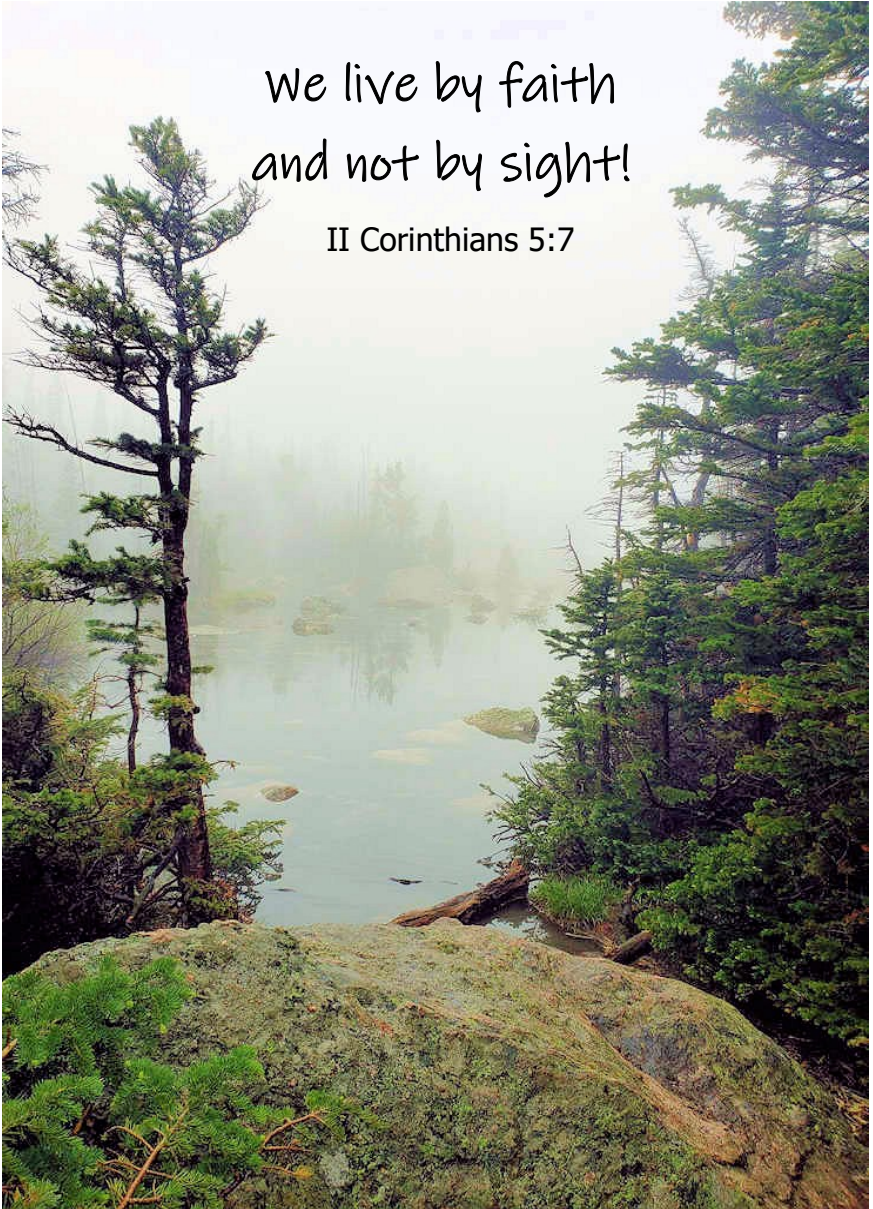


July 2025 Daily Devotional

We live by faith
and not by sight!

II Corinthians 5:7



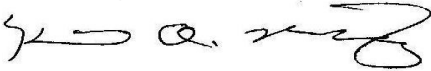
Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

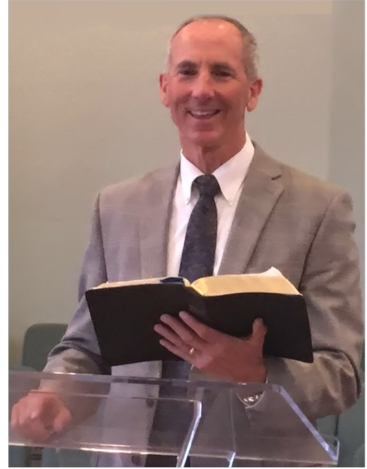
To follow the verse on the cover of this booklet and walk by faith and not by sight is to walk by the truths and promises of God's Word rather than the circumstances of daily living. If we are not careful, those circumstances will loom much larger in our thinking than the unchanging truths of God's Word.

So may God bless you this month as you spend time in His Word, considering a very broad array of Biblical truth!

In His grace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig', written in a cursive style.

Kevin Redig, Pastor-Teacher



All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).

Lessons from Romans

Tuesday, July 1:

Read II Corinthians 5:11-21

Romans 5:7 reminds us that, in rare cases, one member of the human race might die for another, but never in the way we see in Romans 5:8:

But God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ponder this passage. What was it about you and me that prompted Christ to die in our place? Did we deserve it? Did we *shape up*, improve, stop this and start that ...? From the man-ward side of things, we were simply declared *sinners*. We neither deserved His acting on our behalf, nor does the Bible ever speak of something a sinner can do to prompt Christ to go to the cross!

The answer for Christ's actions lies on the side of God. For it was His love for the work of His hands—those originally made in His image and likeness—that prompted Him to act. He died for you and He died for me because He loved us.

Once that truth crystallized in my personal thinking, let me share with you the outcome. I became enamored with the person and work of Jesus Christ. When I talk about how each and every one of us can be saved for all eternity—I talk about Jesus—not me. For, there is absolutely no need for me to talk about myself or anything I have done. I am just a sinner, like the rest of mankind, but I have been saved by the love of Christ! And how was I saved? I have been saved through faith!

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Continued on the next page.

Lessons from Romans

Tuesday, July 1:

Read II Corinthians 5:11-21 (Continued)

We already know that along with this eternal life came ... *even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ* (Romans 3:22). So let me share two additional things that come with faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

- First, *If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation ...* (II Corinthians 5:17)
- Second, *For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ ...* (Colossians 2:9-10)

Not just life and not just His righteousness, because I am saved I am now a new creation in

Christ with a share of all that He is! Scour the promises and practice of religion as you will, you will never find anything like this. For God has provided a so-great salvation in His Son!



ROMANS 3:22 WEB

even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe. For there is no distinction,



Lessons from Romans

Wednesday, July 2:

Read John 3:16-36

Sometimes we read an entire chapter in order to consider the *big picture* of what God has revealed. At other times, such as this section of Romans, every verse is so full of truth we must consider them one at a time!

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Romans 5:9

Why did I underline the phrase *much more then*? It is underlined because in the Greek language in which Romans was originally written, that phrase introduces a very interesting construction which does not translate easily into English. It is used to develop an argument that flows from the *greater* to the *lesser*. You can also think of it from that which is more difficult to that which is easier.

With this understanding, take a look at the above passage and see if you can puzzle out what Paul is teaching us. Let me summarize it this way:

If God could take you and me as lost sinners, rebels in the kingdom of the chief rebel, and clothe us with His very righteousness ... then it is a much simpler matter to deliver us from His wrath!

Justification of fallen mankind was the difficult part, keeping the redeemed child of God from eternal wrath should be a foregone conclusion as it is a lesser problem.

Continued on the next page.

Lessons from Romans

Wednesday, July 2:

Read John 3:16-36 (Continued)

I want to make sure we put this all together:

1. Faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ leads to a justified status before our holy God. That is, we are now righteous in His sight! For we have received:

... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Christ, to all and on all who believe. ... Romans 3:22

2. Having been justified—clothed with the very righteousness of God—the child of God need never fear the wrath of God! Discipline for sin—of course; but eternal wrath—never! Here is the short version:

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:18

Is that a very good reason to put one's faith in Christ? Absolutely, it is the best possible reason!



Lessons from Romans

Thursday, July 3: Read Hebrews 9:11-28

Did you notice in yesterday's devotional the means by which we are justified?

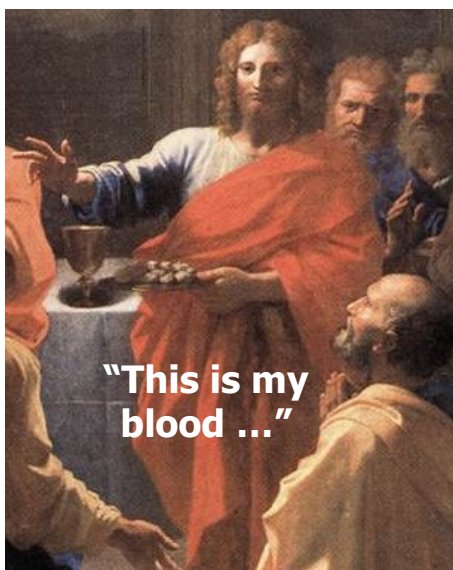
... having now been justified by His blood ...

Romans 5:9

Today's reading reminds us that the *Blood of Christ* should also impact our ongoing sanctification:

**... how much more,
then, will the blood
of Christ, who through
the eternal Spirit
offered Himself
unblemished to God,
cleanse our consciences
from acts that lead
to death, so that we
may serve the living
God?**

Hebrews 9:14



I want to spend today deepening our understanding of what is related to this short phrase: *The Blood of Christ*.

1. The *Blood of Christ* refers to all that Jesus accomplished during those terrible hours on the cross: extreme physical suffering; bearing the sins of mankind; separation from the Father and Spirit! It is important we see there is much more to what Christ accomplished on the cross than the outpouring of the literal blood of an Old Testament sacrifice.

Continued on the next page.

Lessons from Romans

Thursday, July 3:

Read Hebrews 9:11-28 (Continued)

2. Now, allow me to give you a glimpse of what was accomplished by Christ's death on the cross:
 - **From the Father's perspective.** Hebrews 2:17 tells us that as a faithful High Priest in service to God, Jesus made *propitiation for the sins of the people*.
 - **From the perspective of mankind.** We have been *brought near through the blood of Christ*. (Ephesians 2:13). As a result we *have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus* ... (Hebrews 10:19).
 - **From Satan's perspective, even he must respect the blood of Christ.** Although he constantly brings up our failures to God (Revelation 12:10), *we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the righteous One*. (I John 2:1).
3. Reread the above and put them all together! The *Blood of Christ* addresses things from God's side, from man's side, and thwarts Satan.

How precious to us should be all that Christ accomplished on our behalf at the cross. And may we never doubt the efficacy or sufficiency of the saving work of our Lord and Savior!



Lessons from Romans

Friday, July 4:

Read Galatians 2:11-21

In Romans 5:9 we learned that because God did the *harder* thing in providing a means of justification, He will naturally accomplish the *easier* thing, which is to preserve us from His wrath. In Romans 5:10 we learn another very important truth that we can add to our understanding:

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romans 5:10

Did you notice that we once more have the peculiar phrase: much more? Once again we have an argument from greater to lesser or from that which is more difficult to that which naturally follows. The *hard part* was for God to reconcile sinners such as you and me to Himself. Having accomplished reconciliation, it is naturally a much easier matter for Him to share His life with us.

What a wonderful and compelling case Paul is making for the Christian to have confidence in this life! God has provided for our justification and reconciled us to Himself! So, as a result, there is no wrath of God for the child of God. Instead we have a share in His life. It is as if Paul is laying the groundwork for the statement in Romans 8:31:

... If God is for us, who can be against us?

Just to make sure we understand that God really does intend to share His life with us, let me point out something we found in today's reading:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. ...

Galatians 2:20

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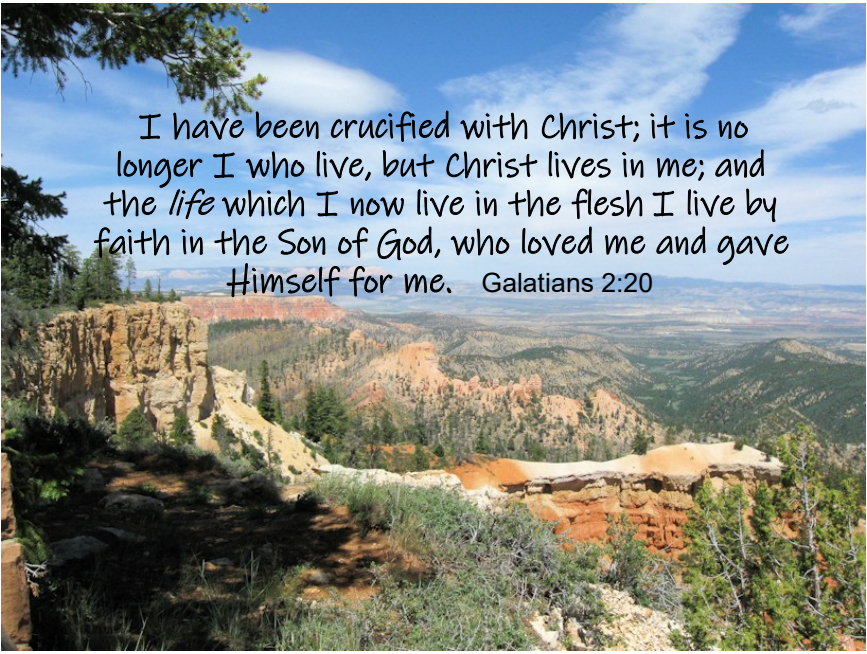
Lessons from Romans

Friday, July 4:

Read Galatians 2:11-21 (Continued)

This is a preview of things to come. Not only did Christ pay the penalty for our sins while on the cross, God has also identified us with the crucifixion of Christ that we might break the power of sin in our lives. Having accomplished that, God intends to replace who we were in Adam with a new creation that is now raised up in the newness of life in His Son.

All this is hard to fully comprehend but, as we have just seen in Galatians 2:20, the Scriptures declare: *Christ lives in me!* This is something it is going to take a lifetime to grow into and an eternity to enjoy.



I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Lessons from Romans

Monday, July 7: Read Romans 5:12-21

Ponder Romans 5:12 for a moment:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned ...

This verse is telling us that Adam's sin led to death for all of mankind. Each of us was born with Adam's sin already *credited* to our account. Am I sure? Upon the authority of God's Word that seems to be exactly what it is saying. In fact, Paul says this very thing over and over again in today's reading:

... the result of one trespass is condemnation for all men ...

Romans 5:18

To be clear—this is God's doing. He decided to include all of Adam's progeny in his sin and its consequence. Now, I have noticed that we don't like this very much. We somehow don't think it is *fair* to be condemned because of someone else's sin. Well let's call it what it is—the genius of God! For you should also have noticed in today's reading that by condemning the entire human race because of the sin of one man, God could also provide salvation for the entire human race through the obedience of the One man—the second and last Adam!

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:19

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Lessons from Romans

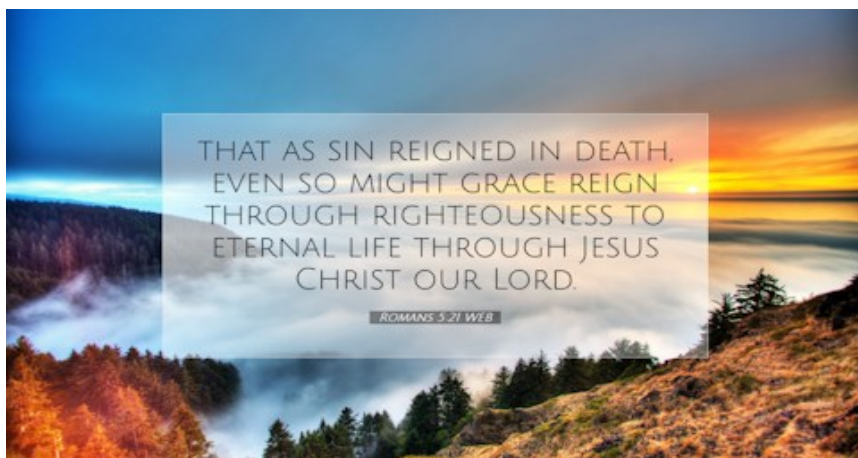
Monday, July 7:

Read Romans 5:12-21 (Continued)

Of course, this salvation is only applied to those who will respond to what God has provided in faith. This is the amazing provision of God's salvation centered in Jesus Christ! We certainly didn't deserve it—it is a work of God provided by sheer grace:

... just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21

As we head into the second half of the year, we are going to cover a reminder of God's desire for those who have trusted in Him to also bear witness to Him. To help promote this, we need to maintain a *Gospel Culture* within our fellowship. In the readings that follow in the Devotions beginning tomorrow, ponder this idea of *Gospel Culture* along with me.



Gospel Culture

Tuesday, July 8:

Read Romans 1:1-18

Today we start an investigation into something I am going to call *Gospel Culture*. A church with a *Gospel Culture* is one that has a firm grasp of, belief in, and zeal for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now let me ask you two questions:

1. Should such a church fellowship have a certain look to it?
2. Should you be able to tell the difference, by observation, between a local church fellowship that has a strong *Gospel Culture* and one that does not?



What I am suggesting is that it is possible for a church to have the look of the graphic at left—spiritually speaking! Do you think that such a fellowship would be attractive to the lost? I don't either. One of the possible reasons for such a condition is that a good solid *Gospel Culture* is lacking. Again by that, I mean the fellowship has a firm grasp of, belief in and zeal for the Gospel of grace centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ!

Continued on the next page.

Gospel Culture

Tuesday, July 8:

Read Romans 1:1-18 (Continued)

Now on the other hand, what about a church that looks like the graphic at right, spiritually speaking?

Would this kind of local fellowship be more attractive to the lost? Of course it would!



Naturally, there are many other factors involved with the kind of

witness, or testimony, a local church has to outside observers—things like an upright walk with the Lord, their love for one another, and their appreciation for God's Word.

For your consideration, I want to add to the list the importance for every local fellowship to have a solid *Gospel Culture*, that it would not be ashamed of the message of the cross but ready to proclaim it with zeal:

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ...

Romans 1:16

In short, fellowships that are grounded in those things in which the power of God resides will always be more vital than those that are not!

Gospel Culture

Wednesday, July 9:

Read Jeremiah Chapter 2

In raising the issue of *Gospel Culture* within a church fellowship, I am not suggesting for even a minute that the corporate supersedes or takes the place of an individual response. I mention that because I want to be very clear that your church can't save you. For example, a mature fellowship does not mean that every attender is mature. On the contrary, we get saved on an individual basis through faith in the person and work of Christ. We also mature as Christians on an individual basis by growing in grace and knowledge. We are spiritual on an individual basis by means of walking in the Spirit.

So then, what is the point of talking about *Gospel Culture*? Consider this: *Corporate beliefs will result in a corporate culture!* You will find that church fellowships that are consistently led and taught tend to gather like-minded individuals. When a group tends to all have the same mindset, they tend to act in concert. Let me give you an example from today's reading. What do you suppose happens when people, as a group, turn from God to other things? What do you suppose happens when they turn to ways of thinking that originate with man and not with God? This is what happens—it brings the rebuke of God:

"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

Jeremiah 2:13

Notice that this was a group of people! That doesn't mean everyone—obviously not Jeremiah—but corporately Israel had, by and large, turned from God and gone their own way. What an indictment from God! How about us as a church fellowship, what would the Lord have to say?

Gospel Culture

Thursday, July 10:

Read Revelation Chapter 2

Beginning in Revelation Chapter 2, John is recording a message from God to seven churches located in Asia Minor. An analysis of the historical and prophetic meaning of these messages is beyond the scope of our daily devotional. Nonetheless, they provide an excellent illustration of the point of yesterday's lesson that *corporate beliefs will result in a corporate culture!*

It is very easy to prove this concept from today's reading in Revelation Chapter 2. Consider the church at Ephesus. If you read through Verses 1-7, is there anything you can tell me about the *culture* of this local church fellowship? Would you agree that they are a hard-working church?

"You have persevered and have endured hardships for My name, and have not grown weary."

Revelation 2:3

This certainly must be seen as a commendation. However, despite their focus on works and perseverance, or maybe because of them, God has a sobering word of rebuke:

"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your First Love."

Revelation 2:4

This busy and bustling church has wandered away from a vital and ongoing relationship with the One who saved them. Using the terminology of John from his Gospel, let me suggest that the Ephesian church is no longer *abiding in the true Vine*. Now this certainly does not mean that everyone in the church has forsaken an ongoing relationship with Christ, but enough have that their church culture can be described as having *forsaken your First Love*.

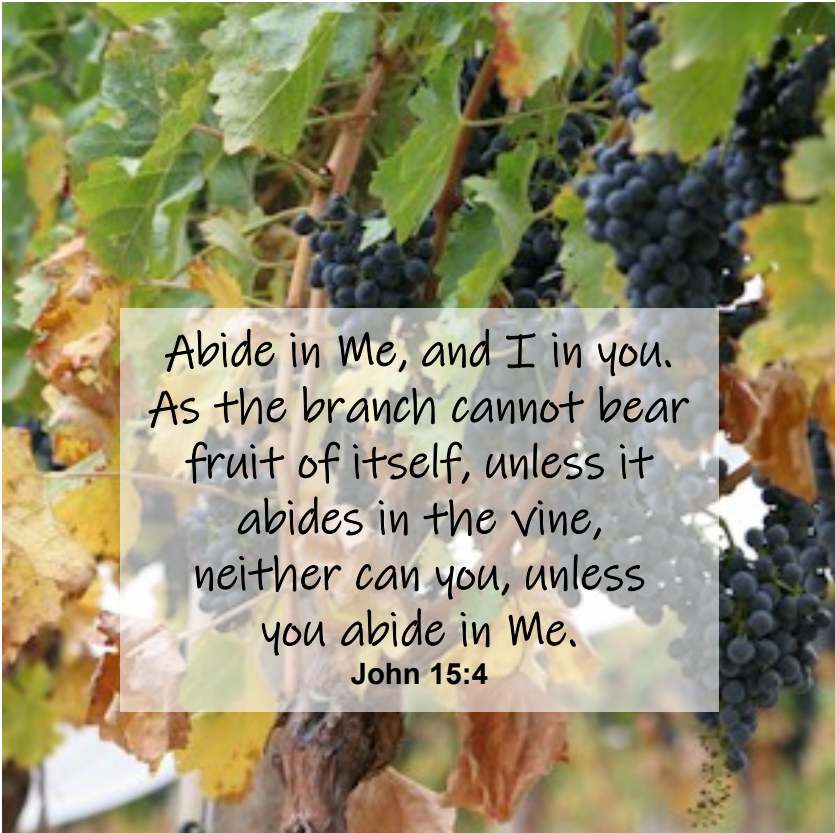
Gospel Culture

Thursday, July 10:

Read Revelation Chapter 2 (Continued)

As you read through the rest of Revelation Chapters 2-3, you will find a description of many other *church cultures*—most of which are quite unflattering. That brings me to a singular question: How would God describe the *culture* of our fellowship, and is it a *Gospel Culture*?

We have seen the negative, time to go to work on establishing the positive!



Abide in Me, and I in you.
As the branch cannot bear
fruit of itself, unless it
abides in the vine,
neither can you, unless
you abide in Me.

John 15:4

Gospel Culture

Friday, July 11: Read John Chapter 3

As stated for the past few days, *corporate beliefs should result in a corporate culture!* Of course, this can be true with respect to the full scope of truth to which we hold as a church fellowship, but our focus is upon our beliefs with respect to the Gospel centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. For example, assume our local fellowship was convicted to the core with respect to the following:

... The Gospel is the power of God for every last person on planet earth to be saved. Romans 1:16

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." John 3:17

We are called to be God's witnesses and ambassadors that we might testify to the Gospel of God's grace. (Acts 1:8, II Corinthians 5:20, Acts 20:24)

God has made known the glorious riches of His plan ... Christ in us the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

If this were the case, would it be something observable to those watching? I ask this question because how many people in our neighborhoods are unchurched or apathetic to the church because they've spent time in one? They were being drawn to something positive, but instead received some kind of sales pitch, observed power struggles, or any host of other forms of carnality!

Gospel Culture

Friday, July 11:

Read John Chapter 3 (Continued)

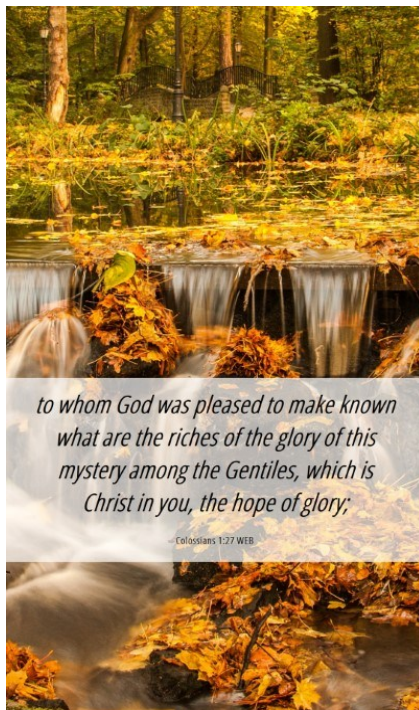
Shouldn't our witness be compelling? Shouldn't the message of the so-great salvation that is available in Jesus Christ drown out all other messages?

On the one hand, A. W. Tozer shares a sad truth:

A widespread revival of the kind of Christianity we know today in America might prove to be a moral tragedy from which we would not recover in a hundred years.

On the other hand, what I am trying to get us to think about is well summarized by Ray Ortlund:

The need of our times is nothing less than the re-Christianization of our churches, according to the gospel alone, in both doctrine and culture, by Christ Himself."



*to whom God was pleased to make known
what are the riches of the glory of this
mystery among the Gentiles, which is
Christ in you, the hope of glory;*

Colossians 1:27 WEB

And, all God's people said, "Amen!"

Gospel Culture

Monday, July 14:

Read I Thessalonians Chapter 1

By now you should be ready for some specifics. What kind of culture should be evident for those who hold to a pure Gospel message? Let's consider three passages of Scripture, and then begin to put the pieces together. First, we have already considered Romans 1:16:

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ...

Second, from today's reading:

... our Gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. ...

I Thessalonians 1:5

Finally, for the purposes of reinforcement, consider this promise of Jesus from Luke 24:49:

"I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Now, I am thinking about a congregation in which these truths are well-known, they are believed, and they have taken root. If that were the case, what would we expect to see? Consider the following:

1. A fellowship of believers who are not ashamed of the saving message of the cross of Christ regardless of the ridicule of the world! The potential of a lost person getting saved looms larger in our thinking than the ridicule of a world on the Broad Road and headed to destruction.

Gospel Culture

Monday, July 14:

Read I Thessalonians Chapter 1

(Continued)

2. A fellowship of believers who are resting in the power of the message of the Gospel of grace. That means that we:
- Don't worry about winning arguments.
 - Don't worry about eloquence of speech.
 - Don't worry about political correctness.

But we do focus on getting the Good News message *on the table* so that its inherent power might do its work of convicting the lost of their need to get right with the Lord before it is too late. As Charles Spurgeon once said, and I paraphrase: We need to let the lion of the Gospel out of the cage!

Charles Spurgeon



The Word of God is like a lion.
You don't have to defend a lion.
All you have to do is let the lion
loose, and the lion will defend
itself.

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, July 15: Read Genesis Chapter 15

Our next Old Testament character is Abraham, and for today I want to concentrate on one well-known verse:

Abraham believed the Lord, and He (God) credited it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6

God had made promises to Abraham which included land, offspring, and blessing. In Chapter 15, we see that Abraham had some doubts, and he is going to have doubts again. But, this text makes clear that *Abraham believed* and God credited his faith to him as righteousness. We would be left wondering exactly what that means if it were not for the fact that we have New Testament commentary on this precise event. Romans Chapter 4 says:

What then shall we say that Abraham, our fore-father, discovered in this matter? ... What does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Romans 4:1,3

In the context of Romans Chapters 3-5, the righteousness in view is the very *righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe*. (Romans 3:22) In short, Abraham stood *justified* before a holy God for one reason—he believed God! What about us? That’s the reason Paul mentions Abraham in Romans Chapter 4, he wants to make application as we see in Romans 4:23-24:

The words “It was credited to him” were written not for him [Abraham] alone, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

This point alone makes Abraham a worthy character for study, for he is the father of all who are justified before God by faith in what God has promised—a righteousness acceptable to Him through faith in Jesus Christ!

Old Testament Characters

Wednesday, July 16: Read Matthew Chapter 7

I would like to challenge your thinking for one more day on the matter of justification by faith. For, in contrast to yesterday's message of justification by means of faith, there are many who want to add a measure of works on the part of man. They typically don't mean some kind of good deed, but instead things like firmness of resolve, commitment, or surrender. Let me ask a question from Genesis Chapter 15 that we read yesterday: Did we see firmness of resolve from Abraham? Or, did we simply see a point at which he believed in the promises of God?



**Narrow
is the
gate!**

Matthew 7:14

Those who promote effort on man's part in order to obtain salvation often point to Matthew 7:14 found in today's reading to support their position:

Because narrow is the gate and difficult the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Naturally, they point to the word *difficult*, and claim that we, therefore, need to work hard to get to heaven. Well, what about that? Two things to consider. First,

consider why is the gate narrow?

Continued on the next page.

Old Testament Characters

Wednesday, July 16:

Read Matthew Chapter 7 (Continued)

Frank E. Gaebelin answers this way:

And why then is the gate narrow? Not because of certain conditions and hard terms are to be fulfilled, but because man does not want to give up his own righteousness, and clinging still to his miserable filthy rags, he refuses God's way and God's door of salvation which is Christ and Christ alone.

Do you see what he is saying? The way is narrow because there is only one way!

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 14:6

Apart from faith in the person and work of Christ, there is no coming to God—for anyone, ever!

Second, what about the claim that the way is *difficult*? Most other translations use a word like *narrow* to get across the meaning of the Greek Word. Consider the New American Standard (NASB) translation of Matthew 7:14:

For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

This is really just another aspect of the same concept. The world has many competing approaches to being happy and fulfilled—the Broad Road. But, from God's perspective, there is only one Savior and one way by which to have the abundant life He offers. We come, not in a way of our choosing, but in the one way He has provided—or we don't come at all! And, that's what makes it *difficult* for lost mankind!

Old Testament Characters

Thursday, July 17: Read Joshua Chapter 1

While looking at Old Testament characters, let's consider Joshua. First, a quick review of who he was:

1. He was part of the Exodus generation that was led out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses as the result of God's mighty acts of deliverance.
2. He was one of the 12 men sent to spy out the Promised Land, and one of only two who encouraged the people to take God up on His promise to lead them into the Promised Land. Note that Joshua's trip to spy out the Land occurred less than a year after deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt.
3. Because of the negative report of the other ten spies, the people panicked rather than trusting that the Lord would give them the victory. As a result, God pronounced discipline on the entire adult population of Israel: they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years, not entering the Promised Land until a new generation had grown to adulthood, with two exceptions— Caleb and Joshua!



Continued on the next page.

Old Testament Characters

Thursday, July 17:

Read Joshua Chapter 1 (Continued)

4. Joshua became Moses' assistant. In the language of our day, Joshua was Moses' aide de camp. And, as you saw in today's reading, following the death of Moses, Joshua is going to be the one to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

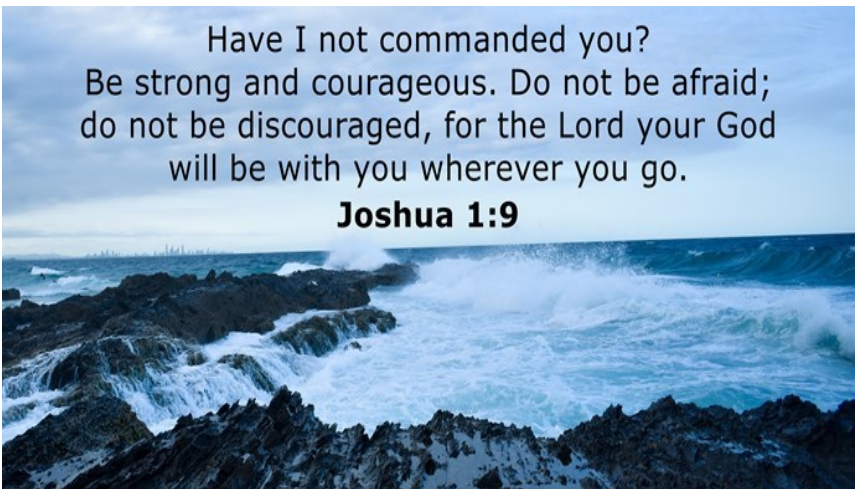
That's the background, now I want to draw your attention to God's command to Joshua as they prepare to cross into the Land:

"Be strong and courageous ... Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law My servant Moses gave you ... Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night ... Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:6-9

There is much worth studying in this entire section—but it is hard to miss the repeated command to be *strong and courageous*. We'll have to consider that more closely.

Have I not commanded you?
Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid;
do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God
will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9



Old Testament Characters

Friday, July 18:

Read Matthew Chapter 14

Joshua was certainly an exceptional man, for he was one of only two to enter the Promised Land out of an entire generation! Which is why, upon our initial reading in Joshua Chapter 1, I was intrigued as to why God told Joshua over and over to be *strong and courageous*. Had not he already passed the test?

Let me suggest, for your consideration, a reason for such emphasis. Is it possible that fear and weariness (the opposite of being strong and courageous) are the greatest obstacles to ongoing faith? As an example, consider the portion of today's reading that deals with Jesus walking on the water. First of all, the disciples have had a long day of ministry, and the boat they were in was:

... buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Matthew 14:24

Certainly, the disciples must have been weary. And then, they saw Jesus coming to them:

When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ...

Matthew 14:26

Even when Peter had the faith to get out of the boat and begin walking to Jesus, it ended this way:

But when he [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord save me!"

Matthew 14:30

Do you see it? It is hard to exercise faith when tired and weary. If you want an Old Testament example, consider the great prophet Elijah. Once, when he became tired and afraid as documented in I Kings Chapter 19, he ran away from everything.

Continued on the next page.


Old Testament Characters

Friday, July 18:

Read Matthew Chapter 14 (Continued)

So really, what God is doing by telling Joshua to be strong and courageous is reminding him to keep walking by faith! He is telling Joshua to keep trusting the God who saw the children of Israel through the desert wilderness for 40 years, the God who can most certainly bring His promise to fruition by bringing them into the Promised Land.

What good advice today! Be strong and courageous every day, by depending on the Savior who died for you, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will see you through!



Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Joshua 1:6 WEB

Old Testament Characters

Monday, July 21: Read Joshua Chapter 5

The Israelites have crossed over the Jordan River. They are technically in the Promised Land, although they have not yet conquered any of it. Their first challenge is to defeat the walled city of Jericho. The time for battle has come and Joshua is apparently off by himself, perhaps in prayer or contemplating how best to lead the people.

Now as Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

Joshua 5:13

Joshua has apparently taken the admonition from the Lord in Chapter 1 to heart, for he has certainly challenged this armed stranger in a courageous manner! Here is the answer the stranger provides in the first part of Verse 14:

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." ...

We are now going to learn something about Joshua as a result of how he responds to this information—no doubt part of the reason God choose Joshua to lead His people.

... Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for His servant?"

Joshua 5:14

For Joshua recognized that he was in the presence of the Lord (see Verse 15 to convince yourself), and responded accordingly. How did he respond? He acted with worship (*he fell face down on the ground in reverence*) and receptivity to the Word of God (*"What message does my Lord have for His servant?"*)! If you put it together, Joshua is a great example for us: courageous in the Lord, with an attitude of worship and receptivity to the Word of God!

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, July 22: Read Joshua Chapter 24

The most important choice faced by every single human being is the call to place his or her faith in the person and work of Christ! Eternity is riding on it:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. John 3:36

Now, let's consider the choices that face the believer. Certainly one of the most significant involves choosing not just to believe in Jesus, but also to follow after Him as a disciple. Joshua laid it out this way:

"Now, fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. ... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:14-15

Just as it was possible for God's chosen people to serve the idols of the people they conquered, so too it is possible for a child of God to follow after the things of this world. What a great challenge from the godly man chosen to lead the Jews into the Promised Land: *"as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."* Further, in Chapter 23, Joshua says why we should serve the Lord.

"... You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." Joshua 23:14

Our Savior is a promise-keeping God, who loved us to the extent He died for us. Even now He is preparing a place for us in His Father's house that we might be with Him forever! Serve Him gladly! There is no other Who cares for you in this way—certainly not the masters of this world!

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

**Wednesday, July 23:
Read John 16:1-11**

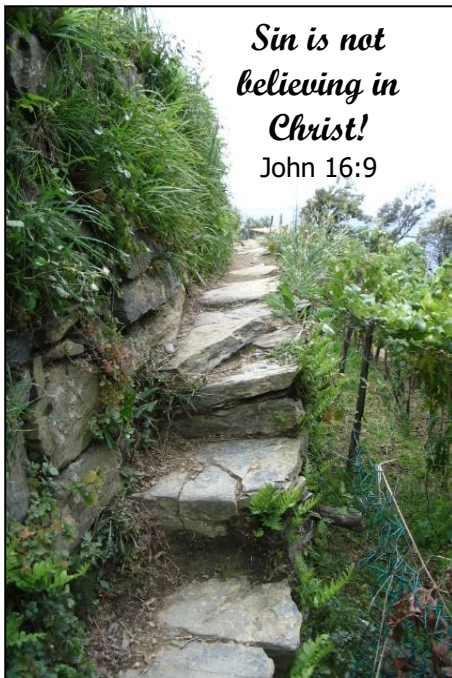
As we now turn to investigating the *foundations* upon which the *Christian Life* is built, next up is a consideration of the Holy Spirit. His role in the life of the child of God is both exceedingly deep and broad, so we will just be able to scratch the surface in a devotional reading.

Let me begin by pointing out that if you have received God's gift of eternal life, then you have been a recipient of the Holy Spirit's ministry. Of course, we receive the gift of eternal life as the result of placing our faith in the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus, and the efficacy of His bearing our sin while on the cross, receiving our punishment, and dying in our place. Jesus *paid it all*, and when we trust Him to have done so, we receive God's gift of eternal life. Now, between understanding what Christ accomplished on the cross and our choosing to put our faith in Him, there is something we should understand and that would be the ministry of the Holy Spirit!

"When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me ..." John 16:8-9

*Sin is not
believing in
Christ!*

John 16:9



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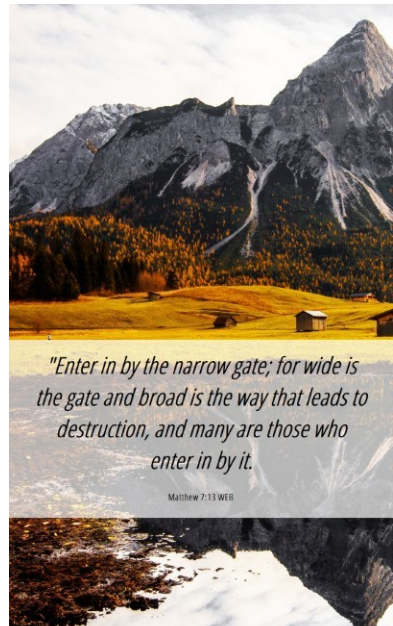
Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Wednesday, July 23:
Read John 16:1-11 (Continued)

It is the Holy Spirit who makes it clear that we are unrighteous before a holy God and desperately in need of a Savior. Further, He makes it clear to us that Jesus is the Savior provided by the Father. Thus, we have a choice: wrath or faith in the Son! Isn't that exactly what John 3:36 says:

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on Him."

You see, we are born under wrath, or as Matthew 7:13 describes it: *on the broad road headed to destruction!* So, if we reject the Savior, we have chosen to remain on the path to destruction! That is where the Holy Spirit places a crucial role in the life of every lost person who gets saved! For He convicts us of our sin of unbelief and rebellion and calls us to faith as the one solution to our *lostness*. And, should we respond in faith, that will be just the beginning of what is meant to be a life-long relationship with the Holy Spirit! Much more to come.



"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it."

Matthew 7:13 WEB

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

**Thursday, July 24:
Read John 16:12-33**

Where do we pick up from yesterday? Let's start with the case of a newly-saved child of God. A person who has just trusted in the person and work of Jesus Christ and, as a result, is in possession of eternal life, having changed their destiny from one in hell to one in God's heaven. What then can they expect in terms of a relationship with the Holy Spirit?

The answers are many, but for today, let's focus on the Holy Spirit's role as our teacher. Let me give you the short version right up front, and then support it with Scripture. The Holy Spirit is our teacher, and what He teaches us are the truths of God's Word! Consider first John 16:13-14:

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. ... He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you."

John 16:13-14

Notice that one of the names of the Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of truth*, and one of His roles is to guide us into all truth. But where are we to find truth. The answer to that is quite clear as well:

"Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth."

John 17:17

Then, in I Corinthians 2:16, we have the Word of God said to be, *the mind of Christ*.

Continued on the next page.

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Thursday, July 24:

Read John 16:12-33 (Continued)

Can you put this all together? God's Word—His revelation to us—comes from His mind! It is what He has chosen to reveal to mankind and preserve against all manner of attacks through the ages. Anything that comes from the mind of God is going to be absolute truth. So, the role of the Holy Spirit is to take from that which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ and reveal it to us.

This is exactly what He is doing when He comes alongside each of us as we study the Scriptures and makes them clear. He is guiding us into an understanding of eternal truths—bringing glory to our Redeemer! Perhaps you can remember trying to understand the Scriptures as an unbeliever, and really struggling to do so. I can. But, then, after coming to faith in Christ, they suddenly seemed to make so much more sense. That's because we now have a Divine teacher. What a blessing it is to be a recipient of the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry.



Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Friday, July 25: Read Titus Chapter 3

Today we see that the Spirit's ministry as our teacher is just the beginning! Allow me to unfold for you a number of the additional ministries of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in Jesus Christ:

1. When we placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration! He is the one who provides our spiritual birth that we might be *new creations* in Christ!

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. ...

Titus 3:4-8

2. The Holy Spirit baptizes every believer into the *Body of Christ*!

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one Body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

I Corinthians 12:13

Continued on the next page.

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Friday, July 25:

Read Titus Chapter 3 (Continued)

3. The Holy Spirit equips every believer with one or more spiritual gifts:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit ... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. I Corinthians 12:4, 7

Be sure to note the purpose of our spiritual gift, it is for the good of the Body!

4. The Holy Spirit *seals* each child of God.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having believed you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14

Read the above verses again, and allow me to point out two things. First, see how a person is *included in Christ!* We are sealed exactly as we have learned—through belief in the person and work of Christ!

Second, having believed, we are immediately sealed with the Holy Spirit. He marks out every child of God as being the possession of God. He guarantees our future within the greater spiritual conflict as He bears witness: "Hands off—this one belongs to God!"

The Holy Spirit may work behind the scenes, unnoticed, but His ministry is vital!

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Monday, July 28: Read Ephesians 1:15-22

After yesterday, you may have thought we had exhausted the list of the ministries of the Holy Spirit, but there are actually many more, and I would like to share several with you today. First, the Holy Spirit is the source of enablement in our lives.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand ...

Ephesians 1:18-20

Notice, His power is for those who believe, and it is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. When governor Zerubbabel faced great challenges from enemies on all sides, God reminded the governor of the same thing.

... "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of Hosts. ..."

Zechariah 4:6



Continued on the next page.

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Monday, July 28:

Read Ephesians 1:15-22 (Continued)

The Holy Spirit is also the agent of production within the life of the believer.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. ... Galatians 5:22-23

Look at that list of character traits again. Only the Holy Spirit can produce them in our lives. When He is at work producing this kind of fruit in our lives, we are being transformed into the image and likeness of our Savior to the Father's glory! In this first set of devotional readings on the Holy Spirit, I have one more aspect of His ministry to bring to your attention. It is called the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit, and that will be our subject for tomorrow.



Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Tuesday, July 29: Read I Corinthians 6:9-20

Let's start with a very clear statement from today's reading and work from there:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? ...

I Corinthians 6:19

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in your body. We call this the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit.

The surrounding context, which is one of sexual immorality, makes it clear that this ministry of the Holy Spirit is not dependent upon the behavior of the Christian. If the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit could be lost, the Corinthian believers would have certainly lost Him!

Now, the fact that we cannot lose the indwelling Spirit is certainly not an excuse for immoral behavior on the part of the believer, for look at what follows:

... You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

I Corinthians 6:19-20

We are to honor God with what we do with our physical bodies, because, among other reasons, wherever we go and whatever we do, we have taken the indwelling Holy Spirit with us! So we should ask the question, "What is the purpose of God sending His Spirit to dwell within every child of God?"

Continued on the next page.

Foundations of the Christian Way of Life!

Tuesday, July 29:

Read I Corinthians 6:9-20 (Continued)

Here are a few things that may help you understand another aspect of God's salvation:

1. After faith in Christ, we are a new creation—spiritually alive—but in a *dead man's* body. That is the case because, even though we are now *children of God*, we retain our nature to sin.
2. So, God has sent His Spirit to take up residence in the body of every saved individual so as to provide an alternative influence to the soul. You may have felt this tension as a new believer when you became uncomfortable hanging out with your old friends and their behaviors. We see this tension clearly spelled out in the following Scripture:

So I say live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other ...

Galatians 5:16-17

As follower's of Christ, we are going to be in the midst of this struggle every single day until *absent from the body and in the presence of the Lord!* Praise God that He has established a presence within our very bodies so that we might separate from the sin nature. Now we just need to learn what it means to *walk by the Spirit*.

And, that will be our subject when we return to our study of the *Foundations of the Faith!*

Gospel Culture

Wednesday, July 30: Read John Chapter 3

As we return to our study of *Gospel Culture*, I realize this concept may not yet be clear. So, let me explain it from another angle. When it comes to the Gospel by which we are saved, we want to believe the right thing. We want to be orthodox in terms of the Scriptures. But, what we believe should directly affect what we do or practice—defined as our *orthopraxy*. In short, we want to believe the right thing and live rightly in terms of what we believe.

Thus, if the Bible talks about both Gospel belief and Gospel behavior, I will have proved the concept and challenged you at the same time. So what is *right belief* with respect to the Gospel? Consider John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

To begin, the Creator-God of this material universe, whose throne is built on righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14), was motivated to act by His love for what He had created.



PSALMS 89:14 WEB

*Righteousness and
justice are the foundation
of your throne. Loving
kindness and truth go
before your face.*

Continued on the next page

Gospel Culture

Wednesday, July 30:

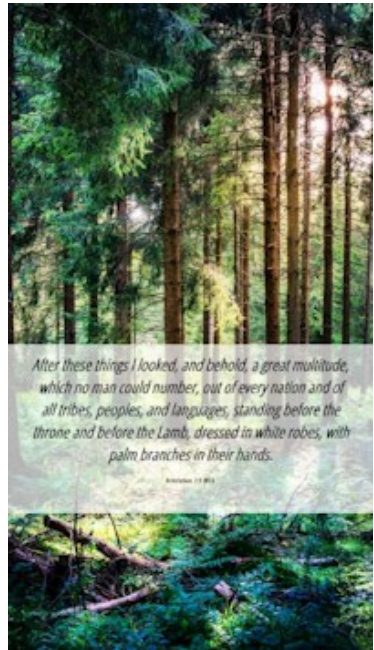
Read John Chapter 3 (Continued)

In particular, He was prompted to act for those made in His image and likeness—people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. As a result, He gave! He sent His Son to die in our place, bearing our sin, so that the just demands of His holiness could be satisfied.

We are not forgiven by the love of God. We are saved by the work on the cross of the One He gave. This Son was uniquely born of a virgin and therefore was without Adam's sin or a nature to sin. Because Jesus was sinless, when He took on human form, He could perfectly represent the human race before a holy God because He had no sin Himself.

And, here is the really good news from John 3:16: *that whoever believes should have eternal life*. Salvation is available to everyone! It is a gift available for all those who will place their faith in the person and work of Christ. And, for each and every person who does so, God promises everlasting life. Death is the end we deserve and are born into, but belief in Christ changes our kingdom from the dominion of darkness to the Kingdom of the dear Son where there is the promise of eternal life.

That's the right doctrine with respect to the Gospel. Now is there such a thing as the right practice, given what we believe? We'll take up that subject tomorrow.



Gospel Culture

Thursday, July 31: Read I John Chapter 4

Yesterday's devotional talked about the doctrine we believe with respect to salvation. Today, we want to consider what kind of life should be practiced by those who hold to such beliefs. In other words, what kind of *Gospel Culture* should we have in our local fellowship? Consider what both John and Peter have to say:

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.

I John 4:11-12

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart.

I Peter 1:22

One theologian of the recent past stated it this way:

One cannot explain the explosive dynamite, the dynamos, of the early church apart from the fact that they practiced two things simultaneously: orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community ... the love of God in practice is beautiful and must be there.

Schaeffer

Why should we care about the culture we present to the watching world? Because our culture is part of our witness to the watching lost. The following may be an unusual way to state it, but I think you will understand:

doctrine - culture = hypocrisy

culture - doctrine = feeling better, but still lost

doctrine + culture = power

Right doctrine plus right culture equals power in that the combination of truth (doctrine) and attractive witness (right culture) can be used by the Spirit to draw people to faith in Christ! Remember we can't produce a culture of love in our own strength, but only as the Spirit enables.

VISTOSO



Community Church

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...*John 15:5*

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