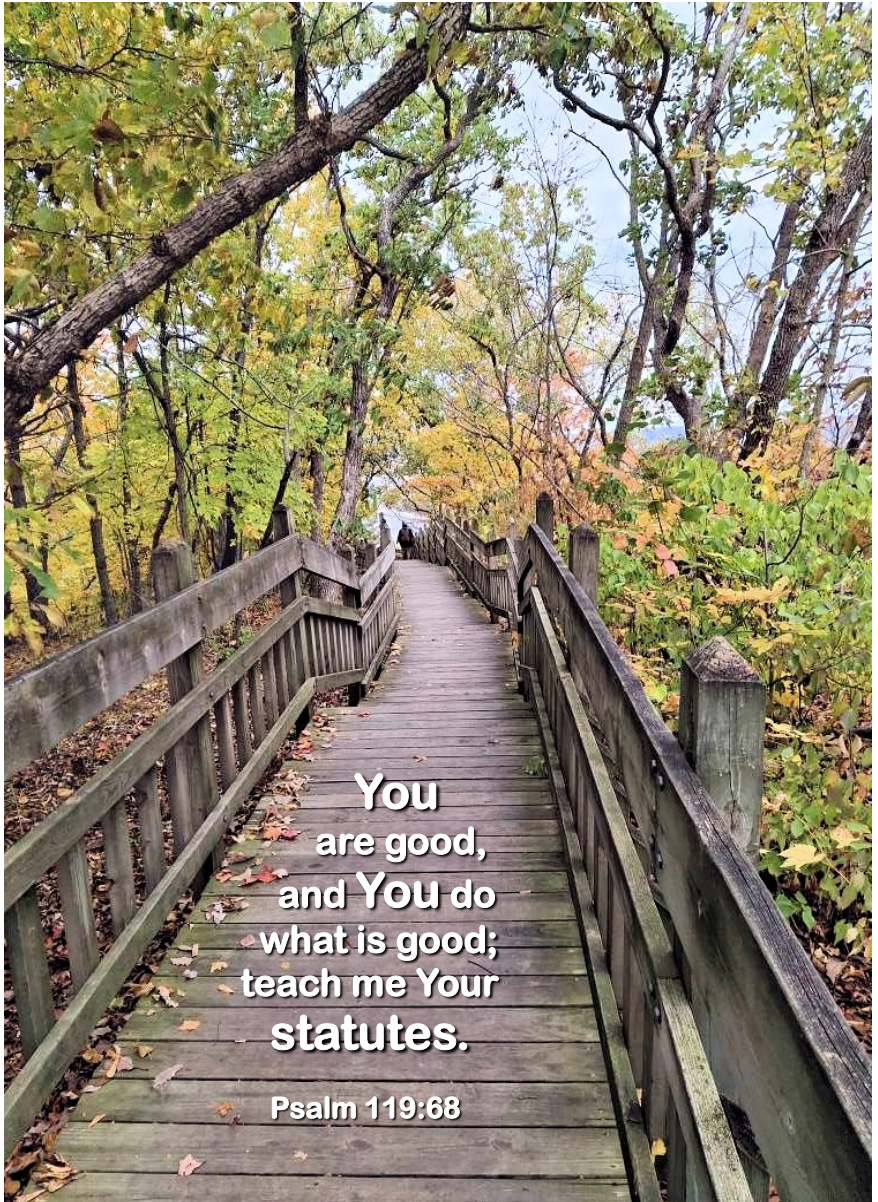


November 2025 Daily Devotional



You
are good,
and **You** do
what is good;
teach me Your
statutes.

Psalm 119:68

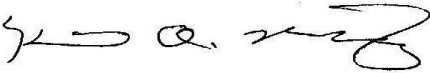
Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

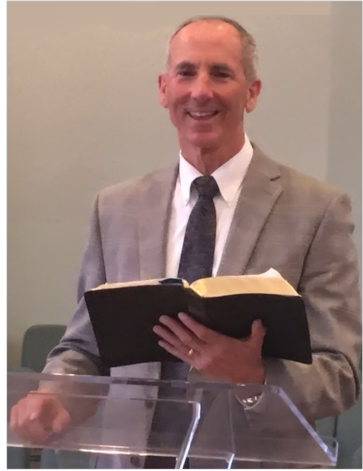
This month we continue our study of an Old Testament character, look at the *Foundations of the Christian Life*, and then finish in the Book of Ephesians. Two of the above have a very strong emphasis on the grace of God, which I trust will be an encouragement!

As always, may God bless you with a deeper understanding of who He is, as you reflect upon His Word.

In His grace,



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, November 3: Read I Kings 11

We are back to our study of Old Testament Characters, and the next on our list is King Solomon. This chapter tells such a sad, sad story:

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God ...

I Kings 11:4

There are those who look at this and say, "Well, if this happened to the wisest man on the face of the earth, what hope is there for me?" What do you think: Do we as Christians have an excuse for falling into sin? Of course not! To help us understand that, the life of Solomon can be very instructive.

For today, consider this: We learned from our study of Judges that we are meant to pursue an ongoing process of progressive sanctification. In Judges it is called *enlarging one's territory*. The process consists of knowing God through His Word, driving anything that distracts out of our lives, and living in ongoing dependence upon Him.

So how did Solomon do?

- In I Kings 6:37 we can read that Solomon completed construction of the Temple in a seven-year period—and it was a magnificent building dedicated to his God. But, in I Kings 7:1-5, we read that Solomon's palace took 13 years to construct and was perhaps even more spectacular.

Continued on the next page.

Old Testament Characters

Monday, November 3: Read I Kings 11 (Continued)

- In I Kings 7:8, Scripture tells us that Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter. In today's reading, we see he had 100s of additional foreign wives and concubines. These might have been helpful for political alliances, but were they helpful in terms of his spiritual life?



- I Kings 4:27-28 tells us that Solomon violated the prohibition in I Samuel 8:10 regarding the accumulating of horses.

Those are enough examples to prove my point. Sin is not so hard to avoid that even the smartest man on earth can't do it. Rather, Solomon is an example of the truth that if you disobey the command of God to continually enlarge your spiritual territory, you can't avoid falling into sin no matter how smart you are!

Apparently, there are no exceptions to our need to grow spiritually! That tells me I need to watch closely what I am doing and what distractions I might be allowing to take hold—for they can trip me up too!

Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, November 4:

Read Ecclesiastes 2

Yesterday we learned that even the smartest man on earth cannot avoid falling into sin if he neglects his spiritual growth. Today we are going to learn what happens if even the most gifted of men allows his passions to go untamed. The Book of Ecclesiastes is full of spiritual lessons, far too many for a devotional, but I trust Verse 10 in today's reading jumped off the page:

I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. Ecclesiastes 2:10

In light of yesterday's reading, that included 700 wives and 300 concubines, how did that work out for Solomon?

The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord ... I Kings 11:9

To be blunt, to *deny yourself nothing your eyes desire ... no pleasure*, is to give free rein to your sin nature. And, we know from our New Testament studies that:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery ... Galatians 5:19

The list continues, but the first three tell exactly what Solomon pursued. I once heard a preacher, whose name I have forgotten, say: "*Solomon was a gifted man with untamed passions.*" The lesson was: Our spiritual lives are not so much about spiritual gifts. Instead, it is about how we turn from who we were in Adam, to walk in the newness of life that is ours in Christ so that the Spirit of God could produce fruit in our lives. For, who wants to end up like Solomon? Where is God's glory or personal blessing in all that mess? We can learn and do better—through Christ!

Old Testament Characters

Wednesday, November 5:

Read I Kings 8

In our reflection upon Solomon, I want to make sure we don't fail to recognize the greatness and spirituality of the man. This is a marvelous chapter, along with both the chapters before and after it. In particular, I love Solomon's prayer of dedication for the Temple found in today's reading. Did you notice how Solomon: exalts the name of God (Verse 23); recognizes that God transcends any building no matter how spectacular (Verse 27); and how he in humility recognizes the potential for sin on the part of the people (Verses 31, 33, 35, 38, 46-47)?

This is one of the few places in the Old Testament where any Jewish individual shows an understanding of the evangelistic thrust that Judaism was supposed to have (Verses 41-43). It is simply a great prayer and God answers in approval in Chapter 9. So, what is my point? In I Kings 8, we see the spirituality of Solomon and by Chapter 11 we see his great turning away. This should really strike a chord with all of us, for there is no level of spiritual standing or accomplishment today that can guarantee our walk with the Lord tomorrow. As a pastor, I take my marching orders on this from I Timothy 4:16:

Watch your life and doctrine closely (this needs to come before any ministry). **Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourselves and your hearers.**

This doesn't refer to saved from hell to heaven, it is to save your life from the spiritually pitiful end that was Solomon's. I am sure you know that I don't think this is just for pastors. Let us encourage each other as a church fellowship to watch our life and doctrine closely—that we might *save* the days the Lord has given us.

Old Testament Characters

Thursday, November 6:

Read I Kings 12

Raising godly children is a very challenging task, isn't it? It is a task for which we ultimately cannot control the outcome. Nonetheless, one has to wonder if Solomon's *"denying himself nothing his eyes desired"* is at least partially responsible for the arrogance shown by his son, the newly-crowned King Rehoboam. Solomon began his kingship with humility, as he prayed to God:

... But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties ... So give your servant a discerning heart to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours? I Kings 3:7-9

How did Rehoboam view his standing before the people?

The king answered the people harshly ... "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions." I Kings 12:13-14

Wow! The progression is from humbly asking for discernment to the arrogant misuse of authority. Something failed to be transferred from Solomon to Rehoboam. What can we learn from this? Solomon was a gifted man with untamed passions which eventually had disastrous results for both himself and the nation. But, let me suggest that Rehoboam was a proud man with the absence of the greatest of leadership qualities—a servant's heart. Jesus said:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. John 13:14

There is none greater than our Lord, and yet what a servant's heart He modeled. In whatever measure the Lord entrusts ministry to us, might we never bluster like Rehoboam, but rather serve like the Lord Jesus!

Old Testament Characters

Friday, November 7: Read I Kings 13

The final Old Testament character in our study will be Jeroboam. After Rehoboam's folly, the tribes living in the northern part of the land rebelled against him and chose Jeroboam to be their first king.

Not surprisingly, there is a backstory. Jeroboam was a very able administrator under King Solomon. When Solomon sinned by turning to idolatry, Ahijah, the prophet, delivered a very startling message from God to Jeroboam:

"See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes ... If you do whatever I command you and walk in My ways and do what is right in My eyes by keeping My statutes and commands ... I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."

I Kings 11:31, 38



Old Testament Characters

Friday, November 7: Read I Kings 13

(Continued)

So Jeroboam has this great promise, directly from God—but then:

Jeroboam thought to himself, “The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.”

I Kings 12:26-27

I trust you understand what is going on in the mind of Jeroboam. On the one hand, he has a promise from God. On the other hand, the practical nature of Jerusalem being the center of worship seems likely to lead people back to whoever is king in the south.

The rest of Chapter 12 is about Jeroboam’s solution to this problem—introducing idolatry to the northern kingdom. And, Chapter 13 is about the terrible consequences for doing so.

Listen, if you have a promise from God—and it seems contrary to earthly circumstances—you are going to have to decide which one takes precedence. Jeroboam was a faithless man, who allowed circumstances to loom larger in his thinking than the Word of the omnipotent, sovereign creator of this universe!

It didn’t work out very well for him—and it won’t work out well for us either!

Foundations of the Christian Life

Monday, November 10:

Read Matthew 5:33-48

As we return to our study of the *Foundations of the Christian Life*, I was drawn to the metaphor of our life ahead as a path through the desert.

There will be ups and downs. If we are not careful—there are sharp objects waiting to inflict pain. And, of course, there is always that vision of glory ahead!



Now to apply what we have learned thus far: We need the Word of God as our guide every single day. We can advance along life's path with a daily confidence in our position in Christ. We have learned to watch our fellowship with our Savior closely so that nothing will hinder our relationship with Him. And, like each new twist and turn in the path, we are learning to tackle each day by faith in the person and promises of our wonderful Savior.

Next in the list of topics we are going to cover is another pair of topics—grace and sanctification. Each is a separate topic in its own right, but I have decided to pair them because there is an essential relationship between the two that I would like us to grasp.

Foundations of the Christian Life

Monday, November 10:

Read Matthew 5:33-48 (Continued)

So let's begin with an effort to Understand God's Grace:

1. Whether they know it or not, the entire human race—lost and saved—are regular recipients of God's grace!

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45

2. God's grace is also descriptive of how the child of God is saved from hell to heaven!

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

3. Already we have learned some things about grace. It is a gift and, therefore, not earned or deserved. Note carefully how the Bible is very clear to declare that our salvation is not of works, but a gift—given from the source of God's grace.
4. One more aspect of grace before we conclude for today. Grace is centered in a person!

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

If we need grace to see us through some challenge in our lives, we now know where to turn—the Lord Jesus Christ!

Foundations of the Christian Life

Tuesday, November 11:

Read John 1:1-18

Yesterday we were introduced to the *grace* of God as it relates to our salvation. Today let me show you how it is an integral part of the Christian Life:

1. It is God's intent to richly bless His children!

From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.

John 1:16

Our failures may at times require God's loving discipline. But if we honestly evaluate our lives as Christians, I think we will have to acknowledge that the Lord has blessed us far beyond what we deserve.

2. One thing to note carefully: Even in the midst of our needs, God is ready to supply His grace as His answer to them! For example, the Apostle Paul had some kind of physical ailment that interfered with his ministry. So naturally:

... Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from Me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

II Corinthians 12:9

The grace of God can do more in our weaknesses than we can do in our strength! His grace is more than adequate to get the job done, we just need to learn to trust in the sufficiency of this gift!

So what exactly is grace? The Greek word is *charis* and, in addition to grace, it means joy, favor, or benefit.

Foundations of the Christian Life

Tuesday, November 11:

Read John 1:1-18 (Continued)

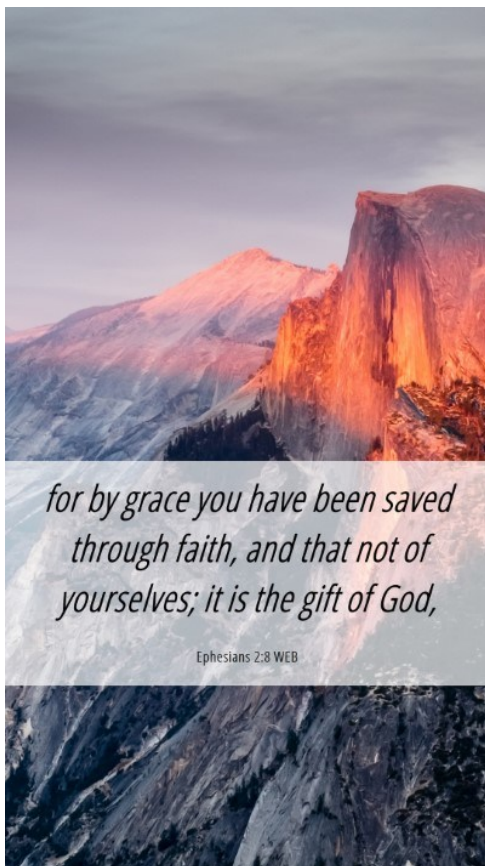
You may have heard the common definition: *Grace is God's unmerited favor!* Here is how I like to define it after looking at the full scope of its Biblical usage:

Grace is God's abundant answer to our ever-changing need!

What this teaches us is that, if we have a need in our lives, God has an answer that will abundantly meet it. And, whatever we do, we have to be careful not to try and mix our works with the grace of God, for once we do, we don't have grace anymore!

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:6



One thing we most definitely need to learn: If there is one thing we need on a daily basis, it is the grace of God!

Foundations of the Christian Life

Wednesday, November 12:

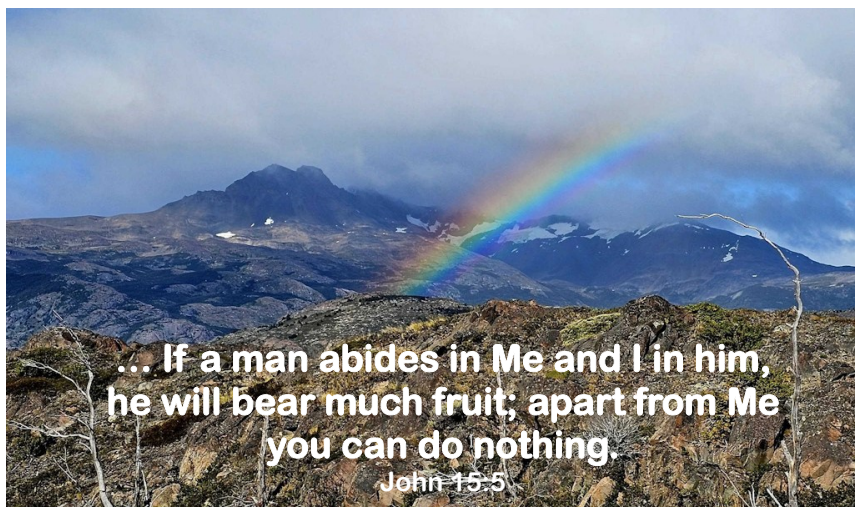
Read John 15:1-9

Thus far we have talked a little bit about grace, but nothing about sanctification. Perhaps you are wondering why we are combining the subjects of grace and sanctification. Let me state the reason as succinctly and clearly as I can: It is absolutely impossible to live up to the high calling of the Christian Life apart from the grace of God. Here is one of many examples from the teachings of Jesus:

"Abide in Me and I will abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."

John 15:4-5

If, for example, we desire to manifest Christ's character to the watching world, and bear the kind of fruit our heavenly Father would approve, there is only one way this can be



Foundations of the Christian Life

Wednesday, November 12:

Read John 15:1-9 (Continued)

accomplished! It can not be done by willpower, not by trying harder, and not by dedicating ourselves. It can only be done by abiding in the One True Vine—our Lord and Savior.

It is His life we need, and only the enabling power of His Spirit will produce fruit acceptable to our God. Note two things:

1. Apart from living the Christian Life His way, we can do **nothing**! I don't think Jesus could have said it any more plainly!
2. It is His life He is willing to share and His Spirit He has sent. That's what makes it grace! We haven't earned or deserved these things. Rather, by faith, we receive them from His hand as exactly what we need to live the kind of life to which we have been called.

If you have tried to live the Christian Life and found it to be impossible, maybe it is because you have tried to do so from the source of self. Maybe we need to turn to the Lord and ask Him to teach us His ways, and then let Him work in us what only He can accomplish. There is no lack in what He has provided:

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

Every single spiritual blessing is already on reserve for every child of God. We just need to learn how to bring these blessings into our lives by faith! He provides in grace, and we receive by faith!

Foundations of the Christian Life

Thursday, November 13: Read Titus 2

I want to spend one more day expanding our understanding of God's grace before we consider the subject of sanctification. There are two things I would like you to consider. First, the point of grace for the Christian! By that I simply mean, what it is supposed to accomplish in our lives. The following passage gives us a very concise explanation of just what that is:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the Blessed Hope ... who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:11-14

Notice that grace teaches us to say "No" to things that are ungodly, and to live a certain quality of life as God's people—a self-controlled, upright and godly life. Then this Scripture makes clear that we are to do this, in whatever time and place we might be living, while we wait for the return of Jesus Christ—for He is coming again!

Secondly, it is not just that grace is our teacher, it is also that it is a summary term for the means that God has provided. You see, we have the need to separate from the appetites of our sinful nature, and we have the need to avoid the many lures of this world.

Foundations of the Christian Life

Thursday, November 13: Read Titus 2

(Continued)

To that point, consider what the Word of God has to say:

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

Romans 6:14

The law can tell you what not to do, but it has no power to help keep you from doing it. But the grace of God not only teaches us, but also provides the means of living up to our high calling as Christians.

Those means include both the *Life of Christ* and the *Spirit of Christ*!

The specific details are beyond the scope of a daily devotion (if you would like further information, you can find it in our publications covering Romans 6-8 as well as our *Advancing to Maturity* series.) For today, the lesson to take with us is that God not only teaches us what He wants, but provides the means to accomplish His plan in our lives.

And, that's a testimony to His grace!



Foundations of the Christian Life

Friday, November 14:

Read I Thessalonians 4:1-12

There are times when it is necessary to bring all of the *pieces* together before we can fully understand what is on God's mind. Then there are times He tells us as plainly as can be. His will regarding our sanctification is one of those times! See what you think:

It is God's will that you should be sanctified ... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.

I Thessalonians 4:3, 7-8

So, what is God's will for every single Christian? It is to be sanctified! And, He doesn't just tell us this once, but twice. For the word translated *holy* in the above passage is exactly the same word translated *sanctified*. Thus, already we have learned that to be holy and to be sanctified are one and the same thing.

Before we continue, let me connect sanctification and grace:

But join with me in suffering for the Gospel, by the power of 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.

II Timothy 1:8-9

Once again we see that God is looking for a holy life on the part of those who are eternally saved. Further, it is part of His grace to do so, which means that He will provide the means. Now let's make sure we understand the terms we are using: The root word for both sanctify and holy means to be *set apart*. When taken in the context of the above Scriptures, this would be God calling us to set our lives apart unto Him.

Foundations of the Christian Life

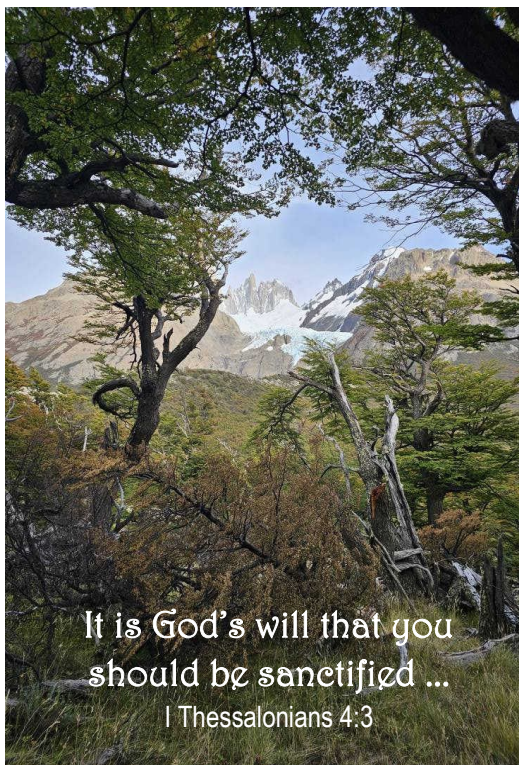
Friday, November 14: Read I Thessalonians 4:1-12 (Continued)

I have looked at many of the Biblical uses of the various Greek words involved. Based upon that, let me suggest the following working definition of what it means to be sanctified:

Sanctification in the life of the child of God is the process of being increasingly set apart unto God in terms of purity, priority, exclusivity, and service—saints by virtue of position and walk!

As you can see, this is a call for us to avail ourselves of the means that God provides to live a pure life, one where He is first and we see ourselves as belonging to Him and living a life of service to others. This is something that is not just part of our position in Christ, but something we put into daily practice in our walk with the Lord.

As you can see, there is much to ponder and much more to learn!



It is God's will that you
should be sanctified ...

I Thessalonians 4:3

Foundations of the Christian Life

Monday, November 17: Read Ephesians 4:17-32

Yesterday we developed a definition of sanctification; today let's consider what that might look like in the life of a follower of Jesus. To begin with, we are talking about something that is both intentional and progressive. By intentional, I mean that it is not going to happen automatically. We are going to have to choose to pursue it, and we are going to have to learn to do it God's way. By progressive I mean that it is a process that we should be engaged in from the day we come to faith in Christ, until we go home to glory in His presence. Let me show you one example of many:

You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which was being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:22-24

Can you follow the process? We, who come to faith in Christ, are to take off the practices of the sinful nature like a set of soiled clothing. Then, we are to put on the new life that is ours in Christ—and this life is both righteous and holy (set apart unto the Lord). That's a picture of what it is to look like, but what are the means? Here are two of them:

1. The Word of God! ***Sanctify them by the truth; Thy Word is truth.*** (John 17:17)
2. The Spirit of God! ***So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*** (Galatians 5:16)

The Word of God is how we are made new in the attitude of our minds, and the Holy Spirit is the enabling power behind the transformation that is meant to occur in our lives. Both are essential to sanctification of the believer!

Foundations of the Christian Life

Tuesday, November 18:

Read Numbers 33:50-56

If you are learning about something in the New Testament, I have found it can often be very helpful to see if you can find it illustrated in the Old Testament. For example, is it possible to learn about the topic of sanctification by turning to the Old Testament? It most certainly is! God has always wanted His people to be *set apart* unto Himself. Thus, consider these two pieces of guidance given to Israel while they are preparing to enter the Promised Land:

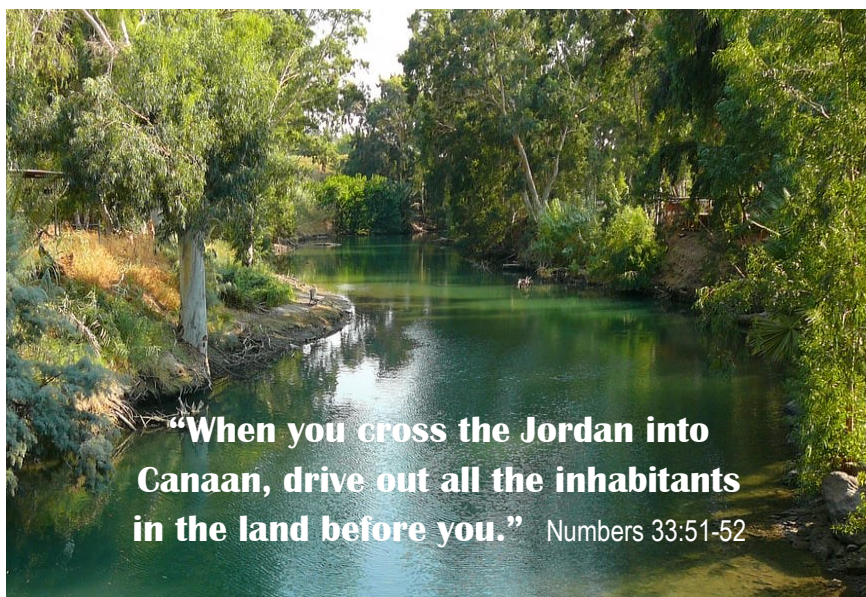
“When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you.”

Numbers 33:51-52

“Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.”

Exodus 23:30

Continued on the next page.



Foundations of the Christian Life

Tuesday, November 18:

Read Numbers 33:50-56 (Continued)

In short, the Israelites are told to drive out the inhabitants of the land, and continually enlarge their territory. Then God makes it very clear what will happen if they do not do as He directs:

“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. They will give you trouble ...”

Numbers 33:55

Living in the desert as we do, the painful outcome of “barbs in your eyes and thorns in your side” should suffice as a powerful figure of speech, but what is the spiritual lesson? Here it is:

Unless we are continually enlarging our territory (growing spiritually), and continually driving out the worldliness to which we are prone, our immaturity and worldly thinking will compromise our spiritual lives—leading to discipline in time and lack of reward in eternity.

Do you see the lesson regarding the process of sanctification? It most definitely requires ongoing spiritual growth; and it most definitely requires us to expel worldliness from our lives. Our God has an infinite way of providing *barbs and thorns* if we ignore the lesson.

There is no sense at all in forcing Him to do so!

Foundations of the Christian Life

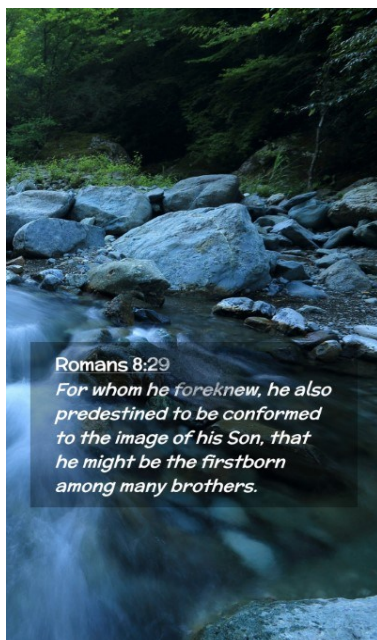
Wednesday, November 19:

Read Romans 8:18-32

Yesterday we looked at a very general picture of the process of sanctification—the daily need to *enlarge our territory and drive out the inhabitants of the Land!* When applied spiritually, this becomes a call to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ as a life-long pursuit, and to drive out the worldliness that steadily seeks to compromise our spiritual walk! If yesterday was the general picture—today is the specific. We can find one such example in Romans 8:29:

**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.**

That is about as specific as it is possible to be! The outcome of the process of sanctification in your life and mine is to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus! That would make Him the *firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*



Romans 8:29
*For whom he foreknew, he also
predestined to be conformed
to the image of his Son, that
he might be the firstborn
among many brothers.*

Continued on the next page.

Foundations of the Christian Life

Wednesday, November 19:

Read Romans 8:18-32 (Continued)

I am not in awe of His being the firstborn—for of course He is the first to be raised from the dead. But I absolutely stand amazed that I am going to be in such a family relationship with my Savior—that He takes on the role of older brother! How is this even possible? Well, to be sure, it is going to be a work of God if it does occur—and naturally that makes it by grace! We should know by now to expect both the Spirit of God to be involved and very likely the Word of God. Can we find any such support for these suppositions? Consider the following:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

II Corinthians 3:18

It is all there, but we will have to work a little bit to extract it. To be transformed from glory to that which is even more glorious is the process of sanctification proceeding as it should. But for that to happen, we have to behold the glory of the Lord. How does that happen? It is meant to happen every time we come to the Word of God as a medium of fellowship with our Savior—to know Him more intimately, and to share His thoughts, affections, and purposes!

As we gaze upon our Savior in His Word, who is the agent of change? Not surprisingly, it is:

... just as by the Spirit of the Lord!

II Corinthians 3:18

Foundations of the Christian Life

Thursday, November 20:

Read Philippians 1:1-21

As we close out this section on grace and sanctification, I want to bring us back to the point at which we began—the grace of God! For, after spending the last few days on the process of sanctification, we should realize by now the supernatural nature of the sanctified life! To become like Jesus in character and deportment is no small task. In fact, it is not remotely possible apart from the enabling power of the Spirit of God and the guidance contained in the Word of God—and that is where grace comes in.

From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after (in exchange for) another.

John 1:16

We have already seen that the grace of God is His abundant answer for our ever-changing need. Here is an additional aspect of grace for us to consider: It keeps coming. The underlined preposition, *after* can al-



so refer to an *exchange*. This better captures the idea of the passage. I think of it like waves rolling in onto the beach—no sooner does one recede than another one comes right behind it.

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Foundations of the Christian Life

Thursday, November 20:

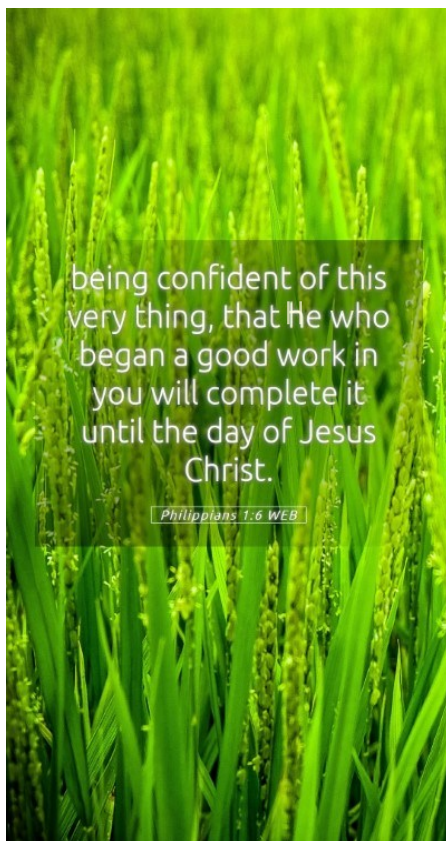
Read Philippians 1:1-21 (Continued)

So, too, the grace of God is sufficient to meet our needs today. Then, when we get up tomorrow, we will find a new provision of grace to meet tomorrow's needs. It is like manna in the wilderness, one blessing after another, each and every day. This concept should help us better understand the following Scripture:

... being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6

Our heavenly Father began a good work in us the day He made us *new creations in Christ!* And, of course, that is the day we put our faith in who Jesus is and what He did for us on the cross.

Now, who is going to finish the work? Why our heavenly Father is. He has promised to do so! This makes clear that ultimately sanctification is His work. Ours is to trust Him to do what He has said He will do. As we do so, we should expect one grace blessing after another—perhaps not all that we want, but all that we need! There is no Savior like our Savior!



Return to Ephesians

Friday, November 21:

Read Ephesians 2:1-5

Today's short reading couldn't be more packed and worthy of our meditation. For the next two days we are going to look at how the Gospel is *good news in light of a bad news situation!* The bad news starts right at the beginning of Ephesians Chapter 2:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins ...

Ephesians 2:1

The personal pronoun is plural and it applies to every single one of us—without exception. You see, we were all born spiritually dead! This is God's evaluation of mankind on a spiritual level. We are spiritually dead at the moment of birth, on our first birthday, and, if nothing has changed, it is still going to be true on our 75th birthday. What does a dead person need? Does he or she need a beauty makeover, an exercise program, or some kind of religious experience? No, there is only one thing dead people need—life! That is exactly what we are going to find in our text.

Before we do, let me ask this question: "What do you suppose is the norm for spiritually dead people?" Let me suggest that they walk according to the thoughts and behaviors of this world, to the lusts of the flesh, and they are receptive to the influences of Satan. Is it any wonder we are said to be *by nature objects of wrath?* (Ephesians 2:3) Of course, that would be the wrath of a holy God. So, here is mankind's situation at birth: hopeless, helpless, and hell-bound. This is the *bad-news situation!*

So where is the good news? We see the first glimmer in Verse 4 with the word *but*—a word of contrast. The text goes on to say: "*because of His great love for us ...*" and we'll pick it up from there tomorrow.

Return to Ephesians

Monday, November 24: Read Titus 3

The *bad news* for mankind is not necessarily that each of us is as bad as we could be. The bad news is that we are born as lost as we could be—dead in trespasses and sin. As mentioned yesterday, good news from God follows on the heels of the bad:

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved

Ephesians 2:4-5

A few things to note:

1. What motivated God to reach into this world and provide a means of salvation for us? The answer: *His great love for us*.
2. God's mercy to lost and needy mankind is on display when He joins us to the life of His Son—we are alive *in Him!* How exactly does that happen? The text in Ephesians 1 makes it clear:
... you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him ... Ephesians 1:13
3. Our association with Christ begins when we believe, for it is at that point that we have been made *alive with Christ*. (Ephesians 2:5)
4. The potential for life out of death is fantastically *good news!* John 5:24 says it this way, those who have believed have *crossed over from death to life*. This transfer is something that need only happen one time, and there is no undoing such a transfer.

Return to Ephesians

Monday, November 24: Read Titus 3 (Continued)

5. Finally, it is grace that saved us. We didn't work for it, we didn't earn it, and we certainly don't deserve it! Meditate upon these verses from today's reading:

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.

Titus 3:4-5

Are you convinced? Our great God is rich in mercy and He saves us by His grace, apart from our own works. What a salvation and what a Savior!



... it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:5

Return to Ephesians

Tuesday, November 25: Read II Peter 3

Our goal today is to consolidate what we have learned from Ephesians by applying it to the topic of *repentance*. The most common repentance misconception is that it equates to ceasing to sin. You can immediately see the problem with this in Hebrews 7:21, where God says:

“The Lord swore and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” (KJV)

The source word for *repent* is translated *change His mind* in other translations, and there are several very good reasons for that. First, the word obviously doesn’t refer to sin, since this repentance is applied to God. Second, the Greek word translated *repentance* means to *change one’s mind* in light of new information. This correct understanding of repentance fits perfectly with our study of Ephesians. Simply ask the question, “In what way does a lost person need to repent, that is to change his or her mind?” The change must be with respect to his or her standing before God. No human being has an acceptable standing before a holy God. We may think we are basically good and have good deeds to bring to the table, but we are *dead in trespasses and sin*. It is clearly necessary to change our minds about our standing and align with what God has declared to be the truth.

If we will just place our faith in the person and work of Christ, we have the potential to be made alive in Him, raised up with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenly realms. We need to change our minds to the point that we understand our spiritual condition is hopeless. Then, we need to change our minds about the only way to address our hopeless condition, for salvation is found in no one else other than the Lord Jesus Christ. To come to that point of faith—now, that’s repentance!

Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, November 26:

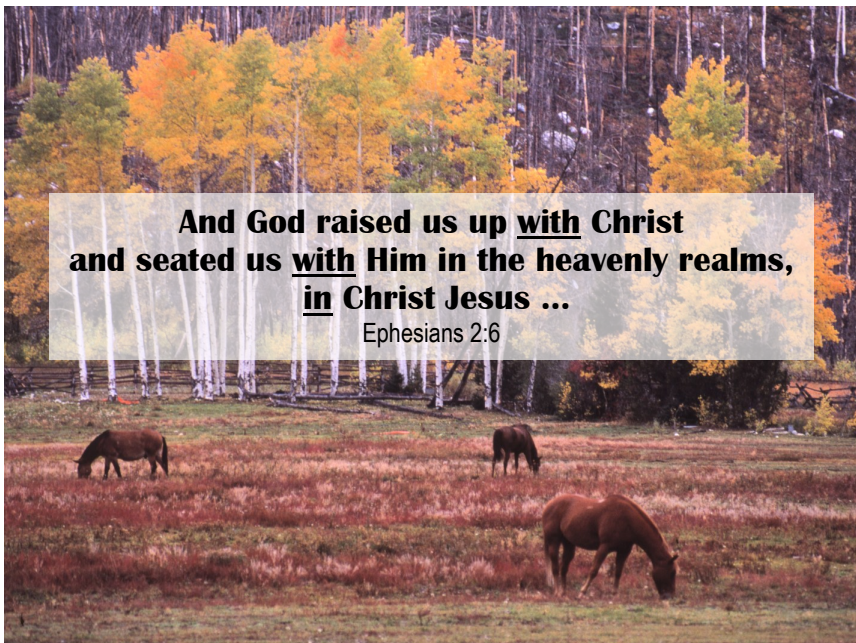
Read Ephesians 2:6-7

Let me suggest that you memorize, or at least meditate upon, the two verses in today's reading. They are fantastic and should stimulate your thinking. First, Verse 6:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms, in Christ Jesus ... Ephesians 2:6

First, did you notice the persistent nature of the union between the believer and Savior? If you look carefully, you will observe: with Christ, with Him, and in Christ Jesus. Is it possible to make any more clear the intimacy of relationship between every single child of God and the Lord Jesus Christ? From *dead in trespasses and sin* to *seated with Him in the heavenly realms*—now that is a so-great salvation!

Continued on the next page.



**And God raised us up with Christ
and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms,
in Christ Jesus ...**

Ephesians 2:6

Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, November 26:

Read Ephesians 2:6-7 (Continued)

If possible, Verse 7 is an even greater display of God's purposes in Christ. For He has seated us in the heavenlies with Christ for a reason:

... in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:7

My salvation and your salvation puts on display the incomparable riches of God's grace! By saving those who were objects of His wrath, solely through the work of His Son, God brings glory to Himself. This act clearly demonstrates the depths of His love for the work of His hands.

In all of this, do you hear a single word about what lost mankind brings to the table? Of course not! For we were in a helpless and hopeless condition until the grace of God rescued us. *Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus! Deeper than the mighty rolling sea ...* We are just getting started on this marvelous topic of grace.



Happy THANKSGIVING

Read through the following Scriptures, and pause to give thanks as God's Word prompts you to do so!

I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. Psalm 9:1

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Colossians 3:16

Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind, for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Psalms 107:8-9

I always thank my God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus.

I Corinthians 1:4

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.

I Chronicles 16:34

All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

II Corinthians 4:15

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I Thessalonians 5:18

Return to Ephesians

Friday, November 28:

Read Romans 11

After learning Wednesday that our salvation not only gives us a matchless position in Christ but also puts on display the riches of God's grace, can you imagine anyone speaking ill of the grace of God? Although shocking, this is very common. There are many who will minimize grace and even some who will attack it outright. Who would do such a thing? It is easier to explain than you might imagine. You see, grace excludes works from salvation:

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:6

The Bible says we are saved by grace! Whenever we add even the slightest work on the part of man, then we don't have grace any more. Man is always trying to shoehorn himself into the plan of salvation. It is for this reason that grace offends the sensibilities of man because it minimizes our capabilities and our contributions. We somehow feel it is just not *right* unless we contribute in some way. The hymn-writer said it well: *Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling!* Spiritually dead people cannot contribute to a salvation that includes a new and abundant spiritual life!

Let me share with you a simple way of determining whether or not your understanding of salvation passes the *grace test*. Listen carefully to a person's testimony on how

Return to Ephesians

Friday, November 28:

Read Romans 11 (Continued)

he or she got saved. Then, mentally shine a light on what it was that saved him or her. If the light is continually shining on the person and work of Jesus Christ on their behalf, the testimony passes the grace test.

We must also examine our own testimony. As soon as the light starts to shine on what we have done, how we changed, what we gave up, or any other work on our part, we get an F for failure in the grace test.

Give God the glory for His saving grace!



VISTOSO



Community Church

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

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