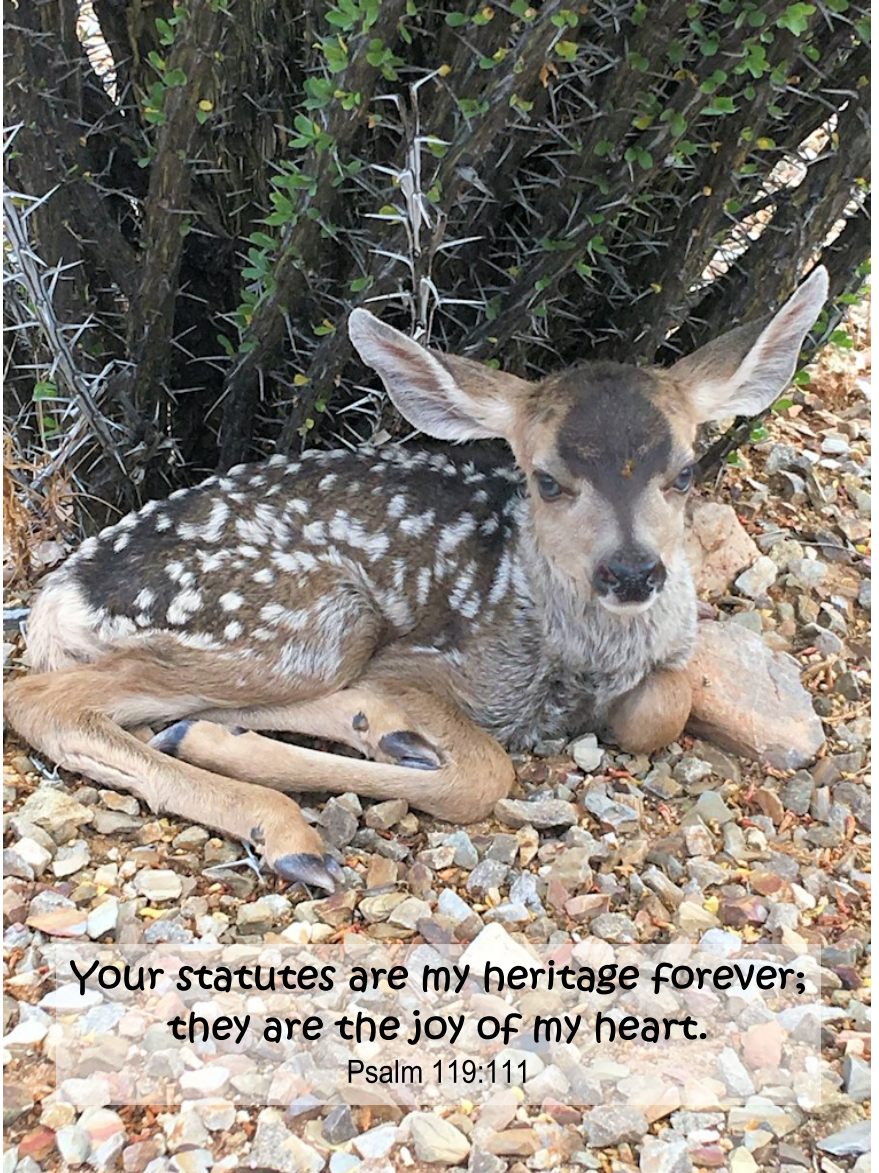


October 2026 Daily Devotional



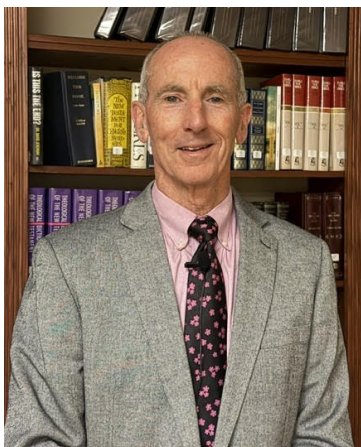
Your statutes are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.

Psalms 119:111

Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

Out of curiosity, I looked to see when we started our read-



ing in the Book of Romans. It was the middle of 2024! This month we finish our reading in this book of such spiritual depth and breadth. I hope you will return to meditate upon it often.

Of course, all Scripture is *God-breathed*, so also enjoy our readings this month in Psalms, John's Gospel, and Ephesians. May God add His blessings to the time you

spend in His Word!

In His grace,

Kevin Redig

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

Returning to Psalms

Thursday, October 1: Read Psalm 67

Verse 1 of Psalm 67 takes us back to the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:

The Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘this is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.’ So they will put My Name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

Numbers 6:22-27

These are powerful words of blessing, very Israel-centric with a promise from God to bless them. This is a wonderful legacy for the Jewish people! But now I want you to notice something very important about Psalm 67. Verse 1 quotes the very familiar language of the Aaronic blessing—*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us*—and then makes a completely new application.

... that Your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

Psalm 67:2

For the rest of Psalm 67, you will note that the language is very inclusive:

... may all peoples praise you ... May the nations be glad and sing for joy ... God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.

Psalm 67:3, 4, 7

God’s intent was that Israel would be a light for the world by spreading the good news of salvation found in their covenant-keeping God! The children of Israel may have failed

Continued on the next page.

Returning to Psalms

Thursday, October 1: Read Psalm 67

(Continued)

in that task, but God's intent is the same because, now during this the time of the church, we are called to:

... go and make disciples of all nations ... Matthew 28:19

"... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

God desires to bring all men into right relationship with Himself. He desires a face-to-face relationship and He desires to bless.

Pray for the hard of heart on your street and in your extended families to soften their hearts to spiritual things that they might turn in faith and thereby be reconciled to God and know the blessing that only He can provide!



MARK 16:15

He said to them, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation."

Lessons from John's Gospel

Friday, October 2: Read John 5:1-15

For the next several days, I want us to consider two miracles of healing, one in Chapter 5 and one in Chapter 9. In Chapter 5, we are introduced to a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. He was hoping to get into a pool which was reputed to have miraculously therapeutic powers whenever the water was stirred—presumably by God. Jesus simply tells him to:

“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” John 5:8

Praise God, the man does. At this point the narrative takes a decidedly strange twist. Rather than rejoicing that the man had been healed, the Jews (probably religious types) started to criticize the man for carrying the mat on which he had been lying because it was the Sabbath. The man blames Jesus who by now has left the scene.

Then two things happen for which we are going to want an explanation. First, Jesus finds the man and tells him,

“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” John 5:14

What do you think Jesus means by this? Was the man an invalid because of his sins?

The second strange thing that occurs is that the man runs off to point out Jesus to the Jews who are angered over his Sabbath violation. If you were healed after 38 years of a physical affliction, would you respond by *tattling* on the person who healed you?

One last question for you: Although physically healed, is there any reason to believe that this man has been spiritually healed? By that I mean, was the man saved? Before we answer these questions, we are going to look at a second miracle, the one described in John Chapter 9.

Lessons from John's Gospel

Monday, October 5: Read John 9

Here we have another miracle, very similar in nature to the miracle in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, Jesus cured an invalid of 38 years. In Chapter 9, He cures a man who has been blind from birth. In both chapters, Jesus miraculously heals the afflicted person. In both cases, Jesus performed the act of healing on the Sabbath which, in turn, led to anger on the part of the religious crowd. It is very clear that the Pharisees are angered in Chapter 9. (See Verse 16.)

The Pharisees don't know how to handle this. In their opinion, no one from God would violate their (not God's) Sabbath laws in this way. On the other hand, this kind of healing requires the supernatural hand of God, and why would God grant healing through a sinner? (Can you imagine thinking of Jesus as a sinner?)

The Pharisees decide to take the easy way out and simply deny the miracle ever occurred. That is one way to stick with unbelief; just deny the miraculous. One problem with their plan—the man born blind will not go along with it, He insists



Lessons from John's Gospel

Monday, October 5: Read John 9

(Continued)

that he was miraculously healed, and his defense of Jesus leads to him being *thrown out*. (John 9:34) This is probably a reference to the synagogue and would have meant that he would have been ostracized by everyone.

This is a very steep price to pay for defending Jesus, and it is a completely different response to the one in Chapter 5. Here is the best part: Jesus found him after his ejection by the Pharisees, and this is what He asked:

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" John 9:35

The man replied,

"Who is He, sir? ... Tell me so that I may believe in Him."
John 9:36

Here is how Jesus replied:

"You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you." Then the man said, "LORD, I believe," and he worshipped Him. John 9:37-38

The invalid of Chapter 5 accused Jesus and refused to attribute anything at all to Him, not even thanks for his healing. The blind man of Chapter 9 recognized his healer was from God, and, when given the opportunity, placed his faith in Him and worshipped Him.

We should add that his decision gave him eternal life! What a difference in two almost identical sets of circumstances. More on this tomorrow.

Lessons from John's Gospel

Tuesday, October 6: Read John 20

*(I know you have read this chapter before.
See if you can find an example of unbelief.)*

I think it is essential to consider together the two miracles of healing found in John Chapters 5 and 9. As I have shown you, the settings are very similar, right down to persecution from the religious crowd. But the outcomes are totally different. What are we to make of this?

Do you remember the four strands upon which John builds his Gospel? Let me refresh your memory:

1. Jesus is God and Savior!
2. Belief in this Jesus changes everything!
3. There is intimacy, congruence, and single-mindedness of purpose within the Trinity!
4. Unbelief is the one thing still keeping man from a relationship with God!

These two accounts of a miraculous healing are really meant to highlight the fourth strand. The problem with the infirm man was not his paralysis. Jesus took care of that. Rather, his problem was his unbelief after coming face to face with the Son of God and seeing with his own eyes a demonstration of His power.

On the other hand, the man born blind is almost longing to come to faith in his Savior. He first trusts and then worships Jesus, a very good model for us as well. Human beings are not born neutral; they are born mired in unbelief. That is a consequence of being spiritually dead. If we choose to cling to our unbelief—even in the face of the miraculous,

Lessons from John's Gospel

Tuesday, October 6: Read John 20

(Continued)

the Word of God, and the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit—there is nothing else that can be done.

Pray that the Lord would remove the obstacles to faith and the light of the Gospel might shine into a desperately needy soul. Pray that hardness of heart would turn to faith.

Allow me to close on a note of encouragement from Jesus Himself:

“Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John 20:29



Lessons from John's Gospel

Wednesday, October 7: Read Matthew 10 (John 5)

We could certainly move on at this point, but I suspect that some of you are bothered by John 5:14, and so I hate to move on without addressing the questions raised by this verse:

Later Jesus found him (the man that had been an invalid for 38 years) **and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."**

What do you make of this? Is Jesus implying that the man was an invalid for all these years because he committed some act of sin? That question is answered for us from the text dealing with the man born blind:

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

John 9:3



The miracles were performed in order to authenticate who Jesus was so that many might believe. Here are some other things to consider to help us understand this passage. First, when Jesus tells the man he is well *again*, that can only be a reference to his physical condition. What Jesus wants to do

Lessons from John's Gospel

Wednesday, October 5:

Read Matthew 10 (Continued)

is engage the man in a dialogue about his spiritual condition for, most certainly, unless something is done about his status as a sinner, something worse most definitely is going to happen to him for eternity.

This is exactly Jesus' message in Matthew 10:28:

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

The saddest thing about the passage is that the man walks away completely uninterested in a dialogue with the Creator of the universe. Instead he *tattles* on Jesus to the Jewish legalists.

Second, as you follow the dialogues of Jesus, you will see that He is always trying to engage the lost with provocative statements that hit the person right where they live:

- Nicodemus about being born again
- The Samaritan woman about calling her husband
- The man born an invalid, a challenge to go beyond physical wholeness to spiritual wholeness

This is the same pattern we should follow. If some persisted in unbelief even when face to face with the One who came to save them, we shouldn't be surprised when there are those who aren't interested in what we have to say. But, do what Jesus did, keep holding out the truth, in love, to a lost and desperately needy world!

Lessons from John's Gospel

Thursday, October 8:

Read John 3:16, 4:14, 5:24

Instead of reading a chapter today, I want to make sure that you are developing a collection of Scripture verses in which Jesus speaks of salvation, and for which you know the precise location in your Bible. John 3:16 follows Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, the clueless religious leader who struggled to understand his need to be born again. Jesus made clear both the initiator of salvation and the means by which we are born again unto eternal life:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

This verse provides both means and outcome—faith which results in eternal life. That's the message that Jesus left with Nicodemus which eventually led to his salvation. (John 19:39) Could the Samaritan woman be a greater contrast? She is a woman of questionable character and a Samaritan to boot. Jesus calls her to *drink the water He provides*. To drink is to believe, not to work, and the result is eternal life. Now we are starting to see a pattern. It continues with John 5:24:

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."

Jesus' ministry is very consistent, isn't it? There are a few things for you to ponder:

- Does the John 5:24 passage add another condition to belief: *"Hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me"*? Not at all. The Words of Jesus are meant to prompt faith. (Roman 10:17)

Lessons from John's Gospel

Thursday, October 8:

Read John 3:16, 4:14, 5:24 (Continued)

- To *believe Him* is to connect the coming of the Son with the sending of the Father (John 3:16) to fulfill the promise of a Savior to come.
- In short, Jesus claims He is the One sent by the Father to save, and the means of our salvation is faith in the One sent—the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who does believe not only has eternal life but the nature of the life is qualified that we might understand it better. It is a life we receive after *crossing over*, a perfect tense verb in the Greek which indicates a finished action with ongoing results, something that does not need to be repeated. Once we are saved through faith in Christ, we have crossed from the status of being spiritually dead to having eternal life.

There is no going back or undoing this new life in Christ! Praise God for that!



1 JOHN 4:9

By this was God's love revealed in us, that God has sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

Lessons from John's Gospel

Friday, October 9: Read John 6:1-29

This section in the Gospel of John includes the fourth and fifth miracles performed by Jesus. The miracles, we have learned, are an important part of the structure of John's Gospel. We have also learned, based upon John 20:30-31, that the purpose of these miracles is to prompt faith in Jesus Christ as both the Son of God and Messiah—a faith that leads to eternal life.

I want you to see how clearly this chapter reinforces our understanding by observing how firmly Jesus keeps the response to His miracles directed toward faith in who He is and what He has come to do. To feed 5,000 men, along with however many women and children were also there, is no small task. To do so from five small barley loaves and two small fish, and then have 12 baskets of leftovers, is clearly a miracle.



Lessons from John's Gospel

Friday, October 9: Read John 6:1-29

(Continued)

Many have tried to find a natural explanation, but the text will not allow this:

After people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did ...

John 6:14

Now we know the purpose of these miracles, but the people responded improperly to the miracle's intent:

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a lonely mountain by Himself.

John 6:15

We have said all along that there was one purpose for the miracles performed by Jesus, and making Him king is not that purpose. Later in the text, Jesus scolds the people for responding to Him simply because they had full bellies! Instead, He admonishes them to *work* for that which will lead to eternal life.

He has the people right where He wants them when they ask Him:

"What must we do to do the works God requires?"

John 6:28

We should be able to write the answer ourselves.

"The work of God is this, to believe in the One He has sent."

John 6:29

It is not a work at all! It is faith in the One who is going to do the work of salvation on our behalf!

Lessons from John's Gospel

Monday, October 12: Read Matthew 14

Jesus' fifth miracle is also described in John 6:16-21, which was part of yesterday's reading. Today I take you to Matthew 14 to read the description of the very same narrative. You can note that the two accounts are related by the phrase:

"It is I, don't be afraid."

Matthew 14:27, John 6:20

Otherwise, the two accounts are quite different. I love the application that comes from Matthew's account. But before we consider it, let me just mention that this is one of the great things about having four different Gospels. None of them is meant to be a complete biography. On the contrary, each is meant to detail selected events directed to a specific audience, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Gospels often overlap, but, typically, we have a marvelous opportunity to compare and contrast as they tell the same story from different perspectives. For example, without the Matthew account we would never know of Peter's involvement. While the others are terrified, Peter asks to join the Lord walking on the water. He actually does for a time, but then it says:

When he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord save me!"

Matthew 14:30

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Lessons from John's Gospel

Monday, October 12: Read Matthew 14 (Continued)

Now, you don't *see* wind directly. Rather, you *hear* it and *see* the size of the waves it produces. That's what I think happened to Peter.

The howl of the wind and the size of the waves got his eyes off of Jesus and that's when fear set in. The result is that he sinks.

What a lesson for us! As long as our gaze is steadfastly upon our Lord, He keeps us in perfect peace. (Isaiah 26:3) But when we start to focus upon the obstacles in our paths and the clamor of this world, we too can start to sink. What is the solution? Do what Peter and the rest did and call out to the Lord and regain that steadfast gaze through a time of worship!



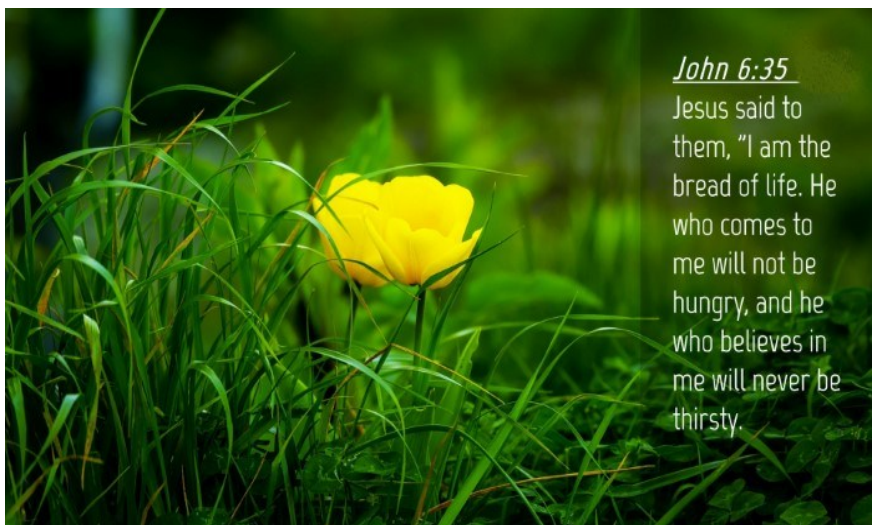
Lessons from John's Gospel

Tuesday, October 13:

Read John 6:30-71

Today we will focus on Jesus' claims about who He is and the result for those who will trust Him. This is really good news and can be found in Verses 30-39 of today's reading. This is a very important but also a somewhat complex passage. Thus, it is too much to handle in one daily devotional. But by breaking it into two pieces today and tomorrow, I can give you a good introduction.

The section begins with the Jews wanting a sign to authenticate Jesus' claim that He was from God. This is right after many saw Jesus feed 5,000 men and their families from five small loaves and two fish. When dealing with unbelief, it is really not about evidence. Jesus does not sugar coat His answer.



John 6:35

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Lessons from John's Gospel

Tuesday, October 13:

Read John 6:30-71 (Continued)

Just as the Israelites following the Exodus ate manna to satisfy physical hunger, Jesus claims to be the:

... true bread who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

John 6:33

Jesus tells them that He is the one who will meet their spiritual need:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty."

John 6:35

What is keeping the Jews from having their hunger and thirst satisfied? It is right there in Verse 36—unbelief.

"But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe."

John 6:36

Perhaps you are still uncertain as to whether this is a spiritual or physical hunger. Look at Verse 40:

"For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

The message of John's Gospel is clear because there is so much repetition: Eternal life results from faith in the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, who was sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world. This salvation was made available when Christ declared on the cross that our sin debt was *Paid in full!* (John 19:30)

Lessons from John's Gospel

Wednesday, October 14:

Read Numbers 11

God provided manna during the wilderness travels and, as we saw in today's reading in Numbers 11:6, the children of Israel grumbled about it. So, you won't be the least bit surprised to read in John 6:41:

At this the Jews began to grumble about Him because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

The rest of John Chapter 6 often causes confusion. Let me try to help you understand with three portions of Scripture:

"... He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life." John 6:47-48

"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink." John 6:54-55

It is the last passage that often causes the confusion. Many of Jesus' disciples even left Him over it (Verse 66), but it need not be confusing. Look at the first passage: It is the one who *comes* and *believes* who receives the blessing—not eats and drinks. In the second passage, believing in the true *Bread of Life* leads to everlasting life. By the time we get to the third passage, we are deep into the use of figurative language.

Lessons from John's Gospel

Wednesday, October 14:

Read Numbers 11 (Continued)

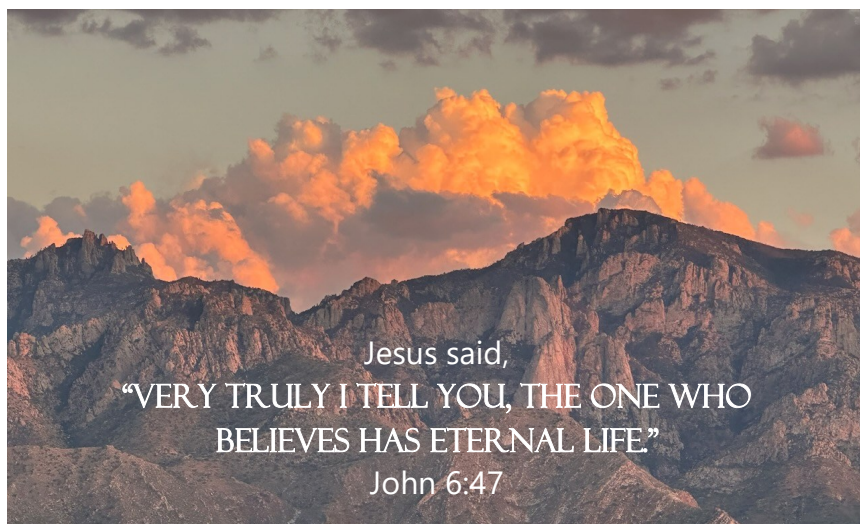
The flesh and blood of Christ represent who He is as the Messiah and Son of God. Eating and drinking clearly carry the connotation of believing in who He is.

Clearly, the metaphor is not understood by many. Unbelief always veils our thinking. But Peter makes clear the proper response of faith to the words of Jesus:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God."

John 6:68-69

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



Returning to Romans

Thursday, October 15:

Read Romans 13:8-14

We are in a section of Romans that deals with the Christian Life from a most practical perspective. The foundation of our spirituality is found in Romans Chapters 5-8, and putting those lessons into practice is the subject of Chapters 12-16. We have seen our call to *put ourselves under orders to God as living sacrifices!* Now,"

Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:8

Allow me to give you a few things to think about:

- Although it is not the subject of our text, it certainly implies that we should pay our debts. There is, however, one debt we can never satisfy, our ongoing obligation to love one another.
- The term *one another* has as its particular emphasis the family of God!
- This love within the fellowship is part of our witness to the lost world around us. It should be attractive to those watching and draw people to investigate further!

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

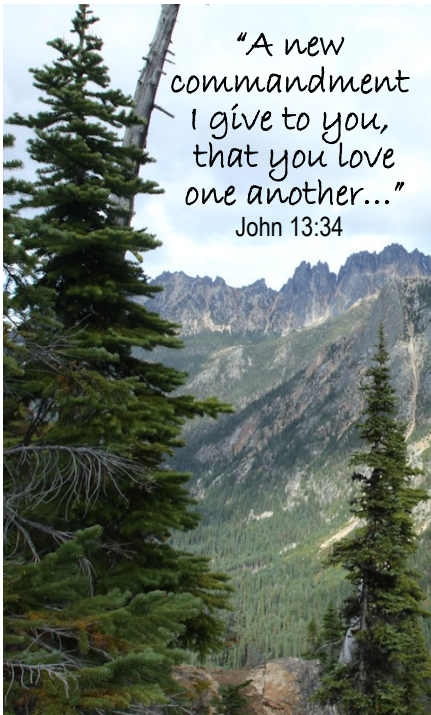
John 13:34-35

Returning to Romans

Thursday, October 15:

Read Romans 13:8-14 (Continued)

- Just to be clear, the love in view here is not an emotional love nor is it primarily the act of doing something. The word used in this case is *agape*. It is having the best interests of another in mind. It is the same word used in I Corinthians 13, which is pretty close to a definition:



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

I Corinthians 13:4-8

Ponder these verses carefully. They seem to start with a mental attitude and then transition to actions. Eventually, love for others will almost always require

sacrificial action on our part—just as it did for the Lord Jesus!

Returning to Romans

**Friday, October 16:
Read Romans 8:1-14**

We'll spend another day on the content of Romans 13.

First, let me ask you a question: *Are we to idle away the hours God has given us as believers awaiting our future glory and being as comfortable as possible, or are we to live with a sense of urgency until called home?*

I suggest that Romans 13:11-12 answers that question:

... do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

These verses call us to live with a sense of urgency! We are saved and going home to be with the Lord sometime soon, so as Paul says, do your best to *redeem the time because the days are evil!* (Ephesians 5:16) Jesus is coming soon, and so we should have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness but, instead, walk worthy of who and what we are in Christ! How do we do this? Paul tells us that in Romans 13:14:

... clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

This takes us right back to the truths of Romans 6-8: Take up the new life that is yours in Christ and reckon yourselves dead to the desires of the flesh and alive unto God in Jesus Christ! And this, not by our desire or will power, but:

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

Romans 8:11

As you can see, this is a work of the Holy Spirit. Our role is to trust Him to do what only He can do!

Returning to Romans

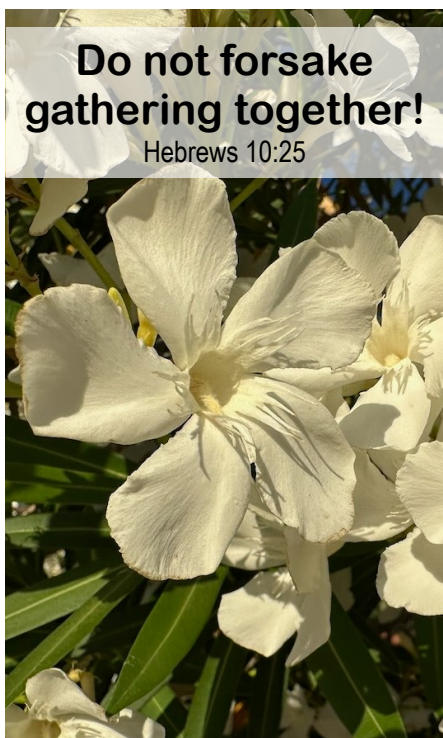
Monday, October 19: Read Romans 14

At a first glance, Romans 14 is hard to understand. That is, in part, because we don't share the same cultural context as those in the first century church. In order to make application, there are two things we will have to understand.

- What is a *strong* versus a *weak* believer?
- The big controversy over eating!

We'll take them one at a time. We can clear up the *strong* versus *weak* confusion by substituting the terms mature and immature (or new). The *strong* believer is one who has been well taught from the Scriptures and looks at life from the Divine Viewpoint, in other words, a spiritually mature individual. The *weak* believer is one who is brand new to the faith and/or has not taken the necessary steps to grow spiritually. As a result, he or she will often look at things from a human rather than a divine perspective. Such an individual is spiritually immature.

The spiritually immature will be present in any growing body of believers for there will always be those new to the faith who need time to develop spiritually.



Continued on the next page.

Returning to Romans

Monday, October 19: Read Romans 14 (Continued)

They need both time and understanding from those who are more mature. The only time spiritual immaturity is a negative is when it persists in the life of the individual through neglecting basics like spending time in the Scriptures, sitting under good teaching, and seeking fellowship with other believers.

Now, regarding eating, the issue was one of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. You see in the cities of the First Century church, the best spot to buy meat was at the various temples, simply because they were a place where animals were sacrificed. The mature believer has the same attitude as did Paul:

As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.

Romans 14:14

Paul's attitude was, *"Who cares if the meat was sacrificed to an idol, there are no other gods!"* The other side of the coin was what happened when immature believers observed others eating this meat. They just couldn't get past the issue of idols! In their minds, it was a sin to eat such a thing. The result is either a legalistic believer, or one who thinks it is okay to go back to a life of sin. Both are very bad outcomes for an immature believer.

As a result, Paul's guidance to the mature is:

Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.

Romans 14:15

The issue may seem trivial to us, but *destroying* a brother or sister in Christ most certainly is not. We'll consider this further tomorrow.

Returning to Romans

Tuesday, October 20: Read Romans 15

The specific circumstances of Romans 14 and 15 might be strange to us—things like eating meat sacrificed at pagan temples—but the underlying problem is something that happens in our local churches all too often. It is the tension between mature and immature believers. It occurs when one group looks down their noses at another or when one group tries to enforce their personal spiritual convictions on everyone else.

I hope you will agree, this would seem to be a very practical subject on which to get some guidance. Here is the first bit of advice we should all follow:

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another.

Romans 14:12-13

You see, *we will all stand before God's Judgment Seat*. Ultimately, the life we live is before the Lord and not others.

Continued on the next page.



Returning to Romans

Tuesday, October 20: Read Romans 15 (Continued)

We have to be very careful that we don't act as if God has called us to judge on His behalf. At the same time, we must avoid thinking we are called to spiritually straighten everyone else out. Both of these are a type of spiritual arrogance that we need to learn to avoid.

Now, this is not to say that we can't have a private conversation with a brother or sister to talk over something that is bothering us. It is a mark of maturity on the part of both to be able to do so. If you can help a brother or sister improve their walk by doing so, God be praised! But we need to do so gently and in great humility.

Here is a second principle, and this one applies to the more mature believer.

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak ... When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

I Corinthians 8:9, 12

Today's reading teaches us the same thing:

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Romans 15:1

You see, the onus falls on the more mature to look out for, and be protective of, the less mature believer. A good place to start is by not overreacting to what they do and say. And isn't this exactly what would be expected of a *living sacrifice* under orders to his or her heavenly Father? This may not be the world's way, but it is true spirituality in practice.

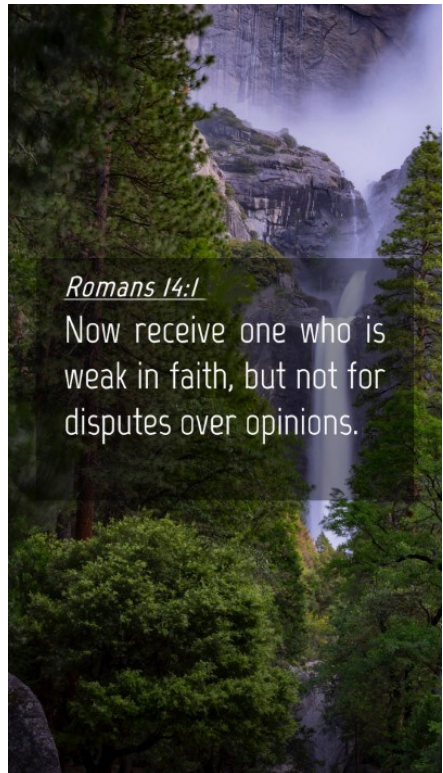
Returning to Romans

Wednesday, October 21: Read Revelation 2

Before we leave this subject of the strong (mature) and weak (immature) believer, I want to make sure we all understand how thoroughly practical this is. Consider these two points of application:

- We must be very careful to never do injury to another believer with respect to *disputable matters*. (Romans 14:1)
- On the other hand, the church must keep worldliness from gaining the slightest foothold, as Jesus made clear in His critique of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

Of course, the immediate question is: "*How do we know the difference?*" Specifically, how do we know when something is a disputable matter that we can let go as opposed to worldliness that must be excluded because it is sin! Let me give you examples that illustrate the difference. These examples are not perfect, but they will make the point.



Continued on the next page.

Returning to Romans

Wednesday, October 21:

Read Revelation 2 (Continued)

Was all of the *junk* that came with the Covid pandemic a disputable matter or a clear cut issue of right and wrong? Some tried to make it an issue of sin, but we chose to simply act in a prudent manner, allowing for a variety of opinions, and kept any division from getting a foothold in our fellowship. Not surprisingly, we came through the pandemic unscathed, while many churches did not fare so well.

On the other hand, churches are coming under increasing pressure to accept positions that are clearly not biblical—such as the pro-choice position with respect to abortion. The church, in some cases, is starting to accept a pro-abortion position. That is to have things exactly backwards. The pro-choice position is an example of worldliness that must be kept out of the Church, for the Bible would clearly label abortion as sin.

On the other hand, the church has had division over vaccines. Whether or not you decide to undergo a controversial vaccine is much more an issue of personal liberty over which no believer should injure another. As you can see, what seemed easy in theory becomes much more challenging when I give you real examples.

When all is said and done, however, it is not as hard as we sometime make it! Choosing what honors God's Word, looks out for others, and is done in faith is always a good option!

Returning to Romans

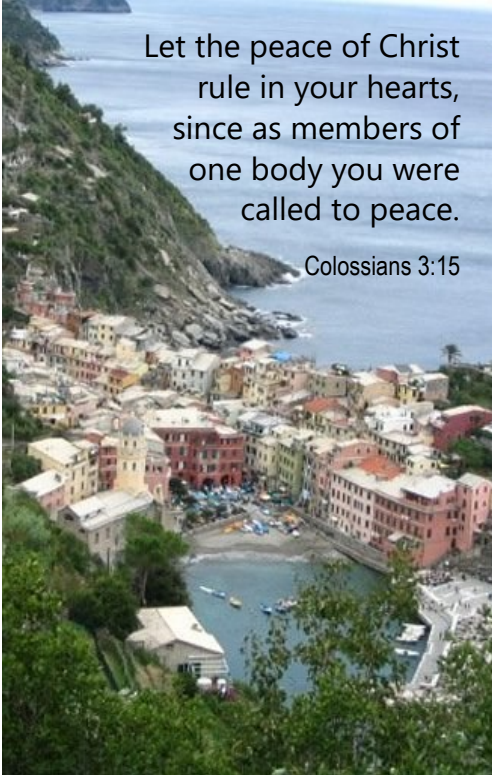
**Thursday, October 22:
Read Romans 16**

This final chapter in the Book of Romans begins with a very personal touch from Paul. He both commends Phoebe to the church in Rome and passes along a greeting to many. But, part way through this final chapter, the teacher in Paul comes out once again. He simply can't keep from passing on some final instructions:

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.

Romans 16:17

It is always a sin to cause division within a fellowship of believers. And, there are always those who want to add to the Gospel and add rules to the Christian Life.



Let the peace of Christ
rule in your hearts,
since as members of
one body you were
called to peace.

Colossians 3:15

Continued on the next page.

Returning to Romans

Thursday, October 22:

Read Romans 16 (Continued)

What is Paul's advice?

Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people ... I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

Romans 16:17-19

The first bit of advice is the most important: Stay away from those who cause division and add conditions to the Word of God. There are many kinds of sinful appetites that seek to be fed at your expense: approbation, sympathy, power, lust, and the like.

Paul also gives some excellent closing advice suited to every fellowship of believers. As a church grows, it should be drawing in all kinds of people. Hopefully, the mature within the fellowship will be on guard and protect those who are new to the faith and susceptible to error.

Unfortunately, any church that seeks to draw in the lost and disenfranchised through the teaching of the Word will also draw in those seeking to carve out a little fiefdom for themselves. It is my prayer that those in our fellowship would steer clear and be innocent about all such kinds of evil.

Pray that such divisive individuals would either grow spiritually themselves under the teaching of the Word or go elsewhere because they can't find anywhere to drive the wedge of division among the saints that make up our fellowship! And, all God's people said, "Amen!"

Ephesians: The Armor of God

**Friday, October 23:
Read Romans 5:1-11**

We are back in the Book of Ephesians to consider more of the armor that God has provided as the means by which we can *stand our ground* when the day of evil comes. After considering the *Belt of Truth* and the *Breastplate of Righteousness* in previous devotions, today we begin considering having our:

**... feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the
gospel of peace.**

Ephesians 6:15

First, let's consider the footwear of a Roman soldier. It consisted of thick leather with metal studs. The leather provided protection from rough terrain and the studs provided grip during battle. The soldier's footwear was meant to provide protection, grip, and mobility.

So what is the spiritual analog? In order to answer this, we need to put together all that we have covered thus far in

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Ephesians: The Armor of God

Friday, October 23:

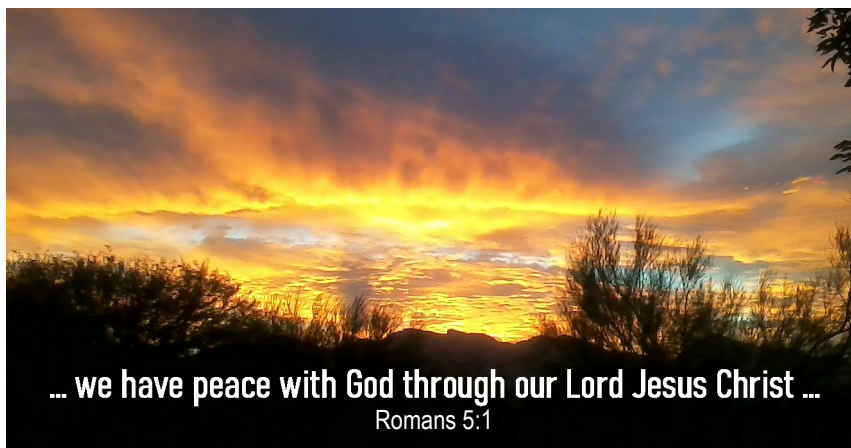
Read Romans 5:1-11 (Continued)

our devotionals on Romans: The Word of truth makes clear our status of justification before a holy God as the result of receiving Christ's imputed righteousness. Now we need to take our justification a step further:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ... Romans 5:1

Satan is an accuser of the saints, and he seeks to weigh us down with guilt for our failures. But we can keep moving forward in the Christian Life, protected from Satan's booby-traps and with a firm grip on the circumstances of life, for part of our readiness to stand against the accuser of the brethren is to know ahead of time that we have peace with God. It is the imputed righteousness of Christ that makes it so! Once we know we have peace with God, then we can know for certain that no accusation of Satan can ever touch our eternal standing before the great Judge of the universe.

Praise God for His wonderful provision of the *gospel of peace* for all who believe!



... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...
Romans 5:1

Ephesians: The Armor of God

Monday, October 26:

Read Philippians 4

Let's spend another day thinking through this idea of the *gospel of peace* as part of our armor to stand against the wiles of Satan. It is *gospel* because it is the good news of our reconciliation to the Father through faith in the Son. This reconciliation, or peace, is the permanent possession of every child of God. But let me share something with you:

- To begin, Romans 5:1 yesterday made clear that there is peace with God. It is the result of being justified by faith, and is only possible through the work of Christ. It is a marvelous aspect of our salvation: Our status as an enemy is gone. It was not something we had to work to earn or have to work to maintain, it is part of the so-great salvation that is ours in Christ.
- Then there is the peace of God, and this is something very different. Consider the well-known verse:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

What can cause us to lose *peace with God*? Nothing! What can cause us to lose the *peace of God*? Anxiety, fretting, and worry that are symptoms of unbelief! What do we need to do? Confess any sin of unbelief that may have crept into our thinking and then turn to the Lord. Give Him thanks for His sovereign control of things. Lay everything at His feet. When we do, we have a promise: Our peace with God will be coupled to the peace of God which will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus through every anxiety-causing circumstance that comes our way!

Ephesians: The Armor of God

Tuesday, October 27: Read Hebrews 11

The next piece of the armor of God is the *shield of faith*:

... above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Ephesians 6:16

Let's make sure we first understand the physical reality from which the metaphor is drawn. The shield of the Roman soldier was quite large, and meant to cover the body of a crouching soldier. It consisted of a wooden frame with a thick and hardened rawhide covering. The Romans typically covered the rawhide with a thin layer of metal so that it would be noncombustible. So, from this physical analog, what are the spiritual principles which we need to apply?



For the purposes of our devotional reading, we will look at three aspects of the shield of faith over the course of the next few days, starting with *I. The Subject of Faith*:

- What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 is the closest thing we have to a Biblical definition:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The word translated *substance* carries the idea of *holding title* to something, such that you own it. We have faith, when we *hold title* to those things in which we have

Ephesians: The Armor of God

Tuesday, October 27: Read Hebrews 11

(Continued)

confidence even though they may not be visible. Now that would make faith very subjective, if it wasn't for the next point.

- The object of faith is critical!

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

Romans 10:17

Are you seeing the connection? It is crucial! We hold title to the way things really are when we rightly understand the Word of God. We can trust in every promise God has made, even when it deals with subject matter we can't physically see because, although heaven and earth will pass away, the Word of the Lord will stand firm! So faith is believing, trusting, and resting in the truths of God's Word.

- Placing one's faith in what God has said, will always bring His commendation:

**This (faith) is what the ancients were commended for ...
Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for
He has prepared a city for them.**

Hebrews 11:2,16

Let's conclude with this question: *"What would cause God to be ashamed of His people?"* The answer should be clear, God is ashamed of a people without faith. This includes all those who don't know or won't believe what He has preserved for us in His Word. So, won't we help each other to *take up the shield of faith* by learning and placing our faith in the Word of God? More to come.

Ephesians: The Armor of God

Wednesday, October 28:

Read James 1

Our second aspect of the shield of faith is *The Fiery Darts*. We will discuss what they are and how we quench them. Today we will discuss how Satan makes use of the fallen world to tempt us to sin. The following Scripture in I John makes it clear that the world seeks to entice:

Do not love the world or anything in the world ... For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

I John 2:15-16

There you have it, the world seeks to stimulate our old sin nature, and it does so by the images it shows, the appetites it tickles, and the pride it stimulates.

Have you ever been happily making your way through the day, when suddenly you are taken aback and ask yourself, *"Where did that thought come from?"* Satan used the world to send a fiery dart of temptation your way and the flesh responded. James provides some very helpful insight on this matter of temptation:

... each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

James 1:14

The phrase *dragged away and enticed* uses words associated with using a lure or bait to catch game.

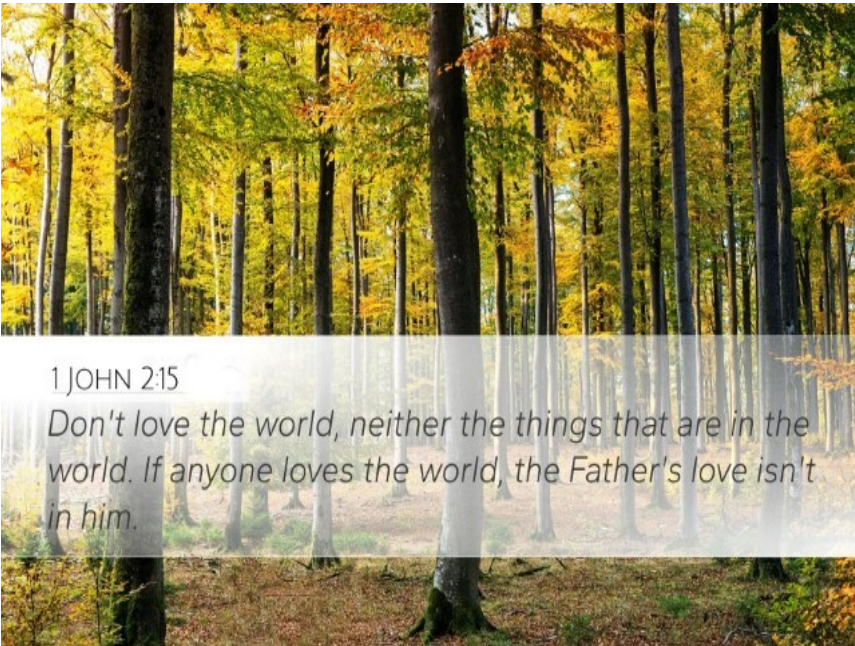
Ephesians: The Armor of God

Wednesday, October 28:

Read James 1 (Continued)

Satan uses this world to toss shiny objects in front of us, seeking to get our sin nature to prompt us to take the lure. And if we do, sin and broken fellowship with God result. No wonder we need something to shield us from such darts. It turns out that it is *the shield of faith*.

But wait, there is one more kind of *fiery dart* we need to discuss tomorrow!



1 JOHN 2:15

Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him.

Ephesians: The Armor of God

Thursday, October 29: Read Mark 9

So one kind of *fiery dart* that comes our way are those associated with the enticements of this world. But there is a second kind of *fiery dart* Satan also employs. He seeks to derail our spiritual lives by getting us to become anxious, afraid, guilty, or struggling with doubt.

When we get bogged down with these things, we tend to forget the call to *walk worthy* of who we are in Christ. We forget that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle, and we forget we are to take every thought captive to obedience to Christ.



Ephesians: The Armor of God

Thursday, October 29: Read Mark 9

(Continued)

In short, we become casualties in the spiritual conflict, and unable to accomplish what God has called us to do until we can quench these kinds of darts.

So, how do we deal with them? Let me take you directly to the Word, and work our way through the above list. When we are anxious:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, with prayer and supplication ...

Philippians 4:6

When dealing with fear: realize that *perfect love drives out fear* ... (1 John 4:18) Couple that with:

... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:39

How about when it comes to guilt?

But if anyone does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense ...

1 John 2:1

When we are struggling with doubt, it can be very helpful to realize: *Whatever is not of faith is sin* ... (Romans 14:23)

This should both turn us to the Word of God, which is how we take up the shield of faith, and to our knees that we might daily pray:

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief."

Mark 9:24

Ephesians: The Armor of God

**Friday, October 30:
Read Hebrews 4:1-12**

So how do we handle the fiery darts of temptation and doubt that Satan sends our way? We quench them by taking up the *shield of faith*. Let me use two passages of Scripture, to show you the quenching power of faith. The first verse is Isaiah 40:30-31:

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength. ...

The word translated *wait* has an interesting background. Among other things, it carries the idea of *to twist together* as when simple fibers are twisted together in order to make a strong yarn or rope.

Second, add Hebrews 4:11:

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

The *rest* spoken of in this great treatise on faith refers to when you cease from trying to manage all the details of life and, instead, turn them over to the Lord, trusting Him to manage better than you ever could. The disobedience we want to avoid is that of the Exodus generation who failed to trust God, who failed to rest in His promise to provide.

Now, put the two together. We all are going to struggle with temptation and doubt from time to time. But those

Ephesians: The Armor of God

Friday, October 30:
Read Hebrews 4:1-12
(Continued)

who consistently take the promises of God—twisting them one with another—will renew their strength with the Lord's strength. In fact, there is a place of rest we can enter and that's the place where we cease striving and start trusting! It is a place where we look to Him to provide and then respond as He leads. That's the start of how we quench that which Satan sends!



*... those who wait on the Lord shall
renew their strength. ...*

Isaiah 40:31

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Community Church

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

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