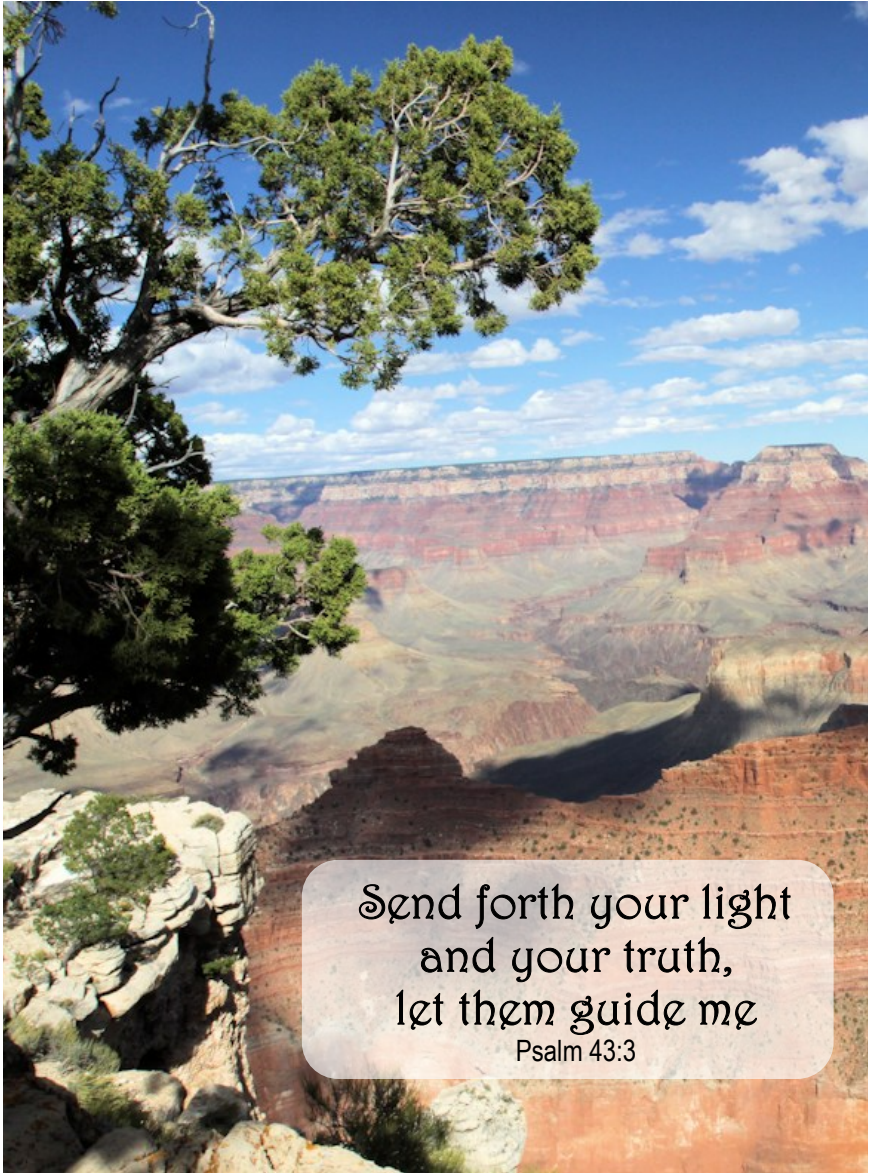


August 2026

Daily Devotional



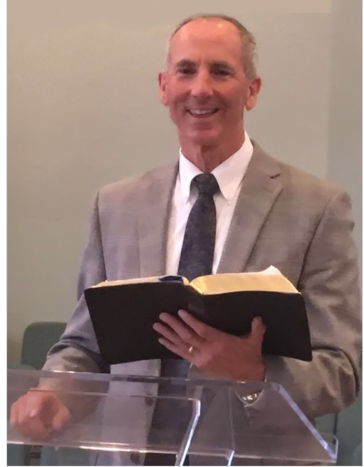
Send forth your light
and your truth,
let them guide me

Psalm 43:3

Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

We begin the month completing our discussions in the Book of John for now. Then this month's readings really put on display the comprehensive nature of God's Word. In Romans we consider what it means to serve as a *living sacrifice*. In Ephesians we are told how to stand firm in the midst of spiritual conflict. Finally, in the Psalms we study how to turn in dependent trust to our God.



Every part of God's Word has something to say to us. What a blessing it is when we begin to put these teachings all together in perfect harmony with one another.

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).

The Gospel of John

Monday, August 3:

Read John 3:1-10

We are moving from the miracle of John Chapter 2 to the narrative of Chapters 3 and 4. Perhaps one of the most famous portions of narrative in the Bible is between Jesus and Nicodemus.

... Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:3

Who is Nicodemus? We should know two things. First, he is a VIP as a member of the Sanhedrin. In fact, his name means *ruler of the people*. Second, he is a well known teacher.

Continued on the next page.



The Gospel of John

Monday, August 3:

Read John 3:1-10 (Continued)

You can verify this in Verse 10, for apparently Jesus Himself was aware of Nicodemus' reputation:

Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

Why did Nicodemus come at night to talk with our Lord? There has been a lot of speculation on this over the years. The text doesn't really tell us. It could be as simple as that, as a member of the Sanhedrin and a prominent teacher, he was so busy that evening was the only time he had room in his schedule. On the other hand, he may very well have been interested in Jesus and, as a member of the Sanhedrin, he wished to keep his interest a secret.

Look closely at Verse 2 and you will see what is really bugging Nicodemus:

This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Although Nicodemus calls Jesus a *teacher come from God*, he doesn't ask him a single theological question. That is because he doesn't have any! As a Pharisee and teacher, he is quite certain he has things down cold in the realm of theology. However, the issue of miracles has him vexed! The only person who can do miracles is someone with divine power. Yet Jesus is *without portfolio* in the mind of Nicodemus, so he wants an explanation.

Do you see how the intended purpose of miracles is at work in the soul of Nicodemus? (John 20:30-31)

More Lessons in Romans

Tuesday, August 4: Read Romans 12

As we return to our reading in the Book of Romans, allow me to remind you for a moment of Chapters 6-8, which contain the most comprehensive treatise in the Bible on New Testament spirituality. In short, God has so intimately identified us with Christ that we share in both His death and His resurrection to new life. Further, that life is now enabled by His Spirit. And so, we are told to:

Reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

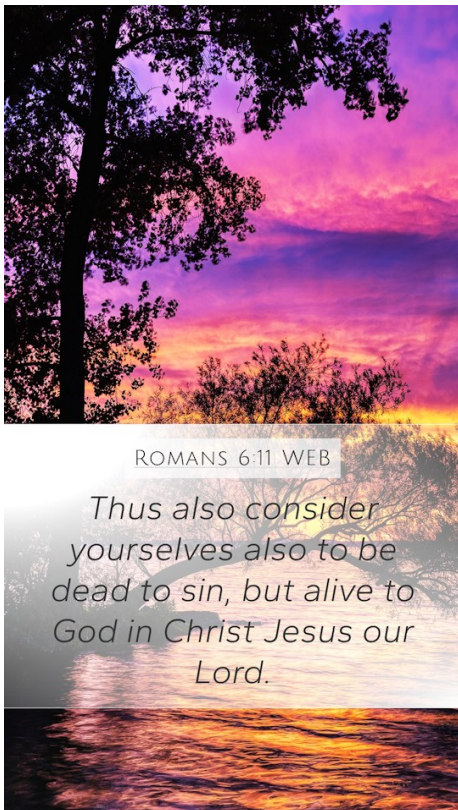
Romans 6:11

I reminded you of this because, if Romans 6-8 are the greatest treatise on spirituality, then Romans 12-15 are a treatise on what spirituality looks like in practice.

They are essential to keep us from fooling ourselves into thinking we are spiritual, when we haven't yet learned to make application. If we summarize Chapters 6-8 by quoting Romans 6:11, then our summary for Chapters 12-15 is found in the very first verse of Chapter 12:

... present your bodies a living sacrifice ...

Continued on the next page.



More Lessons in Romans

Tuesday, August 4: Read Romans 12

(Continued)

Let's look at all of Romans 12:1:

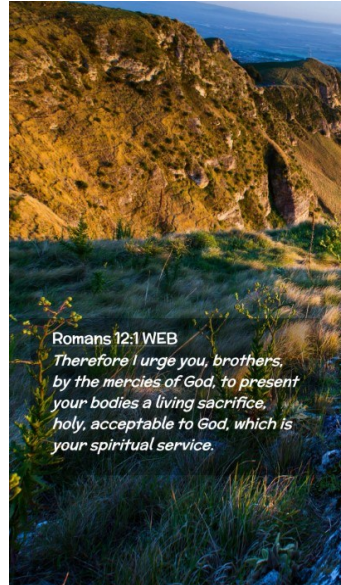
I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul is admonishing his audience to take action—that is what it means to beseech. He is doing so because of what has come before, in particular, the content of Chapters 6-8—the means of spirituality. Paul gives us the reason he is calling us to action: because God is merciful.

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, for His compassions fail not. They are new every morning ...

Lamentations 3:21-23

To be merciful means to have compassion upon another, and not give them what they deserve. That is exactly how God has treated each one of us. We deserved His wrath and instead received a way of salvation through all that Christ accomplished on the cross. There is much more to cover in Verse 1, but first I would like to further consider God's mercy, and add to it the concept of grace. We'll consider both more closely tomorrow.



Romans 12:1 WEB
*Therefore I urge you, brothers,
by the mercies of God, to present
your bodies a living sacrifice,
holy, acceptable to God, which is
your spiritual service.*

More Lessons in Romans

Wednesday, August 5:

Read Mark 5:1-20

Romans 12:1 is calling us to act in a certain way because God is merciful. As we saw yesterday, to have mercy is to have compassion upon another and not give others what they deserve. I want to do two things today:

1. Reinforce the truth of God's merciful nature.
2. Add the concept of God's grace to His mercy.

In today's reading, we have the narrative regarding a demon-possessed man who could not be held, even by chains. He was so unfit to live with others, he was forced to live as an outcast among the tombs. Jesus cast out the man's demons and apparently the man responded in faith. Here is how the narrative ends:

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with Him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. Mark 5:18-20

Jesus wants the man to go and spread the word about the mercies of God. The man willingly goes. My favorite part is that Jesus wants him to tell his family, and instead the man goes to the Decapolis—the ten cities. I am certain he did tell his family, but apparently he is so wanting to declare the mercies of God that he takes it much further!

Continued on the next page.

More Lessons in Romans

Wednesday, August 5:

Read Mark 5:1-20 (Continued)

Let's move on to the subject of grace. If to have mercy is to have compassion, then grace is to give unmerited favor. If mercy is not getting what one deserves, then grace takes it a step further by giving one what they haven't earned. You see, mercy and grace always go hand in hand. One holds back what we do deserve, while the other graciously provides what we could never earn.

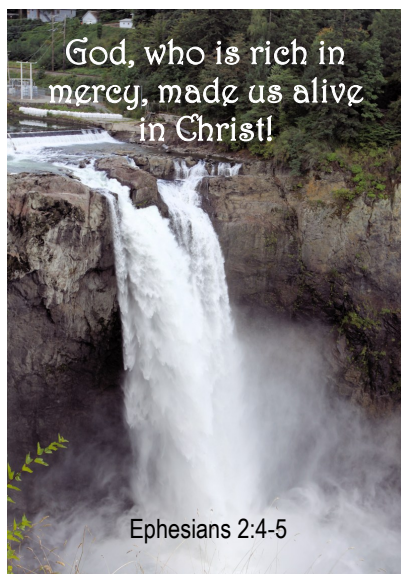
But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:4-5

Can you see both? In our sinful condition, we didn't receive the wages of sin, which is death. Rather, for those who believe, we are saved by God's grace which includes new life in Christ. That's grace and mercy! This is God's way of dealing with those who will put their faith in Him:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

II Timothy 1:2



Ephesians 2:4-5

More Lessons in Romans

Thursday, August 6: Read Romans 6:12-16

I showed yesterday how grace and mercy work together: If we have received one, we have very likely received both. When I apply those two concepts to myself, my testimony is most definitely:

*God has most certainly not given me what I deserve—
He has been merciful to me! And, at the same time, He
has very much blessed me with that which I could never
earn or deserve. That's His grace in action!*

That brings us back to Romans 12:1:

**I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God,
that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,
acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

Let me draw your attention to the phrase: *present your bodies as a living sacrifice*. There are two things to note.

First, the word translated *present* is very significant for the Christian.

I am just not sure the term *present* captures its full meaning. Of course, this is a common problem for translators who do the best they can to capture the meaning without lengthy explanations. The word means to put yourself at someone else's disposal. In military parlance, it means to put yourself *under orders* to a superior officer.

Continued on the next page.

More Lessons in Romans

Thursday, August 6:

Read Romans 6:12-16 (Continued)

Interestingly, this is the same word used in today's reading:

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God ... Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

Romans 6:12,16

The lesson is that our bodies are to be *under orders* to God rather than to the desires of our sinful nature.

Second, here is the connection that we must make: To put our bodies under orders to God is the equivalent of becoming a *living sacrifice*! I don't think you and I can appreciate how this would have caused every reader in the first century to pause in amazement. They were very used to sacrifices—but these sacrifices were all dead. God is looking for us to live our lives in such a way that they can be characterized as sacrificial in nature.

We might agree with this idea in principal, but it is much harder in practice. The flesh resists such a calling. As one theologian quipped:

The problem with living sacrifices is that they keep getting off the altar!

We'll dig deeper tomorrow.

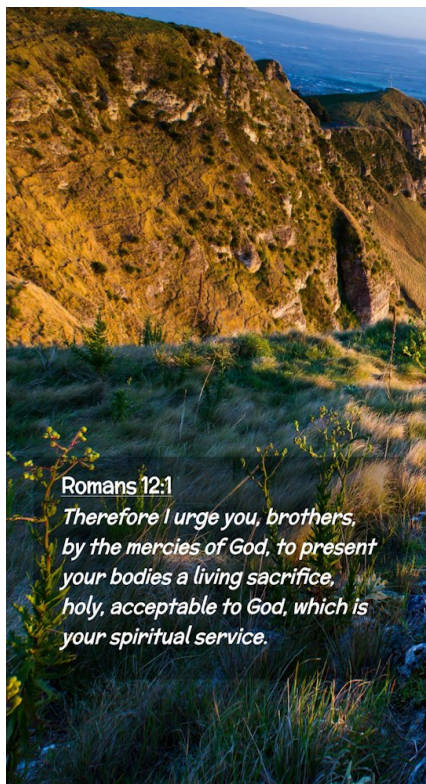
More Lessons in Romans

Friday, August 7: Read Philippians 2:1-11

Our lives a living sacrifice—under orders to God!

This is the message from the first part of Romans 12:1. Let's develop it further today:

1. Every day, twice a day, Israel offered a burnt offering—morning and late afternoon. In this context, death was always in view.
2. But the call upon the Christian is quite different. God wants the life of the saved child of God put at His disposal!
3. Perhaps you are wondering, "*Why are we to present our bodies?*" Let me suggest this is not to exclude the soul and spirit, but in recognition of the truth that it is the body that typically carries out the decisions made in the soul—everything from simple acts of kindness to ongoing ministry.



Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.

Continued on the next page.

More Lessons in Romans

Friday, August 7:

Read Philippians 2:1-11

4. What we have here is the transition from the tremendous doctrinal message of Romans 6-8 to the application of Romans 12. True spirituality is reflected in sacrificial service to others. This is the most important message we can learn.

Did you pick up on this same message in today's reading?

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus ...

Philippians 2:3-5

Now let's ask the question, what kind of living sacrifices does God want? The rest of Romans 12:1 tells us:

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

The kind of living sacrifices our Father is looking for are those that are holy and well pleasing to Him. This tells me that He has the final say on whether or not He is pleased.

One more very convicting bit of truth: God thinks this kind of response is *reasonable* on our part—nothing more and nothing less! We explore the idea of reasonable service more on Monday.

More Lessons in Romans

Monday, August 10: Read Colossians 3

Let's begin today by considering more deeply this idea of the *reasonable service* called for at the end of Romans 12:1. The Greek word translated *reasonable* means that which is logical. The word translated *service* was commonly used to describe the function of priests at the temple. This led John Knox to translate the phrase as, *the worship due from us as rational creatures*.

Here is our text of Romans 12:1 followed by my own paraphrase which captures the various nuances of language which we have discussed.

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

I am pleading with you brothers, by the mercies of God, that you put yourselves under orders to God, as a living sacrifice—one that would be holy as He is holy and fully acceptable to Him, which is how we rightly worship!

Romans 12:1 (Paraphrase)

Continued on the next page.



What is our reasonable service?

More Lessons in Romans

Monday, August 10: Read Colossians 3

(Continued)

Again, let me suggest that the most important thing we can grasp from Romans 12:1 is that this is what true spirituality looks like.

When we have mastered Romans 6-8 by separating from the power of the flesh and, instead, walking by the Spirit, then the things we do will be those works that God desires. They will be sacrificial in nature and they will constitute our daily and practical worship!

As you can see, this is not a one-time choice or something we can do on *auto-pilot*! This is something that will have to become a daily habit as we:

... fix our eyes on Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith ... Hebrews 12:2

It is really His example that we are seeking to follow.

Let me suggest that it really comes down to who we choose to serve. It could be the dictates of our flesh or the demands of this world. There is one other option spelled out in the following:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24

As I said, it is a daily choice. Choose wisely!

More Lessons in Romans

Tuesday, August 11:

Read Acts 20:17-38

Today let's start with the end of Romans 12:2 and ask: What is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God? HE HAS JUST TOLD US! It is that we put ourselves under orders to Him as *living sacrifices*. Just how does that occur? Romans 12:1-2 answers this question as well. We are not going to find out how to be living sacrifices pleasing to God from this world. On the contrary, we have to turn to the Word of God and allow it to transform our thinking.

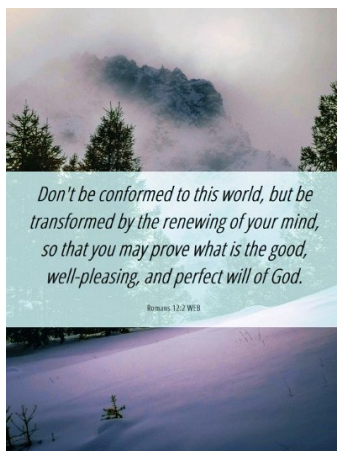
When it comes to applied spirituality, Romans 1 and 2 are extremely powerful. Let me try to succinctly clarify:

1. You are not really spiritual, unless you are living a life in submission to the will of God which includes sacrificial service to others.
2. You are not going to learn how to do this from the world! For it will never stop trying to squeeze you into its mold.

James states the case very strongly:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

James 4:4



Continued on the next page.

More Lessons in Romans

Tuesday, August 11:

Read Acts 20:17-38 (Continued)

Would you agree that we have a problem if it has become hard to tell where the world stops and the church begins?

3. On the other hand, the Word of God, as revealed to us by the Spirit of God, is the one thing that has the inherent power to transform!

All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. II Timothy 3:16-17

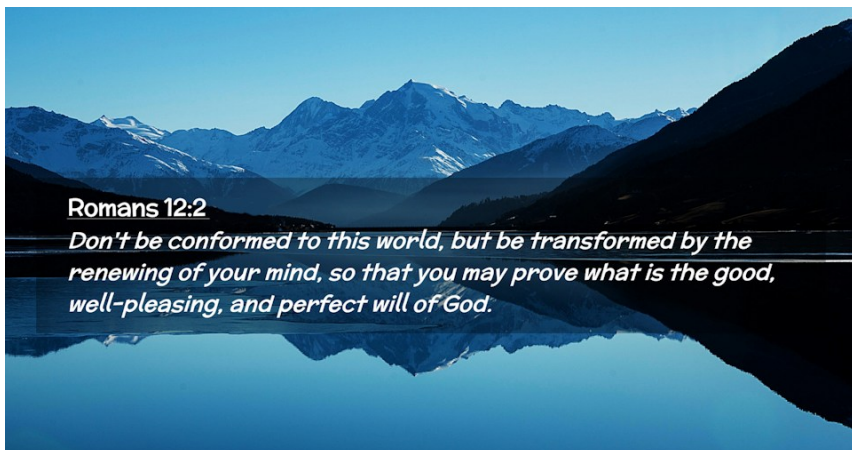
It is no wonder that Paul's farewell to the church leaders from Ephesus included the following:

Now I commit you to God and to the Word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32

I have one more thing for you to consider from our study of Romans 12:1-2 and we'll cover that tomorrow.

Romans 12:2

Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.



More Lessons in Romans

Wednesday, August 12:

Read Psalm 139

Right at the end of Romans 12:2, it says:

... that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will ...

The little word *prove* is translated from a very interesting Greek word that means to *test in order to approve*. You might *approve* a clay pot by holding it to the light to make sure there are no cracks. If you are buying a used vehicle, you might want to listen to how it starts and runs and take it for a test ride in order to *approve* it before buying.

This little word *prove* allows us to understand the Christian Life as follows: Every single day of our lives as followers of Jesus Christ is going to *prove* our level of success in rejecting the world and instead being transformed by the Word into a living sacrifice acceptable to our Savior.

In fact, I think it would be a very healthy way to end each day by asking our heavenly Father to:

"Test my life. Was it lived as a sacrifice to You, such that You are pleased?"

Isn't this very close to what we found in today's reading in Verses 23-24? How often do you think we would receive the response: *"Well done!"*

Now to be clear, I am not suggesting that this is how we are saved! We should know by now that our becoming a child of God is through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Rather, I am asking about the quality of the

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More Lessons in Romans

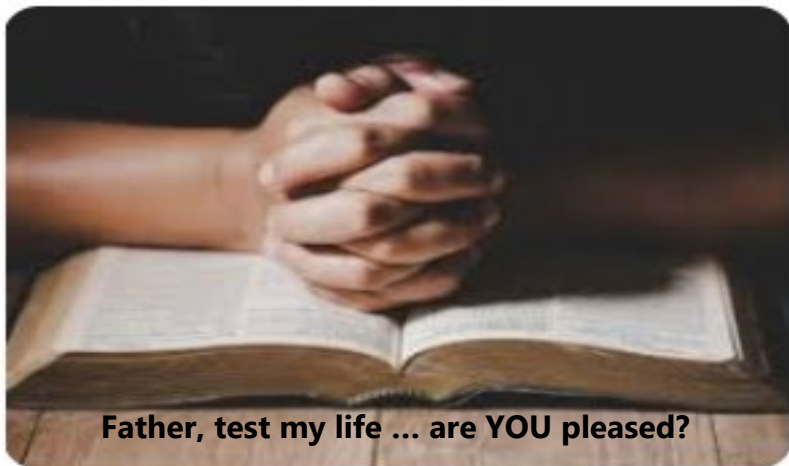
**Wednesday, August 12:
Read Psalm 139 (Continued)**

Christian Life we are living after we are saved. Nor am I suggesting that we can live a God-pleasing Christian Life from any source other than what we have learned from Romans Chapters 6-8.

What I am suggesting is this: God has made it very easy to tell if we are applying what we have learned. Set aside a few minutes at the close of the day to spend in prayer, and simply ask:

"Father, test my life. Was it lived as a sacrifice to You, such that You are pleased?"

Then listen for the answer. To be sure, there are going to be times it is very clear that we need to continue to renew our minds with the Word of God so that the process of transformation would continue. But that's the Christian Way of Life—an ongoing process of *being conformed to the image and likeness* of our Savior by *growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!*



Father, test my life ... are YOU pleased?

Finishing Ephesians

Thursday, August 13:

Read Revelation 12

We are back to our investigation of *Spiritual Warfare* as first mentioned in Ephesians Chapter 6. Let's begin today by asking the question: What is Satan's playbook for attacking Christians? Believers have been lost from Satan's kingdom forever, so how does Satan seek to make them casualties with respect to living a God-honoring life? There are many answers, but for the sake of simplicity, Satan strives to:

1. Despoil the Christian of his wealth.
2. Lure the Christian from his walk.
3. Distract the Christian from his mission.

During the course of the next few days we will discuss these three strategies of the devil in detail. First, *Satan seeks to despoil the Christian of His wealth* both individually and corporately. Here are some examples:

- He keeps us from knowing *every spiritual blessing* that is ours in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)
- He seeks to shift our gaze from our position in Christ to self. Then, he uses our failures to produce guilt.

Revelation 12:10 reminds us that Satan is the accuser of Christians day and night, but, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin that we might confess so that we can be restored to fellowship and continue to grow in grace and knowledge.

Satan uses guilt to get us to focus on self, engage in self-pity, and render us casualties in the Christian Life. He tries to get us to focus on rehabilitating the sin nature and making it acceptable to God. On the contrary, self needs to be crucified (Galatians 2:20), and we need to see ourselves as acceptable solely because of our position in Christ! As you can see, more to come!

Finishing Ephesians

Friday, August 14: Read I Timothy 1

If the first page from Satan's playbook is to *despoil the Christian of His wealth*, then the second is that *Satan seeks to lure the Christian from his walk!*

1. Satan first revealed himself as a liar and a deceiver in the Garden, and he is doing the same thing today to lure us into sin:

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

II Corinthians 11:3

2. If you are wondering about the nature of his lures, Satan uses false teachers to bind us with error, he promotes human good at the expense of God's best (social reform without spiritual reformation), and all manner of things in this world to tickle:

... the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does.

I John 2:15-16

3. Do you know what can happen if we take Satan's lure? We can shipwreck our faith. That is why Paul warned Timothy:

... fight the good fight, holding onto the faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

I Timothy 1:18-19

I trust you agree that a *shipwrecked* spiritual life is a sad sight and completely unnecessary given the abundant grace of God!

Finishing Ephesians

Friday, August 14: Read I Timothy 1 (Continued)

Next, we need to explore the third and final *page* from Satan's playbook: *Satan seeks to distract the Christian from his mission.* So what is our mission?

1. To bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8)
2. To represent Christ, as His ambassadors, to a lost and spiritually dying world. (II Corinthians 5:20)
3. To make disciples! (Matthew 28:19-20)

You see, Satan is in a desperate situation. Once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, Jesus is coming for His Church. At that time, the clock will begin to count down on Satan's remaining days. For that reason, he is going to come against the Church with everything he has: persecution, false teachers, and the like.

What is it that is going to prevail against Satan's wiles? One thing and one thing only: His Church holding fast to the Word of God and its witness that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God.

It is not a bad idea to remind ourselves regularly of the words of Jesus and other scriptural words of encouragement:

"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:20

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

Ephesians 6:10

Finishing Ephesians

Monday, August 17

Read II Corinthians 5

We spent a few days understanding Satan's playbook because we cannot over emphasize our need to be ready. It is entirely possible for us to understand our position in Christ and God's intent to provide us with every spiritual blessing plus His call to walk worthy, yet still not be fully prepared. Furthermore, as we come to forsake self and turn to the Word of God and the Spirit of God in order to live the Christian life, it is possible we may develop an idyllic picture of what lies ahead like the one below.



But, Paul does not close his great letter to the Church in Ephesus until he redirects their thinking in such a way as to bring to mind the image on the next page. It is the Antietam National Battlefield—23 thousand killed, wounded, or missing in one day of battle. These closing verses of Ephesians 6 remind us that our Christian Life is lived inside

Finishing Ephesians

Monday, August 17:

Read II Corinthians 5 (Continued)

a larger context of a great conflict. In fact, human history is being played out in the larger context of a conflict between the Creator-God of all things and a rebellious creature and those who choose to follow him. Through sin, mankind has become the subject of this rebellious creature, with the *world* churning out his propaganda. It doesn't matter that the most gifted historians of our day are completely oblivious: the Word of God makes clear the greater drama being played out.



God wants us to be aware of the situation, prepared, and ready to:

... demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

II Corinthians 10:5

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, August 18:

Read Exodus 14

There is one more thing about the spiritual battle of which I would like you to be aware. It is a very simple thing:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the devil's schemes. Ephesians 6:11

Consider the word *stand*. Normally, this is a terrible idea on the battlefield. The rule is to keep moving or take cover! So, why does Paul tell us to *stand*? Let me give you a few things to consider:

1. We need to *stand*—hold our ground—against the devil's plans to despoil Christians of their wealth, lure them from their walk, and distract them from their mission.



Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, August 18:

Read Exodus 14 (Continued)

2. It is a call to trust in God and His provision—as in *stand* firm in the faith. Just like Moses told the people caught between the Red Sea and the Egyptians:

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. Exodus 14:13

3. To stand is to:
- *Garrison* your mind with God's truth
 - Rest in the finished work of the cross in procuring our pardon
 - Hold firm to who and what we are in Christ—accepted in Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies
 - Never retreat in the face of circumstances, fears, and anxiety, but instead to firmly give thanks that God always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ Jesus
 - Realize that we do not lead the way for there is no victory in the Christian Life that is not first Christ's victory

In short, there are times when all we can do, and all we should do, is to *stand*, and

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

Ephesians 6:10

Finishing Ephesians

Wednesday, August 19:

Read Ephesians 6:10-24

As we return to Ephesians Chapter 6 in our study of spiritual warfare, I want to bring to your attention a potential pitfall of studying this important topic. As we better understand our adversary in the spiritual realm, it is possible for Satan—his forces and plans—to loom too large in our thinking. We can become overly sensitized to the point that Satan is seen lurking behind every sniffle, every trial, and every red light.

We have to guard against this overemphasis. For, as much as it is advisable to be aware of our *foe*, we should know our *friend* even better. Of course, by *friend* I refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is both sovereign and Savior and He alone should dominate our thinking. Clearly this is the message of Scripture:

Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross ...

Hebrews 12:2

We are to fix our gaze upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and hold His authority in the greatest respect and reverence.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:28

Satan, through his influence upon this world can prompt the persecution of Christians even unto physical death, but it is

Finishing Ephesians

Wednesday, August 19:

Read Ephesians 6:10-24 (Continued)

God who determines the eternal destiny of man. And, God has chosen to give eternal life to all those who will place their faith in the person and work of Christ.

So, for the next few days, here is what I would like to do:

1. Show you the contrast between our Savior and our adversary.
2. Encourage you with the exalted status of the Lord Jesus Christ!



Finishing Ephesians

Thursday, August 20: Read Hebrews 5

Today we continue to look at the contrast between our blessed Savior and our foe. First, consider the difference in how they have chosen to exercise their wills. Satan has sought to exalt himself:

I will raise my throne ... I will sit enthroned ... on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain ... I will make myself like the most high. Isaiah 14:13-14

Jesus, on the other hand, exalts the Father:

"... Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Hebrews 10:7

"I seek not My own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." John 5:30

"... nevertheless, not My will but Thine ..." Luke 22:42 KJV



Finishing Ephesians

Thursday, August 20: Read Hebrews 5 (Continued)

The creature (Satan)—who was made and is obligated to respond—rebelled. But, the Son of God, sovereign in His own right, subordinated His will to the plans and purposes of the Father. That is why we can be saved!

Secondly, Satan plays the role of accuser:

**For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them
before our God day and night ...** Revelation 12:10

Not so our Lord, for He always steps forward to intercede on our behalf:

**... we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the
righteous ...** I John 2:1

**... able to save completely those who come to God
through Him ... because He always lives to intercede ...**
Hebrews 7:25

What a difference! Satan is using mankind as a pawn in his struggle with God. Jesus gave Himself for us and intercedes on our behalf.

Don't ever let guilt for a past failure weigh you down and sideline you in terms of your spiritual walk. If you have confessed your sin (failure), the blood of Christ has cleansed you. Always know this, Jesus is interceding on your behalf.

Let's close with one point of application. Which looms larger in your thinking: guilt (from Satan) or the intercessory mediatory work of the Lord Jesus Christ on your behalf? To ask the question this way is to make it clear, there is only one answer!

Finishing Ephesians

Friday, August 21: Read Hebrews 2

Today, we continue the contrast between our *friend* Jesus and *foe* Satan. First, understand that Satan holds death over us—Jesus died for us! In Hebrews 2:14-15 we see clearly who holds death over us:

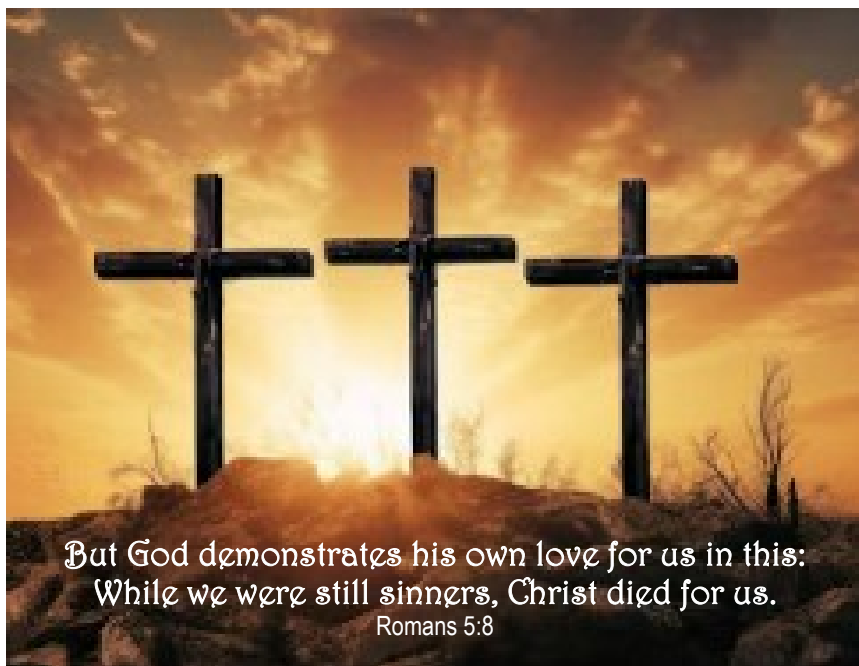
... by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is the devil ... and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

In this passage, we also get a glimpse of what is more clearly stated elsewhere—that Christ died on our behalf:

... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8



**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Romans 5:8

Finishing Ephesians

Friday, August 21: Read Hebrews 2

(Continued)

Romans 8:32 takes it even a step further:

He who did not spare His Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He (God) not also, along with Him (Jesus), graciously give us all things?

This verse teaches that after He did the most for us (died in our place), how could He ever fail to stand by us now? Believers should never stand in fear of being rejected by the Savior who died on their behalf!

Finally for today, Satan is and always has been a murderer:

He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. John 8:44

Knowing that Satan is a murderer and a liar, why would anyone trust him? This question is particularly relevant, because:

God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son ... John 3:16

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. I John 5:11

Let me suggest that, in contrast to Satan, Jesus is the eminently trustworthy one! With the track record of the two protagonists in the great spiritual battle being played out *above*, what we call history, is there anything that makes more sense than: To turn from this world, as well as he who stands behind it, and turn to Jesus Christ? Turning to Christ means putting your faith in a loving Savior who ever lives to intercede on your behalf.

Finishing Ephesians

Monday, August 24: Read Colossians 1

Today I want to continue to encourage you by reminding you of the exalted status of our Lord and Savior in contrast to our adversary! Let me walk you through a number of items I trust you will find to be a blessing.

First, Jesus is the great *I Am!* When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and Moses asked, "*Who shall I say sent me?*" God replied, "*Tell them I Am has sent you.*" God was telling Moses that He is the self-existent One, the self-determining sovereign of the universe.

Satan is a creature. He didn't create his followers, headquarters, or earthly subjects. Instead, he stole them by deceit, his power is limited.

Jesus, on the other hand, is the great *I Am*. He is referred to in this way 23 times in the Gospel of John. Jesus is the



Finishing Ephesians

Monday, August 24: Read Colossians 1

(Continued)

Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life. He has always been, He created this physical universe, and He will judge the living and the dead!

There is no comparison between our Savior and our adversary, for the Creator and the creature are separated by a gulf that cannot be bridged. Further, Jesus may have come in humility, but He wrought a great victory nonetheless!

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

I John 3:8

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. ... having canceled the written code, with its regulations that were against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15

Satan's claim on the human race was based upon our sin, and Jesus dealt with that at the cross by dying in our place. The humility and shame of the cross is the means by which we can be transferred from the dominion of Satan into the kingdom of the dear Son. (Colossians 1:13-14)

If this is what happened when He came in humility, I can't wait until He comes in great glory.

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, August 25: Read Philippians 2

Taking up where we left off yesterday, let's look at two more examples of Jesus' exalted status. First, the name of Jesus is above every name. . .

... He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:8-11



Although not voluntarily, the devil and his demons are going to bow and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord!

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, August 25:

Read Philippians 2 (Continued)

Finally, when Jesus returns, He will not come as a suffering servant. According to Revelation 19:11, 16:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True ... On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is clear that we don't want to become overly preoccupied with our foe in the spiritual conflict, but instead occupy our minds with the Lord Jesus Christ. As Luther summarized so well in his hymn *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, we have *the right man on our side!*

*... For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle!*

Returning to the Psalms

Wednesday, August 26:

Read Psalms 42 and 43

The two Psalms in our reading flow very nicely one into the other. First, consider Psalm 42, Verses 1 and 2:

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

This is the cry of a heart that knows God and longs to feel His presence. It is a cry to engage in worship! This is not the kind of thing we can aspire to directly, but it is what happens naturally as we draw closer to our God through His Word and learn to trust Him.

Now, most of the rest of the Psalm is devoted to difficulties that have been the lot of the author. Yet, despite the many trials, *Deep calls to deep*. The Psalmist feels himself being called to trust and worship his God. In two separate verses, like a chorus in a song, when feeling discouraged, the Psalmist has learned to admonish himself:

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, My Savior and my God.

Psalm 42:5, 11

What good advice for us, for even among those who know God and long for His presence, trials in this life will come! When they do, we must learn to admonish ourselves:

Don't let discouragement or hopelessness overwhelm! Put your hope in God. He will see you through, so that you can yet praise Him—either in the land of the living or face-to-face.

We certainly begin by putting our hope in God—who He is and what He is like!

Returning to the Psalms

Wednesday, August 26:

Read Psalms 42 and 43 (Continued)

Psalm 43 takes this a step further. In Verse 2, the Psalmist speaks of going about in mourning and oppressed. So He asks God:

**Send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me;
let them bring me to Your holy Mountain to the place
where You dwell.**

Psalm 43:3

Not only are we to trust in our God, but also in the truth He has chosen to reveal to us in His Word! As we do, always the Psalmist wants to be in God's presence, caught up in worship. So for the third time in two Psalms he exclaims:

**Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, My Savior
and my God.**

Psalm 43:5

What good advice for us all!



Returning to the Psalms

Thursday, August 27:

Read Psalms 46 and 47

The Psalmist is expecting difficult times, for he speaks of the *earth giving way* and the *mountains falling into the heart of the sea*. Nevertheless, he says, *we will not fear*. The reason:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

Of course, the children of Israel have had many experiences throughout their history that could feel to them like the *earth giving way*. Many of those occurred because of their lack of faith in their God. But, as the Psalm continues, the description doesn't seem to fit simply being attacked by one of their neighbors:

Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations He has brought on the earth.

Psalm 46:8

It would seem the hand of God is directly involved. Even more so as we continue:

He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear ...

Psalm 46:9

It would seem God is going to establish peace on earth. When has that happened? If not yet, then it must be future. The Psalmist then encourages us to pause:

He says, "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalm 46:10

It is true that the Lord Jesus is exalted right now by believers all over the planet as He sits in the place of honor at the right hand of the Father. But is he currently exalted in the earth? Are the nations of this world caught up in the

Returning to the Psalms

Thursday, August 27:

Read Psalms 46 and 47 (Continued)

worship of the King of kings and Lord of lords? Not yet! And so, I think this Psalm is pointing us toward a future day. That is why I had you read Psalm 47 as well. Just look at how it begins:

Clap your hands, all you nations; Shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great king over all the earth!

Psalm 47:1-2

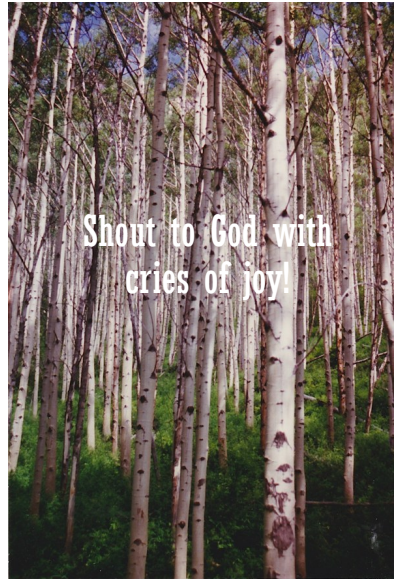
Are the nations currently clapping for the Lord? Is He reigning over the entire earth as King? If current world affairs are what it looks like when He is reigning, I am going to have to lower my expectations! On the contrary, let me suggest this speaks of a future time: a time

following a period of tribulation so great that it does indeed seem as if the earth is

going to give way and the mountains fall into the sea; a time when wrongs will be set to right because Jesus has returned as He promised He would and has established a kingdom of righteousness. It will be a time when God literally *reigns over the nations* (Verse 8). In the meantime, don't forget:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1



Returning to the Psalms

Friday, August 28:

Read Psalm 49

Yesterday's reading focused upon the coming king, today's focuses upon the redemption of man. The Psalmist tells us that:

No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for life is costly, no payment is ever enough—that he should live on forever and not see decay.

Psalm 49:7-9

He goes on to say, wise and foolish alike eventually come to the end of this life, and no man can keep it from happening. A perfect diet and the best of medical care may be able to prolong life, but there is a limit. But there is good news in this otherwise gloomy reality, and the Psalmist reveals it to us:

But God will redeem my life from the grave; He will surely take me to Himself.

Psalm 49:15

Even the godly are going to die physically, the thing we need to prepare for is what comes after physical death. The writer of Psalm 49 is confident that God will surely raise him up and take him to Himself. We too can have that same confidence, for:

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

Hebrews 9:27-28

Are you following what the writer of Hebrews is saying?

Returning to the Psalms

Friday, August 28:

Read Psalm 49 (Continued)

We are all going to die physically! But we can avoid the judgment that follows should the work of Christ be applied on our behalf!

How can we ensure that will happen? It happens when we put our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As the Son of God He came, took on our humanity, and went to the cross in our place. There He bore our sin and received the judgment that was rightly ours! As a result, God's justice has been satisfied.

The work of salvation is finished, all that is left to be done is for us to put our faith in who Jesus is and what He did for us. Should we do so, we are then *in Christ Jesus*! And, the best of news:

There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

How do we get to be *in Him*? Faith alone in Christ alone! The work is forever finished—ours is but to believe!



Returning to the Psalms

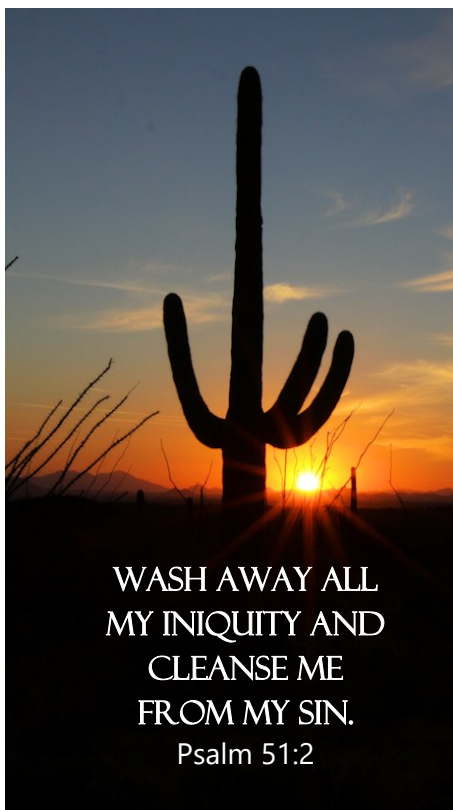
Monday, August 31:

Read Psalm 51

This Psalm reveals an extremely important source of truth regarding our relationship with our God, using the life of David as a backdrop. To begin, take note of David's request that comes from his deep anguish regarding his sin:

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:2

What is he relying upon? The *unfailing love* and *great compassion* of His God. You can read further about how David got himself into such a wretched condition in II Samuel Chapters 11 and 12. By the time he wrote Psalm 51, David had reached the point where he was under deep conviction regarding his collection of sins.



**WASH AWAY ALL
MY INIQUITY AND
CLEANSE ME
FROM MY SIN.**
Psalm 51:2

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Psalm 51:3

... let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Psalm 51:8

Returning to the Psalms

Monday, August 31: Read Psalm 51 (Continued)

Make no mistake, even though David's sin led to the death of an innocent man, he knows that his sin is ultimately against God because it is an affront to His holiness:

Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are proved right when You speak and justified when You judge. Psalm 51:4

At this point, David has reached the point we all need to reach when there is sin in our lives:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Psalm 51:17

There can be no cover-ups before God and no justifying our sin—just a humility that acknowledges our wrongdoing before a holy God and turns to Him for forgiveness. And, that is exactly what David asks for:

Cleanse me ... and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow. Psalm 51:7

Restore me to the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Psalm 51:12

Was David forgiven? The prophet Nathan speaks on God's behalf quite clearly:

... "The Lord has taken away your sin. ..." II Samuel 12:13

Now, is this a special case for David or does it have applicability for us as well? We'll consider that question in the devotional tomorrow.

VISTOSO



Community Church

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

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