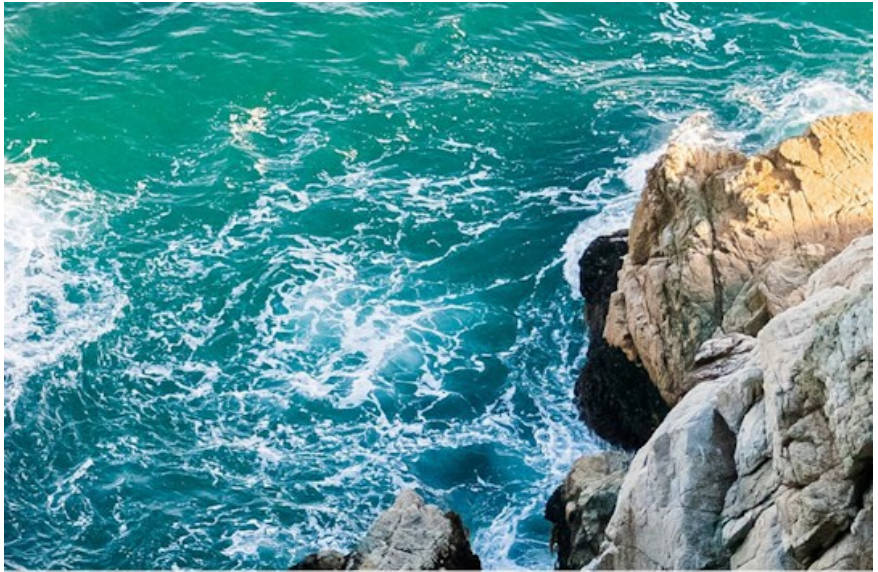


September 2025 Daily Devotional



*Turn my eyes away from looking
at worthless things. Revive me in
your ways.*

Psalms 119:37 WEB



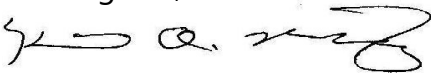
Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

What a fascinating month of Scripture readings this should be. We have the foundational truth of the Spirit-filled life, the deeper doctrine of Romans and Ephesians, and then the chance to see it applied in the lives of Old Testament characters! As always, our study is meant to help us know the truth, think God's thoughts after Him, and then put them into practice.

May God bless you in the study of His Word!

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).

Old Testament Characters

Monday, September 1: Read Judges 2

Our last Old Testament character was Joshua, and I would like to change things up a bit and look at a period of time rather than an individual. The period I have in mind is that covered by the Book of Judges—a period of about 350 years. I find the Book of Judges to be a very depressing read and, for many years I wondered why it was included in God's Word. You might find that a strange attitude, but the failure of the Jews following the death of Joshua is laid bare as early as Chapter 2:

But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

Judges 2:19

The entire rest of the book is about the downward spiral undertaken by the rebellious Jews which ends with the terrible tale of Chapters 19-21 and the final verse of the book:

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

Judges 21:25

So, with failure so clearly laid out in the first two chapters, why did we need the often terrible detail of the last 19 chapters? After all, space is at a premium in the Bible. Of course, God has very carefully chosen what to reveal to us, and when He includes detail, even unpleasant detail, it is for a reason. I have come to realize that this Old Testament book has been preserved through the centuries as a powerful illustration of the challenge faced by God's people—Israel or the Church—to grow spiritually and hold this world at arm's length. I look forward to showing you!

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, September 2: Read Deuteronomy 7

To allow us to understand the *big picture* lesson of the Book of Judges, allow me to walk you through a series of questions. First, as Israel entered the Land that God had promised them, what kinds of things did He intend for them to do? We can find one of those things in this verse in Deuteronomy 5:29:

“Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear Me and keep all My commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever.” Deuteronomy 5:29

Then, we have Moses’ instruction from God in today’s reading:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites ... you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them ... Do not intermarry with them ... for they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods, and the Lord’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.

Deuteronomy 7:1-4

In other words, God is warning them that the evil in the Land will contaminate the conquering Israelites if they do not drive it from the Land! Numbers 33:55 gives a graphic reminder of the stakes:

But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the Land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides.

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, September 2:

Read Deuteronomy 7 (Continued)

Second, the inhabitants of the Land were numerous and powerful, to what promise could the Israelites cling? We find the answer to this question in today's reading:

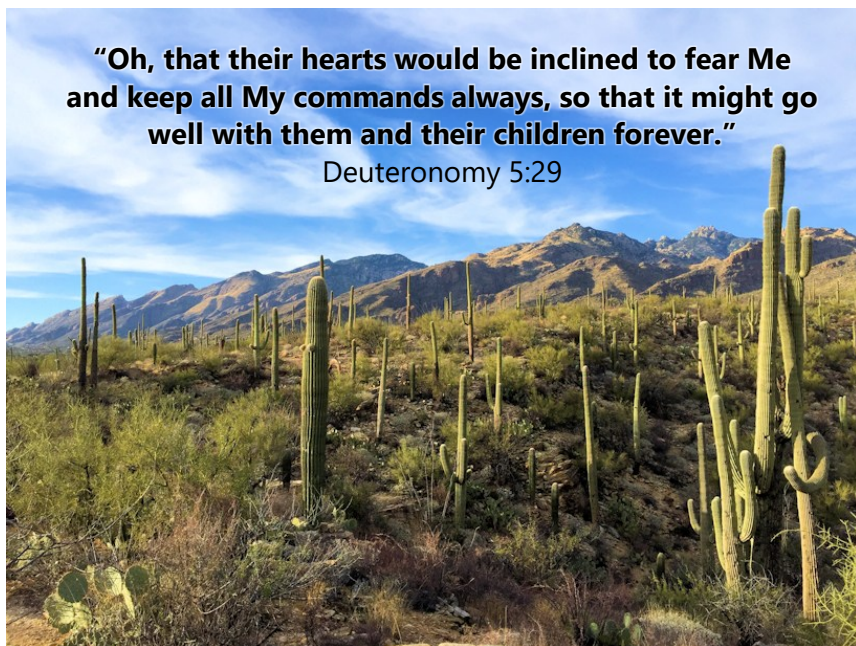
Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God. The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you ... He will give their kings into your hand ... No one will be able to stand against you.

Deuteronomy 7:21-24

With these clear instructions and God's promise of help, how did Israel do in following through? We'll have to see!

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear Me and keep all My commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever."

Deuteronomy 5:29



Old Testament Characters

Wednesday, September 3:

Read Judges 1

Let me take up where we left off yesterday with the question: How did the Israelites do in terms of obedience to the clear directive from God to drive out the inhabitants of the Land and to trust in Him to provide the victory? Things started out well in Chapter 1 with a number of victories, but as early as Judges 1:21 we read:

The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites ...

Through the end of the chapter we read of progress, but incomplete obedience. The opening verses of Chapter 2 tell us how God feels about this partial obedience:

"... you have disobeyed Me ... Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you."

Judges 2:2-3



Old Testament Characters

Wednesday, September 3:

Read Judges 1 (Continued)

Apparently, giving it your best shot and then throwing in the towel is not a substitute for obedience when dealing with the commands of God! So, how did all of this play out? What were the consequences for their failure to progressively occupy the land? Consider the following:

1. The gods of those left in the Land did indeed become a snare to the Israelites:

Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers.

Judges 2:11-12,17

2. The people did indeed become thorns in the side of Israel:

In His anger against Israel, the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist.

Judges 2:14

3. Although the Lord would repeatedly deliver them by sending a judge in response to their cries for help, when the suffering was gone the people returned to their sin. This went on and on for decades:

But when the judge died, people turned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

Judges 2:19

Well, this is an *ugly* Old Testament story, but what does this have to do with us today—during the time of the Church? We'll look into that topic tomorrow.

Old Testament Characters

Thursday, September 4: Read James 4

How do we apply the historical reality of the Book of Judges? To do so, let's switch from the physical picture of the Israelites during the time of the Judges to the spiritual condition of the New Testament believer. In other words, are Christians told to do anything similar to God's instructions that the Israelites were to enlarge their territory and drive out the inhabitants of the Land. Is there a spiritual parallel? How about this from I Peter 2:1-3:

... rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind ... now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Instead of driving out the geographic evil inhabitants, we are told to *drive out* those manifestations of the sin nature that don't belong in the life of a believer! Or how about:

... friendship with the world is hatred toward God ... anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

James 4:4

This New Testament passage could easily be found in the Book of Judges, couldn't it? Further, does the second parallel also apply? By that I mean: If we fail to drive sin out of our lives, will it become *thorns and snares* spiritually speaking? Consider Paul's scolding of the believers in Corinth:

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual, but as worldly—mere infants in Christ ... For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?

I Corinthians 3:1, 3

The Corinthians had many areas of sin that they needed to *drive out* of their spiritual lives. A few are mentioned—jealousy and quarreling. As a result, Paul labels the Corinthians as *worldly* or *carnal*. And, carnality in the life is most certainly a barb in the eye and a thorn in the side!

Old Testament Characters

Friday, September 5: Read John 17

Recalling what we learned in Judges, let's take the failure of the Jews to fully occupy the Land and make the following application to the Christian Life. First, the call to experiential sanctification is as an inviolate part of the Christian Life as was God's call upon the Israelites to completely conquer the Promised Land and drive out the inhabitants with all of their pagan influences.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

II Corinthians 5:14-15

We are to live for Him, becoming ever more conformed to His image and likeness! To do that, the worldly habits and practices in our lives need to go!

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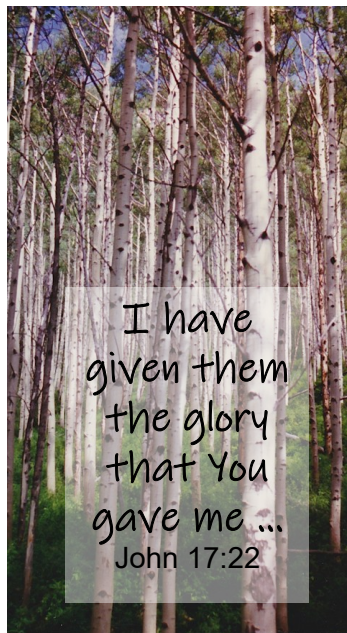
Old Testament Characters

Friday, September 5:

Read John 17 (Continued)

Second, there are some significant differences with respect to what this looks like for the church scattered around the world and Israel centered in the Promised Land. John 17 will help us with the differences:

- The Church and thus the Christian is not of this world and the world is going to hate them. (John 17:13-16)
- In order to bear witness to our God, we need to be sanctified—set apart unto Him. This is accomplished by means of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. (John 17:17)
- Then consider the almost unimaginable outcome that can occur should we obey where the Israelites failed!



"I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and You in Me. And may they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me."

John 17:22-23

So, you see, a choice lies before us—grow or spiral down, cooperate with God's plan of transformation or feel the barb of sin. Choose wisely and allow our study of Judges to help you do so!

Old Testament Characters

Monday, September 8: Read Joshua 3

From the tragic tale of Israel's history during the time of the Judges, I have been trying to draw spiritual parallels and make application. Thus far, I have tried to make the case that we too need to grow spiritually. Further, part of that spiritual growth requires us to carefully assess our lives against the backdrop of Scriptural truth. We also need to *drive-out* those aspects of our lives that can become *barbs in our eyes or thorns in our sides*. (Numbers 33:55)

Let me close this portion of our Old Testament study by giving you a few final considerations:

1. Israel's entrance into the Land was accomplished in supernatural style. (Joshua Chapters 3 and 6) But, by the middle of the first chapter of Judges, it has become a slow grind of one victory at a time.
2. It would seem as if the slow pace of victory, and the push-back by the inhabitants of the Land was considered an adequate reason for both disobedience and settling for less than God intended.
3. I trust you have seen the spiritual parallel yet again. For we start our Christian lives in supernatural fashion receiving new life in Christ as the result of placing our faith in Him. However, at some point, our spiritual lives are also going to be reduced to a dependent grind of one victory at a time. It is at this point that we can lose faith and bog down. Like Israel, that would be to assume that the challenge of being Christ's ambassadors in this fallen world is adequate reason to give up or even fall into disobedience. Perish the thought!

Continued on the next page.

Old Testament Characters

Monday, September 8: Read Joshua 3 (Continued)

For this is the will of God for us—even our sanctification. (I Thessalonians 4:3) By sanctification I mean the on-going process of being ever more conformed to the image and likeness of our Savior. So, let me leave you with this very sobering question, which I hope you will regularly ask yourself: “Since becoming a Christian, have I been actively engaged in *enlarging my territory* in terms of my spiritual growth, or have I allowed the residents of the land (the world) to seduce me and halt my progress?”

If the world has halted your sanctification progress, God always has the same solution—confess your sin, and begin again the walk in the Spirit as guided by the Word of God.

And all God’s people said, “Amen!”



The Holy Spirit

Tuesday, September 9: Read Ephesians 5:8-20

We left our study of the Holy Spirit some weeks ago with the text of I Corinthians 6:19:

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

From this we came to understand that every child of God is indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Further, His indwelling is a permanent possession that is meant to be the basis from which the Spirit ministers to the believer in Christ. Today I would like to introduce you to the Filling of the Holy Spirit.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.

Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

Having read the immediate context, you may have noticed that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not constant in the life of the believer, but rather one of several options. It is something that can potentially be true—something very desirable—but not certain. You can see this in the above verse—if one is drunk with wine, they are not filled with the Holy Spirit. That is because carnality of any kind hinders the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We can further understand the Filling of the Spirit with the following verse:

Walk 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 ...

Galatian 5:16-17

Continued on the next page.

The Holy Spirit

Tuesday, September 9:

Read Ephesians 5:8-20 (Continued)

It will help if you understand walking by the Spirit to be perpetuating the Filling of the Spirit as a function of time. In other words, to walk by the Spirit is to maintain the Filling of the Spirit.

As you can see from the passage in Galatians, there is going to be opposition to this from the sinful nature for it wants those things that are contrary to the Spirit. So, if the flesh has managed to influence the soul of the child of God, such an individual is not only out of fellowship with God, but has also lost the Filling of the Spirit.

At this point there are two things to note:

1. The Filling of the Spirit can be regained in the same way that our fellowship with God following sin is addressed—confession!
2. The Filling of the Spirit is something that is going to come and go in the life of the believer, depending upon whether we are walking by the Spirit or by the flesh. However, it never impacts the indwelling of the Spirit, the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit, or our family status as a child of God!



Walk
in the
Spirit

Galatians 5:16

More on the Filling of the Spirit tomorrow.

The Holy Spirit

Wednesday, September 10:

Read Romans 8:1-14

Yesterday we were introduced to the command *be filled with the Spirit* in contrast to allowing our sinful nature to dominate our lives. To be clear, the grammar associated with the Greek word translated *be filled* is that of a command.

Now, although we have a command clearly given in the Scriptures, we do not have an equally clear and concise definition of exactly what that means. We are going to have to study the guidance given to us regarding the Holy Spirit in order to extract a working definition. Passages such as those included in today's reading can be helpful:

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

Romans 8:11

Can you see that God's way of producing the life of Christ in each of us is the ministry of His Spirit? This, in turn, would have to be part of the *Filling of the Spirit*.

For the remainder of today's devotional, I simply want to give you two definitions of what it means to be *Filled with the Spirit*, that you might reflect upon them and hopefully improve your understanding. First, here is my definition as the result of studying the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer throughout the Scriptures:

To be filled with the Spirit is to be in a condition such that the Holy Spirit has an unhindered ability to influence the soul and empower the life.

Continued on the next page.

The Holy Spirit

Wednesday, September 10:

Read Romans 8:1-14 (Continued)

By *condition* I mean in fellowship with God such that no unconfessed sin is a hindrance to the walk of the believer; and having the *Word of Christ dwelling richly within*. (Colossians 3:16) This brings us to my definition of what it means to walk by the Spirit:

To walk (live) in the Spirit is to moment-by-moment maintain the filling of the Spirit, through the influence of both the indwelling Spirit and indwelling Word of God, that the life of Christ might be manifest in us, as we navigate life's daily demands.

Then, here is a lengthier definition from a theologian that I trust you might find helpful because of its greater detail:

To walk in or by the Spirit is to allow Him to direct the way in which you live your life; it is to make decisions in the light of His holiness; it is to remain in communion with Him; it is to be occupied with the person of Christ, because the Spirit's ministry is to engage us intimately with the Lord Jesus. Carefully note: walking by the Spirit is not a mystical, trance-like state in which the believer enters and mysteriously lives; nor is it some kind of far out, ethereal experience as some have postulated. Any such thinking along those lines is completely "cultic" in its orientation. To walk by the Spirit is to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit and to walk by faith in God's Word. D. Ekstrand

To walk consistently in the Spirit is the work, and goal, of a lifetime, so ponder it deeply.

The Holy Spirit

Thursday, September 11:

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

Today I want us to consider two things that will compromise the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer:

1. The *grieving* of the Holy Spirit:

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30

2. The *quenching* of the Spirit:

Do not quench the Spirit's fire ... I Thessalonians 5:19

The *grieving* of the Spirit is relatively easy to understand from the context of today's reading. The Spirit is grieved, every time the child of God becomes entangled in sin. For it grieves the Spirit when we break fellowship as the result of sin in our lives. And, it should go without saying that to *grieve* the Spirit would also mean that we are no longer filled with the Spirit.

Continued on the next page.



Do not quench the Spirit!

The Holy Spirit

Thursday, September 11:

Read Ephesians 4:17-32 (Continued)

Thankfully, the solution to both broken fellowship and the loss of the filling of the Holy Spirit is the same:

If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

As for *quenching* the Spirit, there is much less in the context for us to go by and so it is more difficult to be precise or dogmatic. Let me suggest that to *quench* the Spirit would be the result of prolonged *grieving* of the Spirit. We *grieve* the Spirit when we sin, but He is ready to go right back to work in the life of the believer as we confess our sin and regain both our fellowship with the Lord and the *Filling of the Spirit*.

In contrast, we *quench* the Spirit when we persist in sin—harden our hearts over time to the voice of the Spirit urging us to confess. In time, we can become both hard of heart and without the evidence of the Spirit's work in our lives. Again, the first thing we need to do if we find ourselves in such a condition is to confess our sin. God will forgive and restore us to both fellowship and the filling of the Spirit.

But, as the result of prolonged carnality, we are very likely to have a difficult time making spiritual progress unless we are ready and willing to keep our minds saturated with the Word of God and spend time in fellowship with other Christians. It will take time for us to regain our spiritual momentum, but it most certainly can be done. I trust you will have already made note that the best remedy of all is to never *quench* the Spirit and, should we *grieve* Him, confess our sin in order to regain our precious fellowship with Him as soon as possible.

The Holy Spirit

Friday, September 12:

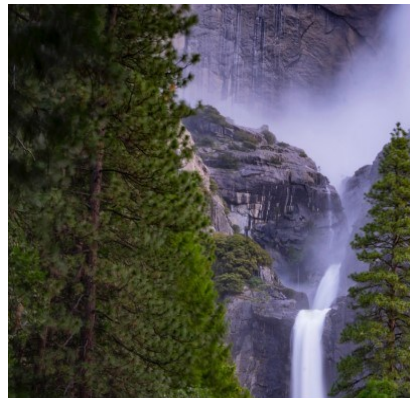
Read Galatians 5:16-26

As those who have trusted in Christ to have paid sin's penalty through His death on the cross and, as a result, now share in His life, we have a long standing relationship with the Holy Spirit.

- It is the Holy Spirit who made the Gospel clear to us and convicted us of our need to trust Christ as Savior.
- It was the Spirit who provided the new birth following faith and then sealed us for all eternity.
- It is the Holy Spirit who indwells in order to provide a counter to indwelling sin.

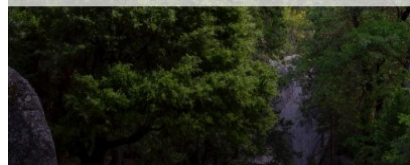
Lastly, we have seen the call for all God's children to be *filled with the Spirit!* For the remainder of today's devotional, let me give you four reasons to be *filled* and *walk* by the Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is our teacher (John 14:26). But He cannot teach an un-receptive or unbelieving heart! We need to be rightly related to Him, including being filled with the Spirit, before we are ready to be His pupil.



But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you.

John 14:26 WEB



Continued on the next page.

The Holy Spirit

Friday, September 12:

Read Galatians 5:16-26 (Continued)

2. The Spirit is the source of enabling power for the Christian, and we are to know:

... His incomparably great power for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:19

Once again, this power cannot be operative in the life of the believer unless he or she is *filled with the Spirit*.

3. By making use of our identification with the death of Christ, it is:

... by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body.

Romans 8:13

So that the following can occur:

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

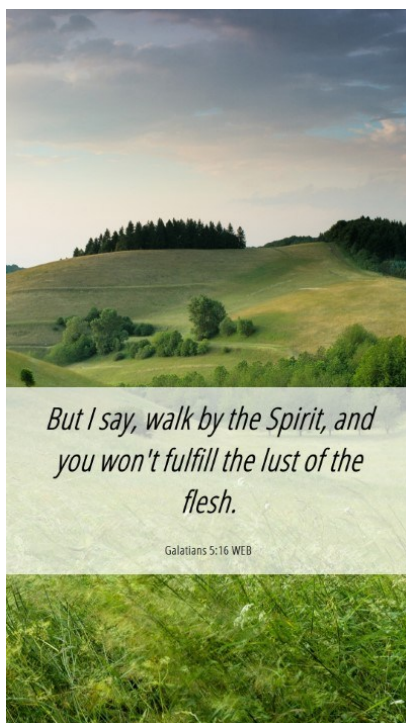
4. The Holy Spirit is the One who will produce fruit in our lives that is pleasing to our Lord:

... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

As you can see, there are many aspects of the Christian Life that only the Holy Spirit

can accomplish. We need to learn to trust Him to do so!



Return to Ephesians

Monday, September 15:

Read Romans 8:15-39

We left off in our study of Ephesians by trying to understand the truths in Ephesians 1:3:

... every spiritual blessing that is ours in Christ ...

Some examples of those blessings are contained in Ephesians 1:4-14, and the next two in order are our adoption as sons and our acceptance in the Beloved. You see:

... to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God ... John 1:12

Today's reading is equally clear in Romans 8:15:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father."

When God blesses you, you are good and truly blessed! You are not second class sons, but *co-heirs with Christ* (Romans 8:17) and called a brother (or sister):

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

What did we do to earn all of this? Nothing! It is part of the so-great salvation that is ours in Christ. Now, there are going to be days when we are wondering how we could possibly be a *co-heir with Christ*. We can be discouraged because we know we fall so short, but our sonship is not based upon our performance. It is based upon the Father's acceptance of His Son in whom *our life is hidden!* (Colossians 3:3) It is this kind of acceptance that is to the praise of His glorious grace. (Ephesians 1:6) We need to accept and revel in the truth that we are to praise His grace—on our good days and on our bad days—because we are eternally *accepted in the Beloved*.

Return to Ephesians

Tuesday, September 16:

Read I Peter 1

Here is another item that is in accordance with the riches of His grace:

... redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ...

Ephesians 1:7

Redemption was a big deal in the ancient world. You see, you could end up in the slave market in all kinds of ways: capture by a marauding band, debt, or being on the losing side in a war. Redemption means to buy out of the slave market and set free. If you were taken captive in a raid, you could hope family members had the means to *buy your freedom*. But in many cases there was no hope.

Ephesians is not talking about redemption in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense. And, the captivity situation is much worse, for it is not just a few who are taken captive. Rather, every member of the human race is born dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1) and condemned in Adam (Romans 5:19). Furthermore, this means we are in Satan's dominion (Colossians 1:13), a place from which no family member can ever redeem us.

From the human perspective, this is a completely hopeless situation. But, as Paul told the Philippian jailor, if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. And, part of that salvation is redemption from our hopeless condition in the slave market of sin.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers ...

I Peter 1:18

Return to Ephesians

Tuesday, September 16:

Read I Peter 1 (Continued)

For the perishable things of this world can never redeem us spiritually. The only possibility for our spiritual redemption is:

... the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

I Peter 1:19

The blood of Christ is a reference to His work on the cross, where He took our sin upon Himself and received the judgment from God that was our due. He paid the redemption price and not only redeemed us from the slave market of sin but provided forgiveness for our sin!

Hallelujah, what a Savior!



JESUS

*in whom we have our redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the
riches of his grace,*

Ephesians 1:7 WEB

Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, September 17:

Read Titus 2

In our effort to understand what we have read in Ephesians 1, today we turn to Titus Chapter 2. In particular, I want to draw your attention to Verse 11:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Of course this passage is talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, but our study in Ephesians makes it clear that it also applies to the salvation that can be had in Him. For, after listing a series of our spiritual blessings in Ephesians 1:3-7, there is a pause in Verses 7 and 8 in which it says that the blessings that are ours in Christ are:

... in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.



Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, September 17:

Read Titus 2 (Continued)

Put these two passages together and marvel. It is the grace of God that brings salvation. The grace of God is a source of great riches and, in the plan of God, He has lavished those riches upon every child of God. He is not a parsimonious God—doling out a little blessing here and a little there—He has lavished His grace upon us.

Let's consider a few pointers on the grace of God:

- Grace is a summary term for the means by which God deals with man. It emphasizes the loving and merciful nature of our Creator God, and not what we earn or merit.
- One way of defining grace, that comes from a review of Biblical usage, is as follows: *Grace is God's abundant answer to man's ever-changing need.*
- This means that if we have a spiritual need, then God has an answer—an abundant answer.
- God's grace has a certain glory associated with it that should lead to praise:

... to the praise of His glorious grace which He has freely given us in the One He loves. Ephesians 1:6

Here is a wake-up prayer for you to consider:

Thank you Lord for Your grace to me today—your glorious grace— rather than giving me what I deserve.

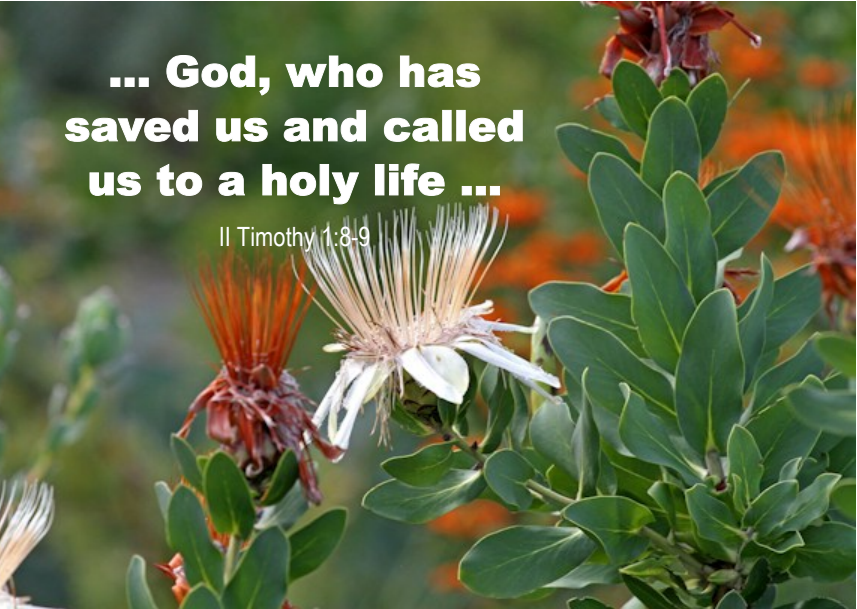
Return to Ephesians

Thursday, September 18:

Read II Timothy 1

As we saw yesterday, whatever exactly grace is, it is a very precious commodity and something to be greatly valued. How can it be otherwise when it has the glory of God associated with it and is part of the riches of every born-again child of God?

You will be shocked to learn that there are many who are opposed to grace, angry about grace, or think too much emphasis is placed upon it. Their reasons include feeling that emphasis on grace promotes a lack of holding people accountable, thinking that grace is too easy, and holding that an emphasis on grace promotes a *lazy* Christian life.



**... God, who has
saved us and called
us to a holy life ...**

II Timothy 1:8-9

Return to Ephesians

Thursday, September 18:

Read II Timothy 1 (Continued)

After reading just the first half of Chapter 1 of Ephesians, one thing is for sure, I don't think we could overdo our emphasis on it because God puts so much emphasis on His grace! As for the other concerns about communicating the truth of God's grace, consider a portion of today's reading:

... God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

II Timothy 1:8-10

Note that within the purposes and grace of God are both our salvation and a call to a holy life. Grace doesn't lessen God's call on our lives, it just provides the means to achieve it! Furthermore, grace is not a new concept, but one that has been part of the plans and purposes of God from the beginning of time.

If I ever wonder whether I value the grace of God too highly, this passage pretty much settles it for me. To restrict the emphasis on the grace of God is to diminish our salvation and God's call to holiness. It is to make less of our position in Christ. It is to forget that death has been conquered through Christ that we might have eternal life with Him.

No thank you! You just can't emphasize grace too much!

Return to Ephesians

Friday, September 19:

Read Matthew 27

Although we are reading in Matthew today, we are still considering how we get the blessings promised in Ephesians:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation ...

Ephesians 1:13a

What do you have to do with what you hear? The next verse begins: *"Having believed ..."* What happened when you believed? Here is the rest of the verse:

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 possessions—to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13b-14

Every child of God is sealed with the Holy Spirit. Amazing! It is this deposit of the Spirit that guarantees what is to come in eternity. Did you notice what is to the "praise of God's glory?" It is bringing a lost sinner into a glorified condition. What a great work of redemption it is to bring us from the condition of lost sinner to glorified in His presence—and the glory for doing so is all His! I had you read Matthew 27 today, so that you could contrast the sealing ministry of man.

"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Matthew 27:65-66

Those who crucified Jesus sealed His tomb and added the might of Rome to keep Him there. But the grave could not hold him. The seal of man meant nothing. On the other hand, when the Spirit of God seals you, you can have complete confidence that you will be kept unto an eternal salvation! You can know so upon the authority of God's Word!

Continuing In Romans

Monday, September 22:

Read Romans 6:1-14

We concluded our last reading in Romans with the wonderful promise:

For sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14

At this point in the development of the Book of Romans, we are deep into the Christian Life. The issue of sin's penalty has already been addressed by the finished work of Christ on the cross and the gracious gift of the very righteousness of God for those who trust in Christ. (Romans 3:22).

By the time we arrive at Romans 6, we are now dealing with victory over the power of sin in the life of the Christian.

And, Romans 6:14 is a promise that, for those who will

choose to live under grace, there is a path to victory over the still-present nature to sin.



To live *under grace* is simply to choose to do things God's way—as laid out in His Word—rather than our way. If we don't do things God's way, and that includes any system of laws or do's and don'ts, as Verse 14 makes clear, sin will continue its dominion in our life.

This is the unfortunate and sad story of many a Christian, many a college student, and many a church. This is the case for any child of God who has not been taught God's way of doing things from the Scriptures. Of course, that *begs the question*: "What is God's way of living the Christian Life?"

Continued on the next page.

Continuing in Romans

Monday, September 22:

Read Romans 6:1-14 (Continued)

Let me first address what we need:

- A way to separate from the power of the sin nature that remains even after we come to faith in Christ.
- A replacement for the old *Adam-life* that was ours before our salvation.
- An enabling power for our new life.



We have already seen God's provision for the first two in our study of the first half of Romans Chapter 6, for God has separated us from the power of the sin nature by uniting us with the death of Christ. (Romans 6:6-7) Then he raised us up to newness of life in Christ, so that we now share His life. (Romans 6:4,8) Finally, the enabling power of that new life—the Holy Spirit—will be the subject of Romans 8.

So then, what should we expect to find in the remainder of Romans 6? The short answer is that we will find reinforcement of what we have learned in the first half. For God's ways are not man's ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9) It is going to take time and repetition for us to understand His ways.

Personally, I find the second half of Romans 6 to be very helpful in helping me better understand—*under grace and not under law!*

Continuing in Romans

Tuesday, September 23:

Read Romans 6:15-23

Verse 15 should sound familiar:

**What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law
but under grace?**

Romans 6:15

The reason it should be familiar is that it is virtually identical to Verse 1. Not surprisingly, the answer to this very important question remains the same! Here are just a few of the various translations of the answer:

*Certainly not! God forbid! No way! May it never be!
Far from it! Absolutely not! That's unthinkable!*

Not a lot of wiggle room is there? That is because, as *new creations* in Christ, we are to leave the old manner of life behind—and there is to be no uncertainty in the mind of the Christian about this! It is equally important that we be able to answer the following: Do sin and grace go together? Is grace a cover-up for sin, or does it ever promote sin? The answer to all three questions must be a resounding, “NO!” in the mind of the believer.

On the contrary, grace is a descriptive truth for the fact that God has provided everything we need, not only to be saved for all eternity, but to live a God-honoring and upright life until we are called home.

**For the grace of God ... teaches us to say, “No” to
ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-
controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age ...**

Titus 2:11-12

God can't expect us to be perfect overnight, can He? Isn't a bit of *unholiness* to be accepted in the believer's life?

Continued on the next page.

Continuing in Romans

Tuesday, September 23:

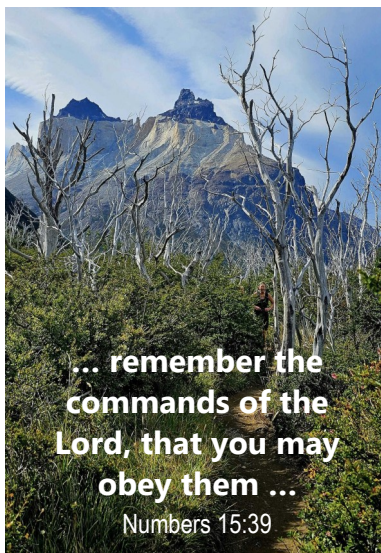
Read Romans 6:15-23 (Continued)

Let me show you first what the Old Testament has to say:

You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.

Numbers 15:39

To *prostitute* oneself is to make a horrible trade—giving away the more precious for something of ultimately much lesser value. That brings us to Roman's 6:16, which addresses this very same thing in a way that should grab our attention:



Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey ...

Romans 6:16 NKJV

In context, this is a message solely to the saved child of God. It reinforces the truth—unseemly as it might be—that the one who has come in faith to Christ can continue as a slave to sin. That should prompt a prayer from deep within our soul:

Lord, keep me from being a slave of my desires. Teach me the ways of Your grace, and strengthen me to walk in obedience to all that You reveal. And all God's people said, "Amen!"

We will continue on this very subject tomorrow!

Continuing in Romans

Wednesday, September 24:

Read I Corinthians 11:17-34

I introduced the following verse yesterday:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey ... Romans 6:16 NIV

Let's go right to some application. First, this verse is meant to raise a very poignant question in every believer's life:

To whom am I putting myself under orders?

This is a question we can answer at any moment of any day. As soon as we answer it, we know to whom or what we are a slave! God wants us *under orders to Him* and, in effect, a *slave to obedience* to that He has communicated in His Word. There is a shameful alternative—*enslavement to the flesh!* But perish the thought. Now let's finish the verse and complete the thought:

... whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? Romans 6:16

This leads us to further application:

1. Did you notice, there is no discussion of a middle ground? You are one or the other! This is really the *trench warfare* of the Christian Life. We are either walking in obedience to the revealed will of God, or we are not!
2. We need to feel the weight of God's perspective; namely, it is an ethical contradiction of immense terms for the Christian to be a slave to sin in light of his or her position in Christ?

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Continuing in Romans

Wednesday, September 24:

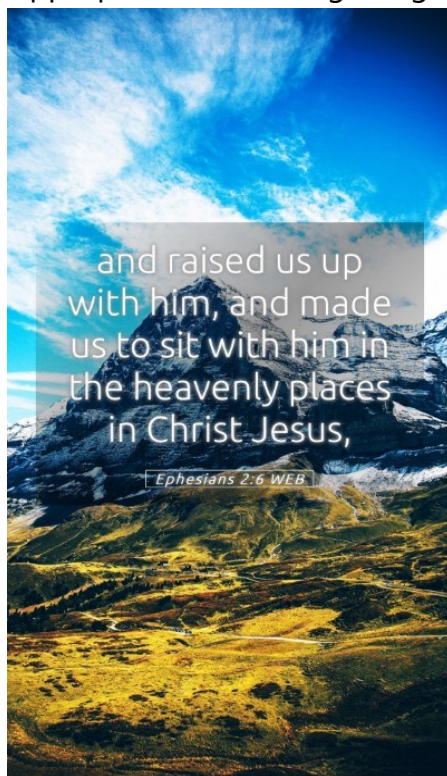
Read I Corinthians 11:17-34 (Continued)

As one example from the Scriptures: Because of our position in Christ we are right now, seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 2:6) So, absolutely how inappropriate is it to be getting drunk at the Communion Table as some in the church at Corinth were doing. (I Corinthians 11:20-21) That's a picture of being enslaved to sin!

3. There are two possibilities for each believer in Christ:

- Sin leading to death
- Obedience leading to righteousness

At every moment of every day, we are a slave to *sin* or the *will of God*; a slave to *death* or *righteousness*!



Do you think this is something we need to watch very closely in our own lives? I would say so! More to come.

Continuing in Romans

Thursday, September 25:

Read Proverbs 4

I want to follow-up on something that came up yesterday. Romans 6:15-16 teaches that for the Christian enslaved to sin, the outcome will be death! That might have raised some questions on your part—allow me to try and answer them. Let's start with: "*What death is Paul talking about in Romans 6:16?*" The answer is *temporal death*. Death always refers to some kind of separation, and so *temporal death* is a loss of relationship between the Christian and his or her Savior. You can see exactly this in John 15:4-6:

"Abide in Me and I will abide in you ... if a man abides in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me ..."

Did you catch it? It is possible for the Christian to fail to abide. And, if so, the Christian produces no fruit and nothing of value—that's *temporal death*! Here is another:

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity ... Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:15-18

The Christian is being cautioned to walk wisely. For he or she can be drunk on wine which is sin, or be filled with the Spirit which is obedience that leads to righteousness! Every moment of every day, this is our challenge.

Continued on the next page.

Continuing in Romans

Thursday, September 25:

Read Proverbs 4 (Continued)

Let me remind you that the believer's position in Christ never changes. We are always *highly favored in the Beloved*, for Christ is our *righteousness, holiness, and redemption*. (I Corinthians 1:30) However, what Romans Chapter 6 is trying to teach us to do is to watch our *walk* very carefully.

Let me close with one of my favorite Old Testament illustrations of this same principle.

**The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn,
growing ever brighter until the full light of day.**

Proverbs 4:18

As brand new believers in Christ, we are placed on the *path of the righteous* as those who are clothed with the very righteousness of Christ! Now, what is God's expectation? The life we live—our *walk*—is to be ever more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ. We are to become increasingly *like Him*, just as the sky gets brighter and brighter following the first gleam of dawn!



**The path of the righteous is like
the first gleam of dawn ...** Proverbs 4:18

Continuing in Romans

Friday, September 26: Read I John 1

As we have seen, Christians have a clear call to put themselves under orders to God and His revealed will. If we do so, we would be *slaves* to obedience leading to a righteous life; rather than slaves to sin which leads to broken fellowship with our Savior. So here is a critical question:

What do I do if I wake up one morning and realize that with respect to at least one portion of my life, I am a slave to sin?

Today's devotional will consider the answer to that question, and we have time to consider two things: First, we confess our sin that we might regain our fellowship with the Lord.

If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:9

Confession leads to forgiveness and cleansing—God has said so. Perhaps you are thinking that is too easy, or that you have to in some way make up for your sin! Consider another passage from John's first epistle:

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sins.

I John 1:7

What does it mean to be *walking in the light as He is in the light*? Our passage in Romans 6 is one way to describe it—*slaves to obedience leading to righteousness*! How are we restored when we fail? By acting in faith to confess our sin and then relying on the cleansing that comes from the *Blood of Jesus*—a reference to His payment for sin on the cross.

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Continuing in Romans

Friday, September 26: Read I John 1

(Continued)

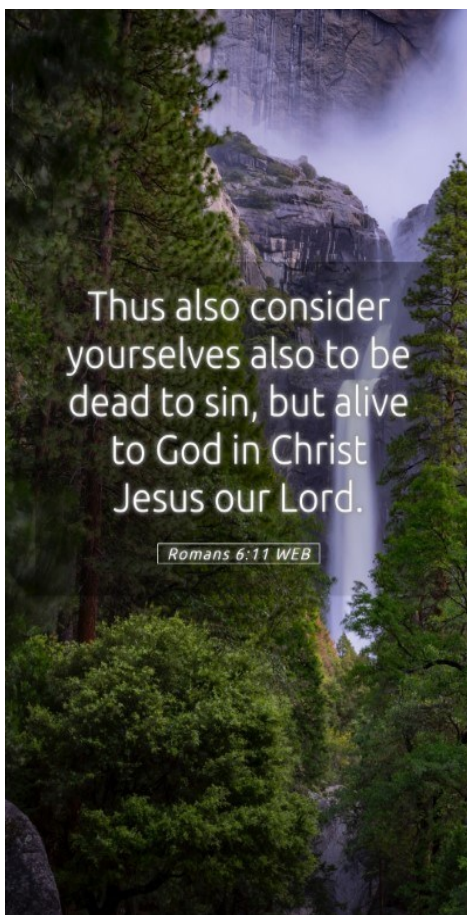
Second, once we are back in fellowship, we return to the great principle we learned in the first half of Romans 6:

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

Romans 6:11

We are dead because we died with Christ to the principle of sin—the flesh. And, we are alive because we have been raised up in newness of life with Him. This is the basis of victory in the Christian Life—a dependent walk of faith in a victory that has already been accomplished as part of God's so-great salvation.

We are all slaves to something, let it be obedience to God, leading to an upright life, which is what a holy life happens to be! When we find we have erred, confess and get right back to trusting in what God has done through the *Cross of Christ* and our new life in Him.



Old Testament Characters

Monday, September 29:

Read I Samuel 3

As we return to our study of Old Testament characters, we are going to look at a number of the early kings of Israel, starting with the very first one—Saul. But before we do, we need to consider the prophet Samuel. For, as the book of Judges closes, Israel was in terrible shape:

... everyone did as he saw fit.

Judges 21:25

As we have seen, this condition came about because the people failed to grow spiritually in order to keep worldliness from encroaching upon their lives. God raised up a prophet to lead the people out of their spiritual malaise and began a time of spiritual revival.

The name of His prophet was Samuel. You can read about his birth as an answer to prayer in I Samuel 1-2. You can also certainly see the Lord's hand upon his young life as he eventually leads Israel into a period of spiritual revival. What was it about Samuel that allowed him to be so powerfully used of the Lord and to positively impact so many people?

I think we find the answer to that question right at the end of today's reading:

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and He let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there He revealed Himself to Samuel through His Word. And Samuel's Word came to all Israel.

I Samuel 3:19-4:1

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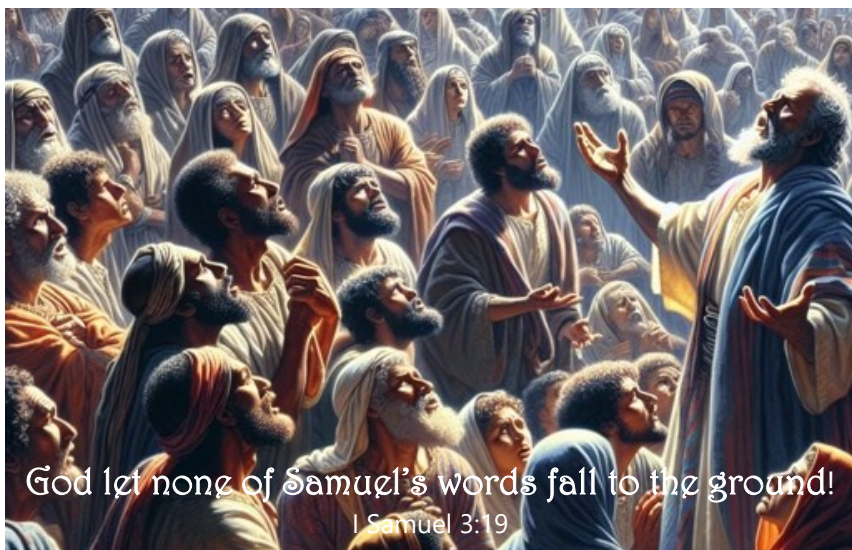
Old Testament Characters

Monday, September 29: Read I Samuel 3 (Continued)

There is something very important here. God's Word came to Samuel, and Samuel sent it right out to Israel—without modification, softening, or adjustment. So faithful was his ministry in declaring the truth, two things happened:

1. All Israel recognized Samuel was speaking on behalf of the Lord.
2. The Lord upheld Samuel's ministry such that not a single thing he said *fell to the ground*. The italicized words translated here come from an archery term for missing the target, so not a thing Samuel said was off target.

I wonder if the Lord feels the same way about the words that leave our mouths? Do others recognize the presence of God in our lives such that it prompts revival?



God let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground!

I Samuel 3:19

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, September 30:

Read I Samuel 9-10

Today's reading reveals to us how Israel got their first king. God's choice was clearly an impressive man:

... a head taller than any of the others. I Samuel 9:2

He also presented himself as an obedient son who persisted in doing his father's will. As a further positive, he was humble. (I Samuel 9:21) He was so hesitant about stepping into the spotlight that the Lord had to reveal:

... he has hidden himself among the baggage.
I Samuel 10:22

Well, so far so good. We will have to see how things turn out. Positions of leadership tend to expose the flaws in character that lurk beneath the surface. What I would like to do for the rest of today is highlight the failure that led to choosing a king in the first place. Although God allowed it, it was most certainly not His will.

If we go back just one chapter, we can read of how the people came to Samuel and said:

... now appoint us a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have. I Samuel 8:5

This prompts God to identify the underlying issue:

"... it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king." I Samuel 8:7

Psalm 33:12 identifies God's plan:

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord ...

Continued on the next page.

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday September 30:

Read I Samuel 9-10 (Continued)

The Israelites have just forsaken this blessing by turning from their singular status as the only nation on earth with God as their king. What could possibly have caused them to do such a thing? In a word—worldliness! For they desired to be like other nations. Apparently, they saw their unique situation to be something of a detriment on the world stage, rather than a tremendous asset!

How do you and I respond? Although we have been declared holy through faith in Christ, do we long to be more like the world? Is this longing a form of rejecting the God who saved us and forsaking the potential for blessing that could be ours? Perish the thought!



VISTOSO



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

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