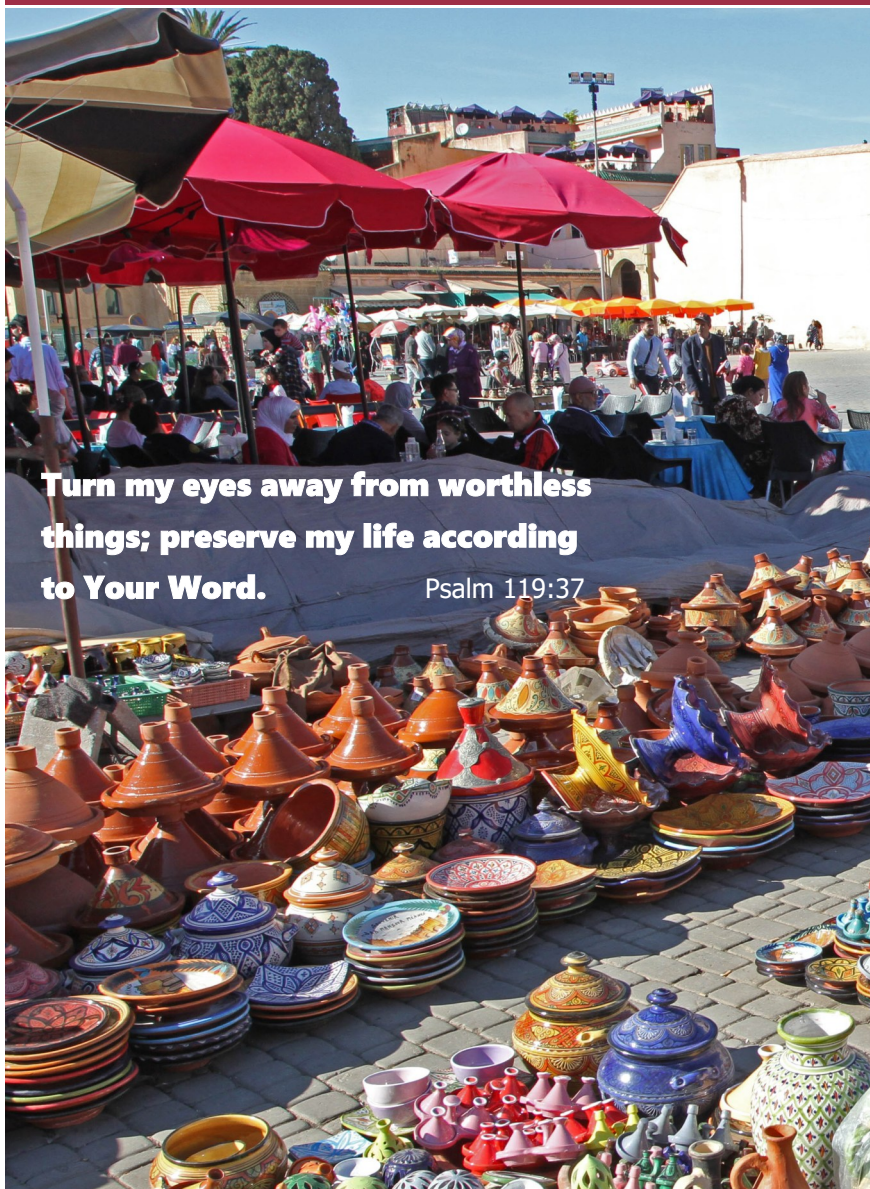


August 2025

Daily Devotional



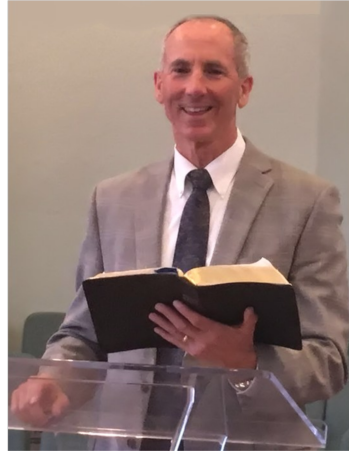
Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to Your Word.

Psalm 119:37

Vistoso Community Church

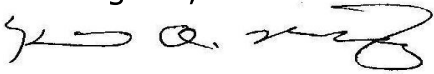
Foreword

This is a New Testament month as we complete our devotions on Gospel Culture and spend time in both Ephesians and Romans. Our time in Romans is theologically deep, but of great spiritual importance. You will notice that many of the readings are just a few verses. It is my hope that you will read them over many times and reflect deeply upon them, for they are the first component of New Testament spirituality.



May God bless you in the ongoing reading of His Word.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig'.

Kevin Redig, Pastor-Teacher

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

Gospel Culture

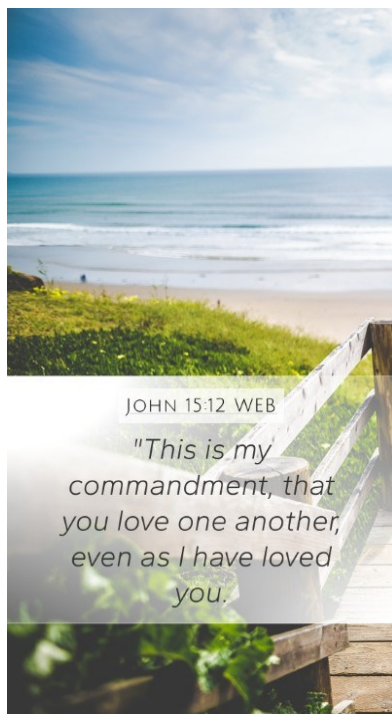
Friday, August 1: Read I Corinthians 1

I am guessing that some, after the devotionals of the past two days, are saying, "*This is too theoretical for me!*" If so, it is my failure to explain it properly. Let me try a more practical approach. How many people do you know who are unchurched, or apathetic to the church, because they have spent time in one?

What a terrible indictment of the church's failure to have a healthy *Gospel Culture* to go along with right belief. Many who were desperate to hear good news, instead received a sales pitch. Many who wanted purity observed power struggles. Those who felt the need to live life on a higher plane observed almost every kind of carnality. Sadly, sometimes the organized *church* is its own worst enemy.

This is what I am challenging you to think about: What kind of Gospel Culture does our church have? Based upon the Scriptures we have read, let me suggest four aspects of Gospel Culture that I believe our Lord desires for our local church fellowship:

1. A love within the fellowship that is so distinctive and sacrificial in its supernatural character that it uniquely identifies us as Jesus' disciples. (John 13:34-35)



Continued on the next page.

Gospel Culture

Friday, August 1:

Read I Corinthians 1 (Continued)

2. The watching world does not identify us for our social standing, clean-living, or political affiliation. Rather, they associate us with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our belief that it has the inherent power to save every lost person!

... we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I Corinthians 1:23-24

3. As for the quality of character in our fellowship, I pray that we would be a grace-oriented, Christ-centered, cross-centered, resurrection-centered people who are gripped by every facet of the *Good News* centered in Jesus Christ. I pray it is what we talk about and what we see as the answer to man's needs.
4. Lastly, when it comes to talking to our neighbors, friends, and family members, we don't worry about eloquence of speech but the power of the message. In fact, I suggest we all follow Charles Spurgeon's example, making it our firm determination before ever sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. I would like for us to be able to put our own names to end this quote:

... if any good is to be done there, if any are led to believe in Christ the Messiah, their belief shall be the result of hearing the gospel, and not of my eloquence ... it shall be said, "How mighty must be the grace of God which has convinced these persons by such simple preaching, and brought them to know the Lord Jesus Christ by such humble instrumentality as ..."

Gospel Culture

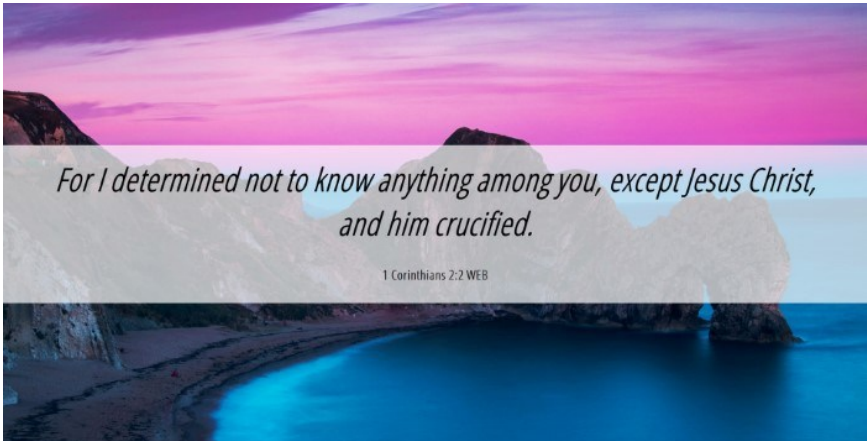
Monday, August 4:

Read II Corinthians 2

There are two ways for a person to come face to face with Christianity: they can read about it, with the best source being the Bible, or they can come in contact with it via a Christian, someone whom they can observe and with whom have dialogue. Which do you think is more common? Which do you think is the way God intended to have the Gospel spread?

With your answers in mind, picture a local church with the following commendable culture: it knows nothing but Christ and Him crucified; it is a powerful agent for transformation in the region where it has been planted; and it is well known as a place where high and low demonstrate a servant's heart coupled with rich acts of love and mercy. Isn't it a Christian from this fellowship you would like our hypothetical lost person to bump into? As you know by now, this kind of Gospel Culture is exactly what these devotional readings are trying to get you to think about.

Continued on the next page.



For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:2 WEB

Gospel Culture

Monday, August 4:

Read I Corinthians 2 (Continued)

Thus far, I have promoted the positive aspects of having and perpetuating a strong Gospel Culture. For the rest of today and tomorrow, let me add a dose of reality as well. Consider this short quote by atheist Christopher Hitchens:

Christianity is a "sinister" religion and explicitly totalitarian; it injects poison into our system ...

To make matters worse, this quote is from a book called, *God is Not Great!* Is it possible that Hitchens ran across poor Christian examples? Quite likely. But is it also possible that he would project his venomous attitude toward even the best of Christian examples, even those with a wonderful Gospel Culture? It is, and he did. How do you explain such an attitude toward that which is beautiful to behold? Today's reading provides an answer:

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

II Corinthians 2:15-16

To Mr. Hitchens, and others like him, the steadfast believer is the *smell of death* because it puts them under conviction. Ray Ortlund also provides a helpful thought:

An angry, cynical, fault-finding, from death to death rejection is not our failure. Rejection is built into Gospel ministry because of the fallen nature of the human heart.

More to come!

Gospel Culture

Tuesday, August 5:

Read Matthew 5

Yesterday, I introduced the possibility that even the best of Gospel Cultures can be rejected by the lost. Today's reading provides a helpful reminder when this happens:

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

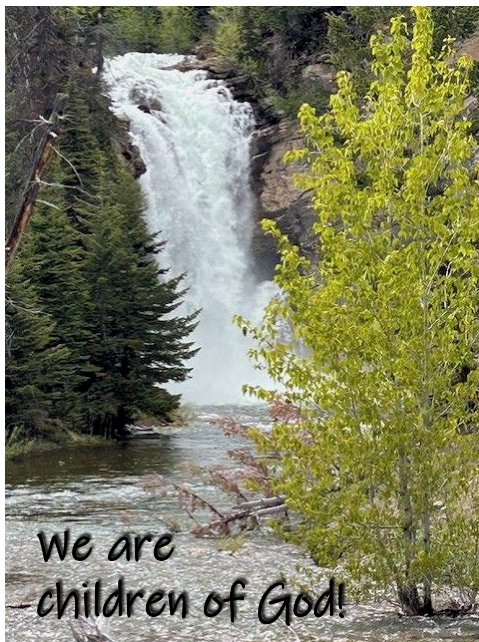
Matthew 5:11-12

They rejected the prophets, they rejected Christ, and lost people might reject you and me as well. The following are some Scriptures that explain why:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

I John 5:19

Do you see it? Satan will provoke the world to attack that which is of God.



Continued on the next page.

Gospel Culture

Tuesday, August 5:

Read Matthew 5 (Continued)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

II Corinthians 4:4

This helps explain why people can come into contact with an accurate Gospel and a powerful Gospel Culture and still reject the good news. Don't lose hope! The light of the Gospel can break through the darkness.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light. ...

John 3:19-21



Whoever lives
by the Truth
comes into
the LIGHT!

There is often a lot of darkness in the soul of a lost person, and sometimes they just don't want to let it go.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him. ...

Romans 1:21

Then, there are those who just don't want to bend the knee to anyone or anything. This is a pretty

gloomy picture. What do we do about it? We'll spend one more day trying to answer that very question.

Gospel Culture

Wednesday, August 6: Read I John 3

If we manage to develop a vital Gospel Culture within our fellowship and it is rejected—or worse yet comes under persecution—what do we do? Consider these options:

1. When people react angrily to the Gospel, realize you are likely a recipient of *misdirected blame*—like Abel.

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. I John 3:12-13

The more you are walking with the Lord, the more you are going to be hated by the world!

2. Do not succumb to *Christianity blackmail!* This happens when someone says something like: "*You Christians are so judgmental, so intolerant ...*" Now if you are judgmental or intolerant, you have sin to confess. But if you are simply holding firm to God's truth, don't let someone twist your arm into compromise.
3. What do you think we should expect if we are Christ's ambassadors, His witnesses, in enemy territory? At the very least—we can expect push back! Society's push back is often greatest when the person is under deep conviction by the Holy Spirit. You'll both forget about the conflict, if and when that individual responds in faith. Just rest in the truth that the Gospel is *the power of God unto salvation for all who believe*. (Romans 1:16)

For in all this world, there is: no truth so solid as Gospel doctrine, no community so humane as Gospel-culture, nothing so resisted and yet so redemptive as the two together, and nothing so worthy of our whole-hearted zeal. Raymond C. Ortlund

A Study in Ephesians

Thursday, August 7:

Read Acts 28:11-31

We haven't actually skipped Ephesians and returned to the Book of Acts. Instead, we are beginning our reading in the Book of Ephesians. Acts 28 gives us Paul's location and situation at the time he wrote his letter to the Church in Ephesus. Paul first visited Ephesus during his third missionary journey and eventually spent an extended period of time there preaching the Gospel and establishing the Ephesian church.

It is now many years later and Paul, after having been arrested and held for an extended period of time, exercises his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. So, off to Rome he goes, where he is basically under house arrest.

When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. Acts 28:16

Being under house arrest allowed Paul the opportunity to minister to the Jewish contingent in Rome and, upon their rejection, turn his full attention to the Gentiles.

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Acts 28:30

Again, I remind you that this was not a *vacation rental*, but a time of constantly being under armed guard with his life potentially in the balance. What did Paul do in Rome? For one thing:

Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 28:31

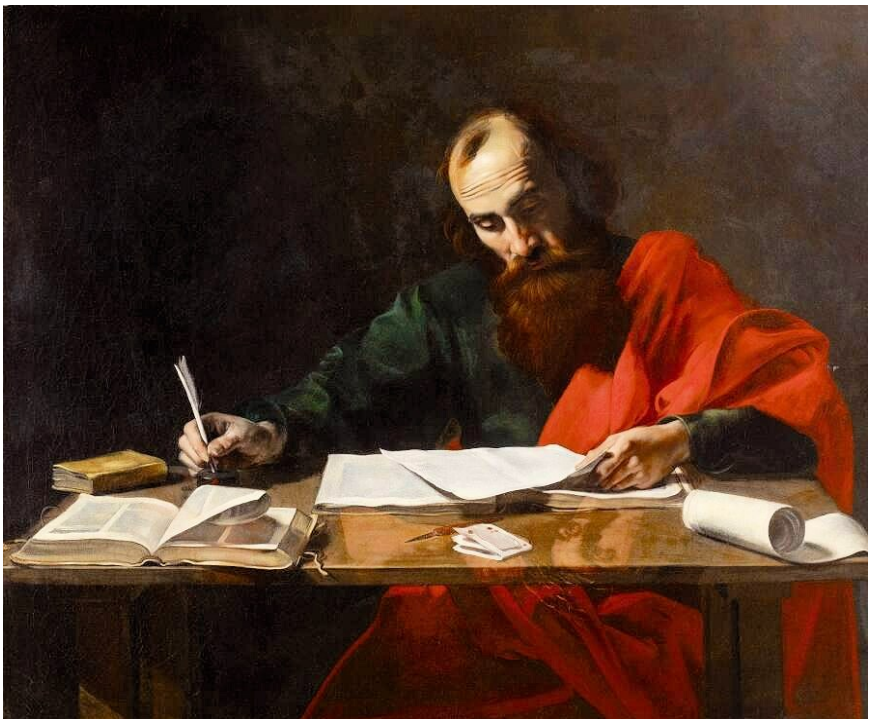
A Study in Ephesians

Thursday, August 7:

Read Acts 28:11-31 (Continued)

For another thing, Paul wrote a number of letters to churches with whom he had an affiliation. These are commonly referred to as the *prison epistles*. As we read through this great portion of Scripture, keep in mind that these were the kinds of things Paul was thinking about while he was under house arrest and eventually put to death at the hands of Romans.

What an example Paul is of maintaining Divine Viewpoint in the midst of trials!



A Study in Ephesians

Friday, August 8:

Read Ephesians 1:1-10 and 4:1-3

Before we get into the specific content of the Book of Ephesians, let me point out an element of structure. I refer to structure as something that God seems to have built into the form of the book, and not any of the many ways in which the book has been organized by those who have outlined it for you. If you read the book through, you will find two surprising things. First, the entire first three chapters focus upon the riches that are ours *in Christ*. Already in the third verse of the book, we read:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

If you are a child of God, you can't name one spiritual blessing you don't already have. The reason? Note what many consider to be the most important prepositional phrase in the Bible: *in Christ*. All of these spiritual blessings come to us as believers for one reason and one reason alone—our faith *in Christ*! As you read through right up to the end of Chapter 3, you are going to find one aspect after another of what God has done for us *in Christ*. One would think that the Christian Life is all about what God has done for the child of God through His Son—and it is!

Then, the second surprising thing: In Chapter 4 there is a marked shift. For the first time God starts to lay out His intent for those who have been so abundantly blessed. Here is what we can learn from the structure of the Book of Ephesians: In the plan of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, it is blessing first and *then* the call to devotion. Far too many of us have spent too much time trying to live the Christian Life as if it were the other way around!

A Study in Ephesians

Monday, August 11: Read Colossians 2

Let me draw your attention once again to Ephesians 1:3:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Can you wrap your mind around it? We have every spiritual blessing *in Christ*! Many think of this as Christian hyperbole, simply exaggeration for the purpose of getting a point across. They have reduced this promise to mean that we have many things *in Christ*, good things *in Christ*, some things *in Christ*, but, there is another way of looking at this verse. That is, when it says we have every spiritual blessing *in Christ*, we respond with, "Of course!"

How could we possibly respond that way? There are two answers—both in today's reading. First, Colossians 2:3 tells us that *in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Then, just a few verses later, it tells us that Christ is *the head over every power and authority*. (Colossians 2:10) The first answer is that every blessing is His and He is willing to share!

The second reason begins at the beginning of Verse 10

... you (every believer) have been given fullness in Christ!

Stating that we have every spiritual blessing isn't a mistake and it isn't hyperbole. We have every spiritual blessing because every blessing is *in Christ* and we are in Him! How could we not be blessed with all things if we are indeed this intimately related to Christ? Perhaps we should spend more time thinking about what it means to be *in Christ*. This is the reason we often say our lives should be Christ-centered, for what could possibly compare to what we have in Him?

A Study in Ephesians

Tuesday, August 12:

Read II Corinthians 1

I want to spend another day having you think about Ephesians 1:3 because it is such a monumental verse:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

How do you suppose we should respond to this amazing promise? Based upon today's reading, our response should be: "Amen!"

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through Him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

II Corinthians 1:20

God wants us to "Amen" the truth of Ephesians 1:3 because it is centered in the person of Christ.



A Study in Ephesians

Tuesday, August 12:

Read II Corinthians 1 (Continued)

To do that, we need to understand just what God has provided. Here are four additional points that may help:

1. We are talking about spiritual, not material, blessings. Some might prefer the material, but that is short-sighted. As one example, consider the forgiveness of sins. How priceless is that blessing! Go ahead and try to assign a dollar value to having your sins forgiven by a holy and righteous God.
2. The promise of Ephesians 1:3 is not made to the spiritually elite or to a select few. Rather, it is the heritage of every single child of God the moment he or she had faith in the person and work of Christ.
3. One of the first mistakes we can make as new Christians is to be unaware or apathetic toward the spiritual blessings that are ours *in Christ*. We need to grow into the truths of Ephesians 1 as soon after salvation as possible.
4. I am not saying that all of the spiritual blessings that are ours *in Christ* are automatically fully developed in our lives. We may need to grow into them, we may need to appropriate them by faith, and their full manifestation may require both obedience and time. Nonetheless, this is a clear statement of the intent of God towards those who have trusted *in Christ*. There is not one thing lacking.

Truly, *Praise God from whom all blessings flow!*

A Study in Ephesians

Wednesday, August 13:

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

I know that we already read this passage several days ago, but I want you to wrap your mind around the immensity of what it is saying. Verse 3 starts by telling us that we have *every spiritual blessing in Christ*. What an amazing way to start a letter to a church. Paul is not telling them spiritual blessings come in degrees as we earn them or achieve a certain level of devotion. They are ours right from the get-go as Christians, and that isn't because we deserve these blessings. It is because God has placed us *positionally in His Son* at the moment we placed our faith in Him.

The term *position* refers to the union that has occurred between the Christian and the Savior. You'll see it in Ephesians Chapter 2, that we have been made alive *with Christ*, raised up *with Christ*, and seated *with Him* in the heavenly realms. You'll see it again in Colossians Chapter 3, where we are told that our lives are:

... now hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3

We didn't earn or deserve these things! God's plan of salvation includes uniting us so intimately with His Son that we share in all that is His. That's why every spiritual blessing is ours from the very start of the Christian Life. This should really motivate us to grow into what is ours.

Now, let me suggest that what follows the monumental statement of Ephesians 1:3 is a partial listing of some of the blessings that are ours. Go ahead and read through the list again from Verse 4 down to Verse 14. The first thing to note is that every one of these is a spiritual and not a material blessing, in keeping with the promise in Verse 3. We won't cover them all, but for the next few days we will touch on some of the highlights.

A Study in Ephesians

Thursday, August 14:

Read I Corinthians 1

What is the first example of the many blessings that are ours *in Christ*? In Ephesians 1:4 we read:

For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.

Chosen in Him! The idea of election is either scary or bothersome to many, but it shouldn't be! The *elect* are those who are set apart for a special purpose or function. The elect are selected from a large pool of individuals, using a criteria established by the one in charge, and then set apart for something special.

It is very easy to take this everyday understanding of the Greek word translated *chosen* and bring it into the spiritual realm in perfect harmony with the Word of God. The elect come out of the human race.

They come out solely by the criteria of the One in charge, who, of course, is God above. By what criteria are we set apart unto Him? Over and over Scripture has made the one criterion plain:

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved ...

Acts 16:31



They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Acts 16:31 WEB

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A Study in Ephesians

Thursday, August 14:

Read I Corinthians 1 (Continued)

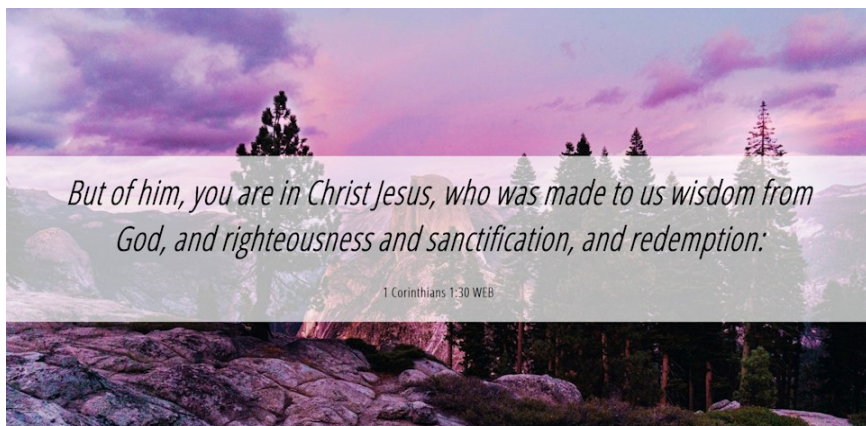
It couldn't be more straightforward: Faith in the person and work of Christ is what brings you out of the human race and into the category of the elect. Truly this passage makes absolutely clear that part of the special purpose and function for which we have been brought out is to be *holy and blameless* in His sight!

You might be tempted to respond, "But I don't feel blameless!" You're not blameless in and of yourself, but you most certainly are blameless *in Christ*.

It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

I Corinthians 1:30

Are you beginning to become established in the wonder of our position *in Christ*? Truly, *Amazing Grace*!



A Study in Ephesians

Friday, August 15: Read I Peter 1

There is quite a bit of controversy regarding the meaning of election, and many would not agree with yesterday's simple understanding. You may have been exposed to teaching that says that God, in His sovereignty, has in the past, chosen some to be saved and some to be lost. This, of course, has the corollary that those who believe do so because they were elect in the past, and those who were not elect have no chance of ever believing. This very logically elevates God's sovereignty, but what do the Scriptures say?

To God's elect ... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. I Peter 1:1-2

Instead of a reference to God's sovereignty, the reference is to His foreknowledge. Foreknowledge of what? Foreknowledge of who will respond to the so-great salvation provided in Jesus Christ. This harmonizes perfectly with yesterday's discussion. So, once again, the elect are those who believe in the person and work of Christ. They are set apart for special purpose and function in God's plan of redemption because they have believed.

Perhaps you are thinking, "But where is the sovereignty of God in all of this?" From His sovereignty, He has established the way lost mankind can become part of the *elect*. There is just one way—Jesus! For as He declared, Jesus is:

... the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me. John 14:6

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A Study in Ephesians

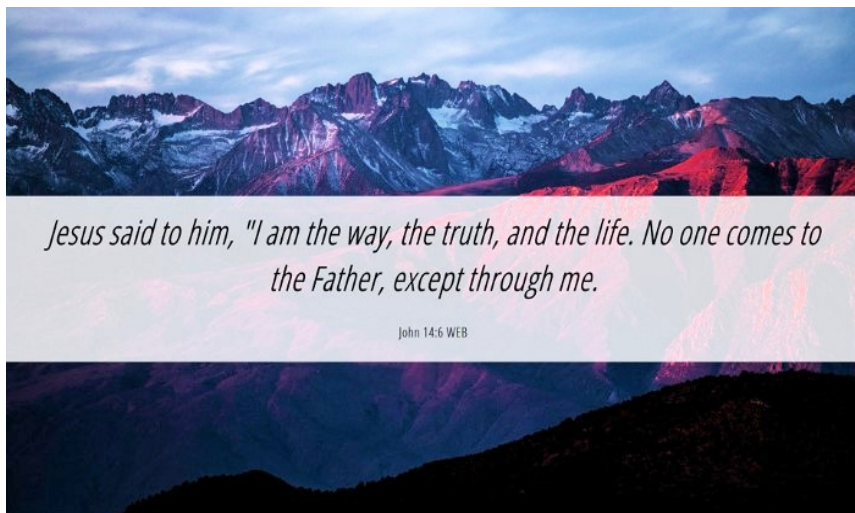
Friday, August 15: Read I Peter 1

(Continued)

There is no other Savior and no other way because God has sovereignly decreed it to be so!

Furthermore, He is apparently comfortable enough with His own sovereignty that He has allowed the work of His hands to choose for, or against, the salvation He has provided. That is the clear and repeated message of Scripture.

There are certainly other theologies out there. They just aren't grounded in the Word of God.



A Study in Ephesians

Monday, August 18: Read Ezekiel 18

As a preacher of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the issue of exactly who can get saved is very important to me—and it should be to you too! Can that grandchild, childhood friend, or neighbor really get saved? Is it really possible for them to place their faith in the person and work of Christ? Note, I am not asking can we know who will get saved; but rather, has God allowed each member of the human race the opportunity to be saved?

Of course, God knows who will and who won't believe. The issue is whether or not He has decided ahead of time who will believe and who will not, as much of reformed theology teaches. I want to know whether everyone with whom I am bold enough to share the truth can actually get saved or am I just going through the motions in the majority of the cases?

The difference of opinion on this matter hinges upon the sovereignty of God. Basically, there are those who say that God must choose everything that happens, and they say this in order to protect His sovereignty. The logical ramifications of this logic are not pretty, for under that definition of sovereignty God has now chosen the fall of man and the fall of Satan.

Continued on the next page.

A Study in Ephesians

Monday, August 18: Read Ezekiel 18

(Continued)

Rather than go there, let's turn to the truth. The following are two passages of Scripture for you to consider that marvelously clear up the whole matter:

"Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" declares the Sovereign Lord. "Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"

Ezekiel 18:23

The Lord is ... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. II Peter 3:9

Do you see what God wants? He wants lost people to get saved! He sent His Son so that all could be reconciled to Him. Now, we realize that not all are going to be saved, but all have the opportunity. What is necessary for them to be saved *"is finished."*

Do you see how, once again, God is in perfect harmony with His sovereignty? He has allowed mankind, the work of His hands, to choose for or against what He has done on their behalf. God has not excluded anyone from His so-great salvation, but some will choose to ignore His call for them to believe.

Praise God for the opportunity we have.

Back to Romans

Tuesday, August 19:

Read I Thessalonians 4:1-12

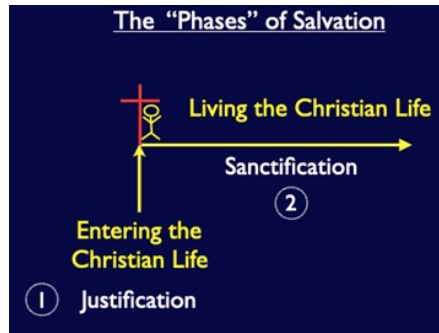
Today we return to our study of Romans with a reading in I Thessalonians. Tomorrow we will begin reading in Romans, Chapter 6.

As we begin our reading in the sixth chapter of Romans, it is important to realize that the focus of the text has made a significant transition. The subject of Chapters 3-5 was our justification: How God met our

need for righteousness by imputing His righteousness to all those who put their faith *in Christ*. This is Point 1 on our Phases of Salvation diagram.

Chapter 6 begins an investigation of the next aspect of our salvation—that of sanctification, which is Point 2 on our diagram. Sanctification speaks of the quality of the Christian Life that we live, including the concept that, as Christians, we are to be undergoing transformation—we are in the process of becoming ever more like Jesus!

Continued on the next page.



Back to Romans

Tuesday, August 19:

Read I Thessalonians 4:1-12

(Continued)

So, before we look at the text of Romans, let me introduce you to the concept of sanctification:

1. The word sanctify and the word holy are very closely related. The terms basically mean to be *set apart* for something special. Consider the following:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification ... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

I Thessalonians 4:3-7

Both the word sanctification and holiness are the same in the Greek text. It is very clear, God wants us set apart unto Him!

2. Were we to study the usage of holy and sanctified in the Scriptures, let me suggest that we would define sanctification something like the following:

Sanctification for the child of God is the progressive setting apart of the life unto the Lord, in terms of purity, priority, exclusivity, and service—saints by virtue of position and walk.

We will pick up here tomorrow, but for now take this idea with you: There is nothing automatic about sanctification! It is something we must choose to pursue, and we must undertake it while closely following any guidance the Lord has chosen to provide. As you can see, we have much more to come.

Back to Romans

Wednesday, August 20:

Read Romans 6:1-11

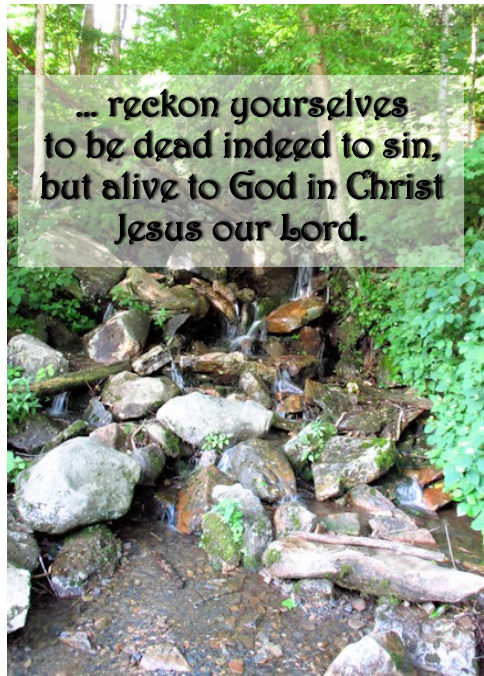
Let's go straight to a verse to which we will refer many times:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:11

This verse is a summary of the preceding ten verses. When all is said and done, we are to *reckon* ourselves dead to sin because we are *in Christ* Jesus. At the same time, we are to *reckon* ourselves alive to God because we are *in Christ*.

I trust this raises a lot of questions on your part. Let me start by pointing out something that is key to understanding this whole section. Our part is to *reckon*. That is the only thing we are told to do! So what does it mean?



Continued on the next page.

Back to Romans

Wednesday, August 20:

Read Romans 6:1-11

The Greek word has a connection to the practice of accounting: It means to take the correct sum and mark it down in a ledger. The idea is that we take a truth that God reveals to us in His Word—the truth that we have been crucified with Christ and then raised to life with Him—and mark it down in the ledger of our own soul. We mark it down by believing it to be true!

This is an act of faith in the message revealed in Romans 6:1-10. Our part is to believe. God's part is that He crucifies the old man, separates us from the power of the sin nature, and raises us up to newness of life. Read Romans Verses 1-10 again and you will see that this is the clear message of the text.

Do you know what this means? In the same way that our justification and glorification are solely a work of God, so, too, our sanctification is completely beyond us. If it happens in our lives—and it should—it is because God has accomplished the work. Far too often, we are taught that the Christian Life is our responsibility. We are pressured to toe the line of what a good Christian is supposed to do. In truth, as we will see, we most certainly do have good choices to make and truth to believe, but God wants to do a work in our lives that changes us from the inside out.

He will sanctify, if we will choose to *trust and obey*!

Back to Romans

Thursday, August 21:

Read Romans 8:28-34

I closed yesterday by suggesting that our sanctification is every bit as much a work of God as is our justification. As you know, following our faith *in Christ*, God clothed us with the very righteousness of His Son! That's the basis of our justification and a work that only He can do! Now, today we read:

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29

Do you see it? *God predestined* means He determined beforehand that we would be conformed to the likeness of His Son! That process of change from what we were in Adam to be like the Son is the process of sanctification.

Continued on the next page.



Back to Romans

Thursday, August 21:

Read Romans 8:28-34 (Continued)

It should be clear to you that God is the One who is going to bring about the result. Not only that, we also read:

... those He called He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified. Romans 8:30

It would seem, then, that all three aspects of our salvation— justification, sanctification, and glorification—are ultimately a work of God.

It is my intent to make this point as strongly as possible before we begin our study of sanctification so that we don't think we have any chance of pulling this off from the source of ourselves: our wisdom, our self-discipline, our will-power, or the like. Isn't this exactly what our text implies when it says:

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all— how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:31-32

Let me suggest the *all things* He graciously provides are the things we need for progressive sanctification to occur in our lives. Can you imagine the wrongheadedness of anyone saying, "No thank you! I can handle this on my own!"

So, as we dig deeper into Romans Chapter 6, we should expect to find exactly what God has provided so that we might become ever more like His Son.

Back to Romans

Friday, August 22:

Read Romans 6:1-14

(Meditate Upon It)

Let's go to work on the text of Romans Chapter 6. Paul wants to put to rest what might seem to be a strange question. If our sin led to God's grace providing our justification, why shouldn't we just keep on sinning so that even more good would result?

(Romans 6:1) The answer to this rhetorical question comes in two parts. Depending upon your translation, it begins with something like: May it never be, by no means, or God forbid! My favorite is "That's unthinkable!" from the God's Word translation.

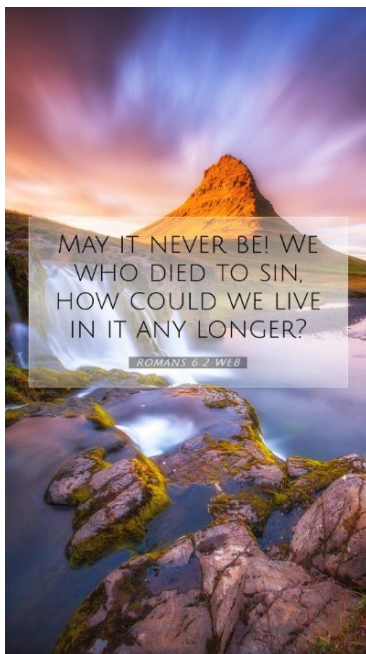
It is worth asking, why is there such a strong statement? The text tells us:

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer.

Romans 6:2

The text is blunt and direct, but it raises an obvious question: "When did we die to sin?"

Continued on the next page.



Back to Romans

Friday, August 22:

Read Romans 6:1-14

(Continued)

Let's let the text answer:

... all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death ... We were therefore buried with Him ... in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Romans 6:3-4

These two verses introduce us to an essential aspect of the Christian Life. Specifically, it is possible for us to avoid sin because we have been identified with Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. One is the basis of our separation from the sin nature, and the other is the basis of our new life as a child of God.

This may be new to you, but it is cause for rejoicing, for our greatest need as a lost person was forgiveness for sin's penalty! Our Savior took care of that:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Now, our greatest need as a child of God is deliverance from sin's power, specifically, our sinful nature. As we shall see, our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is God's provision for taking care of that as well. Our God has thought of everything and provided in grace!

Back to Romans

Monday, August 25: Read Galatians 2

The message of Romans 6:1-10 is first death and then life. The message is repeated multiple times. Further, it is not just the death of Christ followed by His resurrection, but our identification with His death and resurrection! The realization of our identification is an essential part of the process of sanctification, and it can only be brought to effect in our lives by faith. Let me support this from the text:

If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.

Romans 6:5

There it is: First death, then resurrection life! And, yet again:

We know that our old self was crucified with Him ...

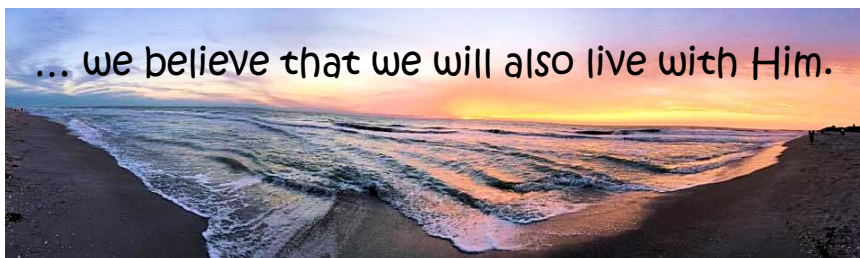
Romans 6:6

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.

Romans 6:8

Continued on the next page.

... we believe that we will also live with Him.



Back to Romans

Monday, August 25: Read Galatians 2 (Continued)

So, at least three times now in the first ten verses of this sixth chapter, we are said to have been identified first with the death of Christ and then with His resurrection. This truth is not unique to the Book of Romans. For example, in Galatians, Paul writes:

**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me.** Galatians 2:20

So, let's make sure we understand what this is saying: In some way that we did not physically experience, everyone who has trusted in the person and work of Jesus Christ for eternal life has also been identified with (participated in) His death and resurrection.

I will tell you now, this has nothing to do with Christ's payment for sin. That was a work He accomplished on His own without any involvement from us. No, this follows our salvation and lays the foundation for living a Christian Life separated from the power of the sin nature that remains following our salvation.

So, we close today having been identified with Christ's death and resurrection. Let's pick up tomorrow with its practical significance in the plan of God.



GALATIANS 2:20 WEB

*I have been crucified with
Christ, and it is no longer I that
live, but Christ living in me. That
life which I now live in the flesh,
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me, and gave
himself up for me.*



Back to Romans

Tuesday, August 26:

Read Romans 6:6-10 (Meditatively)

Today we take up the question, "Why has God seen fit to identify us with both the death and resurrection to life of His Son?" As a lost person, what we needed most was forgiveness of sins and a righteousness that would withstand the scrutiny of our Holy God. God took care of both:

... everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. Acts 10:43

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

Having trusted *in Christ* for eternal life (and His righteousness), we move on to living for Jesus and have a different need. We are new creations *in Christ*, who continue to live in a fallen body with a sinful nature that still wants to remain in control. It is now, very reasonable to ask, "What has God provided in order for us to have victory over our nature to sin?" The answer is our co-crucifixion with Jesus.

... our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Romans 6:6

We were identified with the death of Christ in order to break the sin nature's power in our lives. Verse 7 continues:

For anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

As we, by faith, consider ourselves to have died with Christ, we are also to see ourselves as we now are, united with Him in His resurrection. This new life we have *in Christ* is *dead*, that means separated, from the sin nature. In short, we are to take God at His word, by faith, and see ourselves as dead to the sin nature, alive unto God in newness of life. So naturally, it follows that we are to live consistent with who and what we are—*in Christ!*

Back to Romans

Wednesday, August 27:

Read Romans 6:11 (memorize)

I concluded yesterday's devotional with what should seem like a fantastic claim: We are to see ourselves as dead to the sin nature and alive unto God in newness of life. Now, let's hold that up against the text of Romans 6:11 and see how they compare.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:11

The messages are very close aren't they? Let me walk you through it:

1. The little prepositional phrase right at the end (*in Christ Jesus*) applies to both of the previous phrases. In other words, we are dead to sin—*in Christ*—and alive unto God—*in Christ*. We must realize it is only in our co-crucifixion with Him (Romans 6:6) and our co-resurrection to life with Him (Romans 6:5) that we are first dead to sin and then alive unto God. This is solely a work of God, revealed to us in the Word of God and received by faith!
2. To what does the opening phrase *likewise you also* refer? It takes us back to Romans 6:10:

The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives for God.

This is a reference to Jesus dying not only for our sins, but also to the principle of sin—something He accomplished once and for all at the cross!

Back to Romans

Wednesday, August 27:

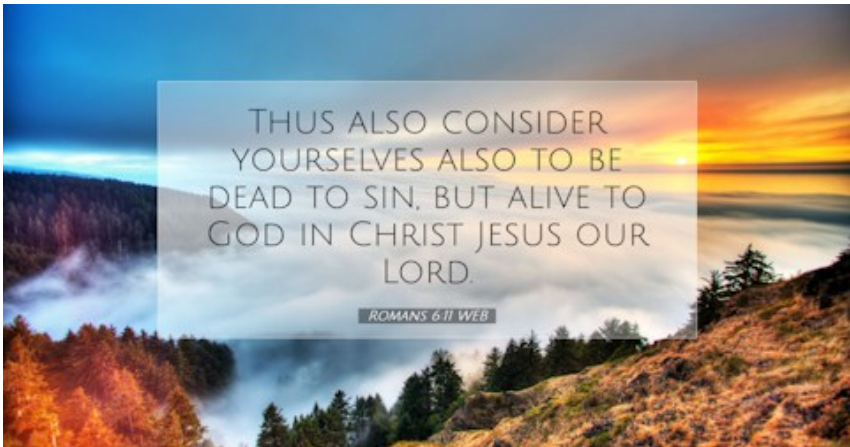
Read Romans 6:11 (memorize)

(Continued)

Of course, in His resurrection, He continues to fulfill the will of the Father. Verse 11 tells us that our approach should be the same. We are separated from the sin nature *in Christ* and now live for the will of the Father.

3. Don't miss the word reckon. I introduced this term just a few days ago, so let me remind you that this is our call to faith. We are to take the truths we are finding in this powerful sixth chapter of Romans, and mark them down in the ledger of our souls. They are God's provision for us to break the power of the sin nature over our lives, and instead live for the will of the Father as enabled by the Holy Spirit!

Much to ponder!



Back to Romans

Thursday, August 28:

Read Romans 6:12-13 (Meditatively)

You might consider Romans 6:12-13 to be the nuts and bolts application of what we have learned in the first 11 verses of this chapter.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness.

Let me extract a number of things from these two verses:

1. Make no mistake about it: Because we are *in Christ*, we have died to the power of the sinful nature. With that being the case, we should most certainly not be allowing sin to reign in our lives or control our hands, feet, or tongue!
2. Instead, because we are alive unto God *in Christ*, we are to *offer* ourselves to God. The Greek word translated *offer* means to put oneself at another's disposal or at their command. In other words, we are to put ourselves under orders to God. Note very carefully, it is the new life that we have *in Christ* that is to be put under orders to Him. God is not the least bit interested in our old life!

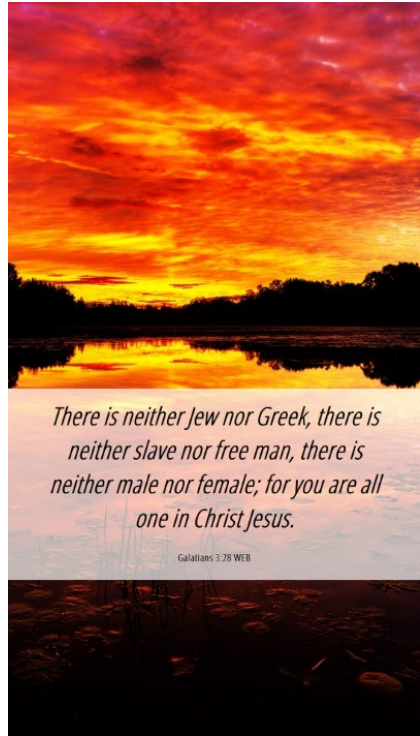
Back to Romans

Thursday, August 28:

Read Romans 6:12-13 (Meditatively)

(Continued)

3. There has always been a false teaching seeking to ensnare the Church that goes something like this: The spiritual is of the soul, while it doesn't really matter what you do with your body. Of course, the spiritual does start in the human soul and spirit, but notice the emphasis on the body in this passage. Sin is not to reign in our bodies, nor are we to offer the various parts of our body to sin! Instead, we are to put the members of our body under orders to our God as instruments of righteousness. That pretty much refutes that false teaching doesn't it?



One more verse to go in this section and we will take that up tomorrow.

Back to Romans

Friday, August 29:

Read Romans 6:14-23

Romans 6:14 is an astounding summary of this first half of Romans Chapter 6. When we return to the second half, we will notice that Paul, who loves repetition, will repeat many of the same truths from yet another angle. But, for now, let's look closely at this 14th verse:

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Every single Christian, although possessing a heavenly home, is going to have to deal with his or her sinful nature while on this earth. If we do not master it, it will master us. So consider the following:

1. Any effort to master the sin nature that depends on a system of do's and don'ts, will-power or surrender will ultimately lead to failure. Failure means that the sinful nature, often referred to as *the flesh*, will be your master.



... reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus ...

Back to Romans

Friday, August 29:

Read Romans 6:14-23 (Continued)

2. But for those who choose to take God at His Word and do it His way, there is a promise of victory. Our text has expounded God's way for the past 13 verses: We are to ... reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11)

We can do this because God, in grace, identified us with the death of His Son as the means to separate us from the power of the flesh:

... because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Romans 6:7

Furthermore, He has also identified us with the resurrection life of His son that:

... we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4

3. Make no mistake about it, God's way is a provision of His grace. We don't provide—He does! Ours is to steadfastly put our faith in the truth of God's Word as laid out in Romans 6:1-13.

There you have it! If we go with the grace of God, sin will not be our master. Instead, we will master it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (a preview of what is yet to come in Chapter 8). Should we decide a walk of faith is too challenging and choose some system of law instead, count on it, the flesh will call the tune. Perhaps you are thinking, "How can this be?" A system of law has no power, but the Cross of Christ, coupled with the Spirit of Christ, most certainly does!

VISTOSO



Community Church

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

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