

July 2026

Daily Devotional



**Your testimonies are my
heritage forever, for they are
the joy of my heart.**

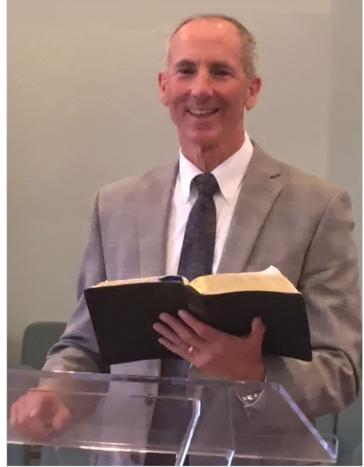
Psalm 119:111 ESV

Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

Our cover Scripture for this month tells us that the truths God has revealed in His Word are our heritage forever. What is more, they are meant to bring joy to our hearts. When I consider this month's readings in Romans, Ephesians, Psalms, and John, I find much that should both bring joy to our hearts, and to which we should most certainly hold fast.

I trust you will be blessed by your time in God's Word this coming month.



In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "K" and "R".

Kevin Redig

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

Reading in Romans

Wednesday, July 1: Read Romans 9

Let's use today's reading to ask and answer a very simple question: *"Why has Israel been set aside for a time, while God instead works through a predominantly Gentile Church?"*

The answer is stated in crystal clear terms, right at the end of Romans 9!

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith ...

Romans 9:30

We know how God has been able to bless a Gentile Church, they obtained God's righteousness through faith in the salvation provided by Jesus Christ. That truth is very clearly developed back in the third chapter of Romans:

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Romans 3:22

But why was Israel set aside? Today's reading addresses that as well:

... but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

Romans 9:31-32

The Jews thought they could *work* their way to a righteousness that would be acceptable to God. They stumbled at the truth of Romans 3:10: *There is none who is righteous, No, not one.*

Continued on the next page.

Reading in Romans

Wednesday, July 1: Read Romans 9

(Continued)

Likewise they stumbled at the truth that righteousness could be found through faith in a crucified Messiah, and in no other way. Is there any way for this monumental failure of the Jews to be addressed? I'll give you a sneak preview of Romans 11:

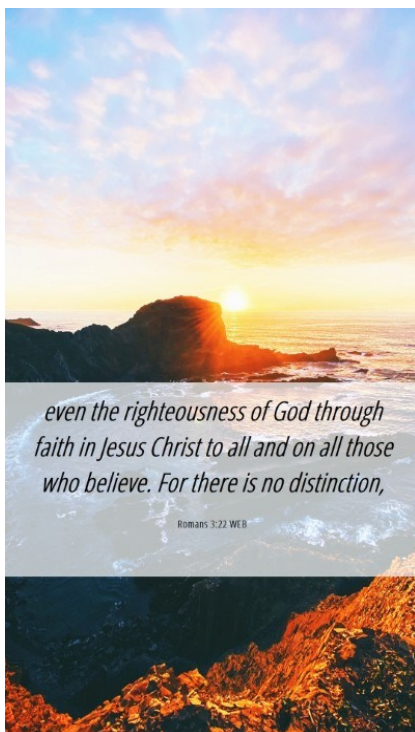
And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Romans 11:23

In short, the Jews simply need to do what every member of the human race needs to do:

- Recognize their sinful condition before a holy God
- Push aside their own efforts to earn a righteousness acceptable to God
- Instead put their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, believing that as a result, God will impute His righteousness to each and every one who believes.

This is grace, and this is God's way of saving lost mankind! Praise Him for it!



Reading in Romans

Thursday, July 2: Read Romans 10

Let's work at reinforcing the truth of what we considered yesterday by answering the question: *"Is God done with the Jews? Did their rejection of Christ render them unable to be saved?"* Paul doesn't think so:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. Romans 10:1

What is keeping them from being saved? Yesterday we saw that it is a combination of rejecting Christ and seeking to be saved by means of *law-keeping*. What does our text today tell us? The short answer is almost exactly the same thing! See if you can see it in this text:

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Romans 10:3-4

Because the Jews rejected Christ, they were unable to *know* the imputed righteousness that God was so desirous to provide. Instead, they sought to do it their own way. But we can never be good enough. Righteousness is available for everyone, but only received by those who believe in the person and work of Christ!

Is this still the case today? Absolutely! "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for:

... "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

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Reading in Romans

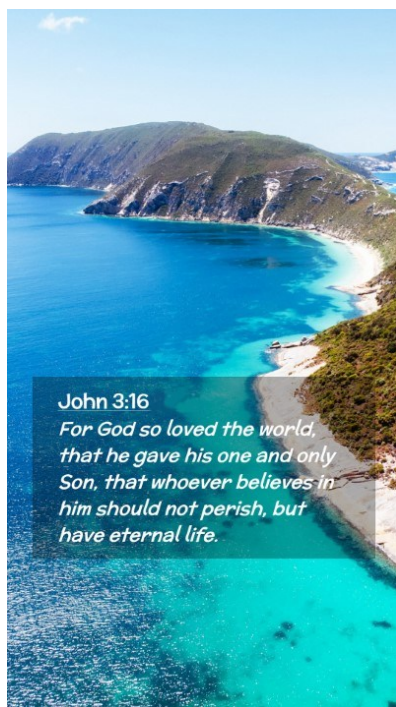
Thursday, July 2: Read Romans 10

(Continued)

There may remain an ethnic difference between Jew and Gentile, but not when it comes to how either is saved for all eternity. For both, salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

What do you suppose it means to call upon the Name of the Lord? How about to put your faith in who Jesus Christ is—the eternal Son of God who took on humanity to represent all of us—and to put your faith in what He has done—went to the cross for the express purpose of paying sins penalty for each and every one of us as He bore our sin.

The Father was so satisfied with the work of His Son that He raised Him from the dead and seated Him in the place of greatest honor in the entire universe. What Jesus did for us was so efficacious that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that *Jesus is Lord* to the glory of God! And, all God's people said, "Amen!"



Reading in Romans

Friday, July 3: Read Romans 11

This is the third and final chapter of this three chapter parentheses to make sure the Church understands that Israel most certainly has a future. For today, I would like to focus on the following portion of text:

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in ... and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches ... they were broken off because of unbelief and you stand by faith ... if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Romans 11:17-23

The branches that have been *broken off* are the Jewish people who make up the nation of Israel. The text tells us why they were broken off because they responded to the coming of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, in unbelief!

Now the Church, predominantly Gentile in nature, is the recipient of the blessings promised to Abraham—not land or a kingdom—but spiritual blessings. Notice, however, as I have been telling you, the history of Israel is not over. Also note how the Church has clearly not replaced Israel! They remain separate entities throughout this passage. Further, should the Jews turn in faith to their Messiah, the text is very clear that God will restore them to their former place of blessing!

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Reading in Romans

Friday, July 3: Read Romans 11

(Continued)

Can we be sure of this? Absolutely! Just a few verses later, we have a summary of the current situation for the Jewish people, and their future!

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved ...

Romans 11:25-26

Once the Church has completed its mission, then the Lord will again turn His full attention to Israel, and they will be saved. As the passage has already made clear, that refers to all those who will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. Unbelief has been hard on the Jewish people. In fact, it is hard on all of us. It is so much better, as the Lord calls, to respond in faith.



HEBREWS 11:6

Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to him, for he who comes to God must believe that ~~the~~ he exists, and that ~~he~~ he is a rewarder of those who seek him.



Finishing Ephesians

Monday, July 6: Read Ephesians 6:1-11

At the end of today's reading, we arrive at, "*Finally* ..." in Verse 10. After everything we have covered in this great book, it wouldn't be the least bit surprising if the book closed with something like, "... and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." But I've got news for you! This little word *finally* is not something we should take lightly or gloss over. For rather than closing out the book with a platitude, Paul sounds the trumpet and calls us to battle.

Paul knows that we are being called to *walk worthy* of who and what we are in the Lord—all the while living in enemy-held territory. So he is going to close his great epistle with revelations regarding our adversary, as well as God's provision for how we might stand firm as the Lord's representative in a hostile environment and against the devil's schemes.

So, by way of introduction, consider two things:

1. This passage is not directed to church leadership or those with certain gifts. It is addressed to *my brethren*. In other words, none of us dare ignore this passage as if it applies to someone else. This is a very serious call to each one of us to be prepared, for we are in a desperate struggle—every single one of us and our believing extended families too!
2. You likely know what is coming in this passage, for it is a famous passage about the armor of God. Perhaps you have a picture in mind of something like that at the right, but, in reality, this is meant to be a call to the Church, not the individual.



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Finishing Ephesians

Monday, July 6: Read Ephesians 6:1-11 (Continued)

It is a message to us. If Satan hears of the work we are doing in our part of town—the lost getting saved, the saved growing in grace and knowledge, and our keen interest in the Great Commission—he will come to investigate. It is our goal that, as he tops the hill, this is what he will find.



You see, the devil comes seeking to sow error, to create dissension, and to distract us from our mission. Instead, we want him to see that there is not one single weakness to exploit. If we are so equipped, spiritually speaking, then our church will be the kind against which the Gates of Hades will not prevail!

Now such a strong illustration might be making you a bit uncomfortable, and we are going to learn that we are opposed by a formidable and determined foe. But, there is good news right from the start:

... the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

I John 4:4

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, July 7: Read Psalm 18

In our understanding of the Christian's spiritual warfare, there is a mistake we want to avoid right from the very beginning. The talk of warfare and spiritual armor can prompt us to think, "Ok, give me the armor. I am ready to go out there and do battle for the Lord!" No, no, no—don't think that way for even a moment! Look carefully at how this final section in Ephesians begins:

... be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Ephesians 6:10

The phrase, *be strong*, is a verb in the passive voice which means it is something we receive. We are to receive the strength that is *in the Lord*! The only power in view is the *power of His might*! The focus is on other than ourselves: Receive strength in the Lord, His might! In ourselves we are completely insufficient to do battle in the spiritual realm. That's why, over and over, the Scriptures point us to the all-sufficient One, and do so using the terms of the battlefield:

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.

Psalm 18:2

And, one of my favorites put to music and sung many times with my children:

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Proverbs 18:10

So, as we progress in our study, consider this point of application: To think of ourselves as a solitary warrior is a huge mistake (see yesterday's devotional) To look to our own strength is an even bigger error! Look at the armor to come: Girded with truth (whose truth?), wearing the breastplate of righteousness (whose righteousness?), feet shod with the Gospel (whose good news?). Do you see it? The Lord, and He alone, is our strong tower!

Finishing Ephesians

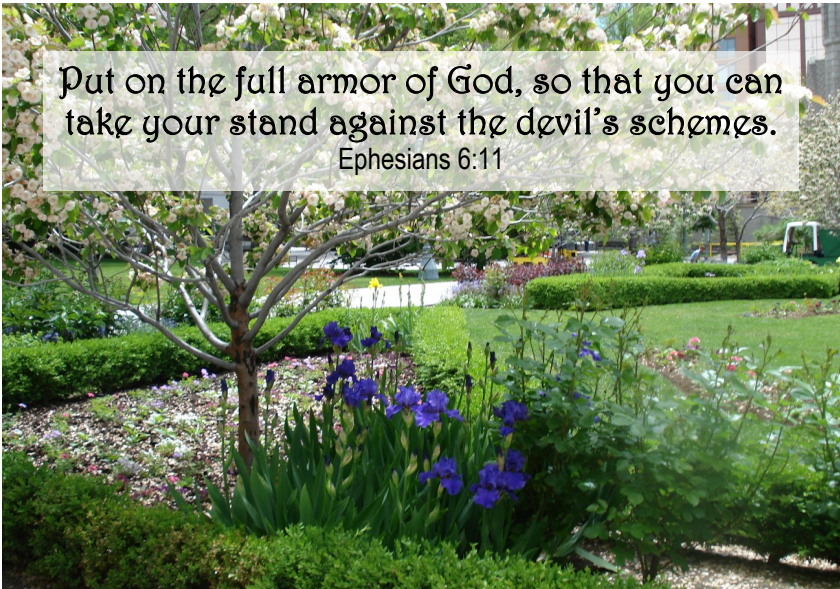
Wednesday, July 8: Read Hebrews 2

Here is a question for you: “Why all this concern about *being strong in the Lord and putting on the full armor of God?*” The answer is:

... so that you can stand against the Devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:11

Now perhaps you are thinking that this is a reference to evil in general, bad karma, or anything else but a reference to an evil and powerful angel who is in rebellion against his Creator. If you are, you are not alone, for a recent Barna survey showed that 90% of Americans believe in God but two-thirds of them do not believe in the Devil. This may be a popular view, but it is a grievous error for the Christian. And, this error has been promulgated from many a pulpit.



Put on the full armor of God, so that you can
take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:11

Finishing Ephesians

Wednesday, July 8: Read Hebrews 2

(Continued)

I recently read an article by a pastor who said:

God has never created an evil spirit; all such ideas and nomenclature are symbols expressing the mere human or earthly nature of man.

God didn't create evil, but one of His most beautiful creations most certainly did become evil as the result of rebellion. It's time to spend some time understanding our adversary. We'll cover seven points over three days:

1. Our antagonist is a being! He is not a cosmic force, impersonal idea, or the fallen nature within.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (Jesus) likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 2:14-15

The writer of Hebrews certainly believes we have a personal adversary.

2. Then, consider these Biblical contexts:

The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Job 1:7

The Tempter came to Him (Jesus) and said, "If you are the Son of God ..."

Matthew 4:1-11

In context, this cannot be an impersonal force, but a very personal evil being. More to consider tomorrow.

Finishing Ephesians

Thursday, July 9: Read Ezekiel 28

We continue with point three of seven in the discussion we began yesterday about understanding our adversary:

3. Lucifer was an angelic creation that came perfect from the hand of God. The name Lucifer means light-bearer or morning star. (Isaiah 14:12) He was declared to be an anointed cherub:

... the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty ... Ezekiel 28:12

Despite his exalted position, Scripture declares:

Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. Ezekiel 28:17

4. So this perfect and beautiful creature sinned:

By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned ... Ezekiel 28:16

The word translated *trading* literally means that which passes through the hands. Although this is not the place to develop this definition fully, let me suggest that as the guardian cherub of God's throne room, that which passed *through his hands* was praise for God. His prideful heart resented all this praise being given to God and he longed to divert some to himself:

"... I will raise my throne above the stars of God ... I will make myself like the Most High." Isaiah 14:13-14

As an illustration of what happened, imagine a pastor who, in pride, thinks far too highly of himself and begins to think *his* church depends upon him! A fall is coming, isn't it?

Finishing Ephesians

Thursday, July 9: Read Ezekiel 28

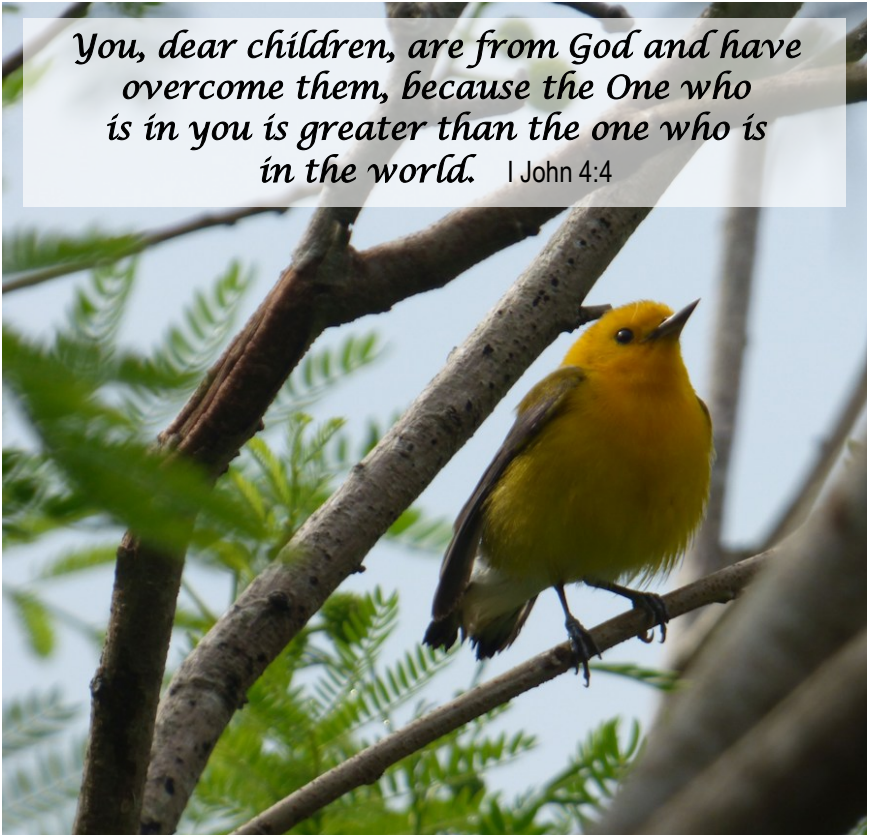
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5. And so, Lucifer became Satan—the adversary of God—and was expelled from heaven. Furthermore, when Satan rebelled against God, he convinced a third of the angelic host to follow him. (Revelation 12:4) We'll spend one more day developing our understanding of our adversary, but, again, I feel compelled to remind you:

... the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

I John 4:4

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. I John 4:4



Finishing Ephesians

Friday, July 10: Read Ephesians 6:12

Picking up where we left off yesterday with Points 6 and 7:

6. Our adversary sits at the top of a fully fleshed out organizational chart. We dare not underestimate his power or contingent. His minions include one-third of the angelic host. Plus, as we saw in today's reading, he has a well-established organization:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

This verse sounds striking in English but doesn't really reveal much. The word *principalities* means that which is first. *Rulers* is a lesser word and in the plural along with the word hosts. What this is communicating to us is that the demonic host consists of a commander, his generals, and the rank and file demon army.

7. Satan's influence is in two areas: First, he is the:

... prince of the power of the air ...

Ephesians 2:2

This is a reference to his leadership of his demonic host. Second:

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

I John 5:19

This means that a malevolent and intelligent being stands behind every anti-god theory of academia (evolution, big-bang), behind every enslaving political system (socialism/communism), and behind every evil

Finishing Ephesians

Friday, July 10: Read Ephesians 6:12 (Continued)

social policy (abortion). Further, he seeks to use the human race as pawns in his rebellion against the God of Glory!

I know many will think that statement is far too strong. I beg to differ upon the authority of God's Word:

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

Revelation 12:9

No wonder God tells us to be on guard and to depend upon Him!



1 John 5:19

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

Finishing Ephesians

Monday, July 13: Read Matthew 4

Perhaps you are wondering how Satan became the ruler of this world? Let me give you a few things to consider:

1. In Genesis 1:26:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness, and let them rule ... over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

2. However, by Genesis 3, man had rebelled against the command of God and instead obeyed Satan. At this point, I would suggest that dominion over the earth was transferred from Adam to Satan.
3. That brings us to today's reading:

Again, the devil took Him (Jesus) up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Matthew 4:8-9

Satan is promising to place Jesus over all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would just worship him. Notice that Jesus makes no effort to refute whether or not these kingdoms are Satan's to give. Apparently they are. Instead, He simply refuses to worship.

There is an important point of eschatology here, for all of the kingdoms of the world will be under the sovereignty of Jesus when He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords at His Second Advent.

Finishing Ephesians

Monday, July 13: Read Matthew 4

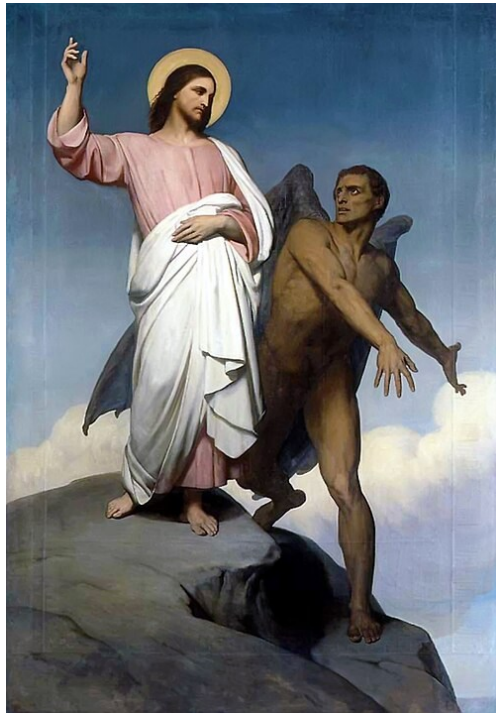
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What Satan is actually doing is tempting Jesus to bypass the cross. Jesus refuses as He keeps His eyes firmly upon the Father's plan.

4. So until Jesus returns, things will remain as they have been since the fall of man, and we need to know:

... that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

I John 5:19



Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, July 14: Read Colossians 1

I would like you to consider today the greatness of the redemption God has provided through His Son. You see mankind was made to have fellowship with God, but was taken captive by the deceitful wiles of Satan and our own failure to trust. Now, every human being is born as a slave in Satan's dominion—hopeless, helpless, and hell-bound!

But, because of His love for His creation, God the Father devised a plan by which mankind could be redeemed from the clutches of Satan and be restored to relationship with Him. His Son carried out the plan, accomplishing what we could never have accomplished on our own. Consider these questions and their Scriptural answers:

- **What was the price of this redemption?**

It was beyond anything we could ever pay:

For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

I Peter 1:18-19



Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, July 14: Read Colossians 1 (Continued)

- **Was this plan of redemption effective?**

It was spectacularly effective:

You (Jesus) are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. Revelation 5:9-10

- **Is it even possible to escape Satan's dominion?**

God can do it:

For He has rescued us from 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

- **How do we obtain this redemption?**

Only through believing in Jesus.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ...

Ephesians 1:7

- **Just how is it that we obtain the status of *in Him*?**

We can only obtain that status when we turn to Him in faith:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of truth ... Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13

Praise God, our Redeemer lives!

Back to the Psalms

Wednesday, July 15: Read Psalm 29

This Psalm is very clearly meant to promote worship. To that end, I trust it might be helpful in our lives. Let me suggest that entering into God-honoring worship is something we are not very good at doing. There are a number of reasons for this—first and foremost is that worship requires our full and undivided attention. There are so many distractions in this world, that we rarely set aside the time and the necessary mental energy to give the Lord His due!

To help address this shortcoming, God has communicated a principle throughout His Word called *The Fear of the Lord*! Here is one way to define this concept which I find helpful:

The Fear of the Lord is a Recognition of who God is as Creator of all things; a Reverence for what He is like in terms of His attributes such as sovereignty, holiness, and love; and a Respect for His capability to reach into this world at any time and place of His choosing to bring to fruition whatever He desires.

So what does this have to do with worship? Quieting the soul and mentally working from *Recognition* to *Reverence* to *Respect* is very helpful in bringing us to the point of worship. Then, once our souls have been properly prepared, Psalm 29 will complete the job, for we continue from *the Fear of the Lord* right on into ascribing:

... to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.

Psalm 29:2

As we give the Lord His due, worship results! As we do so, we should begin to hear the voice of the Lord: *powerful* and majestic! (Psalm 29:3-5)

Back to the Psalms

Wednesday, July 15: Read Psalm 29

(Continued)

Are we really focused on the Lord—correctly thinking about Him as He is and engaged in worship? If so, then let me suggest that:

The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And all in His temple cry, "Glory!"

Psalm 29:9

In the quietness of our own souls, our voices should be joining with all those engaged in worship calling out "Glory!" And, not only is worship God's rightful due, it comes back as a blessing to us:

The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace.

Psalm 29:11



Back to the Psalms

Thursday, July 16: Read Psalm 32

As you can see in today's reading, the subject matter of the Psalms varies greatly. Yesterday our subject was worship, today that of forgiveness! Verses 1 and 2 get right to the heart of the matter:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Psalm 32:1-2

Forgiveness and covering (atonement) of sin is found in one place and one place only—the Lord Jesus Christ!

In Him we have redemption, through His blood the forgiveness of sins ...

Ephesians 1:7

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. I John 2:2

How do we avail ourselves of such wonderful blessing—the reality that God will *cover* our sins and never count them against us? First, we must see that we are unrighteous in and of ourselves:

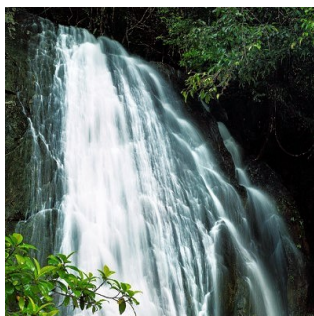
There is none righteous, no, not one ...

Romans 3:10

From this helpless condition, we turn in faith to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Through Him [Jesus] everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Acts 13:39



ROMANS 3:10

*As it is written,
"There is no one
righteous. No, not
one."*



Back to the Psalms

Thursday, July 16: Read Psalm 32

(Continued)

To be justified is to be declared righteous in God's sight. As soon as that occurs as the result of faith in Christ, we can receive ongoing forgiveness as we confess those sins that might occur day-to-day.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:9

As the psalmist makes clear, this is something we have to monitor very carefully in our lives. For:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me ...

Psalm 32:3-4

David tried to cover up his sin and live as if he didn't have a problem between himself and the Lord. As you can see in today's reading, that didn't work out too well for him. Eventually he came to his senses:

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"—and You forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 32:5

A wise man many years ago told me, "*Always keep short accounts!*" By that he meant don't let sins accumulate—always confess them as soon as you become aware they have occurred. In light of Psalm 32 that seems to be very good advice, for:

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. Psalm 32:2

Back to the Psalms

Friday, July 17: Read Psalm 33

If you would like something to help promote worship during your quiet time with the Lord, this psalm is an excellent choice. We are directed towards praise in the very first verse:

... it is fitting for the upright to praise Him.

We are given one reason after another, beginning with the following:

He is faithful in all He does ... the earth is full of His unfailing love. Psalm 33:4-5

Then, the psalmist takes us in a surprising direction:

By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth. Psalm 33:6

Genesis 1 gives the unmistakable impression that God created the material universe ex nihilo—out of nothing. This verse reinforces and adds additional information—God spoke this universe into being—including all the starry host!

How awesome is our God. But that is not all.

For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded and it stood firm. Psalm 33:9

The material universe, in which we live, exists to this very day for no other reason than God has commanded it to stand firm! The New Testament elaborates further:

For by Him [Jesus] all things were created ... He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16-17

Back to the Psalms

Friday, July 17: Read Psalm 33

(Continued)

Jesus is identified as the One who spoke our material universe into being, and is now the One who is sustaining it until He is ready to usher in a new heaven and a new earth as described in Revelation 21. Now, don't lose sight of the message of Psalm 33! We praise our God because He is faithful, loving, and the Creator of all things! Is it any wonder the psalmist directs mankind as follows:

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him. Psalm 33:8

We know they will not, but what is our excuse. A God who is powerful enough to speak the universe into being—and is faithful and loving at the same time—is most certainly worthy of our worship and praise! And so, along with the psalmist, we can bring a simple request to the Lord:

May Your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in You. Psalm 33:22



Back to the Psalms

Monday, July 20: Read Psalm 36

The one who seeks to live an upright life before the Lord will often face a vexing problem—the problem of evil in this world. Further, that evil is not passive; rather, it seeks to *swallow up* the righteous. Thankfully, the Book of Psalms often addresses this problem, including in today's reading.

First, a reminder as to why we see blatant evil so often, and why it often seems to have the upper hand. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, not only did sin enter this world, but rulership of this world defaulted to Satan. (1 John 5:19) So, here we are as God's representatives, seeking to live upright lives and point people to Him, in a world ruled by Satan. Not only that, but his world is filled with people who are in Satan's dominion with a nature to sin.

No wonder this world is such a mess, and no wonder the lost so often seek to come against that which is righteous. Here is how Psalm 36 describes the lost:

An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes ... he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin ... Even on his bed he plots evil ... and does not reject what is wrong.

Psalm 36:1-4



Back to the Psalms

Monday, July 20: Read Psalm 36

(Continued)

How does the psalmist handle this reality? Does he rail against the sinful? Does he point out all their egregious acts? On the contrary, he is fully occupied with God and His character:

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O Lord, You preserve both man and beast. How priceless is Your unfailing love.

Psalm 36:5-7

There is a very simple point of application to be made here:

When the evil in this world vexes your soul, occupy yourself with your great God, and His wonderful character.

This is how we can still and quiet our souls despite the evil around us. Understand that there are two things in our God that we can find nowhere else: our salvation and the truth! In particular, the truth regarding the future end of evil and restoration of all things.

For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see life.

Psalm 36:9

Life is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and Him alone. There is no other way to the Father. In the light of His revelation, we find the certain end of the wicked as well as the eternal blessing in store for the righteous. To be specific, the righteous are those who have received the very righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ! (Romans 3:22)

Back to the Psalms

Tuesday, July 21:

Read Psalms 39 and 40

In Verses 1-3 the psalmist paints a picture of himself as one who is trying to do what is right, but is struggling with the presence of evil. As in yesterday's reading, sometimes we are just vexed by the evil present in this world. David's solution to this internal problem provides yet another way to respond! He turns to the Lord and cries out:

"Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath."

Psalm 39:4-5

David is trying to properly orient himself to the contrast between evil in time and his hope of glory for eternity. He asks God to make clear just how short this life really is in contrast to eternity. The idea is that our dealing with the evil of this world lasts no longer than a breath in contrast to eternity. Where is this kind of introspection to take us?

"But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in You."

Psalm 39:7

That brings to my mind a comparable New Testament promise:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Romans 8:18

Now that David has his eyes focused on eternity: his God has become that which occupies his thinking. The evil of this world and the machinations of the wicked have faded into the background.

Back to the Psalms

Tuesday, July 21:

Read Psalms 39 and 40 (Continued)

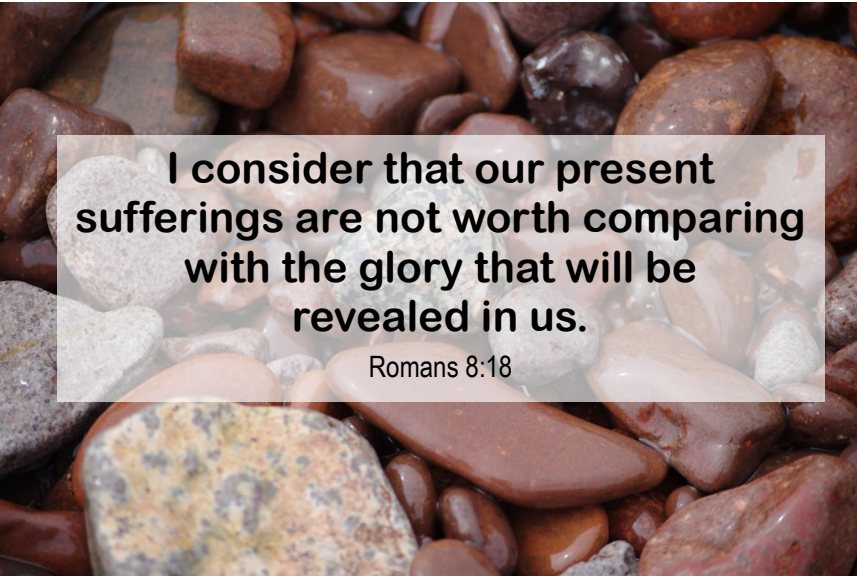
That leads us right into Psalm 40:

**Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust; who
does not look to the proud ...** Psalm 40:4

There it is again. Look to the Lord and don't worry about the wicked! Once we have settled our hearts and minds on things above, rejoicing will naturally follow:

**But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
may those who love Your salvation always say, "The Lord
be exalted!"** Psalm 40:16

What a change from the beginning of Psalm 39 to the end of Psalm 40. From anger and frustration with the way things are, to exalting the Lord for the way things will be! Let me suggest this is very good advice for us all!



**I consider that our present
sufferings are not worth comparing
with the glory that will be
revealed in us.**

Romans 8:18

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, July 22: Read John 2:1-12

As we return to the Gospel of John, today's reading brings us to the first of the seven miracles John records in his gospel account. It is a fascinating miracle in that it records the turning of water into wine at a wedding banquet. There have been many attempts to develop a natural explanation to this narrative, and I am always amazed at the naïveté of those who try to do so.

I say that because efforts to explain away the miraculous typically go something like this, "Jesus took some wine and added it to the stone water jars creating a mixture of mostly water and a little bit of wine." If you are going to contradict the inspired Word of God, you should at least put some thought into your alternative theory. According to the text, the jars were full to the very top, there was no room for anything else. The banquet master declared it to be the *best* wine and he would not have been fooled by a watery mixture. Plus, Jesus' disciples saw the whole thing. Do you put your faith in a gimmick or revealed glory? The text answers:

This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.

John 2:11

I love the way Mary handles this whole thing. Consider this question: Is God able to manage both our need and His purposes? Of course the answer is yes! However, here is where the application comes in: Is our response like Mary's? She doesn't sulk, doesn't beg, doesn't get anxious. She simply tells the servants to do whatever Jesus says.

Consider the power if we prayed the same way: "Lord, we delight to leave the outcome up to You, and, in the meantime, we will do whatever You say!"

The Gospel of John

Thursday, July 23:

Read I Corinthians 15:1-32

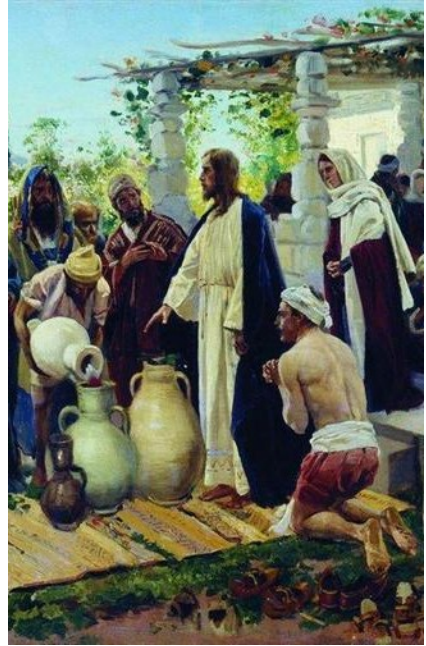
So, what is your view of miracles? Did Jesus actually change water into wine? Or, do you agree with theologians like Rudolph Bultmann, who held to the position:

We who use electricity to turn on a light with the flick of a switch could not possibly believe in miracles! To believe in the miraculous is ridiculous. There is no physical bodily resurrection.

In fact, he went so far as to say: "*We must demythologize the text of Scripture.*" Here is an example of what he meant by that. The resurrection has become:

... something here and now ... entering into a new dimension of existence, a being set free from the past and from guilt and from care and being made open to one's fellowman in love.

This is gobbledygook of the first degree. For Christ's resurrection has not *become* anything. Christ's resurrection is the physical and bodily raising of the humanity of Jesus Christ from the dead as a kind of *first-fruits* of what is possible for all those who will put their faith in Him.



Continued on the next page.

The Gospel of John

Thursday, July 23:

Read I Corinthians 15:1-32 (Continued)

Furthermore, it is not only the prototype resurrection body that all believers have as a hope for the future, it is a clear message from God the Father regarding His complete satisfaction with the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

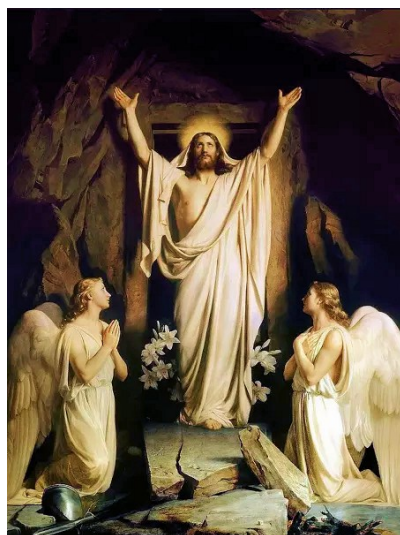
Although many theologians of our day have rejected outright the miraculous, which includes the truth of the resurrection, we must hold to the authority of Scripture:

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either ... Your faith is futile; you are still in your sins ... If only for this life we have hope ... We are to be pitied more than all men.

I Corinthians 15:16-19

For what I received I passed on to you of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred ...

I Corinthians 15:3-6



No bodily resurrection? Paul will not allow this error to stand. Note how carefully he dismisses this bogus claim. Jesus is sure to come in the future because the resurrected Jesus appeared to Peter, to the twelve, and then to 500 eye witnesses!

The Gospel of John

Friday, July 24: Read Hebrews 11

Since we dug a little deeper into the subject of miracles, we should do the same with the subject of faith. Did you notice this message in our previous reading in John?

This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him. John 2:11

Faith, as a response to the revelation of God, is typically ridiculed by the world. The greater the world's degree of sophistication, the greater the ridicule. Yet, what does God very explicitly say?

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29

Without faith it is impossible to please God. For those who come to Him must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

Faith is necessary to please God but notice, in the John 20 passage, how Jesus places a premium upon faith in contrast to that which is seen. The kind of faith that pleases God, per Hebrews 11:6, is not *blind* faith or, as falsely described by one theologian as a *leap of faith*. A leap of faith might be described as the act of believing something intangible or without evidence. Does that fit the text of John 2:11? Absolutely not! The faith of the disciples was not *blind* or a *leap*. The evidence provided by Jesus, via His miracle, authenticated who He was. So, the disciples exercised faith based upon the evidence, and their faith was not misplaced. Nor will ours be when we believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ or His Word!

The Gospel of John

Monday, July 27: Read Romans 10

I hope during the last few days you said to yourself, "Wait a minute, there has got to be more to prompt faith than miracles!" Good point, and something we will consider.

We believe in the historicity of Jesus Christ, the substitutionary atonement He accomplished on the cross, and in a physical, bodily resurrection from the dead. All of these are real events. But what about our day-to-day life as Christians? We don't have daily miracles, at least not clearly supernatural events, so then what is the object of our faith? Our reading for today answers that very question, and at the same time lays down an absolutely essential truth for the child of God.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

Let me give you the King James translation which is marvelous for its succinctness:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Connect these verses to our study of the past few days. The disciples believed as they saw Jesus' miracles and Jesus proclaims a blessing on those who believe without seeing. Who can do that? We all can do that who accept the content of the Word of God for what it is: God's mind revealed to us for "*All Scripture is God-breathed ...*" It is this very content that prompts faith in the child of God. Do you feel your faith wavering? Turn to the pages of the Word to have it renewed. As we accept the testimony of Jesus' first miracle, we see with the *eyes of faith* that He really is the Son of God. When we believe, the miracle has done its job. It has prompted our faith!

The Gospel of John

Tuesday, July 28: Read John 2:13-25

Consider this verse near the end of our reading for today:

... many people saw the miraculous signs He was doing and believed in His name. But Jesus would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all men.

John 2:23-24

Let's begin with a very straightforward question: "Why did Jesus not entrust himself to those who had believed?" The specific answer from the text—"... *for He (Jesus) knew all men*"—is not as clear as we might like. We will have to do further work to determine the correct interpretation. Let me walk you through a few possibilities.

It is very common to take the interpretive position that the individuals of Verse 23 had *spurious* or false faith. This means that interpreters holding to this position do not believe that the individuals of Verse 23 had really believed or were really saved.

From a purely theological standpoint, this is a very *handy* interpretation for Christian theologians to take because it allows them to cover all manner of Christian failure by simply claiming that those who failed were never really Christians at all! For example, how do we, as Christians, explain a Christian husband leaving his wife and children for another woman or a Christian businessman embezzling funds from his company? When it happens in your sphere of influence, this becomes a very practical issue. Certainly the easiest answer is to hold to the position that the *sinner*s in question were never really Christians.

There is, however, a much more important question than whether or not the explanation is easy and saves us from answering tough questions. The bigger question is

Continued on the next page.

The Gospel of John

Tuesday, July 28: Read John 2:13-25

(Continued)

whether or not this is a good interpretation of Scripture. Let's see what the Scripture says:

- The Scripture says they saw the miracles and then believed in His name. The phrase *believed in His name* is the exact same phrase used in John 1:12 to describe the means by which we become children of God. The Greek word translated *believe* is the same word used in John 1:12, 3:16, 4:42, 4:53, 5:24, and many other passages in the Gospel of John. All of these are directly related to a person's salvation—either explicitly or implicitly.
- Let's go back to the beginning of our study and the truth contained in John 20:31. John's purpose for constructing his gospel around a collection of miracles is very clear and specific and that purpose is to prompt belief, which in turn directly leads to eternal life!

Miracles are meant to prompt belief in those who see them and belief is the criterion for eternal life. Isn't this what we see in John 2:23-24? As nice as it might be to have an excuse to cover all manner of failure within the Christian community, it is simply bad Bible interpretation to nullify the purpose of John's gospel simply because it doesn't fit personal theology or theological preferences. This is what is happening when the interpretation is that belief following an example of the miraculous is not really belief! It is more consistent with the text to hold to a position that there were those in Jerusalem who, after seeing the miracles, believed in Jesus as Messiah and thus became children of God.

But what about our original question? Why did Jesus not entrust Himself to them? We will continue tomorrow.

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, July 29: Read Matthew 16

After taking the position that those who saw the miracles and believed had become children of God, why would Jesus not entrust Himself to them? First of all, could it have something to do with John 2:4?

“Woman, why do you involve Me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

In this dialogue Mary has asked Jesus to intervene because of a potential social *faux pas* on the part of family friends. Jesus at first declines to act on the social issue, but then turns around and performs a miracle that the text clearly tells us strengthens the faith of His disciples.

In John 2:4, I want to draw your attention to the phrase: “... *My time has not yet come.*” The Jews were looking for a Messiah that would be a great king and military victor. At the time of Christ, this meant they were looking for someone who would drive the hated Romans from Israel.

These new Jewish converts would certainly have brought this mindset with them. But was that the purpose of the First Advent? First the cross and then the crown! In the plan of His heavenly Father, Jesus’ first coming was going to culminate in the cross. However, when He comes again, it is indeed going to be as King of kings and Lord of lords.



Continued on the next page.

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, July 29: Read Matthew 16 (Continued)

These new believers had something other than the cross in mind, so Jesus refused to be sidetracked from the plan of God by entrusting Himself to them. To see an example of how new believers can think apart from the plan of God, consider Peter and his actions as recorded in Matthew 16:22. Can you believe that Peter tries to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross when this is the very reason He came. These are nothing more than the words of Satan in the mouth of Peter.

Jesus certainly refuses to entrust Himself to Peter and the others. With such a monumental rebuke, does that mean that Peter's faith was false? Go back a few verses to Matthew 16:15-f. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah is said to have come from the Father and be the basis upon which the coming church will be built. You have to do some serious theological gymnastics to try and take the position that Peter was not yet saved when rebuked by Jesus for acting contrary to the plan of God.

The simple truth is that wandering from the path is something new believers often do. If we are honest with ourselves, we can probably look back in our own lives and remember times when we got ahead of the Lord and headed in the wrong direction. I can sum this up by simply stating: A saved person is not going to start out as a mature Christian. Entry into the family of God happens at the moment of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Maturity comes with time and pursuit of a relationship with our Lord. This coincides perfectly with the truth waiting for us in John 15 where, as believers, we are told to abide continually in the Vine that is none other than Jesus Christ!

The Gospel of John

Thursday, July 30: Read Luke 22

Issues of how we are saved, assurance of that salvation, and what it means when we fail are hugely important. These topics are so important that we are going to insert a brief *parenthesis* into our study of John's gospel in order to consider these issues more closely. Let's consider Peter. The following verse from Luke 22:62 immediately follows Peter's three denials of our Lord:

And he (Peter) went outside and wept bitterly.

Continued on the next page.



The Gospel of John

Thursday, July 30: Read Luke 22

(Continued)

How do you think Peter was feeling right at this moment and for the doubtless sleepless hours ahead? Did he feel a sense of failure? How about guilt? Do you think it is possible that he questioned his relationship with the Lord?

If you have been a believer for any length of time, you have experienced similar feelings. We all have! Our sin may not have been quite so dramatic as Peter's, but we know we have let the Lord down and now we wonder where we stand with Him. Do you see what I mean about these kinds of things—salvation, assurance, and dealing with failure—being hugely important?

How would the *spurious faith* theology explain Peter's behavior? It would simply tell us that Peter had never *really* believed. This explanation might solve the issue of how could a *real* follower of Jesus Christ deny Him, but it ignores the clear record of Scripture. We looked earlier at Matthew 16:15-f, in which the believing testimony of Peter is said to be the response upon which Jesus will build His Church. There are many other instances in the four Gospels where Peter is stated to have believed prior to his denial.

So instead of relying on a man-made theology, let's ask the question, "What would John tell us about Peter?" We will discuss that question tomorrow!



The Gospel of John

Friday, July 31: Read I John 5

What would John tell us about faith? How about:

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 5:13

Consider two things:

- Based upon the above reference, if Peter could identify a time in his own life when he had believed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then by the authority of the Word of God he could know that he was saved.
- Equally important, knowing that he was eternally secure in Christ—we call this having *assurance*—is meant to be the very first thing to help Peter recover from his failure.

Notice how tenderly and personally Jesus deals with Peter in John 21:7-19 even after Peter's denials. Jesus displays no hint of rejection for Peter's failure. The cross had paid for Peter's denial and our Lord still had plans for him.

Do you see the application for us? How are we to understand the basis of our relationship with God the Father through His Son? What kind of picture does Scripture paint describing the *firmness* of that relationship—especially when we fail? Do we need to fear being cut off if we fail or question whether or not we had really become His children? Of course not!

The Biblical picture of how God deals with failure promotes an ever greater appreciation for a "*mercy that endureth forever!*" The Christian Way of Life is not ultimately about how worthy we are. It is, instead, about how worthy He is!

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

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