2).

Together, all these prayer requests constitute an ideal description of a complete Christian—an ideal for which we should all strive and pray—both for ourselves and for others. Summarizing again, the list is as follows.

“[Filled] with all joy and peace in believing.”

“Filled with the fruits of righteousness.”

“Filled with the knowledge of his will.”

“Filled with the Spirit.”

“Filled with all the fulness of God.”

“[Filled with] assurance of understanding.”

It is also worth noting that the Greek word for “filled” is the same as for “fulfilled.” When a Christian is “filled” with all these wonderful realities, he becomes a “fulfillment,” as it were, of God’s purpose in creating and redeeming him. His ultimate goal, of course, is to measure up to “the fulness of Christ” Himself (Ephesians 4:13). HMM

Saturday, November 11

## He Shall Speak Peace

*“And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” (Zechariah 9:10)*

This wonderful prophecy follows immediately after the verse predicting the coming of the Messiah into Jerusalem riding upon a lowly donkey’s colt (v. 9). That prediction was fulfilled by Jesus as He came into Jerusalem on that last Sunday before His death and resurrection (Matthew 21:4-5), but the prophecy in our text was certainly not fulfilled at that time. There have been wars somewhere in the world practically every year since Jesus came. Nevertheless, the day will come when He shall indeed speak peace to all the nations.

Early in the last century, the nations had fought a great war that was supposed to end all wars. They celebrated the armistice that ended that war on November 11, 1918, and established an annual holiday called Armistice Day. But many other wars followed that war, so the name was changed to honor the veterans who had fought in any of those later wars as well. However, there is still no real peace in the world.

The fact is that there can be no lasting peace between men and other men until there is peace between men and God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can make such a peace, for He alone is the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Indeed, He has already paid the price to make such true and eternal peace, for He “made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself” (Colossians 1:20).

In that great coming day when He returns to Earth to establish His kingdom, “he maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth” (Psalm 46:9), “and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:17). HMM

## Christ at Creation

*“When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep.” (Proverbs 8:27-28)*

This chapter contains a beautiful description of some of God’s works during the creation week when God, in Christ, was creating and making all things. Christ Himself, personified as the divine wisdom, the word of God, is speaking.

Verse 27 speaks of His pre-existence before the creation of the space/time universe itself. At first the “earth” matter was “without form,” with only a great “deep” of water. Then God “set a compass” on the face of the deep, activating the gravitational forces that brought it into spherical form. The Hebrew word for “compass” means “sphere,” the same word used in Isaiah 40:22, where it is said God “sitteth upon the circle [i.e., ‘sphere’] of the earth.”

Then God “established the clouds above.” The word for “clouds” means “thin mists,” undoubtedly referring to the waters “above the firmament” (Genesis 1:7). Finally, He strengthened the fountains of the deep, locking them under the “foundations of the earth” (Proverbs 8:29). The same strong fountains of the deep would later be broken up at the time of the great Flood. When the earth was finished, He “rejoiced in the habitable part of his earth” (i.e., Proverbs 8:31).

In all these and the other mighty works of creating and making all things, the Lord Jesus Christ assures us “I was there!” That further assures us, of course, that through all the ages to come, He will be there.

This remarkable eighth chapter of Proverbs concludes with the following exhortation, more relevant today than ever: “For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:35-36). HMM

Monday, November 13

## **Mortified**

*“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*  
(Romans 8:13)

To mortify something means to put it to death. Paul taught in our text and in other passages that the “deeds of the body,” or its fleshly actions and appetites, all that pertains “to the old man,” should be mortified, or put to death.

This mortification is first of all judicial—Christ having been put to death in our stead. “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).

But the mortification must not stop there, with only a positional death. It must also be an actual mortification in practice, for “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25). “For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Romans 6:19).

Elsewhere, Paul identifies specific deeds and attitudes that must be mortified. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence [or evil desires], and covetousness” (Colossians 3:5). The first four listed will be recognized as various forms of sensual sins, indicating how detrimental this category of sin is to spiritual life. The fifth is covetousness, or inordinate love of money and material things. These five comprise deadly sins to men and women of any historical age—particularly our own. If they are not put to death, they bring death, “for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh” (v. 6).

The choice is clear! It will be either death to the flesh, or death to the spirit. JDM

## Total Abstinence

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”*  
(1 Peter 2:11)

The command to *abstain* occurs only a few times in the New Testament, but there are three occurrences that are especially relevant for Christians today. One of these is 1 Thessalonians 4:3: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” The Greek word here actually applies to any type of sexual relationship outside of marriage, and the command is not merely for temperance or for “love” in one’s non-marital sexual relationships, but for *total abstinence*. This exhortation is perhaps needed more today than at any time since the days of pagan Rome, even for Christians and, unfortunately, Christian leaders

But that is not all. In the words of our text, we are also urgently exhorted to “abstain from fleshly lusts” since these carnal desires are in mortal combat with our very souls. One must avoid situations that might initiate or encourage fornication or its kindred activities.

But even that is not sufficient for the serious Christian man or woman. “Now we exhort you, brethren,...Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:14, 22). The word here means anything that in outward form might appear to be evil, regardless of whether it is really wrong in itself or not. The Lord desires that we “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:10) and that we “give none offense” (1 Corinthians 10:32).

A believer cannot afford to be careless in this warfare against his soul. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). HMM



Wednesday, November 15

## **Who, What, and Why of Creation**

*“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)*

**Who:** In eternity past, God spoke the physical universe into existence (Genesis 1:1). “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). Unlike the triune Godhead, the matter-space-time universe had a specific beginning.

**What:** Genesis 1–2 gives the only eyewitness account and historical framework for creation. God spoke into existence what previously had not existed (Hebrews 11:3). The Hebrew words *bārā*’ (divine creation through God’s command) and *yôm* (the day-by-day pattern of God’s creation work) remove any wiggle room for evolutionary insertion into the first chapter of Genesis. God speaks and creates everything in six literal 24-hour days. “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Nothing in His creation was a product of natural selection or death.

**Why:** Man’s creation is listed separately because he was created in God’s image. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). God’s purpose for the entire material universe was humanity. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:10). Everything will eventually be uncreated except for humanity.

So, God created us according to His pleasure and, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, for us “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Those of us who’ve placed our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ can “look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). CCM

## Earnestly Contend

*“It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3)*

After Jude had responded to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to direct his thoughts away from writing a gospel account, the intensity of the growing battle for “the faith” came into focus. Perhaps Jude was aware of Paul’s observation that we do not “wrestle” against ordinary forces, but our battle deals with the “spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

The special word chosen by the Holy Spirit to speak to this struggle in Jude’s letter was *epagonizomai*. The core word (*agonizomai*) is used in the famous passage “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). Paul also notes what “great conflict” he felt for the church at Colosse (Colossians 2:1) and that Epaphras was “always labouring fervently” for them in his prayers (Colossians 4:12).

The object of this spiritual struggle was “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Two matters are of importance in that little phrase. First, “the faith” is a specific designation used in the New Testament to incorporate the basic doctrines of the New Covenant. It does include, but does not limit itself to, the belief that results in salvation. The early churches were “established in the faith” (Acts 16:5). We are to “stand fast in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13) and to come to a “unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13).

Second, that body of doctrine was “once delivered to the saints.” Implicit in that comment is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to “guide [the apostles] into all truth” (John 16:13). Both Old and New Testaments insist that we are not to add or subtract from the words of God’s Word. Jude’s epistle emphasizes the awful judgment that comes upon those who would distort or disdain what is “the faith.” HMM III

Friday, November 17

## Dead Works

*“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and a faith toward God.” (Hebrews 6:1)*

The phrase “dead works” can be found only twice in the New Testament. In the first (our text), it refers to the deeds of the unsaved sinner from which he must turn away in salvation, while in the second, later in the same epistle, it refers to unprofitable deeds accomplished by the believer, from which we must also turn away (Hebrews 9:14).

Dead works are certainly not *good* works, but neither are they necessarily *evil* works. Rather, they are ineffective, useless acts that count for nothing. They are as different from evil or good works as *wild* fruit is from *good* fruit or *bad* fruit. In this analogy, while bad fruit looks unappealing and would never pass for food, wild fruit may have the appearance of good fruit but lacks flavor and nutritional value and would provide no useful function even if it were eaten. In just the same way, dead works, which may be of some humanitarian value, lack life—not stemming from proper motives and not being propelled by love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) and thus accomplish nothing of lasting value.

The non-Christian can pridefully indulge in such works, but this must be repented of at the point of salvation. Likewise, the Christian must replace his useless *dead works* with *good works* through the power of the Spirit of the living God. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from *dead works* to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

May we continually submit all our efforts to Him, recognizing that service to the living God does not entail our dead works. JDM

## The Angelic Shout

*“...when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7)*

The phrase “shouted for joy” in this verse is actually a single word (*ruwa*) in the Hebrew, and it can carry a number of meanings. It is most frequently translated simply “shout,” as when the army of Joshua surrounding Jericho shouted and the walls fell down (Joshua 6:20). In Psalm 100:1, it is translated “make a joyful noise.” It can refer to a shout of alarm or shout of triumph, as well as a shout of joy, but it always refers to a *loud* shout. In fact, it comes from a root meaning “to split”—a noise that would split eardrums or shatter glass.

In the context of Job 38, the Lord is reminding Job and his friends of the great primeval event of creation. When the earth—which is destined eventually to house God’s throne in the eternal ages to come—was established on solid foundations (on the third day of creation), a resounding noise like mighty thunder—or, better, a gigantic angelic anthem—echoed throughout the universe. An “innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22), identified in the poetic structure of the Hebrew parallelism in our text as both “morning stars” and “sons of God,” shouted exultantly and sang in unison when the solid earth appeared.

The angels probably were created on the first day of the creation week, immediately after the creation of the universe itself. Even though Satan and other angels later rebelled against God, most of the angels still obey Him, and one day we ourselves will actually hear them singing His praises and shouting for joy when He returns to Earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 4:9-11; 5:11-14; Psalm 148:1-6).

Therefore, “praise ye him all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts” (Psalm 148:2). Someday, we shall join them in a “joyful noise” at God’s throne. HMM

Sunday, November 19

## Certain Men

*“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.” (Jude 1:4)*

Jude speaks severely of these “certain men” who were “before ordained” (literally “written about beforehand”) for a very specific judgment. The context relates back to the period of the Old Testament, although Jude later identifies others who are apparently active in the early churches.

A purification of 30 days was required of “certain men” who were (apparently) undertakers during the time of Moses. They were “defiled” by their contact with dead bodies according to the law but must still keep the Passover—albeit a month after the other Israelites (Numbers 9:4-11). God does not allow excuses.

Later, “certain men” among the Israelites who had apostatized and become “children of Belial” were to be destroyed, along with their city and all of their possessions, after it had been definitely determined that they had left Israel and become part of a cult community (Deuteronomy 13:13-16). God does not take prisoners!

During the time of Jeremiah’s ministry, God allowed the evil king Jehoiakim to send “certain men” down into Egypt to capture the prophet Urijah so the king could kill him (Jeremiah 26:22-23). God does allow evil men to gain the upper hand temporarily as He brings about the fulfillment of His prophetic warnings—in this case, the captivity of Judah by Babylon.

Jude speaks of “certain men” who had been “written before” (*prographo*) as historical examples of those among the New Testament saints who were “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 4b). Peter puts it this way: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). HMM III

Monday, November 20

## The Lord Our Shield

*“But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.” (Psalm 3:3)*

The beautiful metaphor of God as our shield and our protector from evil is used over 15 times in the book of Psalms, the first being in our text above. The very first time it is used in the Bible, however, is also the first time the word “shield” itself is used. That was the time when God assured Abram, after his battle with the armies of the northern kings, “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield” (Genesis 15:1). This was a great comfort to Abram, there in the land of the Canaanites, where evil and enemies surrounded him on all sides.

But consider also a few of the many “shield” promises in the book of Psalms. One of the most beautiful and most uplifting is Psalm 84:11: “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

And consider also this wonderful promise: “As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler [same word] to all those that trust in him” (Psalm 18:30). In the same psalm appears this great testimony: “Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35).

Three times in Psalm 115 appears the injunction to “trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield” (Psalm 115:9-11). Similarly, “thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word” (Psalm 119:114).

The final reference in Psalms to the Lord as our shield is “Blessed be the LORD my strength....My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me” (Psalm 144:1-2). HMM

Tuesday, November 21

## Misuse of the Bible

*“...his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:16)*

It is vitally important for every Christian to study and use the Scriptures, for they constitute our only real authority (note Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 14:26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; etc.). In doing this, however, it is just as important that we not misuse the Scriptures, for this can be almost as dangerous as ignoring them altogether.

Many people twist the Scriptures, seeking to make them fit some opinion of their own, hoping thereby to give a pseudobiblical authority to their peculiar prejudices, instead of allowing the Lord to say what He means. Such distortion of Scripture has generated a plethora of cults and heresies—past and present. This was essentially Christ’s view of the Pharisees: “In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

Similar—perhaps even worse—is claiming to receive new Scripture, or perhaps new (and authoritative) insight on existing Scripture. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2). “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).

Cults and heretics distort and supplement the Scriptures, but still deadlier are the liberals who try to explain away the Scriptures. “If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life” (Revelation 22:19). This act of distorting and then denying God’s Word (“Yea, hath God said....Ye shall not surely die,” Genesis 3:1, 4) was the very lie of Satan that brought sin into the world. No wonder the Bible warns so severely against it! HMM

Wednesday, November 22

## The Unknown Creator

*“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” (John 1:10)*

This verse is surely one of the saddest, most poignant verses in all the Word of God. In the Lord Jesus Christ, our Creator/ Redeemer, “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The atoms of our bodies are sustained by Him (Colossians 1:17), yet multitudes ignore Him, ridicule Him, and take His name in vain. What presumption! What foolishness!

Once He even entered visibly into the world He had created so that people actually could *hear* His words of life and *see* His works of love. But they willfully refused to acknowledge Him, and then hung Him on a cross to die.

The height of irony and the depth of foolishness are reached when those whose very minds and bodies were created by Christ refuse even to admit the fact of creation. In effect, they turn Psalm 100:3 upside down and claim, “It is not he that hath made us—it is we ourselves!” Not only do modern men deny His creation, they also reject His salvation, thinking they can save themselves.

It is important to note that John 1:10 specifically refers to the refusal of the “world” to know Him as its Creator. It was made by Him but would not acknowledge His work of creation. How then could the world ever “receive” Him as its Savior (v. 11)? Only its Creator could ever become its Savior, since no one else in all creation was both deserving and capable of such a mission.

Even more inexcusable than those who rejected Him when He was here in the world are those who reject Him today. With all the marvelous evidences of creative design in nature as revealed by modern science, plus the unanswerable evidences of His own bodily resurrection from the dead, it is wicked foolishness for modern men and women still to reject Him as their Creator and Savior. HMM



Thursday, November 23

## The Son of Thankfulness

*“And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.” (Genesis 29:35)*

This verse is the testimony of Jacob’s first wife, Leah, at the time of the birth of her fourth son. It also is significant in that it contains the first mention of the Hebrew *yadah*, often rendered “praise” but more often “thank” or “thanks.” In fact, she even named her son Judah, which is essentially the same Hebrew word.

Although Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were all older sons of Leah, God chose Judah to be the father of the tribe through which Christ would come into the world. Whenever Leah spoke to her son, she would actually be calling him “Thanks” and thus in effect remembering her gratitude for this gift of a special son.

We also continue to give thanks every day for that special Son of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as Judah later was willing to offer his own life for his brother Benjamin (see Genesis 43:9) out of love for both his brethren and his father, so this distant grandson of Judah was willing to lay down His own life to save those whom He was glad to call His brethren (Hebrews 2:11-12).

In the last reference to Judah in the Bible, this son of Judah is called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” who will one day be acknowledged as King over all the earth (Revelation 5:5). The last mention of “thanks” in the Bible is when the elders of the church in heaven cry out: “We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and has reigned” (Revelation 11:17).

We surely have much for which we thank God, but most of all we are thankful for the Son of God, our Creator, Savior, and coming King. HMM

Friday, November 24

## What Began at Philippi

*“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi... Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:1-2)*

The church at Philippi was birthed on one of Paul’s missionary journeys. He was summoned there in a vision by an unidentified man in Macedonia (now Greece) pleading for him to come and help them (Acts 16:9-10). Recognizing the call was from the Lord, he went immediately.

Paul’s European ministry began with the conversion of Lydia, who worshipped God and readily followed Paul’s teachings (Acts 16:14). Paul soon traveled to Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens, where he encountered much hardship and persecution. But the work he had begun in Philippi continued, eventually spreading throughout the continent. The intensely personal letter he later wrote to the Philippian church contains some of the most important doctrinal truths concerning Christ and our victorious life in Christ in all of Scripture.

God’s sovereign plan included Europe. He saw to it that the governmental roadblocks and personal opposition were ultimately unsuccessful. Today, many individual Christians trace their ancestry back to Europe. Great evangelistic movements and worldwide missionary efforts over the centuries have European roots. The God-ensured preservation of the Scriptures primarily occurred there as well. Many of the important Bible study tools and preaching helps come through the Western church. Many seminaries and Bible colleges, as well as hospitals and humanitarian efforts, stem from the Western tradition.

Today, great numbers are thankfully turning to Christ around the world, but much of the Church’s work began in Philippi as a faithful witness fearlessly and sacrificially preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. JDM

Saturday, November 25

## **The Dayspring from on High**

*“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.” (Luke 1:78)*

This is an unusual, but beautiful, name of the coming Savior given Him by Zacharias when he was “filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied” (Luke 1:67). In that same prophecy, Zacharias also called that coming one “the Highest” and “the Lord” who would “give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” (vv. 76-77). Just six months later, Jesus was born.

The Greek word here translated “dayspring” is so translated only this one time. It refers to the metaphorical spring from which the sun springs forth each day, and so is usually translated simply as “the east.” It is interesting that it is used three times in connection with the story of the wise men “from the east” who saw “his star in the east,” and then, when they reached Bethlehem once again, “the star, which they saw in the east,” led them to the one who was Himself “the dayspring” (Matthew 2:1-2, 9).

There is one other sunrise appropriately presaged here. Many years later, the women who had tearfully watched the Lord being crucified and buried came to His sepulcher to anoint Him with sweet spices “at the rising of the sun” (Mark 16:2) immediately after He had risen from the dead. Here a closely related word is the word translated “rising.”

There is another great sunrise coming, as promised in the last chapter of the Old Testament. “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2). He who is Himself “the light of the world” (John 8:12) will someday even replace the sun in the new Jerusalem. There will never be another sunrise after that, for “there shall be no night there...neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Revelation 22:5). HMM

## The Meaning of “Day”

*“And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”*  
(Genesis 1:5)

Many people today, professing to believe the Bible, have compromised with the evolutionary philosophy that dominates our society by accepting its framework of geological ages. This system interprets the rocks and fossils in terms of a supposed 4.6-billion-year history of the earth and life culminating in the evolution of early humans perhaps a million years ago. In order to justify this compromise, they usually say that the “days” of creation really correspond to the geological ages, arguing that the Hebrew word for “day” (*yom*) does not have to mean a literal solar day.

Oh, yes, it does—at least in Genesis 1! God, knowing that the pagan philosophers of antiquity would soon try to distort His record of creation into long ages of pantheistic evolution (as in the Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, and other such ancient cosmogonies), was careful to define His terms! “God called the light Day,” and that was the first day with its evening and morning. All subsequent days have followed the same pattern—a period of darkness (night), then a period of light (day).

One may quibble about the exact length of the day if he insists (e.g., equatorial days versus polar days), but there is no way this definition can accommodate a geological age. This is the very first reference to “day” (or *yom*) in the Bible, and this is given as an actual statement of the meaning of the word.

This ought to settle the question for anyone who really believes the Bible. One may decide to believe the evolutionary geologists if he wishes instead of God, but he should at least let God speak for Himself. God says the days of creation were literal days, not ages. “In six days the LORD made heaven and earth” (Exodus 31:17). HMM

Monday, November 27

## Creeping in Unawares

*“For there are certain men crept in unawares...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:4)*

The special word chosen by the Holy Spirit is most helpful in understanding this warning. The Greek term translated “crept in unawares” is *pareisduno*, a uniquely compounded word meaning to “sink down in alongside.” What could be more descriptive? These kinds of sneaky people have been written about before, Jude says, and are prime examples of those who transpose the grace of God into uncontrolled lust.

Paul uses a similar word in his letter to Timothy to warn him about the ungodly men of the last days who “creep into houses” and undermine the lifestyles of “silly women” (2 Timothy 3:6-7). The imagery implies the subtlety and cleverness of these “ungodly men,” but there is a horrible consequence of this replacement of God’s grace with “lasciviousness.”

Jude lists the terrible judgment on the people of Israel who refused to believe the good report of Joshua and Caleb when the 12 spies returned from the land of Canaan. God “destroyed” those who embraced the fearful and faithless report of the 10 (Numbers 14). Even the angels who led the world of Noah into corruption (Genesis 6:1-4) were chained in “darkness” for their disobedience (2 Peter 2:4).

Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah (Core) are all given as examples by Jude of God’s stern judgment on those who knew better but chose to lead a rebellion against the righteous lifestyles or leadership of God’s people. God does not take lightly the misuse of His instructions. Even the “least” of the commandments are important (Matthew 5:19). After all, “thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psalm 138:2). HMM III

Tuesday, November 28

## Light in the Darkness

*“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isaiah 9:2)*

This beautiful verse is treated in the New Testament as a Messianic prophecy, fulfilled when Christ came into the world—growing up in Nazareth and then dwelling in Capernaum, both cities being located in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matthew 4:15). This was in the region once occupied by the 10 northern tribes and then devastated by the invading Assyrians when they carried the Northern Kingdom away into captivity.

This region had for centuries thereafter remained in spiritual darkness, even after the return of Judah from captivity in Babylon. But then Christ came, and “from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Thus, His public ministry actually began in this land of darkness. “And the light shineth in darkness....the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:5, 9).

Wherever Christ comes, the light comes, for He is light. He left heaven for Earth, saying: “I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:9). This great purpose of God “is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

And yet, tragically, “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:19-20). To those who desire light, Jesus says: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). HMM

Wednesday, November 29

## The Second Remnant

*“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.” (Isaiah 11:11)*

The great prophet Isaiah lived during the time when the 10 tribes of Israel were being carried into captivity by the Assyrians, and about a hundred years before his own nation of Judah would be carried into exile by the Babylonians. Yet, in one of the most remarkable prophecies of the Bible (Isaiah 44:28–45:6), Isaiah promised that his people would someday return and build Jerusalem and its temple again. Furthermore, he even named the future emperor of Persia (the nation that would succeed Assyria and Babylonia as the dominant world power), calling him Cyrus. This great king fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy about 175 years after it was given (note Ezra 1:1-4).

But Isaiah not only prophesied this first return from exile, as noted in the key verse above; he foresaw that, in the distant future, God would also “set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.” The context of this passage is nothing less than the glorious future time of Messiah’s reign over all the earth (Isaiah 11:9-10). The outcasts of Israel and Judah would return home, not only from the nations of the Middle East, which will evidently be active enemies of Israel again in that future day (note that Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, and Hamath were the ancient names of the nations now identified as Upper Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, respectively), but even from “the four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:12). Isaiah thus predicted an even greater exile and worldwide homecoming long beyond that of the Babylonian captivity. Such information could have come only from God Himself. HMM

## Qualities of Glory

*“The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together; to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”*  
(Isaiah 60:13)

The temples in Jerusalem showcased Yahweh’s glory. However, those glorious temples were swept away because the Israelites abandoned their God. The Lord Jesus may have been looking directly at the last temple when He told His disciples, “Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2). His prophecy was exactly fulfilled when that temple was destroyed in AD 70. Visitors can still see the huge stones jumbled below the Temple Mount.

What qualities make an object “glorious”? Brightness and height help. In contrast, darkness and depth accompany the absence of the Lord. “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30).

The temple’s height of over 50 feet added to its glory, as did its elevation on a mount built atop a hill. One definition of glory is “celebrity” or “renown.” The exalted (high) and glorious (bright gold) temple declared the Lord’s renown. Imagine the greatness that a 1,500-foot-tall city of “pure gold, like unto clear glass” will portray (Revelation 21:18)!

Not just high and shiny qualities count. Here in Isaiah, the Lord specified woods that will “beautify” the sanctuary upon which He will stand. Until then, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). When we know Him, He shines through us. BDT



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