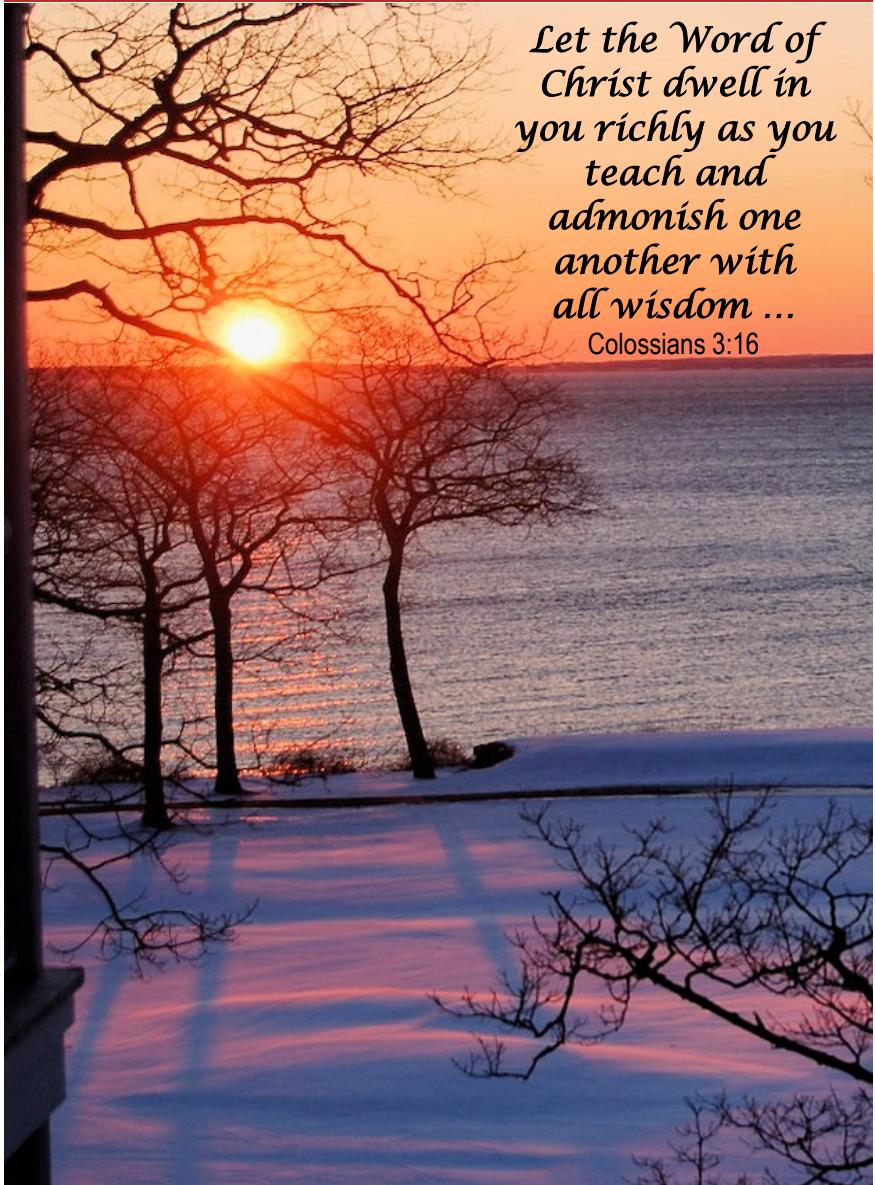


January 2026 Daily Devotional



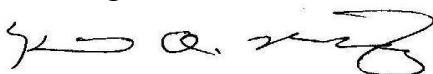
Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

May the Lord bless your time in His Word in the coming year by drawing you closer to Himself! I trust the Word of God will prompt a response of faith and lead to your ability to see everything through the lens of God's truth.

This month's devotional begins with two days on our theme for 2026: *Entering the Rest of Faith*. Then we will spend a week exploring how we can leave a spiritual legacy, followed by a number of devotionals on the topic of the Christian Way of Life. We will end this month with two foundation topics: eternal security and assurance.

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



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

Happy New Year!

Best wishes for a blessed New Year!

**Thursday, January 1:
Read Hebrews 3:12-4:12**

Our theme for this coming year is: *Entering the Rest of Faith!* You saw a reference to it in today's reading:

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God ... Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:9,11

I'll write later in the year about exactly what I think that *rest* might be. For today, let me awaken your curiosity by making a few observations:

- Here we have an aspect of the Christian Life about which we are told to *make every effort*. This is God giving us our marching orders—focusing our attention—for He wants us in what He calls a *place of rest*.

Continued on the next page.



Happy New Year!

Best wishes for a blessed New Year!

Thursday, January 1: Read Hebrews 3:12-4:12 (Continued)

- If we don't enter this *rest*, it would seem that we are going to be in a state of disobedience! In the context, this is the disobedience of the Exodus generation of Israelites who had such difficulty in learning to trust the Lord.
- Don't let the word *Sabbath* as a descriptor confuse you. This is simply telling us that we are not talking about a physical rest—it is not a vacation, time in your La-Z-Boy, or anything like that. It is a God-ordained spiritual rest, just like that prescribed for His people every seventh day. It is a time of setting aside the demands of this world, and setting your full affections on Him.



It is this kind of rest:

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength ...

Isaiah 30:15

As you can see, we are going to be working this year on learning to trust our ever-so-trustworthy Savior.

Happy New Year!

Friday, January 2: Read II Timothy 4

As we open the new year with a second day on the subject of faith, allow me to share a favorite verse:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. II Timothy 4:7

This happens to be Paul's personal testimony as his life draws to a close—and praise God that it might be ours as well. Although I believe there to be more depth to this verse than just the subject matter of faith, it is nonetheless an excellent place to start. Paul says, "I have fought the good fight ...". That certainly includes the *good fight of faith*—meaning he faced every trial, every disappointment, every circumstance by turning to the Lord and His promises. He put His faith in the *unseen* rather than the *visible*.

He continues: *I have finished the race ...* And Paul's race was certainly a marathon with a lot of hills! He took no shortcuts, and he never quit. He just maintained a steadfast faith! He always gave himself fully to the work of the Lord because he knew that his labor in the Lord would not be in vain! (I Corinthians 15:58)

Lastly Paul says that he *kept the faith*. Once the word *the* is placed in front of the word *faith*, it typically no longer refers to the act of faith but to the content of what is believed. In other words, Paul is saying that the object of his faith was always the promises and truths of God's Word, along with the One who stands behind the Word—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Continued on the next page.

Happy New Year!

Friday, January 2: Read II Timothy 4 (Continued)

I hope that you can see that Paul's intent is for us to follow his example. We might restate it like this:

In every spiritual battle we are yet to face, let us:

- *Trust the Lord and His Word.*
- *Finish the race of this life as those who leave to those who follow a legacy of faith in God.*
- *Choose the truths of God's Word over the lies of this world.*

Here is something we should find very encouraging: Should we do this, we have a promise to look forward to. It starts with Paul and ends with us!

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearance! II Timothy 4:8

I am not surprised such a crown is coming to Paul, but what an encouragement for us to walk by faith as we too long for His return!



Leaving a Legacy

Monday, January 5: Read Matthew 25

My Dad died on the last day of September this past year. That has caused me to think about what it means to leave a legacy; in particular, a spiritual legacy. After I step out of this life, will I leave anything of value behind and will I have stored up anything of value ahead of my passing?

Of course, I am not thinking of this as the world does. For when I think of leaving something of value behind, I am most certainly not thinking of material things. Rather, I am thinking of people. People who would testify they received a blessing simply by knowing me. People who were impacted spiritually by my life and ministry and, as a result, are walking with the Lord and accomplishing His will. That's a legacy worth thinking about ahead of time and one worth trying to leave behind.

As I said, I am also thinking a lot about the kind of legacy that you send ahead.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether bad or good.

II Corinthians 5:10

In context, this is the appearance of the believer before his Savior for an evaluation of the quality of the life he or she has lived as a Christian. The issue is no longer heaven or hell, that has already been settled by the receipt of God's gift of eternal life for those who trust in Christ.

Continued on the next page.

Leaving a Legacy

Monday, January 5: Read Matthew 25 (Continued)

At the *judgment seat of Christ*, the issue is the quality of the life lived as a Christian, and whether or not it will merit any eternal reward from the Savior. My, how I think we should desire to hear Him say:

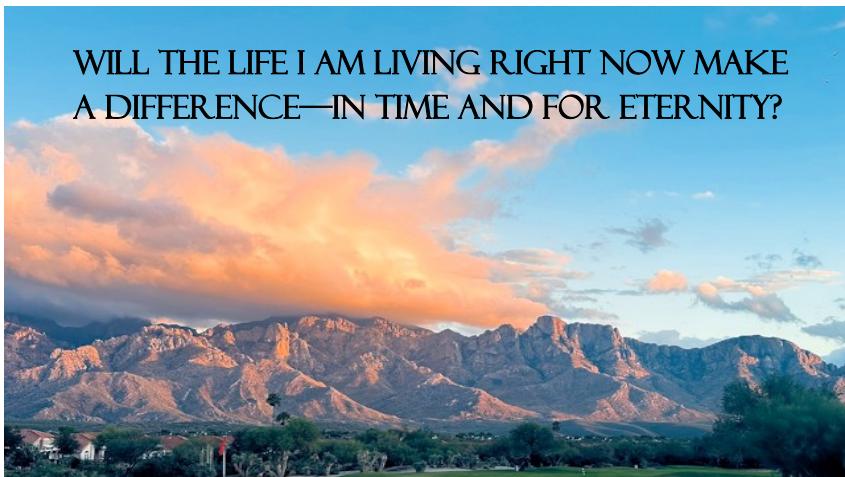
"Well done My good and faithful servant!" Matthew 25:23

So, that brings me back to the question,

Is the life I am living right now, such that when I stand before the Lord He is going to be pleased? Will He be pleased enough to call me "faithful" and bestow reward for the things done during the course of my Christian Life?

For the next few days, I would like us to consider a few of the kinds of things that would lead to a *spiritual legacy*. In other words, the kinds of things that lead to a quality of life that makes a difference—both in time and for all eternity!

**WILL THE LIFE I AM LIVING RIGHT NOW MAKE
A DIFFERENCE—IN TIME AND FOR ETERNITY?**



Leaving a Legacy

Tuesday, January 6:

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Yesterday I defined one's *spiritual legacy* to be the kinds of things that lead to a quality of life that makes a difference—both in time and for all eternity. Although a comprehensive look at the concept of *spiritual legacy* is far beyond the scope of a daily devotional, we'll use the space for the rest of the week to begin the process of thinking about this more deeply.

To begin, we are talking about the things we do with the days God has given us on this earth as a Christian. That immediately brings to mind two passages of Scripture. We will look at the first verse today and the second tomorrow.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

Here is a very simple principle for you to consider: If we are going to leave a spiritual legacy behind, we must focus on those good works which God has prepared for us to do! I would go so far as to say that we should focus on those alone and forget the rest!

Of course, that immediately brings to mind a question: "*How do I know what those works happen to be?*" Part of the answer to that question lies with the leading of the Holy Spirit, but it equally lies with the Word of God. For example, both Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 focus on relationships: husband and wife, parents and children, and workplace. Let me suggest that is an excellent place to start!

Continued on the next page.

Leaving a Legacy

Tuesday, January 6:

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9 (Continued)

If you want to leave a *spiritual legacy*, work on your relationship with your wife, your children, and, if not your employees, then your circle of acquaintances.

We have the opportunity to come in contact with two things on a daily basis which last forever—the Word of God and people. We should have a daily relationship with both, and to be sure some of the *good works which God has prepared for us to do* involve these people.

I know some will tell me, "*It is too late for that—I have made a complete hash of things!*" This is where the leading of the Holy Spirit comes in. Ask Him where you should apply your efforts. At the very least you can tell people from whom you are estranged that you love them and are praying for them. You don't have to agree with them or embrace their ideas, just put on display the love of Christ as guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. More on this tomorrow.

If you want to leave
a spiritual legacy,
work on your
relationships!



Leaving a Legacy

Wednesday, January 7:

Read Philippians 2:1-18

I mentioned one passage that indicates the kinds of things we *do* in this life that might result in leaving a spiritual legacy behind. Here is another:

Therefore, my dear friends ... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13

Paul is speaking to his *dear friends* in Philippi, those believers in Christ who constitute the church in this rough and tumble Roman enclave. Now, think carefully about this phrase:

... for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.

Philippians 2:13

Would you agree with me that if God is at work in our thoughts and actions, we can't help but do anything other than leave a *spiritual legacy*? Of course! It must be that way. But how do we get this to happen on a consistent basis in our lives? There is one hint right in the text—*fear and trembling!*

Let me suggest the word fear is a reference to a much larger concept which is the *Fear of the Lord*. I find it helpful to define this concept as:

- A *recognition* of who God is as sovereign Creator of all things.

Continued on the next page.

Leaving a Legacy

Wednesday, January 7:

Read **Philippians 2:1-18** (Continued)

- A *reverence* for what He is like in terms of character and attributes.
- A *healthy respect* for His capability to reach in and accomplish His purposes at any time and place of His choosing.

In short, we have a very, very big God. Then the word *trembling* is used to describe humility and distrust of self. Now, put this all together. We are to work on our salvation—live in such a way to leave a *spiritual legacy*—by means of distrusting ourselves and instead trusting in the Lord who is able to do all things.

Let me take this one step further. What this passage is telling us is that, if we put ourselves in the right position, what we are thinking and what we are doing will be of the Lord. How do we do that? We set ourselves aside. We put our faith in God's Word and His promises and walk by means of His Spirit. As we do, we can trust that He will work through us, both to will and to act in such a way that we leave a *spiritual legacy*. He will guide us to repair a broken relationship, open a new one, and a hundred and one other things.

I can tell you this: He is trustworthy. It honors Him when we forget what is behind and press on, steadfastly trusting that He is able to make something out of our remaining days in this life, before we see Him face to face!

Leaving a Legacy

Thursday, January 8: Read II Timothy 4

What remains is the second half of our quest: How do we live so that we promote a *spiritual legacy* that extends into eternity? First, let me show you it is possible:

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the
crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will award to me on that day—and not to me
only, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.**

II Timothy 4:6-8

Paul is going to get a *crown of righteousness*—that is most certainly descriptive of an eternal reward—so it is possible. Please pause with me for a moment. Have you ever thought about what it might be like to exist in God's heaven with a *crown* of any sort, bestowed by the Lord Himself? I don't dwell on it; nonetheless, I must tell you that I find that to be a very appealing outcome for my life—to do something found worthy by my Savior.

Did you note that it is not something that just Paul is going to receive, but something that every believer who *longs for His appearing* is going to receive? What does it mean to long for His appearing? Let me suggest that the best way to understand it, in context, is to equate it to: *fighting the good fight, finishing the race and keeping the faith*.

Continued on the next page.

Leaving a Legacy

Thursday, January 8:

Read II Timothy 4 (Continued)

We looked at this exact phrase just a few days ago at the close of the year. When we did so, we considered it in the context of faith. Allow me to expand our understanding a bit by adding some additional considerations: To fight the good fight is to do things God's way.

- Not to decide ourselves the works we should do, but to seek His will.
- Not to do those works in our own wisdom and own strength, but in the wisdom and strength He provides.

This will keep us from being like the man in Chapter 7 of Matthew who claimed to have done all these great things for the Lord. Jesus' response should get our attention:

... “I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers.”

Matthew 7:23

Simply stated, to *fight the good fight* requires each and every one of us to walk by faith and by the Spirit—each and every day. We'll finish this verse tomorrow.



Leaving a Legacy

Friday, January 9:

Read I Corinthians 3:1-15

Yesterday, we only managed to get part way through looking at *fighting the good fight, finishing the race, and keeping the faith*. If fighting the good fight is doing things God's way, then finishing the race is to continue to be a follower of Jesus—a disciple—all the way until He calls us home.

I once invited a woman in Sun City to church. She told me, "*Oh my husband and I did church all our lives—but we're retired now.*" I am not exactly sure what that means, but I am pretty sure that she and her husband are not *finishing the race!*

As for *keeping the faith*, that is simply holding fast to the truths revealed in God's Word. It means you can't let the philosophies of men, or the thinking of this world guide your thoughts. It must be the Word of God.

Nor can we let circumstances, especially trials, cause us to turn away in unbelief.

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.

I Corinthians 16:13-14

Now, if we should manage these things in this life, not in our strength but with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, what are we putting on reserve in eternity? We saw it yesterday—*a crown of righteousness!* I think this language is purposely vague, so that we do not fixate on the reward. Ours is to be faithfully obedient, and trust that rewards are to come.

Continued on the next page.

Leaving a Legacy

Friday, January 9:

Read I Corinthians 3:1-15 (Continued)

The general case of this principle was stated in today's reading:

... no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is ...

I Corinthians 3:11-13

There is no sense talking about an eternal legacy if you are not first a Christian! But, if we have trusted in Christ unto eternal life, then we are going to build one way or the other. It will be with things of value (gold, silver, and costly stones) or things of no value (wood, hay, or straw). The Lord Himself is going to test our work:

... the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved ...

I Corinthians 3:13-15

This is how we set aside an eternal legacy, building things of value during our time on this earth. That takes us back to the previous few days: investing in relationships, doing the works God has prepared in advance for us to do, and dis-trusting self while operating in the *Fear of the Lord*. In short, what we do now, has eternal consequences! Do you doubt the truth of this?

Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

I Corinthians 15:58

It is not in vain because He will reward you for doing His works, His way, in His strength, to His glory and our great blessing! And, all God's people said, "Amen!"

The Christian Way of Life

Monday, January 12: Read Genesis 1

We are going to review a series we did some time ago called The Mission and Disciplines of the Christian Way of Life. By the nature of this kind of study, we will not be working our way through any particular book, but rather through a number of topics. Nonetheless, we will continue reading a selected chapter a day and focus upon reminding ourselves of the singular mission given to us by our Lord, and the many disciplines with which we must become familiar in order to accomplish the mission we have been given.

I think you will find these reminders to be very helpful. We won't do them all at once, but spread them out in several sessions during the course of the coming year.

Does it help an organization to know its mission? Apparently the U. S. Army thinks so, because for many years it has fostered a *Soldiers Creed*. The mission mindset it attempts to foster is clear in the following excerpt:

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.



Jesus said: "Go and make disciples of all nations ..."

Continued on the next page.

Christian Way of Life

Monday, January 12: Read Genesis 1 (Continued)

Now, as we turn to the pages of Scripture, it becomes clear that God has, on a number of occasions, given a mission to mankind. For example, consider Genesis 1:27-28:

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

It is true that God gave that mission a long time ago, so what about now God is working through the Church? Our mission couldn't be more clear, given by Jesus Himself:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

Notice that Jesus first establishes His authority, and then gives one command—to make disciples!

Does the Church seem to you like it is fully engaged in its mission? Are the lost being converted and then taught everything Jesus taught and revealed to us in His Word? I would suggest we have lost our focus, that we have a *mission problem*. That is one reason why 78% of the people in America who claim to be Christians don't seem to hold values or live lives compatible with Biblical Christianity!

Christian Way of Life

Tuesday, January 13: Read II Peter 3

What exactly does our mission entail? What does it mean to *make disciples*? I think the Scriptures reveal that there are several components to disciple-making. First, through the proclamation of Gospel truth and the convicting ministry of the Spirit, it is bringing a person to the point they ask:

... **“What must I do to be saved?”**

Acts 16:30

Should they respond by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then conversion, the first part of disciple-making, has occurred. A lost soul has been brought into the Kingdom of God! After that there is the growth aspect. Consider Peter's final words to the churches to which he ministered:

... **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

II Peter 3:18

Continued on the next page.

At VCC, our mission is to be used by God to help the lost receive eternal life, and those with eternal life to grow in grace and knowledge.



Christian Way of Life

Tuesday, January 13: Read II Peter 3 (Continued)

Consider one more component from II Timothy 2:2:

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Did you catch it? Those who are discipled are, in turn, to disciple others. Here is my summary of what it means to follow through on our God-given mission:

To make disciples is to cooperate with the Spirit of God in holding out the truth of the Gospel that lost men and women might become part of the family of God. And then we are to continue the process by doing everything possible to foster their growth in "grace and knowledge." Make no mistake, disciples are to, in turn, produce disciples!

When I look at the church in America and hold it up against our Mission, again, I would suggest that we have a *mission problem*. What happens when a military unit loses sight of its mission? They stop training, which in time means they can't shoot straight, meet the physical rigors of combat, and neglect their equipment. They suffer a loss of readiness.

How about the church? What happens when it loses sight of its mission? Same thing! It becomes politically correct, substitutes entertainment for preaching the Word, and exchanges the Gospel that can eternally save for a social gospel. In short, the Church suffers a lack of readiness to fulfill its role as God's witnesses to a lost and spiritually needy world! Troops found to be non-combat ready should feel a certain shame. So, too, should the church that has ceased to be the salt and light that God intended!

Christian Way of Life

Wednesday, January 14: Read Luke 8

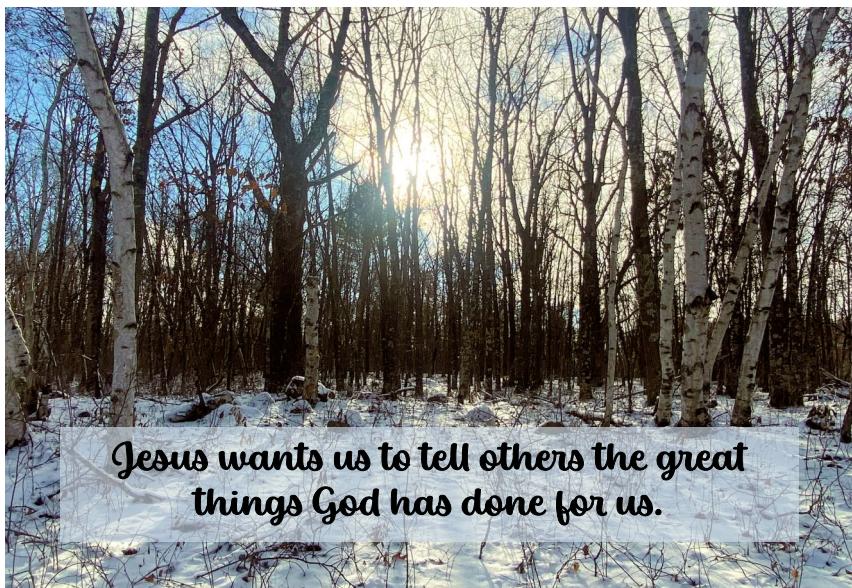
Let me show you what it looks like to be *mission-minded*.

Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him ... but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

Luke 8:38-39

This newly-saved man just wanted to be with his Savior. Of course, this is very understandable and analogous to the church fellowship that sees itself as a place of refuge for Christians, where we can *hunker down* while the world around us falls apart. But look at the answer Jesus gives: Go tell others what God has done! And, the man goes just where Jesus tells him to go, and beyond! That's what it looks like to be fully caught up in our mission!

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Christian Way of Life

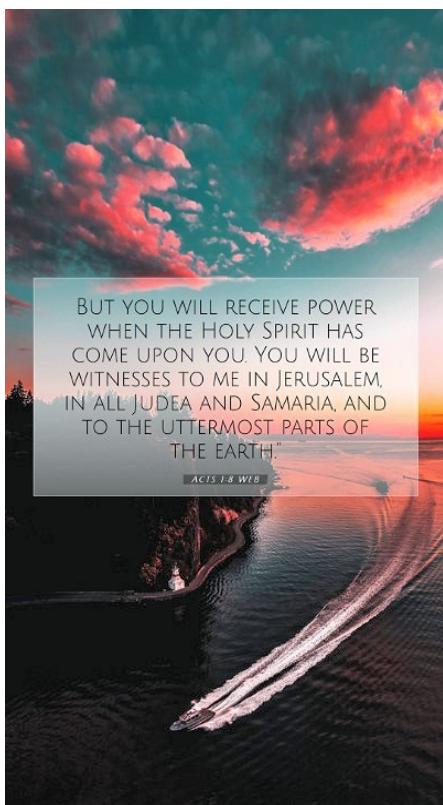
Wednesday, January 14: Read Luke 8

(Continued)

Here is a question for you that I hope brings some conviction. Do you see your current mission in life as one of being retired (or preparing for it)? If so, that would make us a retired church and where is the sense of mission in that? How much better to see ourselves as a church of retired

persons with the one mission of making disciples, many of whom happen to also be retired persons.

That would mean that being retired is a current stage of life, which allows more time to hold out the Word of life to those with whom we recreate and socialize and to our extended families. Praise the Lord He has put us on mission in sunny Arizona. But, in any event, if soldiers deployed around the world are prompted by their creed to *always place the mission first*, can we, as Christians with a singular *great commission*, do anything less?



Christian Way of Life

Thursday, January 15: Read Ezekiel 33

The Great Commission is a very well known passage of Scripture. But, perhaps in the back of your mind you are thinking, "You have made a strong case for our mission as Christians, but you have built it all on just one verse of Scripture!"

First, there are many more New Testament references to our singular mission (Acts 1:8 and Luke 24:44-48 are two examples). Ezekiel 33 provides a very powerful statement of mission in the Old Testament and it has application in our day. Here is what we can glean:

- In Verse 2, we are introduced to *the actors on the stage*: the sword, the watchman, and the people.
- The tension within the storyline is developed in Verses 3-6. Will the watchman be faithful because his deliverance depends upon it? (Verse 6) Will the people respond to the grace of God in repentance because their deliverance depends upon it!? (Verse 5)
- This narrative has as its background the physical realm. Would the watchman be faithful to warn the people of the city of the approach of a band of marauders? Will the people respond in order to fight off their attackers?

However, in context, this scripture is meant to convey a spiritual message. Prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah were Israel's spiritual watchmen. The first issue is would they be

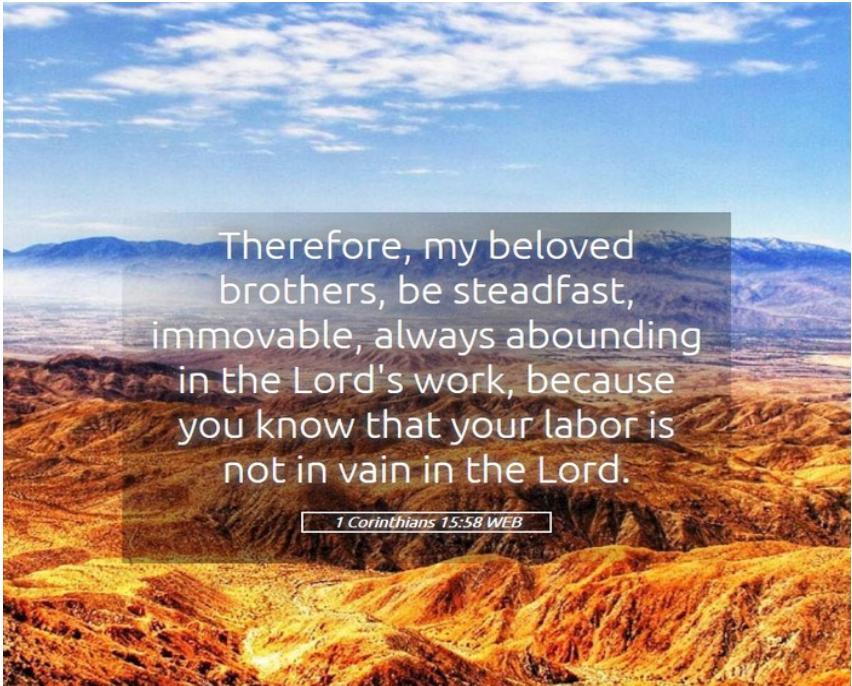
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Christian Way of Life

Thursday, January 15: Read Ezekiel 3 (Continued)

faithful to convey God's message to the people? The second issue was whether the people would respond to the message in repentance? As always, there are consequences for all associated with obedience or disobedience.

Perhaps you are thinking: What does this have to do with the Church in the day in which we live? We'll make the application in tomorrow's devotional. In the meantime, give it some thought and see what conclusions you reach.



Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58 WEB

Christian Way of Life

Friday, January 16: Read Genesis 33

Perhaps you are thinking yesterday's narrative in Ezekiel is just too far removed from our day to really have any application to us. Consider this to see if you might change your mind:

- The actors on the stage were the sword, the watchman, and the people. Do we have a category of *at-risk* people in our day? Of course! Every member of the human race is born lost and on the broad road headed to destruction. (Matthew 7)
- Is there pending judgment, that is the sword, for this group?

... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

- How about the watchman? Who fills that role?

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us ...

II Corinthians 5:20

The drama today is identical in nature to the situation in Ezekiel: Will we as watchmen be faithful to declare the message of the Gospel and in doing so warn the people? Will the lost respond before it is too late?

And then as a final point to consider—look at the identical attitude on God's part. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says,

"... I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live."

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Christian Way of Life

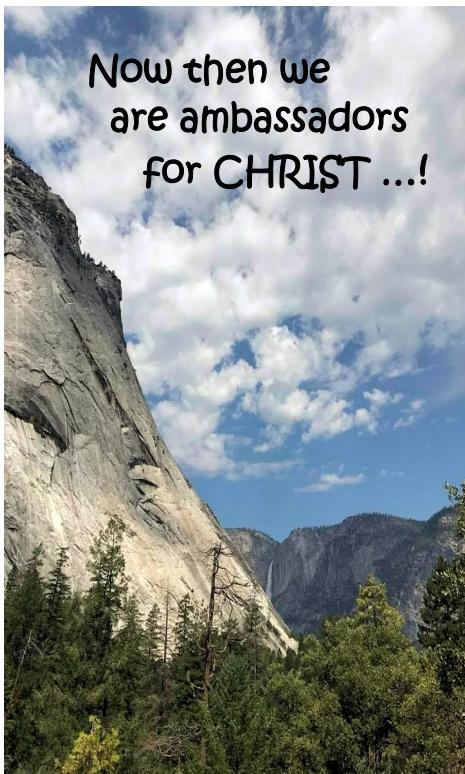
Friday, January 16: Read Genesis 33 (Continued)

And what is God's message in our day regarding the lost?

... God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. I Timothy 2:3-4

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

II Peter 3:9



**Now then we
are ambassadors
for CHRIST ...!**

The spiritual parallels are so strong they are impossible to miss. So, what is our take-home lesson? Not only has God always given a mission to those who are His, that mission is wrapped up in His desire to *deliver* that which His hand has created!

What a remarkable privilege that we have been given such a high calling (our mission). What a privilege that we have the opportunity to be engaged in rescuing those who will otherwise perish for all eternity.

Christian Way of Life

Monday, January 19: Read Acts 2

Today we move into the disciplines of the Christian Life—things like worship, prayer, and Bible study. Let's begin with an understanding of the balance between our singular mission and our many disciplines. By this I mean that we have one mission to make disciples of all nations, but we have many disciplines. Here is the principle:

The mission/discipline distinction is not one of priority or importance, but one of focus and organization.

Let me show you by continuing to use our analogy of soldiers. We have already seen their mission: to defeat the enemy in close combat. So what kind of mission-ready soldiers do you have if they fail in the disciplines associated with being a soldier: can't shoot, can't find their way, can't carry their combat load over distances, and so on. On the other hand, it is possible to forsake the mission for the love of a particular discipline! That would be the soldier who spends all his time at the firing-range, but doesn't want to shoot at anything other than bullseyes.

Are you seeing the application? Are we really ready for the mission if we don't know God's Word, how to pray, or how to engage in worship with other Christians? Of course not! But then, there is the Christian who has pages of Bible study notes and has never shared the Good News with anyone. Both are out of balance!

Continued on the next page.

Christian Way of Life

Monday, January 19: Read Acts 2

(Continued)

Consider it this way: Without worship, you are not really a disciple yourself because you are not preparing for your mission. Without disciple-making, your worship is contradictory because it springs from failure of mission (disobedience).

Who is the most effective disciple-maker? One who is fully capable in the disciplines of the Christian Life. And, that's the story of the early Church.

Disciplines: And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:42



Mission: Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 5:42

Christian Way of Life

Tuesday, January 20: Read Luke 10

To introduce our first discipline, I would like you to consider the following hypothetical. Imagine for a moment that, in order to both encourage you in your walk and to guide your efforts for the remaining days you have on this earth, you were going to have a short face-to-face meeting with Jesus. At this meeting He is going to pass on to you the *one thing* He would like you to keep in mind. What do you suppose it would be?

Interestingly enough, the Bible tells us what it would be in Luke 10:38-f. Before we begin to unpack this passage, let me remind you of the differences in how I am using the terms mission and discipline. Our mission is the big picture task that the Lord has given us to accomplish, individually and, in particular, corporately. As we have seen, that is to represent Him to a lost and dying world that the lost, for whom Christ died, would hear the good news of the Gospel from us, turn to Christ, and believe.

On the other hand, the disciplines of the Christian Life are those habits and practices in which we engage every day in order to become conformed to the image of Christ (that's the vertical aspect of the Christian life). The disciplines help us be prepared and fully engaged in our mission of reaching the lost (that's the horizontal component of our Christian life). Don't let my use of these terms cause confusion. It is as simple as thinking about the daily disciplines that will help us accomplish our mission from the Lord.

Continued on the next page.

Christian Way of Life

Tuesday, January 20: Read Luke 10 (Continued)

So with that said, what is the *one thing* in terms of a daily discipline which the Lord is communicating to us? Well, I can tell you one thing it is not—excessive busyness!

But Martha was distracted with much serving ...

Luke 10:40

Most churches would love to have as many Marthas as possible. Now to her credit, she did welcome Jesus into her home and went to work putting her gifts of hospitality into practice. One problem, the Lord of glory was in her home and she was too busy to pause to hear what He might have to say. You may think I am being too hard on Martha? Not only does the text say she was *distracted*, there is also only one imperative verb in the whole passage. That is Martha's *command* to Jesus to order Mary to help. When your efforts at ministry lead you to boss Jesus around—something is out of balance! More tomorrow.



Jesus said, "My sheep listen to My voice ..." John 10:27

Christian Way of Life

Wednesday, January 21: Read John 17

So Martha was involved in doing *important* work for the Lord. (It really was for the Lord!) Now look at what Jesus said to her:

“But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:42

This passage should really get our attention. For Jesus not only identifies the *one thing needed*, but He also calls it the *good part* and something that cannot be *taken away*. We have just found our first discipline of the Christian Life!

What was Mary doing? She was sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing, literally to hear with understanding, what He had to say.

Let me give you a few points to consider on this marvelous little narrative:

- As we seek to follow Jesus as His disciples, we must be constantly on guard against the tendency to allow the good to be the enemy of the best. Here is an example. There are times when focusing upon the Lord through prayer, reflection, and Bible study is the most important thing we have to do! To do anything else, at that point, is to let the good be the enemy of the best.
- Although it may be a part of “sitting at Jesus feet to hear His Word,” I want to be certain that you understand you cannot just reduce this to Bible study.

Continued on the next page.

Christian Way of Life

Wednesday, January 21: Read John 17 (Continued)

I have pointed you to the following many times:

“... But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

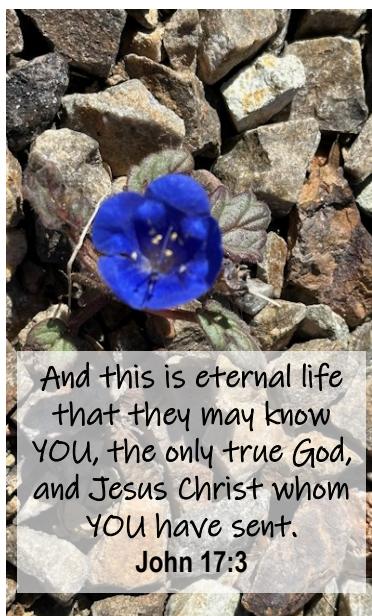
John 5:38-40

This is what can happen when you come to the word as a medium of scholarship—to get facts, figures, and quotes. It must be seen as the written Word behind which stands the Living Word! It must not be seen as a medium of scholarship, but one of fellowship with our Lord and Savior. Notice how eternal life defined in this way is relational:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 17:3

By way of application, I encourage you to open your daily quiet time with a simple prayer based upon John 17:3. You will be blessed by the results.



And this is eternal life that they may know YOU, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom YOU have sent.

John 17:3

Christian Way of Life

Thursday, January 22: Read John 15

I am trying to build a case for the first discipline of the Christian Life: to daily sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what He has to say! We saw it in Luke 10, but is it anywhere else in Scripture? How about John 15:5:

"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

Could it be that *to abide* is very closely related to *sitting at His feet and listening*? The word translated *abide* is a command in the Greek. Notice how, apart from abiding, we can accomplish nothing in terms of fruit. Furthermore, note the repetition of the term *abide* in Verses 4-10. This is another way to emphasize its importance.

The word abide means to remain in a particular location, to wait, to dwell. When these are applied relationally, they are very similar to the idea found in Luke 10 of giving Jesus our focused attention.

The concept of grafting a branch into the vine can be very helpful. When a branch is grafted into a vine, it must first be tightly bound, followed by a period of waiting while internal changes occur. These changes involve the *growing* of the woody fibers of the vine into the branch and vice versa.

Do you see the beautiful picture of what happens when we regularly come to the Lord and listen—receiving His mind

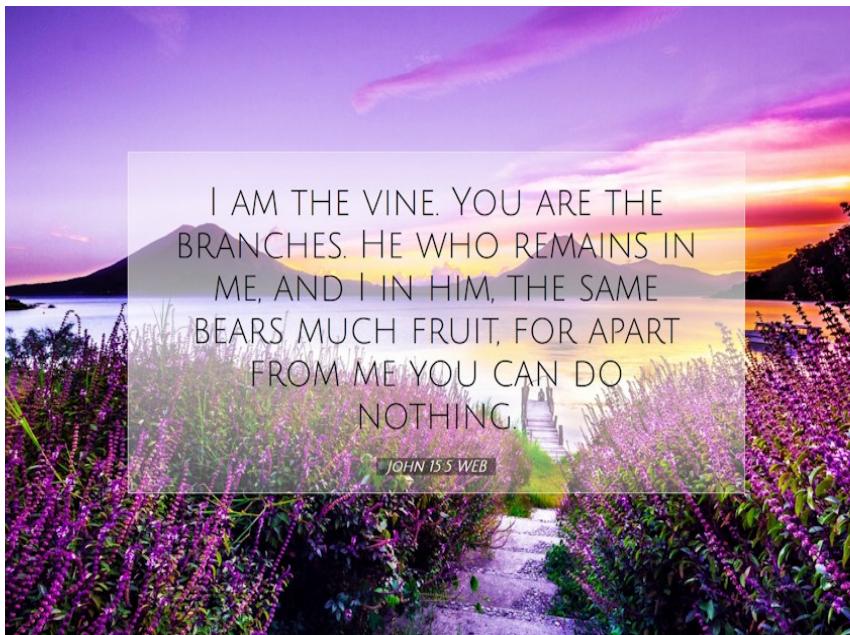
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Christian Way of Life

Thursday, January 22: Read John 15 (Continued)

through the study of His Word, listening to the voice of the Spirit, and meditating upon His ways and His thoughts?

This opens the way for His life to be manifest in our lives so that we can bear fruit. Until this happens, there is no way for real fruit, that which is pleasing to the Lord, to be born in our lives. In fact, until this happens the branch is simply not ready to bear fruit. Do you desire for your life to bear fruit? Begin by abiding in the true vine that is Jesus Christ and in Him alone.



I AM THE VINE. YOU ARE THE
BRANCHES. HE WHO REMAINS IN
ME, AND I IN HIM, THE SAME
BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART
FROM ME YOU CAN DO
NOTHING.

JOHN 15:5 WEB

Christian Way of Life

Friday, January 23: Read Luke 3

So, the first discipline of the Christian Life can be described as sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to what He has to say or, alternately, abiding in Christ as a branch in the vine.

There is one more thing to which I would like to draw your attention before we move on, consider John 15:9:

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

This is an astonishing verse! But to understand it, we must understand just how the Father has loved the Son. Consider Luke 3:22:

"You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

The Father's love for the Son is dramatically described, but did you note that Jesus says He loves us in this same way? You will never come to grips with the depth and meaning of this aside from spending time with the Lord, abiding in Him!

There is nothing automatic about our abiding in Christ. We need to make it a priority in our lives and set aside the time to do so. If we don't, the demands of this life will push our time with the Lord out of its rightful place. John 15:10 tells us that part of abiding in the love of Christ is to obey His commandments. This verse makes it clear that we are not in fellowship with the Lord unless we are walking in obedience to what He has revealed to us. But we must realize that in terms of priority, we don't start with obedience,

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Christian Way of Life

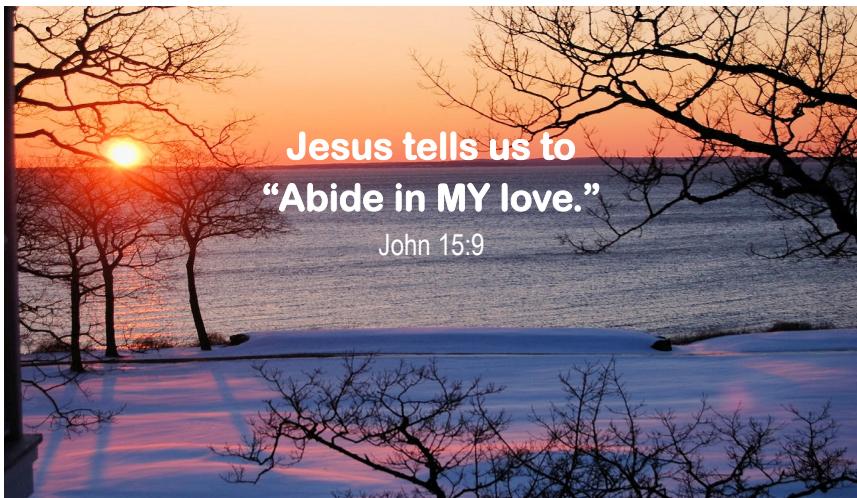
Friday, January 23: Read Luke 3

(Continued)

but rather with abiding in Him. Obedience flows from abiding. When you and I struggle with obedience in some particular area, our greatest need is not to strive harder but to come out from the struggle and abide, to sit at His feet and fix our eyes upon Him!

... you have been in the arena, you have been endeavoring, you are a failure, come out and sit down, and as you sit there behold Him, look at Him. Don't try to be like Him, just look at Him. Instead of letting that fill your mind and heart, let Him fill it. Just behold Him, look upon Him through the Word. Come to the Word for one purpose and that is to meet the Lord. (Douty)

Sometimes, this is all we can and should do! Not as an excuse for failure, but to find God's answer to our need.



Jesus tells us to
“Abide in MY love.”

John 15:9

Foundations

Monday, January 26: Read Acts 16:1-34

Returning to the *Foundations of the Christian Life*, we are once more going to consider two closely-related topics. Next up are *Eternal Security* and *Assurance*. We'll take them one at a time beginning with *Eternal Security*—and here is how we get there. I can present a lost person with the means to be saved by introducing them to John 3:16:

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

There are, of course, many questions that may need to be answered, and clarifying information provided. But the long and short of it is: God has provided a means of salvation centered in the Second Person of the Trinity—the Lord Jesus Christ. Should we put our faith in His work accomplished at the cross on our behalf, instead of perishing, we will receive the gift of eternal life. It is that straight forward!

We find exactly this occurring during Paul's first missionary journey when the Philippian jailor fell at Paul's feet and asked, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30) Paul and Silas replied, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...*" (Acts 16:31)

The outcome for the jailor was that:

... he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family. Acts 16:34

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Foundations

Monday, January 26:

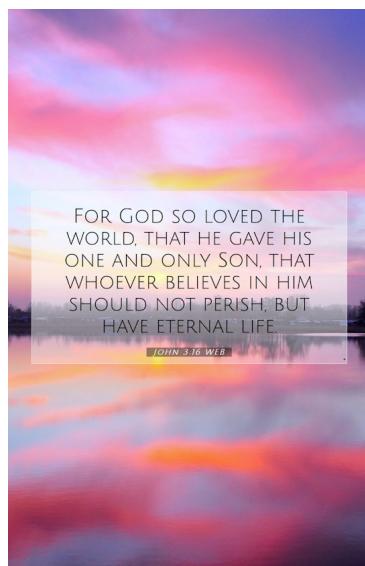
Read Acts 16:1-34 (Continued)

But I can tell you from experience, should a person respond in faith, it won't be long until they ask this question: "*Is there anything I can do to lose my eternal life once I have it?*" What they are really asking is, "*How secure is the life God has given me?*"

These questions are usually the result of some kind of spiritual failure in the life. I am going to first give you the Biblical answer to questions regarding the *security* of our eternal life and then spend the next few days proving it to you from the Scriptures. Here is a summary of what the Bible has to say:

Those things that God, in grace, gives to those who believe in the person and work of Christ are eternally secure. They cannot ever be lost. Specifically, believers can never lose: eternal life, their association with Christ, and their family status as a child of God.

If this is true, it is very good news, isn't it? And, I am going to try and leave no doubt in your mind that, upon the authority of God's Word, it is absolutely true!



Foundations

Tuesday, January 27: Read John 5:16-47

Let me start where I left off yesterday:

Those things that God, in grace, gives to those who believe in the person and work of Christ are eternally secure. They cannot ever be lost. Specifically, believers can never lose: eternal life, their association with Christ, and their family status as a child of God.

God very much wants us to know this, and repeats it in a variety of ways throughout His Word. For example, He does so right within His well-known promise of eternal life:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

God has made a point of describing the kind of life He gives to those who believe. Is it temporary or conditional? No! If we believe, then the life He gives in return lasts forever—that's what eternal means! By the way, God doesn't say anything about us having to *keep on believing*. If we believe, then He bestows a gift—an eternal one.

If that is not enough, then consider the way in which God, through Jesus, revealed a bit more in John 5:24:

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Continued on the next page.

Foundations

Tuesday, January 27:

Read John 5:16-47 (Continued)

Once again, should an individual believe, he or she receives eternal life in return. Now, God has added more information to the blessings of believing—such an individual also need not fear condemnation. That's because, if you have eternal life, you are *in Christ Jesus* and there is

... no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

God takes it one step further by telling us that we have crossed over from death to life. Before I placed my faith in Christ I was *dead in trespasses and sins* (Ephesians 2:1) and, like all the rest of the people in the world, I was *by nature an object of His wrath* (Ephesians 2:3).

But when I believed, God caused me to *cross over* from a place of death to one of life. The Greek verb translated *crossed over* is in the perfect tense. That is the verb tense used to describe an action that happened in the past and has present results. It describes something that has already happened and it never needs to be repeated. At the moment that we trusted in Christ for eternal life, God caused us to cross over from a place of death to one of life—eternal life.

Today, however many years we have believed, we are still *crossed over!* In fact, we don't ever need to worry about crossing over again. Our crossing over is an accomplished work of God that occurred the moment we believe and cannot be undone. God wants all those who have trusted in Christ to know that their eternal destiny is secure!

Foundations

Wednesday, January 28: Read II Timothy 2

Continuing our investigation of *Eternal Security*, the question arises, *“What if I turn away from the Lord? What if I am not faithful?”* Do you suppose it depends upon our faithfulness to spiritual things, or is it God’s faithfulness to His promise to save? We had better hope it depends on His faithfulness and not upon ours or there is no such thing as the *eternal security* of the believer! Perhaps you remain skeptical, so how does the Scripture handle this?

... if we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself. II Timothy 2:13

Our God is the faithful one! One more passage for you to consider. In Matthew 12, the Pharisees have accused Jesus of driving out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus refutes their position in such a way that it speaks directly to the concept of *eternal security*. He first makes it very clear that He is driving out demons by the Spirit of God as the King to come. And then He says something very interesting:

“... how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.”

Matthew 12:29



God is faithful!

Continued on the next page.

Foundations

Wednesday, January 28: Read II Timothy 2 (Continued)

In order for demons to be cast out, Satan must first be bound by someone greater—the Lord Jesus. Then Satan's demon servants can be cast out. Here is what happens when a lost individual believes in the person and work of Christ and gets saved:

For He has rescued us out of the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

When we placed our faith in Christ, God forcibly removed us from the kingdom of Satan and put us in that of His Son. He bound Satan, and caused the born-again child of God to *cross over from death to life*. What a mighty spiritual act accompanied our salvation. Yet we wonder if it is something that we can lose. Why for that to happen, for Satan to get us back, he would have to bind our Savior and take back what was once his.

When I spell it out for you like that, you should be quick to realize that this is never going to happen. Satan does not have the power to bind Jesus or to take anything that belongs to Him. You see,

Having believed, you were marked in Him (Jesus) with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14

Once we are in the Kingdom of the Son, we aren't going anywhere. That's security you can count on!

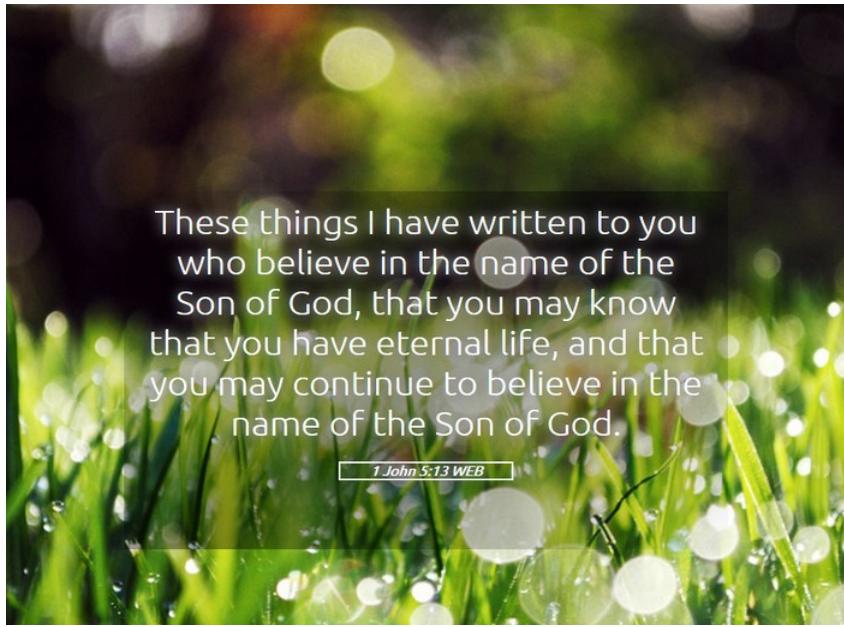
Foundations

Thursday, January 29: Read I John 5

Today we move on to the subject of the believer's *assurance*. Our *assurance* is part of how we understand the salvation that God has provided for all those who receive by faith His gift of eternal life. To have *assurance* of one's salvation is to both know you are saved and to have confidence your salvation is *secure*. Such *assurance* is based upon the unchanging nature of God's promises and not the uncertain nature of our personal walk.

There are those who will claim that it is a form of arrogance to confidently claim to have *assurance* of one's salvation. On the contrary, it is to believe the clear declaration of truth as contained in God's Word, something every believer should be doing.

Continued on the next page.



These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:13 WEB

Foundations

Thursday, January 29: Read I John 5 (Continued)

See for yourself:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life ... I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:11-13

By this point you shouldn't be the least surprised that eternal life is found only in the Son. But are we to know for sure whether or not we have it? God's Word says we are to know we have eternal life. You and I have just one question to answer: *Have we believed in the name of the Son of God?* If you can answer in the affirmative, then you are to know that you have eternal life.

To clarify, at the time John wrote his epistle, the *name* of an individual was descriptive of who they were and/or what they had accomplished. So, I might ask, "*Have you believed in the person and work of Jesus Christ?*"

- *His person* in that He is the eternally existent Second Person of the Trinity, who took on our humanity in order to be our representative.
- *His work* in that He went to the cross in our place, bore our sin, received the wrath of God upon Himself for that sin—so that we could be redeemed!

If you have put your faith in that Jesus and the work of the cross, then you are to know you have eternal life. You are to know you eternal life is as secure as God can make it.

And, that should be all the *assurance* you or I will ever need!

Foundations

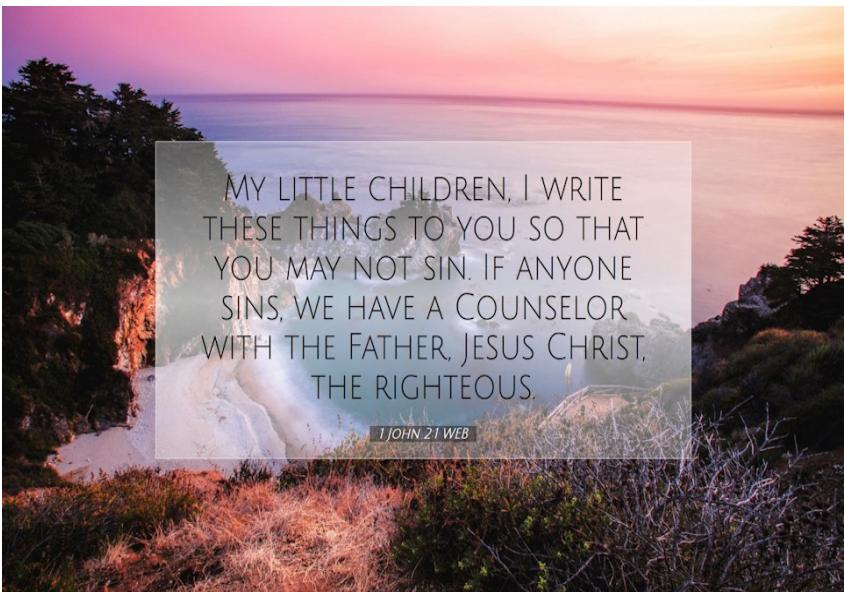
Friday, January 30: Read I John 1:1-2:2

Given the clear Scriptural support for both the *eternal security* and *assurance* of the believer, why do so many have doubts about both? There is a one word answer: failure! That is failure either in terms of sin or of wandering away from the kind of vital relationship we are meant to have with the Lord.

Now either of those failures is a serious spiritual issue! But the question we are investigating is whether or not they impact God's gift of eternal life. Let the Scriptures speak for themselves, starting with I John 2:1:

My dear children, I write these to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Continued on the next page.



MY LITTLE CHILDREN, I WRITE THESE THINGS TO YOU SO THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE A COUNSELOR WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUS.

1 JOHN 2:1 WEB

Foundations

Friday, January 30:

Read I John 1:1-2:2 (Continued)

It is clear that God's intent for the child of God is that we avoid sin. But what if we do sin? The Lord Jesus steps forward and speaks in our defense. And who could possibly be a better choice than the One who died for our sins! How often will He speak up in our defense? Do you see any expiration date? Do you see anything about a loss of eternal life? On the contrary, this is reason to think our salvation is *secure* and to have *assurance*!

Here is a second verse for you to consider:

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25

This passage speaks of Jesus in His role as High Priest. If we have come to God the Father through faith in Christ, then of what can we be sure? We can be sure that Jesus always lives to make intercession on our behalf! As a result, we can know that we will be saved *to the uttermost!*

I hope that by now you are really starting to gain a crucial insight. We are *secure*, and can have *assurance*, not as a result of what we do, but because of the finished work of Christ on the cross and His ongoing work on behalf of those who have believed. I am not trusting in the quality of my spiritual life, although I am certainly trying to make progress! On the contrary, I am trusting in the ability and faithfulness of my loving Savior!

That's what gives me confidence and it should be your confidence as well!



*Therefore he is also able to save to the
uttermost those who draw near to God
through him, seeing he ever lives to make
intercession for them.*

Hebrews 7:25 WEB



VISTOSO Community Church

A decorative graphic of a grapevine with green leaves and clusters of blue grapes, positioned between the word 'Community' and 'Church'.

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

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