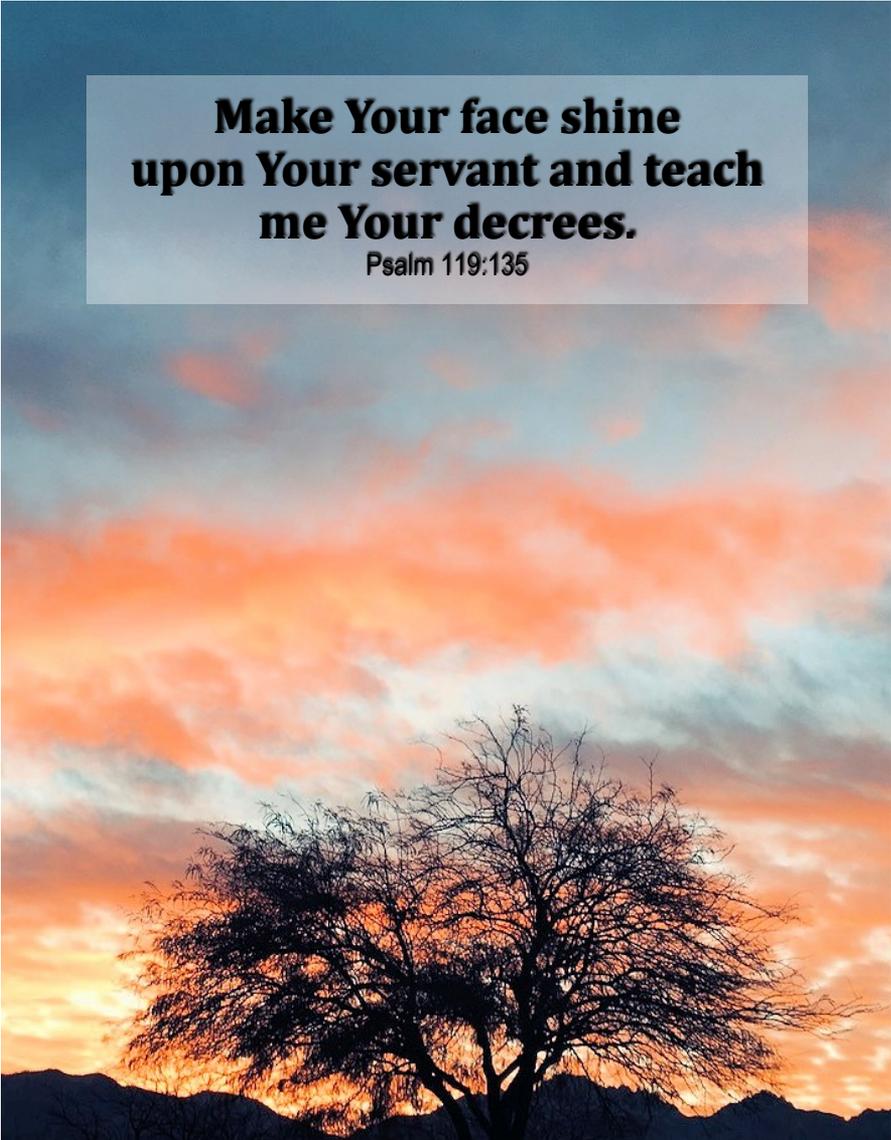


March 2026 Daily Devotional

**Make Your face shine
upon Your servant and teach
me Your decrees.**

Psalm 119:135



Vistoso Community Church

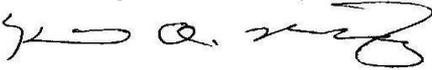
Foreword

This month we begin by finishing our answer to the question: Prayer, Why Bother? Then we finish our contemplation of the *Foundations of the Faith* by spending two blocks of time on the subject of faith.

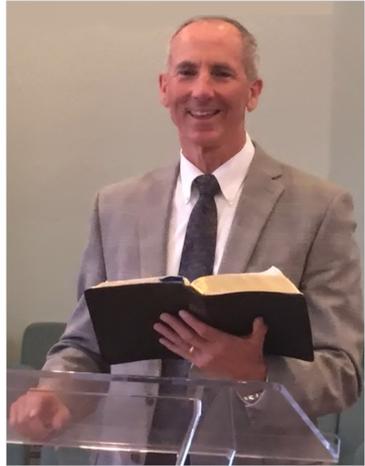
We'll also have a two-day pause to consider something I call the bookends of faith, before continuing our reading in Ephesians. Our final topic for the month is a discussion of the *Mission and Disciplines of the Christian Life*, with several devotions on the subject of worship.

I trust you will find many things that challenge your thinking and continue to draw you closer to the Lord.

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



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

The Mission and Disciplines

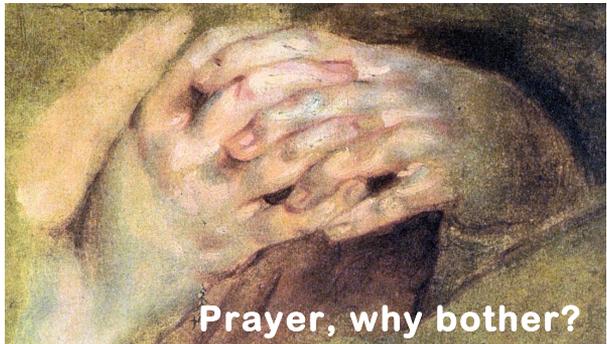
Monday, March 2: Read Jeremiah 33

We raised the question on Friday: Prayer, Why Bother? We aren't going to be afraid of dealing with this question, for Christianity is at its best when dealing with hard and seemingly hopeless situations. Because God found a way to save us, He is not going to have any difficulty dealing with the hard questions we might bring to Him. Consider the following as a partial answer to this question on prayer:

- Throughout Scripture, prayer is interwoven in the lives of God's people. God expects us to call to Him, and He promises to answer in a remarkable and profound way:

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3

- Crying out to God is not the problem. What I want to encourage us to do is to make sure it is the cry of the believer in distress, even the cry of a discouraged believer, but not the turning away of the skeptic.



- But how do we avoid feeling as if God has forsaken us? There is something that every child of God must know, and must settle in his or her thinking. God loves His own.

Continued on the next page.

The Mission and Disciplines

Monday, March 2: Read Jeremiah 33

(Continued)

Every child of God is accepted in the Beloved, that is, accepted in Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:6) We are grounded in the love of Christ. (Ephesians 3:17) The love of God is wide enough to cover every circumstance we will ever face, long enough to cover every day we will ever live, deep enough to cover every pit in which we find ourselves, and high enough to keep us seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 3:18)

Best of all, once we come to realize this, we can count on the fact that God never changes. (Malachi 3:6) There is no shadow of turning in Him. (James 1:17) That means the love of God for His children is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We'll continue answering this question tomorrow.



Ephesians 1:6

*to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which
he freely bestowed favor on us in the Beloved,*

The Mission and Disciplines

Tuesday, March 3: Read Job 42

We'll continue where we left off yesterday, answering the question: Prayer, Why Bother?

- Sometimes we feel as if events are completely outside of anyone's control. Maybe it is fate or the cosmic juggernaut just grinding on. I know why we sometimes feel like that, but how does that line up with the Word of God?

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.

I John 5:14-15

- Obviously, we are not to conclude that things are outside of God's control. But that immediately raises another question: How do we know what is according to His will? The easy answer to that is: Anything that clearly lines up with His Word is in His will.

But how about things that are not Biblically black and white: Praying for healing for a sick neighbor, that job for a family member, and a host of other items that we do not find explicitly stated in the scriptures? My advice is to pray for what the Lord seems to put on your heart and remember as one theologian put it, prayer doesn't change the plans and purposes of God but it does move His hand.

What a privilege we have to be involved with the plans and purposes of God.

Continued on the next page.

The Mission and Disciplines

Tuesday, March 3: Read Job 42

(Continued)

- As a final thought: Sometimes we realize we are in the wrong for doubting God's understanding of our situation and doubting His ability to act. Like Job, we have reached the point of wondering if God is even listening and, like Job after being questioned by God in Chapters 38-42, we suddenly realize we have sinned. We know we have it wrong because God loves us, has everything in hand, and is acting in keeping with His purposes. What do we do when we realize our error? Why we pray just as Job did in Job 42:5-6:

My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

We simply address our unbelief and get back to offering the fervent prayer of a righteous man that can avail much! (James 5:16)



... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16

Back to the Foundations

Wednesday, March 4:

Read Acts 16:11-34

The final topic in our series on the Foundations of the Christian Life is a big one—that of faith. In fact, it is big enough that I feel it is necessary to break it into manageable pieces. For the next few days we will work on an *Introduction to Faith*, then later in the month we will discuss *The Rest of Faith*.

First the introduction to faith:

- The Greek noun and verb align reasonably well with their English counterparts: faith and to believe. Both an English dictionary and Greek lexicon define faith as having a strong trust in someone or something; to be convinced of the truth of something; to be persuaded.
- So, how is a person saved from an eternal destiny in hell to one in heaven? The Scriptures tell us the Philippian jailor asked that exact question:

...**“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** Acts 16:30

The Apostle Paul and Silas answered as follows:

... **“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved ...”** Acts 16:31

Applying what we learned about the meaning of the word *believe*, Paul and Silas are telling the Philippian jailor to not only put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are also calling on him to be convinced that Jesus is *Lord*—fully God. *Jesus* is a reference to His humanity begun at His Advent. *Christ* refers to the fact that He is the One sent by the Father to provide salvation for mankind.

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Back to the Foundations

Wednesday, March 4:

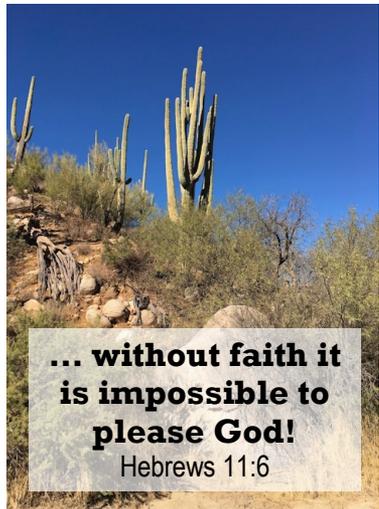
Read Acts 16:11-34 (Continued)

- So, we see that both the concept of trust and trust in the right object are important for faith to function as God intends.
- Further, it would be reasonable for you to ask, what is the role of faith in the Christian Life—the focus of our study. Why is faith foundational to the Christian Life? There are many verses of Scripture that address these questions. Let's start with Hebrews 11:6:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

- Once we are a saved child of God, if we want to please God, we must continue on in faith.

... just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him ... Colossians 2:6



How did you receive Him? By faith! So then, how do we continue on? By faith! More specifically, we continue on by faith in His revelation to us as contained in the Word of God, and by faith in His ability to do all that He has promised to do! We'll pick up here tomorrow.

Back to the Foundations

Thursday, March 5: Read Hebrews 11:1

In order to continue to develop our understanding of what it means to live by faith, let's consider two Scriptures:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Romans 10:17

I find considering these two verses at the same time to be very helpful. The passage in Romans is telling us that the object of our faith is to be the Word of God. Once that is settled in our thinking, then the *substance* of our faith is the truths and promises contained in His Word.

Further, that is how we can know for sure things that we otherwise cannot see or test. For example, consider the words of Jesus in John 14:2-3:

"In My Father's house are many rooms ... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am."

The *substance* of our hope for the future is an eternity with our Savior. We have not seen heaven, but we have all the evidence we need within God's Word. The Word of God both prompts our faith and provides the right object for our faith. This is the pattern we are meant to follow! Each new truth from the Word is meant to guide us toward a faith response.

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Back to the Foundations

Thursday, March 5:

Read Hebrews 11:1 (Continued)

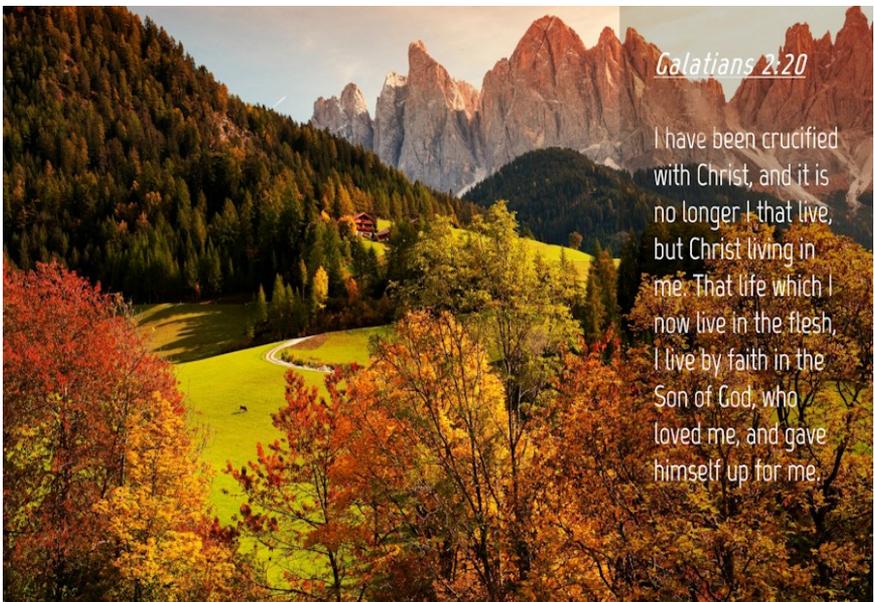
Not just in the words on the page, but faith in the *Living Word* who stands behind the written Word—that He is able to do all that He has promised to do.

While we are at it, let me mention a few things faith is not:

- It is not a feeling.
- It isn't based on that which is most probable.
- It is not the power of positive thinking.

In short, faith is choosing to trust in God's facts as revealed to us in His Word. Thus, one aspect of reaching spiritual maturity is modeled for us by Paul when He says:

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20



Back to the Foundations

Friday, March 6:

Read Romans 1:1-17

Today I would like to show you that the topic of faith is directly related to the Gospel by which we are saved. Consider Romans 1:16-17 with me:

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Let's ponder a few things contained in these two verses:

- Only one thing has the power to save a lost person for all eternity—that would be the *good news* (that is the meaning of the word *gospel*) centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ! His person in that He is both the eternal Second Person of the trinity and, at the point of the First Advent, added humanity to His deity. He did this so that He might go to the cross in our place as the *perfect Lamb of God*, bear our sins and receive upon Himself the *wages of sin*—death!
- How do we receive the salvation that has been provided at so great a cost? It is available to everyone who will believe! Believing is placing our trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ as the one thing that can save.
- Those who believe receive not only eternal life, but also the very righteousness of the Savior:

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

Continued on the next page.

Back to the Foundations

Friday, March 6:

Read Romans 1:1-17 (Continued)

- Here is the most important part in terms of our study:
... the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith ... Romans 1:17

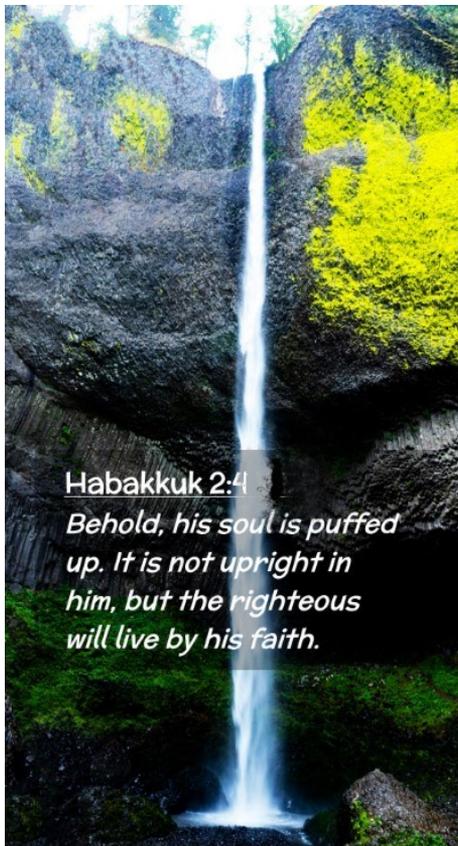
This verse is telling us that the Christian Life begins with faith in Christ, continues by faith every step of the way, and is meant to conclude with us trusting in Christ as we come into His very presence. It's from faith to faith!

Am I sure? Absolutely! For, we have already learned that:

The just (or righteous)
shall live by faith.

Habakkuk 2:4

This verse is first recorded in the Old Testament and then quoted three times in the new (Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38), including at the close of today's reading in Romans 1:17. I can tell you, upon the authority of God's Word, our God is very serious about His desire for those who are His to learn to steadfastly trust Him—every day and in every circumstance!



The Bookends of Faith!

Monday, March 9: Read Exodus 14

Today and tomorrow we pause to look at what I call *The Bookends of Faith!* The first *bookend* is found in Exodus 14. God has demonstrated His power through the ten plagues and redeeming all of Abraham's descendants out of Egypt. But the Egyptians have decided to come after their slaves! So what does God tell them to do through Moses?

“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today ... The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.” Exodus 14:13-14

Why simply stand still? There is nothing the former slaves can do against the army of Egypt, and further God wants to demonstrate once again just how capable He is!

The second *bookend of faith* is found in I Samuel 17. In this well-known story of David and Goliath, David makes it clear he is operating in faith by volunteering to fight Goliath:

“The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” I Samuel 17:37

I Samuel 17:47-48 tells us David's thoughts and what he did:

“All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's” ... David ran quickly to the battle line to meet him.

Note the difference between what God wanted His people to do at the Red Sea, and what He wanted them to do with respect to the Philistine army. These are the two *bookends of faith!* Sometimes we are to trust and stand still and watch the deliverance of the Lord; other times we are to trust and charge the giant of the moment. Either way, we are always to trust! We'll dig deeper into this tomorrow.

The Bookends of Faith!

Tuesday, March 10: Read James 1

Let's work our way through some applications from yesterday's *Bookends of Faith* as put on display at the Red Sea and in David's victory over Goliath.

First, consider each situation. What is the same? In both cases, the Lord provides the victory. What is different? In one case, the people of God do nothing more than *stand still* and watch God deliver them. In the other case, God's man charges Goliath—firmly trusting the Lord to prevail.

Second, faith *wins the day* in both cases. As we have learned, there is no disputing what God wants us to do:

"The righteous will live by faith."

Romans 1:17

Third, the challenge as we deal with the trials of this life is to know what we are to do. We need to discern whether we are to a) stand still and allow the Lord to deliver, b) charge the problem and allow the Lord to deliver, or c) some combination of the two! Whichever action is appropriate in the circumstances, it is the Lord who delivers.

Fourth, let me suggest that this is where discernment comes into play. To exercise discernment, why not simply ask the Lord? He is more than willing to reveal how we should proceed if we will just turn to Him in dependent faith and ask:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea ... That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

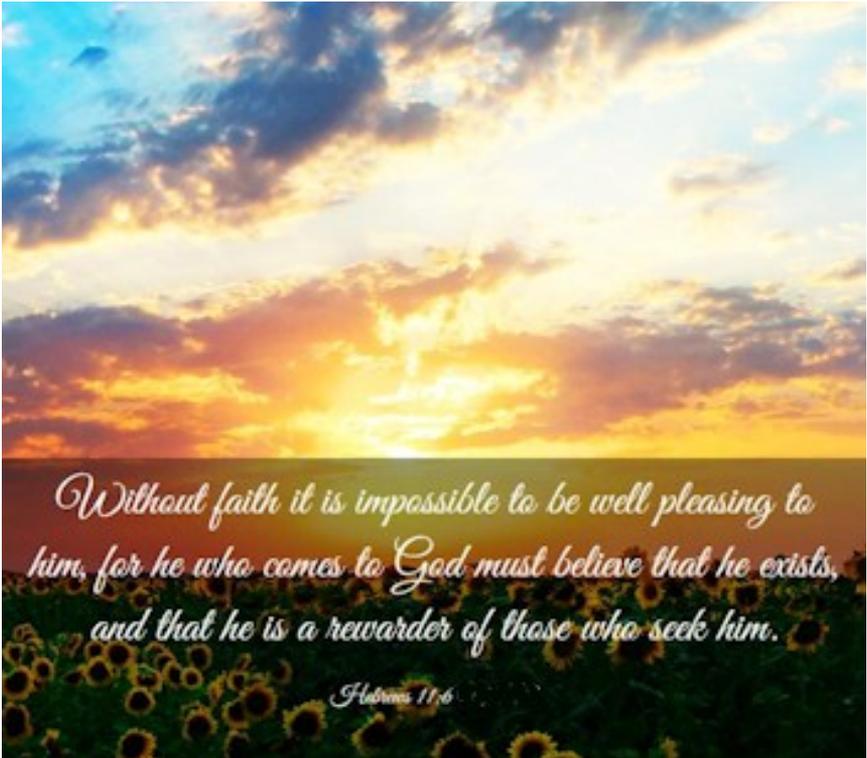
James 1:5-8

The Bookends of Faith!

Tuesday, March 10: Read James 1
(Continued)

Finally, I call these two Old Testament events the *Bookends of Faith* because they are the two extremes. In many cases, our discernment and level of spiritual maturity will actually place us somewhere in between. For some things, we will simply need to leave the situation in the Lord's hands. While in other situations, God will expect us to act.

The key is that either way we first turn to Him as the One who can address the need. Then we need to trust Him to be at work whether we stand still, charge, or act somewhere in between!



Return to Ephesians

Wednesday March 11:

Read Ephesians 4:1

I suggest you spend the time you normally spend reading a chapter of Scripture in memorizing this one verse. Read it over and over again to yourself until you have it down. For if the first three chapters of Ephesians establish our position in Christ, then this single verse lays out God's intent for our position in a powerful and clear manner.

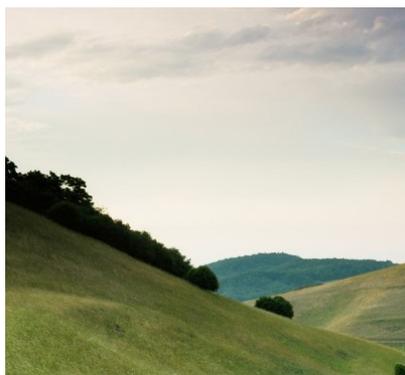
I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling to which you were called ...

Ephesians 4:1

Nero thinks that Paul is his prisoner. On the contrary, Paul is the Lord's bondservant and he is ready to reach out to the lost and encourage the saints in whatever circumstances he finds himself. There are two ideas in this verse:

1. *To walk worthy*
2. *The calling to which we are called*

Both ideas are exceedingly important. For today, let's concentrate on the first idea, these two words: *walk worthy*.



EPHESIANS 4:1 WEB

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,



Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, March 11:

Read Ephesians 4:1 (Continued)

The word *walk* is an interesting compound word in Greek consisting of a word meaning *path* and another meaning *about* or *around*. When taken together, they literally mean the sum of the steps one takes. This word is also often translated *live*, in which case it means the life one lives. I like to break it down this way: wherever your steps take you today, from the time you put your feet on the floor in the morning until you lay your head on your pillow this evening, you are to walk in a certain manner—a worthy manner!

It is equally beneficial to study the word *worthy*. It carries the connotation of *that which balances the scales*. You see, in the ancient world, the system of money was based upon weight—the shekel was a measure of weight. In fact, much of what was purchased was based upon matching (balancing) a weight of grain against a standard.

So with the pictured balance clearly in mind, this opening verse tells us that the life we live is to balance out—to have an equivalent weight to something else—so that the two are in balance with each other. We'll find out what our lives are meant to *stack up against* tomorrow!



Return to Ephesians

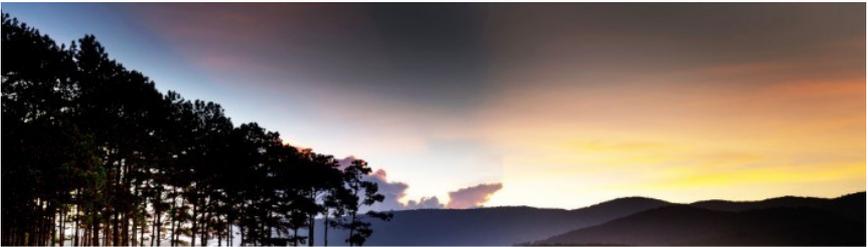
Thursday, March 12

Read Deuteronomy 25

Ephesians 4:1 has taught us that our lives are to *balance the scales* against something—but against what? The answer is also found in Ephesians 4:1:

... the calling to which you were called.

After covering the first three chapters of Ephesians in some detail, we should know exactly what the calling is to which we have been called! It is the tremendous position *in Christ* that is ours as a result of responding in faith to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Ephesians 4:1 is commanding us to live a life (*our experience*) that matches (*is worthy of*) our position—who and what we are *in Christ!*



1 THESSALONIANS 2:12

*to the end that you should walk worthily of God,
who calls you into his own Kingdom and glory.*

Return to Ephesians

Thursday, March 12:

Read Deuteronomy 25 (Continued)

This is a clear statement of God's intent. Christ did not die for us—nor did He make us new creations in Christ—so that we could live sloppy, lackadaisical, or worldly lives as Christians. On the contrary, Ephesians 4:1 states in a marvelously concise fashion, after three chapters of explaining our exalted position, that we are to live a life that is in balance with that position. As you should already realize, this is a very high calling! We'll have to learn more about that calling.

In the meantime, let me reinforce the idea that God intends for our actual walk to be of an equivalent weight to our position in Christ. Consider this scripture:

You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

Deuteronomy 25:13-15

If this is how God feels about *what's fair* in the marketplace, how do you think He feels about the lives lived by those who are His children?

The answer is straightforward:

... walk worthy of the calling to which you were called ...

Ephesians 4:1

Return to Ephesians

Friday, March 13:

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

We are going to go directly from the admonition to *walk worthy*, to the *unity of the Spirit*. And, as we investigate the unity of the Spirit, think Church! For this is so strongly the flow of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus: Christ, the Head of the Church; the Church as God's masterpiece; the Church is the building of which Christ is the Chief Cornerstone; and now, the call to:

... maintain the unity of the spirit (in the Church) **through the bond of peace.** Ephesians 4:3

What I would like you to think about today is the contrast to what the world calls unity and what the Bible is promoting as unity. For the world would like to promote unity for unity's sake. Anything goes and we all have to embrace it. Christians who don't heed this message are labeled as narrow-minded and divisive! But look at our text. True unity starts with character:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:2

The unity the Bible promotes is of the *Spirit*, and is based upon:

... one body, one hope, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all ... Ephesians 4:5-6

This is actually quite an exclusive unity that requires us to conform to God's ways and His plans in order to have unity with others who are likewise doing so.

Return to Ephesians

Friday, March 13:

Read Ephesians 4:1-16 (Continued)

Let's focus on just two of these:

1. One faith means one body of truth—that which has been revealed and preserved in God's Word.
2. One Spirit means that which is spiritual—holy.

In short, our unity is built around the *worthy walk*. Anything else is sin, and that's what breaks unity within a body of believers. Far from embracing all manner of worldliness, this unity is a call to watch our lives and doctrine closely that we might maintain the unity fostered by the filling of the *Spirit*, remembering that the Spirit is holy.



Return to Ephesians

Monday, March 16: Read Romans 11

Let's develop our understanding of the *unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace* by considering both the vertical and the horizontal aspects. First, the vertical. Romans 5:1 makes it clear how we can have peace with God.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...

Once we are clothed with the very righteousness of Christ (justified), the enmity between God and ourselves has been removed. We have peace! The vertical is of utmost importance, as our eternal destination depends upon it.

What about the horizontal? Consider this, if two people have peace with God, what could possibly keep them from having peace with each other? This is the unity wrought by the Spirit of God! This is why the Scripture provides this truth in Galatians 3:28:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one (in unity) **in Christ Jesus.**

Do you see the basis for unity in the Church? It is our oneness in Christ! What could possibly keep us from having unity with one another? How about sin? I am not necessarily suggesting some hidden sin, but much more likely open sins of the character like pride, stubbornness, and self-centeredness. Naturally, these are likely to disturb the unity among brothers and sisters in Christ (the horizontal), and always between us and God (the vertical).

I remind you, this isn't an admonition for how the Church is to interact with the lost, but instead how the Church is to interact among its various members. For it is you and I who are to maintain the *unity of the Spirit!*

Return to Ephesians

Tuesday, March 17: Read I Corinthians 12

Unity in His Church is so precious to our Lord we will spend a few more days pondering it. Consider these points:

1. A lack of unity is at cross purposes to God's plans for His bride:

... just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her ... that He might present her to Himself glorious ... without spot or wrinkle ... that she should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Are you making the application? Disunity in a fellowship is certainly not the absence of spot or blemish.

2. A lack of unity compromises mission readiness:

... on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

Jesus is not building His Church upon factions and infighting. In fact, this kind of church has already succumbed to Satan's strategy.



I also tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18



Continued on the next page.

Return to Ephesians

Tuesday, March 17:

Read I Corinthians 12 (Continued)

3. A church with disunity dishonors the Lord because it sends the wrong message, as noted in Ephesians 3:9-10.

... God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the Church to principalities and powers in the heavenly places ...

Have you ever thought about the possibility that some of the stuff that goes on in churches causes the elect angels to hang their heads in shame and the demons to laugh in derision. May we never be the cause.

4. Disunity provides an opening for the accuser of the saints—for he is a *wedge-driver!*

... for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Revelation 12:10

Satan loves to find a little crack of disunity within a local fellowship, and then just *drive the wedge* until he causes a split of disunity if not geography.

5. A lack of unity renders the body dysfunctional:

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased ... And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it (honor), that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

I Corinthians 12:18-25

This topic of unity seems to be quite important to our Lord. I trust you and I both have a growing appreciation and will be on guard against any disunity.

Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, March 18: Read Philipians 2

After investigating the threats to unity, let's consider the kinds of things that promote unity:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:2

These four qualities—humility, gentleness, patience, and love—could be called the *four graces* for they depend upon the character of the one displaying them and not the merit of the one receiving them. A few things for you to consider:

1. These four qualities cannot really be displayed unless the recipient is undeserving. You have not really displayed patience until circumstances conspire to make you impatient!
2. Humility is to have a low (proper) view of oneself. In ancient times it was used to describe a river during the dry season. We have a lot of humble rivers around Tucson. In the same way, the people of God should have a lowly view of themselves while at the same time an elevated view of their position *in Christ*.



EPHESIANS 4:2 WEB

*with all lowliness and
humility, with
patience, bearing with
one another in love;*



Continued on the next page.

Return to Ephesians

Wednesday, March 18: Read Philippians 2 (Continued)

And, our Lord demonstrated this for us, for:

He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:8



3. Morris defines *gentleness* this way:

... gentleness is a virtue of the strong, those who could exert force to get their own way, but choose not to.

4. *Patience* has the equally good translation of long-suffering. Ruth Paxson explained it this way:

Patience "... is an unweariable spirit that is so strengthened by Christ that it outlasts the blasts of pain and provocation."

5. Finally, consider the term *bearing in love*. Harry A. Ironside defines it this way:

... lovingly putting up with all that is disagreeable in other people.

There is much more we could add, but do you see how allowing these four manifestations of godly character would go a long way toward maintaining the unity of the Spirit in our local fellowship? Unity is not complicated, just challenging!

Back to the Foundations

Thursday, March 19:

Read Exodus 15:22-17:7

As we return to conclude our investigation of faith as one of the *Foundations of the Christian Life*, we are going to take up a very important aspect of faith, which is commonly referred to as *The Rest of Faith!*

Let me introduce the topic this way:

1. For every child of God the choices we make have consequences. One of those choices is whether or not we will trust God to superintend over the challenging circumstances of this life.
2. The choice of whether or not we will trust Him determines whether or not our life will be lived in a spiritual wilderness of our own making, or a place of spiritual rest!
3. The Exodus generation is the perfect illustration of how this will play out down through the centuries—even to our day! We are going to spend most of our time in the Book of Hebrews, but first we need the backstory provided in Exodus and Numbers. Today's reading gives you a taste for how well the redeemed Israelites do when facing a challenge. When they ran into a no water situation after crossing the Red Sea:

... the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

Exodus 15:24

Continued on the next page.

Back to the Foundations

Thursday, March 19:

Read Exodus 15:22-17:7 (Continued)

When they faced a shortage of food:

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron ... “you have brought us into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

Exodus 16:2-3

Then, once again facing a lack of water, they grumbled against Moses:

“Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?” Exodus 17:3

Moses labeled this desert location: Massah and Meribah, which means *to test* and *to quarrel*. As we shall see, they were not ultimately testing and quarreling with Moses, but with God! How do you think that is going to turn out for them?

As I mentioned at the start, it is possible to live out our lives in a spiritual wilderness of our own making! To be sure, all of these were very serious situations. But haven't they seen God redeem them from Egypt through the ten plagues? Haven't they seen God blow open the Red Sea? Aren't they in the process of seeing Him supernaturally provide for them through one serious need after another? Yes!

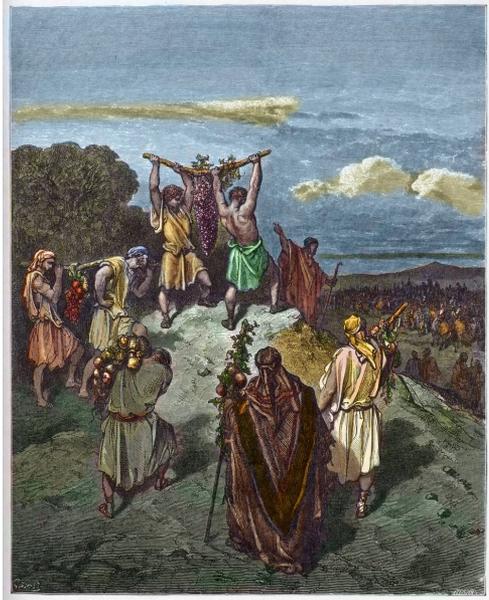
At what point do you suppose God's people should begin to trust Him? We'll continue this investigation tomorrow.

Back to the Foundations

Friday, March 20: Read Numbers 14

We will spend one more day to get the full backstory on the Children of Israel in the desert. In Numbers 13, Moses has sent spies into the *Promised Land*. When they return, all that ten of the spies can talk about are the giants in the Land. They admit that God was right about the bounty of the land, but they sow fear and doubt about having any chance of conquering a land filled with giants.

Two of the spies tell a different story simply because their faith is in a *large* God! Caleb and Joshua report on the bounty, report on the giants, and then say:



... "The Land we passed through is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land ... the Lord is with us. ..."

Numbers 14:7-9

Continued on the next page.

Back to the Foundations

Friday, March 20: Read Numbers 14

(Continued)

But the people would not listen. They have been testing God and quarreling about His faithfulness, and now they are going to go too far. You saw in today's reading God's response:

"How long will these people treat Me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe Me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

Numbers 14:11

It is helpful to realize the above has actually happened in reverse: The people have seen many signs of God's omnipotence as He provides for their every need; yet they refused to believe time after time. Finally God calls this what it is—contempt for Him. As you noted in today's reading, God tells Moses He is going to wipe out the unfaithful nation and start over. But Moses pleads with God, and here is God's response:

... "I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw My glory and the miraculous signs ... not one of them will ever see the Land I promised on oath to their forefathers. ..."

Numbers 14:20-23

There you have it: No one over 20 years of age was going to enter the Promised Land except for the faithful Joshua and Caleb. The people died in a wilderness of their own making simply because they refused to learn to trust God—to enter what we are going to learn is called the *rest of faith!* We are now ready for the truths of Hebrews Chapters 3 and 4, where we'll pick up Monday.

Back to the Foundations

Monday, March 23: Read Hebrews 3:7-19

Although we are now in the New Testament, the first thing is to make sure we realize that the writer of Hebrews is using the exact same text of Scripture we have been looking at for the past two days. Notice that the Holy Spirit says:

"... time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried Me and for forty years saw what I did."

Hebrews 3:8-9

That is the Massah and Meribah of Exodus 17. And then Verse 16 makes it absolutely clear:

"Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?"

What we have accomplished is to arrive at a portion of New Testament guidance for the church that is going to use Old Testament characters as an illustration. What is the illustration? The Israelites refusing to learn to trust God, and so they were not allowed into the Promised Land.

Am I sure? Absolutely:

"That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said their hearts are always going astray ... So I declared on oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My rest.'"

Hebrews 3:10-11

In fact, at the close of Chapter 3, the writer of Hebrews sums up the problem in this way:

So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Hebrews 3:19

Persistent unbelief is a serious problem for the Christian.

Continued on the next page.

Back to the Foundations

Monday, March 23: Read Hebrews 3:7-19 (Continued)

We have seen the negative side of unbelief, it angers God and leads to discipline for those He loves. Let's be sure we see the positive side. Here is the beautiful admonition from today's reading (Hebrews 3:12-14) broken into manageable pieces:

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

A heart that fails to trust has entered into the realm of sin, and has at that point turned from God.

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Sin deceives, while God promises blessing. Worse yet, ongoing unbelief leads to a heart *hardened* to spiritual things.

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first.

It is so clearly stated: We came to Christ in faith and He wants us to keep trusting Him for everything we need—day in and day out. If we do, we will have come to *share in Christ!* The idea is that we will be in partnership with Him and what He is doing. Is this a reasonable thing for the Christian to do? Oh yes!

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through Him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. II Corinthians 1:20

Back to the Foundations

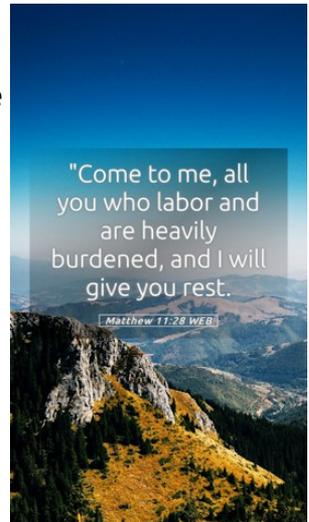
Tuesday, March 24: Read Hebrews 4:1-11

Our topic of study has been that of faith, and today we finally arrive at one particularly important aspect—the believer's *rest of faith*. You can see it immediately in Verse 1:

Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.

There is this thing called *God's rest*—it is a rest of faith and it is possible for the Christian to miss out on it. How could that be? All that has to happen is for us to do the same thing that the Israelites did when they came out of Egypt! If we fail to combine the promises of God with faith, we too will fall short of the place of rest God has in mind for every believer.

Before we continue, let me try to explain what this place of rest actually is. For the Jews, it was the Promised Land. It was God's intent for the Jews to leave their life of slavery, leave the trials of the wilderness and live in a land flowing with milk and honey and in relationship with their God.



For the believer today, who is part of the Church, God's rest is a place of contentment, calm, and peace with our eyes *fixed on Jesus* and trusting Him to provide all that we need.

Continued on the next page.

Back to the Foundations

Tuesday, March 24:

Read Hebrews 4:1-11 (Continued)

The good news is that:

There remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;
Hebrews 4:9

The first thing we have to do to enter this rest is to stop working for it!

... for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work ...
Hebrews 4:10

But there is something we do need to do:

Let us therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.
Hebrews 4:11

The phrase *make every effort* is one word in the Greek language, and it means to be quick to do something, diligent to do it, with an understanding it is going to take effort. When the believer faces any kind of trial or difficult circumstance, what is he or she to do? They are to be *quick to the Word of God, diligent to see what it has to say, that they might put their faith in the truths and promises that are ours!* If we do so, here is the promise: We will enter a place of rest! It is called a *rest*, because we are simply taking God at His Word and trusting Him to do what we cannot.

Here is another way of describing this very same *rest* that I find very encouraging:

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.
Isaiah 26:3

What does it take to have perfect peace and rest? Trusting in the Lord!

Back to the Foundations

Wednesday, March 25: Read Habakkuk 1-2

I want to close this introduction to the topic of faith by sharing something I call the *choreography of faith*. In the same way the steps of every dancer in a major production are carefully choreographed, so too the believer is called to a variety of ways in which to implement faith as part of the Christian Life. Let's start with our stand:

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith ...

I Corinthians 16:13

From there we can move on to our walk:

We walk by faith, not by sight. II Corinthians 5:7

In fact, our entire life is to be lived by faith:

**The life I live in the body,
I live by faith in the Son
of God, who loved me
and gave Himself for me.**

Galatians 2:20

Given the preceding, it should be no surprise that at times we are going to have to fight:

Fight the good fight of the faith.

I Timothy 6:12

Continued on the next page.



Back to the Foundations

Wednesday, March 25:

Read Habakkuk 1-2 (Continued)

By now we should know that the Christian Life is not a sprint but rather a marathon. And our heart's desire should be to one day say:

... I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

II Timothy 4:7



Will it be worth it? It is how we come to be partakers with Christ:

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first.

Hebrews 3:14

How do we hold firmly to our initial confidence? By faith!

It is no wonder that God's answer to His prophet Habakkuk, as he struggled to understand

the plans and purposes of God, was *the righteous will live by his faith*. (Habakkuk 2:4) Further, God has seen fit to have this passage quoted three times in the New Testament. Surely we have all the evidence we need to be convinced that God is looking for a people who will live in dependent trust in who He is and what He has revealed to us in His Word!

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

The Mission and Disciplines

Thursday, March 26: Read Psalm 95

We are back to our study of the Mission and Disciplines of the Christian Life. As a reminder, this study has caused us to think about the mission we have from the Lord to "Go and make disciples ..." Furthermore, there are also a number of disciplines associated with the Christian life including regular intake of the Word of God, regular prayer, and now we turn to the subject of worship.

The most important thing that I would like you to grasp from this study is the way that both our *Mission* and *Disciplines* are inseparably linked. If we try to isolate them, we do so at our own peril. I am not saying one aspect is more important than the other, I am saying that you are not really fulfilling the call to *make disciples* unless you are involved in Bible study, prayer, and now worship.

Take prayer for example. If you are not praying for the lost people to whom the Lord allows you the privilege of sharing the Gospel, and if you are not praying for those you are mentoring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, then you are not fully engaged in disciple-making! Conversely, if you are not engaged in disciple-making, then you are not really engaged in worship.

Perhaps you are thinking, "What does disciple-making have to do with worship? I worship regularly, I am just not gifted in the area of disciple-making." Here is the connection.

Continued on the next page.

The Mission and Disciplines

**Thursday, March 26:
Read Psalm 95 (continued)**

Matthew 28:18-20, and many other passages, command the followers of Jesus to be involved in disciple-making.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*” Amen.

How can we truly be engaged in worship if we have chosen to ignore a clear command from our sovereign Lord? For that matter, wouldn't worship be compromised any time we are apathetic toward the Word of God or allow unbelief and worldly pressures to take hold. I hope you will come to see there is a harmony between our mission and the various disciplines of the Christian Life. Stated another way, if we respond as we are called to in the first verses of Psalm 95:

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation ...



If we are truly engaged in worship, wouldn't this naturally spill over into our lives by telling others about the Rock of our salvation? Of course it would. Worship leads to a heart so full that it naturally overflows with what has filled it!

The Mission and Disciplines

Friday, March 27: Read Revelation 4

I am going to try to promote your understanding of worship by using the breadth of Scripture. Consider:

- This fascinating passage in Genesis connects mankind to our Creator in a captivating way.

Let Us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness ... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female ...

Genesis 1:26-27

- Man was placed in a perfect environment and interacted face to face with God on a regular basis. (Genesis 3:8)
- Though a fallen creation, it is still possible for those who turn back to the Lord to undergo a transformation that glorifies God.

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

- Then from today's reading:

... for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 4:11 (KJV)

Before reading further, go back and put the above four points together and see what you get!

I trust you discovered something like the following: In keeping with the purposes of God, and for His pleasure, He created mankind. He created man with the capacity for, and intent of, having fellowship, building relationship, and reflecting His glory. In short, mankind was made for _____! When I fill in the blank, I come to the conclusion that the word worship is the best fit. What do you think? More to come in the next few days.

The Mission and Disciplines

Monday, March 30: Read Acts 17

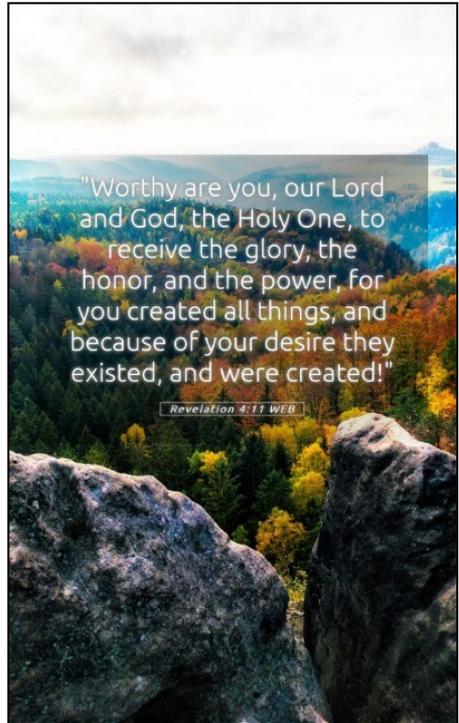
Let me open with the verse that closed yesterday's lesson:

... for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Revelation 4:11 (KJV)

If it is true that God created mankind in order to have a relationship with Him—one that included man as both a reflector of God's glory and as a creature that would choose to worship his Creator—then all of a sudden a lot of things fall into place.

Some reject the notion of a loving personal God who cares about each person. But if we were created for worship and relationship, if this worship and relationship gives God pleasure, then it is no longer such a stretch to think that He would care about me and seek to restore me to relationship with Himself.

Now that I know what I was made for, it is no wonder that He knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13) It is no wonder that all the days for me were written in His book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:16) It is no wonder that He has put eternity in my heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and deep calls to deep (Psalm 42:7).



The Mission and Disciplines

Monday, March 30: Read Acts 17

(Continued)

In fact, this very issue of worship infuses history with meaning. What we call history is in reality a great redemptive story in which God has provided a means of reconciliation, is calling lost mankind back to Himself, and is restoring all things to the way He intended them to be. That's what the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21 is, in part, about. In the meantime, as A. W. Tozer has said, most of mankind is in a deep, deep fog regarding the reason for his existence. Mankind has a *spiritual amnesia* as to why he exists and his purpose in life.

This is so easy to prove. The ancient Greeks claimed the goal of life was to obtain the highest form of knowledge. (Plato) The Epicureans claimed it was pleasure, while out of the enlightenment came reason and social order. The Nihilists claimed life is without objective order and it is absurd to search for any such thing. Existentialism dogmatically asserts that life's meaning isn't determined by some god, but each of us creates his or her own meaning. Then there is the Christian, who against all this worldly wisdom, calmly asserts:

God made me, He calls me to reconciliation through the work of His Son, to know Him, to bring glory to Him, to spend eternity with Him. He has given me a mission to engage in rescuing others as I have been rescued, and I have Christ within the hope of glory.

That's the testimony you will hear when the fog of amnesia lifts, and that's a Christian who understands his or her mission because he has spent time in worship.

The Mission and Disciplines

Tuesday, March 31: Read Revelation 5

Perhaps by this time you are thinking, “Can you tell me plainly, what is worship?” The English word carries the idea of *to place worth upon an object*. Both the Hebrew and Greek words focus on the position of the body, that is to kneel or to prostrate oneself (to lie on the ground before). You can see this concept in Revelation 4 and 5:

... the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever.

Revelation 4:10

... the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb.

Revelation 5:8

I think of worship as the outcome of *sorting out* priorities and then *aligning oneself* with them. In other words, determining what (or who) is most important, and then giving that object its due. See if you can see that occurring in both this famous definition of worship by Archbishop Temple and in the closing verses of Revelation 5.

Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose—all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable.

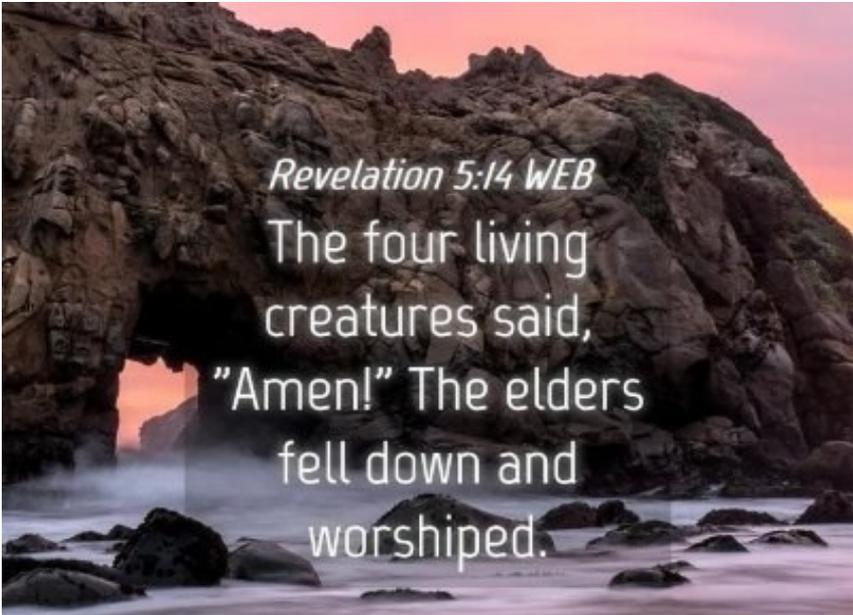
Temple

The Mission and Disciplines

Tuesday, March 31: Read Revelation 5 (Continued)

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped. Revelation 5:13-14

We must sort out Who, and Who alone is worthy of worship, and then fall in delight before the Father and the Son!



VISTOSO



Community Church

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

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