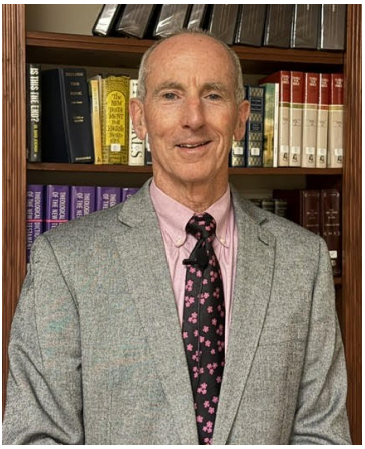
December 2026
Daily Devotional



Vistoso Community Church

Foreword



We are going to close out the year by finishing our studies in the Book of Ephesians as well as spending time in both the Psalms and the Gospel of John. I trust you will also enjoy the Old Testament connections to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at His First Advent.

I urge you to find time during the busy holiday season to continue your devotional time in God's Word. God has promised a blessing for those who daily come to Him through the truths He has preserved in His Word.

> **Blessed are those who listen to Me, watching daily at My doors, waiting at My doorway. For those who find Me find life and receive favor from the LORD.** Proverbs 8:34-35

In His grace,

Kevin Redig, pastor-teacher

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

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, December 1:
Read Philippians 1

We have just scratched the surface when it comes to *taking up the helmet of salvation!* How about the present *tense* of our salvation? With respect to the present, we are told to: redeem the time, abide in Christ, be Holy as God is holy, walk worthy of who and what we are in Christ, be Jesus' witness, be His ambassadors, bear fruit to His glory, be transformed into His image and likeness.

On the one hand, what a glorious calling we have as believers in and then followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian Life is most certainly not a self-centered or easy life, but a life with such meaning and purpose! On the other hand, we have an impossible list—humanly speaking. That is the reason God has also provided: the indwelling of His Spirit within every believer, the filling and enabling of His Spirit, divine promises that connect us to everything we need for life and godliness, and His Word—divinely inspired and preserved through the ages. I would have my doubts about all of the above if it wasn't for a very precious verse found in today's reading:

> **… being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** Philippians 1:6

Who did all of the work in providing for our salvation from hell to heaven? Of course God did! How about when it comes to the Christian life in time, who is the prime mover? Once again, it is very clearly God who has committed to carry it on to completion. Our devotion may be up and down—but our God never wavers in His desire to conform us to the image and likeness of His Son and provide us with the means to do so!

Finishing Ephesians

Wednesday, December 2:
Read Romans 8:18-39

Let's not move on before talking about our salvation in terms of what God desires to do in the future. This is the third tense of our salvation, something we commonly refer to as our future *glorification!* What has He promised:

- We are going to see our Savior in His glorified state.
- We are going to know Him fully as He knows us.
- We will have an incorruptible resurrection body that is just like our Savior's.
- We will be in the company of a great host of Saints.
- The last enemy, death, will be overcome and so there will be no more death, sorrow, tears, or suffering.
- We will rule and reign with Him.
- We will be with Him where He is in glory for all eternity.

Let me remind you once again of these powerful words of Jim Eliot, a man who was martyred for his faith:

> *He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose.*

Consider also Paul describing very similar sentiments in our reading for today:

> **I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed <u>in us</u>.**
>
> Romans 8:18

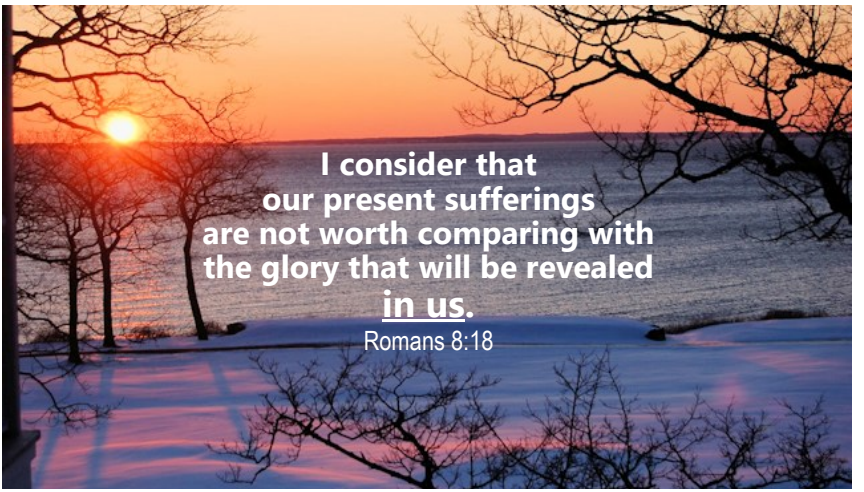
Finishing Ephesians

Wednesday, December 2:
Read Romans 8:18-39 (Continued)

As we ponder what God has planned for our future salvation, let me remind you:

- These are aspects of our salvation that are certain, but not yet our experience.
- We are to look forward to them as they are our confidence.
- These are certain because our God is faithful.
- We can rejoice in them, though we currently only see them by the eyes of faith and from a distance.

It is this *helmet of salvation*—the salvation that we have covered during the course of the last three devotionals—that we are to put on so that we might stand firm against the wiles of the devil!



Finishing Ephesians

Thursday December 3: Read Matthew 4

One more piece of the armor to go:

> **Take … the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.** Ephesians 6:17

First, let's differentiate between the *belt of truth* and the *sword of the Spirit*. If the *belt of truth* is the body of truth—the Word of God in its entirety—then the *sword of the Spirit* is the specific truth appropriate for a given set of circumstances. In other words, it is one thing to have a broad understanding of what the Bible says, it is another altogether to be able to apply Scripture to our specific circumstances.

There is no better example of how this is meant to function than the way our Savior responded to the temptation of Satan as described in Matthew Chapter 4.



> **After fasting forty days and forty nights, He** (Jesus) **was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."** Matthew 4:2-4

Finishing Ephesians

Thursday December 3: Read Matthew 4

(Continued)

Consider how Jesus responds to the temptation described in Verse 4: "*It is written* ..." The grammar associated with the word translated *written* makes it clear that, although the words to follow come from Deuteronomy 8:3 and were written in the past, their impact continues to the present. That is because the Bible is not a dusty tome, but something alive, vital, and powerful:

> **For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**
>
> Hebrews 4:12

In fact, Jesus didn't come against the sly temptation of Satan in His own power, but rather via the Word of God. That is because:

> **For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.** II Corinthians 10:3-4

The Word of God is going to decisively deal with the temptation from Satan—a temptation for Jesus to satisfy His own appetites outside of the will of God. Thus we are to do as He did:

> **... demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God** (by holding it up to scrutiny against the light of God's Word), **and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**
>
> II Corinthians 10:5

Finishing Ephesians

Friday, December 4:
Read Ephesians 6:18-20

We have nearly finished our investigation of the armor of God. Why have we spent so much time to methodically work our way through it? One theologian answers this way:

> *Nothing is more fatal than to start in the Christian life with the notion that now we are Christian we have finished with all our difficulties and problems … The New Testament rather gives the impression that because we are Christians we must expect attacks upon us in a way that we have never known or realized before. But thank God, we are not only told that we have to wrestle and fight in this way, we are also told how we can be enabled to do so successfully.*
>
> Martin Lloyd-Jones

In keeping with this observation, consider that, although the metaphor regarding armor has run its course, the discussion of spiritual warfare has not!

> **And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me …** Ephesians 6:18

So, let's take up prayer, along with the armor of God via the following introduction:

- To pray is to communicate with God. Note in the above verse that we are told to do so all the time and in all circumstances.
- There are many kinds of prayer: praise, thanksgiving, intercession (for others), and supplication (for self).

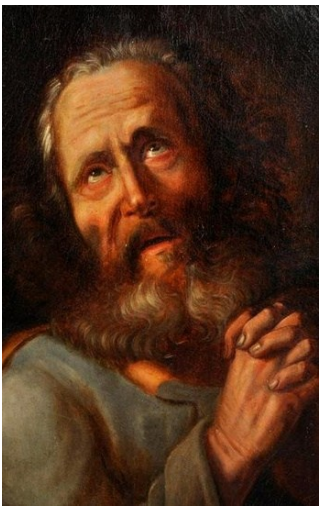
Finishing Ephesians

Friday, December 4:
Read Ephesians 6:18-20 (Continued)

- To pray *in the Spirit*. This is a reference to being in fellowship with God, tuned to His will as revealed in His Word, and trusting in the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf with *groans that words cannot express*. (Romans 8:26)
- To be alert in prayer is to make prayer a regular habit—ideally at a regular time. If we don't, we will find ourselves always trying to *catch-up* with our prayers!
- To remember that prayer is personal and need based. How healthy it is to get our eyes off of self and onto the needs of others.

Allow me to share my own paraphrase of Ephesians 6:18:

Talk with the Lord—as a habit and in all circumstances. Do so with praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and particular petition. Make sure to be filled with the Spirit and trusting in the Spirit's own prayer ministry on your behalf. Pray as an ever-vigilant watchman who does not grow weary. Pray for the saints, in general and by name, for you know that your brothers and sisters are undergoing the same trials and temptations as you are.



… For the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16

Finishing Ephesians

Monday, December 7: Read Acts 6

Let's delve deeper into praying in concert with the full armor of God by considering the following:

- Appending the admonition to pray at the end of the armor of God metaphor is no accident or change of subject. Rather, it is meant to keep us from treating the armor of God in a mechanical or formulaic manner. We need to be in vital and ongoing communication with the Creator of this universe, bringing everything to Him in prayer, as part of relying on the various pieces of our *spiritual armor*. That's why it says, … *pray continuously* in I Thessalonians 5:17.



Finishing Ephesians

Monday, December 7: Read Acts 6

(Continued)

- A study of the life of Jesus seems to place a premium on prayer that does not seem to be a part of today's Christian practice!

But Jesus <u>often</u> withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
Luke 5:16

(See also: Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12, 22:41-44)

- If Jesus, who was from the Father and led by the Holy Spirit, needed to withdraw to pray, is it conceivable that we could possibly need to do less? Of course not! Perhaps Luke 18:1 was meant to remind the coming church to trust more in the Lord than secular strategies:

Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not faint.

- Finally, the many commentators who claim there is only one offensive weapon in the armor of God have completely overlooked prayer! We are concerned about missionaries around the world and bring them before the Sovereign God of the Universe. Why? Because He can act anywhere at any time! When it comes to leading His Church, the Lord Jesus Christ is on the offensive.

So, let me suggest there is great need to wield the sword of the Spirit individually and pray both individually and corporately!

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, December 8: Read James 5

Taking up where we left off yesterday, let me try to clear up one area of confusion regarding prayer:

> **"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."**
>
> Mark 11:24

We all too often treat this verse as if it is the only guidance in the Bible on prayer, as well as a *blank check* to obtain whatever we want. Our reading in James provides some immediate boundaries—our motives:

> **When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives …** James 4:3

I John provides much more subtle guidance:

> **This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**
>
> I John 5:14

This is really a parallel to asking in *Jesus Name*. The idea is that we ask after first aligning ourselves with the will of God. This is an essential step in coming to Him in prayer.

Finally, keep praying for the saints—always:

> **praying always … in the Spirit … with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—** Ephesians 6:18

God has determined to move His hand in response to the prayers of His people to accomplish His purposes to His glory.

Finishing Ephesians

Tuesday, December 8: Read James 5

(Continued)

So, pray as much as possible in keeping with the known will of God, doing so from a perspective of divine viewpoint while making the case for God's glory, reputation, and will, for we have been promised:

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

Let us be both well-armored warriors, as well as prayerful warriors!



Back to Reading the Psalms

Wednesday, December 9:
Read Psalm 86

I am not sure how you approach the psalms; but unless I am careful, I find it easy to gloss over the language of praise without allowing it to impact me as it should. It is not until I slow down and look more carefully at what is being said, that the Spirit of God can begin to speak to my heart as God intends for His Word to do.

For example, David makes clear to us that his life is full of problems. Just consider the various ways he calls upon the Lord:



Hear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Psalm 86:1

Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. Psalm 86:6

Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant Your strength to Your servant and save the son of Your maidservant. Psalm 86:16

We sometimes think that after becoming king, David's life was easy. Actually, it was just like ours, filled with challenges and trials. How do we face those challenges and trials?

Back to Reading the Psalms

Wednesday, December 9:
Read Psalm 86 (Continued)

I trust we will do what David did, turn to the Lord, call out to Him and trust Him to answer. David gives us some very good advice about what to do in between the trials that are sure to come. I trust David's prayer will be the prayer of our heart as well:

> **Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify Your name forever. For great is Your love toward me …** Psalm 86:11-12

What a glorious goal, to have an undivided heart that fears the Lord:

- A heart that is fully committed to the Lord, rather than a heart that oscillates between the worldly and the divine.
- A heart fully caught up in the *Fear of the Lord*, which is to recognize the exalted nature of our God.
- A heart that has reverence for His character and a respect for His capability to do all that He has promised to do.

Where might a heart such as this lead? How about to a testimony just like David's:

> **Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord; no deeds can compare with Yours … You, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.** Psalm 86: 8,17

Back to Reading the Psalms

Thursday, December 10: Read Psalm 91

This psalm challenges us to make a choice! Specifically—where are we going to find our security? There is no doubt what the psalmist has in mind:

> **He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."**
>
> Psalm 91:1-2

Allow me to suggest that we *dwell in the shelter of the Most High* when we trust Him, when we hear His Word and believe it! Where then is our security? Our security is in the One who is our *refuge* and *fortress*.

The psalm goes on to speak of the Lord's protection—protection from all manner of harm: the marauder's arrow, pestilence, and plague. In short:

> **If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.** Psalm 91:9-10

But wait a second, disaster does sometimes befall Christians! Does that mean they have not made the Most High their dwelling place, not come to Him in dependent trust? At this point, we have to be careful. Israel's witness to the watching world, was God's material blessing upon them.

During this the time of the Church, let me suggest that our witness to the watching world is the spiritual blessing that is ours in Christ. That blessing is something that no illness, enemy, or catastrophe can touch.

Back to Reading the Psalms

Thursday, December 10:
Read Psalm 91 (Continued)

The psalmist says:

> **"Because he loves Me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name."**
>
> Psalm 91:14

> **Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."** John 11:25-26

Physical protection was God's promise to the believing Jew. Spiritual protection in the form of eternal life is the promise of Jesus to those who put their faith in who He is and what He accomplished at the cross! So the believer in Christ can look forward to *dwelling in the shelter of the Most High* in both time and for all eternity. That's a kind of security that can't be found anywhere else!

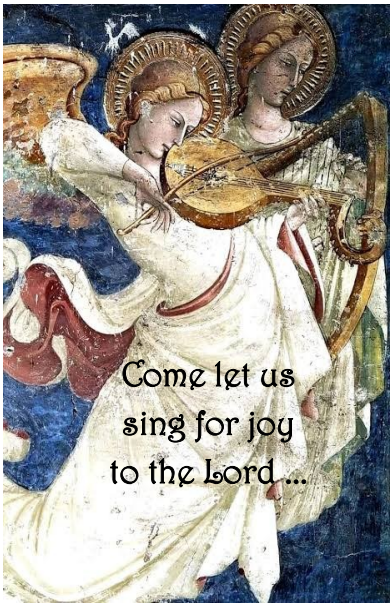


Back to Reading the Psalms

Friday, December 11: Read Psalm 95

The first half of this psalm is a joyous call to worship!

Come let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Psalm 95:1



All down through the psalm, we are called to extol the Lord, and give thanks to Him. Halfway through we are called to:

"... bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care." ... Psalm 95:6-7

For each of us, this should be more than adequate reason to *bow down in worship*, for our great God is the One who *created our inmost being and knit us together in our mother's womb*. (Psalm 139:13) He is the One who has reconciled us to Himself through faith in the work of His Son on the cross and brought us into a relationship that is so close we are now family!

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! I John 3:1

Back to Reading the Psalms

Friday, December 11: Read Psalm 95

(Continued)

But as children of God the second half of this psalm carries a warning:

> **Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert …** Psalm 95:8

You see, God expects His children to trust Him. A hard heart is one that turns from God to fear, worry, and the answers provided by this world. That is what the Israelites did when they quarreled with Moses and tested God's patience by complaining about a lack of water and threatening to go back to Egypt.

In short, don't turn from God to other things, for there are consequences should we choose to do so! God Himself said, "*They shall never enter My rest.*" (Psalm 95:11) The Israelites remained God's flock, after all He continued to feed them with manna day after day. But they wandered in the wilderness rather than entering the Promised Land that God desired to give them.

We too need to watch our lives closely that we do not harden our hearts toward spiritual things and, in doing so, turn from our great God. Life's disappointments can tempt us to do so, let us not forget to:

> **… shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation!** Psalm 95:1

Back to Reading the Psalms

Monday, December 14: Read Psalm 96

As you can see, this section of the Book of Psalms is filled with psalms of praise! Would you agree with my observation that we are not really very good at doing what the psalm is describing? It is not often you see Christians, *singing to the Lord, praising His name and proclaiming His salvation day after day*. (Psalm 96:2) Let me suggest that we try to do at least some of that as circumstances allow and the Spirit leads.

> **For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, He is to be feared above all the gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.**
>
> Psalm 96:4-5

Our God is great and He is worthy of our praise. What He deserves, those saved by His grace should give to Him! We are not going to find anything in this world like the salvation that is available in Jesus Christ. One of my favorite calls to corporate worship in the church is found in Verses 8-9:

> ***Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.***

When we gather for corporate worship, we should be acknowledging that our God is glorious above all else, and perfectly holy like none other! The offering we bring should be one of thanksgiving and a *humble and contrite spirit that trembles at the Word of God!* For this is the one whom the Lord esteems. (Isaiah 66:2) And, why should we tremble before Him? We should tremble because He is coming!

Back to Reading the Psalms

Monday, December 14: Read Psalm 96

(Continued)

And when He comes:

> **He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His truth.** Psalm 96:13

The Lord Jesus is not going to judge according to our standards, but according to His righteousness. He is not going to be interested in our version of things, but in *His truth!* That should be enough to cause all of us to tremble.

The good news, for those who have placed their faith in the person and work of Christ, God has given us righteousness:

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

Being clothed with God's righteousness is the only way to be ready for the judgment that is to come!



Back to Reading the Psalms

Tuesday, December 15: Read Psalms 100 and 101

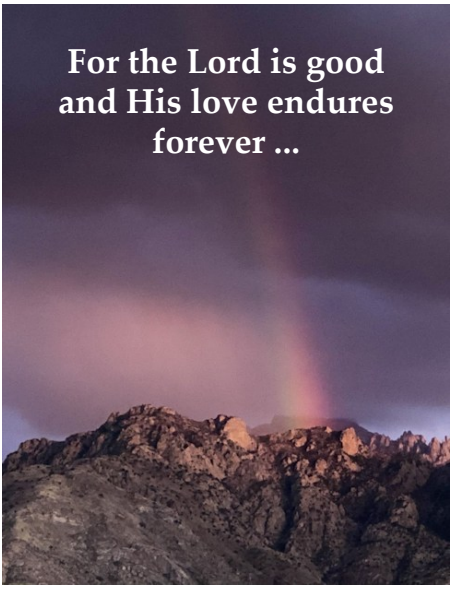
These back-to-back psalms make a nice pair. We begin once again with the subject of praise. We have seen the reason for such praise before—God is both our *Maker* and our *Good Shepherd*. Consider the focus of Psalm 100:4—thanksgiving and praise are each mentioned twice:

> **Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.**

And then, Verse 5 gives us the reason:

> **For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.**

At this point let me suggest that you conduct a little exercise. Look back over your life and ask yourself, "*Has the Lord loved me? Has He been faithful to watch over me?*" Ask Him to show you, and I think you will be surprised at two things.



- First just how loving and faithful He has been.
- Second of all, how undeserving you have been of all that He has provided!

Back to Reading the Psalms

Tuesday, December 15: Read Psalms 100 and 101

(Continued)

If this is how God acted in the past, what do you suppose He will do in the future? We just read the answer in Psalm 100:5:

> **… His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.**

How should we respond to this amazing fact of God's grace and mercy? Psalm 101 tells us. Let me suggest our intent should be the same as David's:

> **I will be careful to lead a blameless life … I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.**
>
> Psalm 101:2-4

That's a pretty good list right there, and David provided even more. Allow me to summarize our response to *God's love and faithfulness*. It would seem we should come out of the world and separate ourselves from it and its practices. This is how we become a vessel suited for the Lord's purposes:

> **… if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.** II Timothy 2:21

This leads me to believe that separating from this world is the proper outcome for those who give praise and thanks-giving to our great God!

Lessons from the Gospel of John

Wednesday, December 16:
Read John 10:22-42

As we have already seen in Verse 25, the response to His miracles that Jesus is looking for is belief! Further, the sheep of the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, are those who have believed. For today's devotional, I want to point out something about those who have believed, something Jesus Himself said:

> **"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand."** John 10:28

This means that the eternal life of the believer is secure! But wait, consider Verse 29:

> **"My Father, who has given them to Me is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand."**

The believer's eternal status is doubly secure. Here is one more verse from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus:

> **Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance ...** Ephesians 1:13-14

If you have placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, then you have eternal life. You are secure in the cupped hand of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and then covered with a second hand, that of the Father. Both hands are then wrapped up with a seal who is none other than the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. If you are saved, you are eternally saved by the combined action of all three members of the Trinity. Children grasp this concept immediately, but I have had adults ask me, "What happens if I decide to jump out of God's hands?" My response,

> *"Which do you think is more significant, God's ability to preserve your salvation, or your ability to compromise it?"*

To ask the question is to answer it. Praise God !

Lessons from the Gospel of John

Thursday, December 17:
Read John 11:1-27

Let me start today's devotional with the closing verse of John, Chapter 10:

> **And in that place** (east side of the Jordan) **many believed in Jesus.** John 10:42

Man always tries to add some kind of works to salvation, but the Scriptures make it clear that what Jesus is looking for is a faith response to Who He is—the Son of God and Savior of the world. John 10:42 documents just that response.

Continued on the next page.



Lessons from the Gospel of John

Thursday, December 17:
Read John 11:1-27 (Continued)

In our reading today in Chapter 11, consider how consistently Jesus continues to minister in order to prompt faith. I remind you to recognize this as the ever-repeating pattern of this Gospel and the Bible in general. Consider Verse 14:

> **"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe."** John 11:14

Not only is Chapter 11 going to prompt saving faith on the part of many, it is going to further develop the faith of the disciples. Consider Verse 25 as Jesus confronts Martha:

> **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"**

Jesus brings this emphasis on belief to a clear point of decision for Martha when He asks her: "*Do you believe what I have told you?*"

I love her answer in Verse 27, because it tells us she is in the kingdom of God. She says: "Yes, Lord!" She told Him, *"I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

Since we live after the cross, a faith that saves today is very similar and sounds like this:

> *Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who went to the cross to bear my sins, satisfying the just demands of the Father. I trust in Your finished work that I might receive Your gift of eternal life.*

Lessons from the Gospel of John

Friday, December 18:
Read John 11:28-57

Today I would like to focus upon Jesus' prayer to His Father as recorded in John 11, Verses 41-42:

> **"Father, I thank You that you have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me."**

Are you following this? Jesus didn't need to audibly pray to the Father, for the Father always hears the Son. Continued on the next page.



Lessons from the Gospel of John

Friday, December 18:
Read John 11:28-57 (Continued)

He made an audible request of the Father so that the people gathered around would know what He was requesting. He did this so that when the Father answered the prayer, they would be prompted to believe He was who He claimed to be—the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The next recorded words from the mouth of Jesus are: *"Lazarus, come out!"* And, Lazarus immediately does. Verse 45 records what happens:

> **Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in Him.**

What is Jesus looking for? What was the purpose of the miracles performed by Jesus? Why did Jesus pray such that the people would see a direct answer? The answer to all three questions is so that lost people would be saved through placing their faith in Him. What leads to eternal life is believing in who Jesus is, the eternally existent Son of God who took on humanity at His first coming, and what He came to do, save the world from sin which He did by going to the cross in our place.

Did you notice how Jesus didn't look for any response other than belief—no works whatsoever! That's the Gospel message. The only thing a lost person contributes is to humbly accept, by faith, the finished work of Jesus Christ. Don't let anyone contaminate, or take from you, the Gospel of God's grace!



Preparation for Christmas

Monday, December 21: Read Genesis 3

For this upcoming week before Christmas, I would like to share with you just a few of the many Old Testament passages which point ahead to the First Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the Old and New Testaments are inseparably bound together. The subject matter of the Old Testament centers in the person and coming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will spend the next week looking at just a few of the many examples.

Although the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ can be found as early as Genesis 1, His coming is clearly predicted in Chapter 3. We'll consider two connections to our Lord, but this first one is the more obvious:

So the Lord God said to the serpent …"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel." Genesis 3:14-15

There is a specific reference to Jesus in the verse. It is the offspring of the woman who will crush the head of Satan. Why the woman? It is because of the coming virgin birth of Christ. Who else is able to crush Satan, other than the King of kings and Lord of Lords? (Revelation 19:11-16, 20:7-10)

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Preparation for Christmas

Monday, December 21: Read Genesis 3

(Continued)

Satan's strike at the heel is a reference to his manipulation of people and circumstances leading to the unjust trial and crucifixion of our Lord.

There is a second connection to our Lord in this chapter that is more subtle. We saw that Adam ate of the fruit and died spiritually. The Book of Romans tells us that God has imputed this sin to every member of the human race making Adam the father of sin and death for the human race. I Corinthians 15:22 sums it up: *For as in Adam all die. ...*

One has come who is in contrast to this Adam:

> **The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam a life-giving spirit ... The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. ... And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.** I Corinthians 15:45-49

Because of the coming of this Second Adam—the one without sin who died in our place—we celebrate Christmas! He provided life where the first Adam provided only death, and that is why He will crush the head of Satan.



Preparation for Christmas

Tuesday, December 22:
Read Ruth 2:20 and Ruth 4

I trust you remember the storyline of Ruth. Boaz assumes the role of *Kinsman-Redeemer* in purchasing the land of Ruth's deceased husband and taking her for his wife. The *Kinsman-Redeemer,* developed elsewhere in the Old Testament, is a male who acts on behalf of a relative who is in need of assistance. A *Kinsman-Redeemer* might buy back mortgaged property or buy a relative out of slavery. Two things about the Kinsman-Redeemer:

1. There had to be a familial relationship. (Leviticus 25:47-49)

2. The redeemer had to pay a price. (Leviticus 25:27)

The *Kinsman-Redeemer*, as portrayed by Boaz, is a type of Jesus Christ. Notice how he fulfilled the criteria:

- Speaking of Jesus in Hebrews 2:14, 17:

  Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity … For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way …

- Speaking of the purchase price in I Peter 1:18-19:

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

Here is yet another reason we celebrate Christmas. It is a recognition that our *Kinsman-Redeemer* has come into the world. And, He came to redeem us from the slave market of sin that we might be transferred from the dominion of darkness and into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:13-14)

Preparation for Christmas

Wednesday, December 23:
Read Isaiah 40

Isaiah Chapter 40 starts out with a word of comfort for the people of Israel after the discipline they have received. It then moves into a prophetic description of the ministry of John the Baptist, commentary on the frailty of man, and the good tidings that are coming to Jerusalem. These are the two verses to which I want to draw your attention today:

> **See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and His arm rules for Him. See, His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies Him. He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young.**
>
> Isaiah 40:10-11

What an amazing expression of God's character we see in those two verses. Of course, the Sovereign of the universe would come with power. But who would expect Him to carefully tend His flock, gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them close to His heart? It is no wonder that we celebrate the coming of this kind of shepherd—for He is the *Good Shepherd*. And, as we have learned:

> **The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**
>
> John 10:11

The text goes on to tell us that the hired hand runs off when danger approaches. How much this reminds me of the religious leaders of the world, who ultimately have their own agendas in mind. It is not to religion that we must turn, but to the One who desires to take us in His arms, hold us close to His heart, and even die for us. I trust you are one of His sheep through having placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Preparation for Christmas

Thursday, December 24:
Read Exodus 12

This chapter institutes the *Passover* and establishes it as an ongoing memorial for the Jewish people. The Passover is a striking type of the sacrificial and saving work of Jesus Christ in so many ways. Consider a few of them:

- The lamb chosen for sacrifice was to be without blemish or defect. (Exodus 12:5) In the same way our Lord Jesus Christ *knew no sin.* (II Corinthians 5:21)

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Preparation for Christmas

Thursday, December 24:
Read Exodus 12 (Continued)

- It was the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the door-frame, that protected the firstborn from physical death. (Exodus 12:13) In the same way, it is the blood of Christ that redeemed us from the slave market of sin and changed our future from one of eternal death to eternal life. (I Peter 1:19)
- In describing the Passover lamb, Moses said:

  You shall not break any of its bones. Exodus 12:46

  Although it was customary for a crucified victim to have his legs broken, according to John 19:33-35, they did not break Jesus' legs.

Finally, to be spared the judgment of the tenth plague, the Israelites had to respond to the revelation of God by faith. They had to select a lamb according to the guidelines and place the blood upon the doorframe and they had to do this personally, family by family. This action would hardly be able to fend off the destroying angel, rather it is the act of faith that saved the oldest child. In the households of those who responded, that child was perfectly safe and needed to have no fear of the coming darkness.

No wonder we celebrate the coming of Jesus, for:

> *… then and now, the angel of death passes over those who are covered by the blood of the Lamb.* Ray Steadman

Praise God that Christ *our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed.* (I Corinthians 5:7)



Christmas Day
Friday, December 25

Enjoy reflecting upon the following passages of Scripture:

"… the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a Son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, 'God with us.'" Matthew 1:23

Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God saying, "Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You may now dismiss Your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel." … Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, His mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Luke 2:29-35

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth … For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known. John 1:14-18

Gospel of John

Monday, December 28:
Read John 16:1-15

As part of our reading before the Christmas break, John 11:45 tells us that many who saw the miraculous resuscitation of Lazarus put their faith in Christ. I call it a resuscitation because Lazarus was going to die again. We look forward to receiving a resurrection body, one that will never die nor will it house a sin nature! Then, the corruptible will have been replaced by the incorruptible!

Today, consider the very next verse:

> **But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.** John 11:46

Do you realize that Jesus Christ divides the human race? The division is between those who respond in belief and those who run off to stir up mischief in unbelief! It certainly was mischief, for consider a result of the report the Sanhedrin received:

> **... from that day on they plotted to take His** (Jesus') **life.** John 11:53



Gospel of John

Monday, December 28:
Read John 16:1-15 (Continued)

How can people see the exact same miracle and some respond in faith leading to eternal life and the rest run off in disbelief completely unchanged? That is why I stated that one of the strands of John's Gospel is:

> *Unbelief is the one thing still keeping man from a relationship with God.*

God has provided everything, but unbelief is a huge obstacle to overcome. Turning from a condition of unbelief to one of faith can be a long and tortuous process for the lost. They fear they are going to lose out, that they are going to have to give up the *fun* everyone else is having. They fear they are going to have to give up some measure of control over their lives! All the while Satan is whispering in their ears trying to keep them from faith in the One Who can save them.

Thankfully, we can rest in the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be at work convicting the lost of their unbelief:

> **"When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt … in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me …"**
> John 16:8-9

We will have more to say about Chapter 16 when we get there, but for now note that it is the Spirit who convicts the lost of their *sin*.

Note that He doesn't start with their evil deeds, but rather their failure to believe in the One Who can save them. That is always the place for the lost person to start—faith in the person and work of Christ!

The Gospel of John

Tuesday, December 29:
Read John 12:1-11

In John, Chapter 11, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and many had placed their faith in Him! Now in Chapter 12 we learn that the story of Lazarus' resuscitation from the dead has spread, and:

> **... many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Him.** John 12:11

People were getting saved, and now, in addition to Jesus, the chief priests were planning to kill Lazarus as well. You can expect religious people to resist the work of God every step of the way. We will see, as this chapter continues, just how great an obstacle unbelief can be to overcome.

In the meantime, we have the marvelous story of Mary anointing Jesus for burial by pouring a very expensive perfume on His head and then washing His feet with her hair. (The parallel passages in Matthew 26 and Mark 14 are worth reading for their additional detail.) To me this is such a gripping narrative because it speaks of the significance of personal worship. Without question, this was an act of worship on the part of Mary.

Ponder the following: Whatever it was that prompted Mary to act as she did, she was the <u>only one</u> of all His followers who worshipped Jesus in the way she ministered to Him. In Luke 24:1-3, the women who were going to the tomb early Sunday morning following the crucifixion in order to anoint the body of Jesus had the best of intentions, but they were

The Gospel of John

Tuesday, December 29:
Read John 12:1-11 (Continued)

too late. He had risen and no longer needed to be anointed for burial.

Only Mary's act of worship was timely, and listen to what Jesus had to say:

> **"I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."** Matthew 26:13

High praise indeed from the Lord of glory!



The Gospel of John

Wednesday, December 30:
Read John 12:12-22

The 11 verses in today's reading are full of information. Consider the following:

- Jesus is given a tremendous and praise-filled welcome to Jerusalem.
- This welcome is in direct fulfillment of prophecy and apparently nobody realized it. At least one historian has shown that this is a fulfillment, to the exact day, of the prophecy in Daniel 9:26.

Jesus knew that many of these very same people cheering Him were going to be shouting "*Crucify Him, crucify Him*" just a few short days later. Here are a few questions for your to ponder: How could He keep going? How could He show such love and compassion for the crowds and even His own disciples who were soon to deny Him?

Consider the following reasons He could keep going:

- His love for His creation motivated Him:

  But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

  Romans 5:8

- His goal for mankind kept Him going:

  The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, <u>not willing that any</u> should perish but that <u>all</u> should come to repentance. II Peter 3:9

The Gospel of John

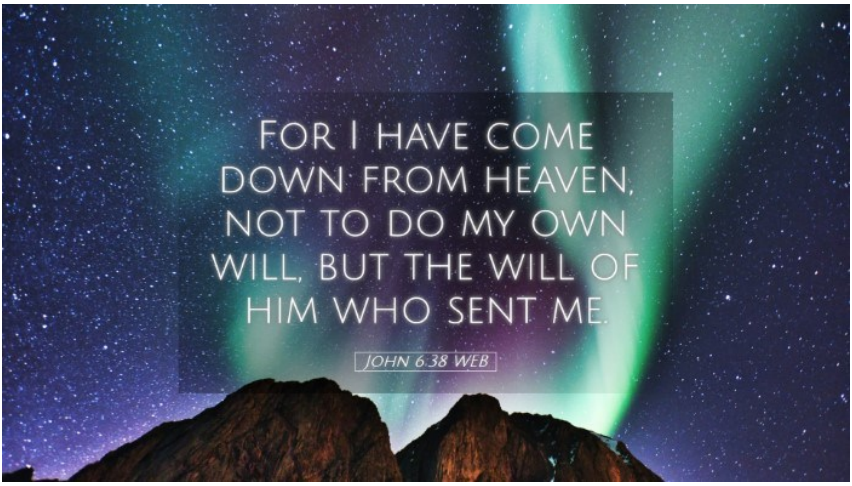
Wednesday, December 30:
Read John 12:12-22 (Continued)

Do you see it? Jesus loves all of mankind and wants all to recognize their need of a Savior and to come to Him in faith.

- His obedience to the will of the Father:

  "For I have come down from heaven not to do My will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me." John 6:38

Have you realized that every one of these things is also meant to apply to us? We are to love others enough to share the *Good News* with them. We should long for those the Lord brings into our sphere of influence to come to Him. We, too, have been called by the Father to *go and make disciples*. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a role model beyond compare!



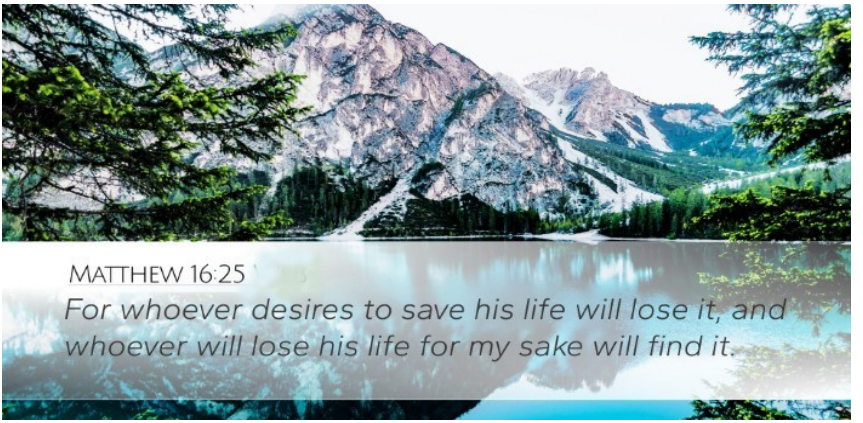
The Gospel of John

Thursday, December 31: Read John 12:23-50

Pay attention to Verses 24-26. This is a parallel passage to Matthew 16:24-26 and others in Mark 8 and Luke 9. Why? In Matthew 16:25, Jesus says:

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it."

Do you see the connection with John 12:25? These verses are talking, first of all, about whether one will try to live independently of God or, in humility, turn to Christ and trust Him for salvation. The even larger and more poignant issue is the choices we make as Christians. Will we try to maintain control of our lives or will we give up the independent use of our *time, treasure, and talents* and take up whatever calling God might have on our lives?



The Gospel of John

Thursday, December 31:
Read John 12:23-50 (Continued)

Why would we conclude that this is the correct interpretation of this Scripture? First, because that is exactly what Jesus is doing! He is talking about Himself in the example He gives in Verse 24:

> **"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."**

He is going to die and, as the result, many are going to be saved because of His sacrifice.

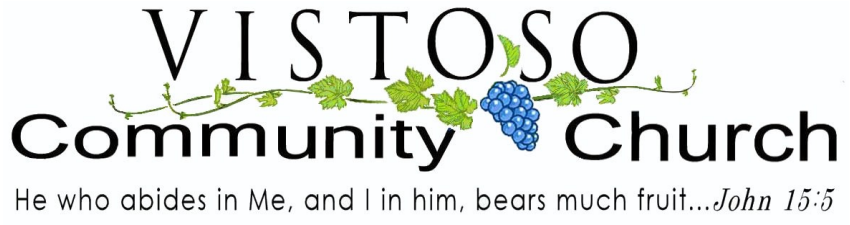
Verse 26 is all about those seeds serving the Lord Jesus Christ. This is exactly the thrust of our parallel passage in Matthew 16:24:

> **"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."**

This isn't about putting up with some problem or affliction. It is all about following the example of Christ in giving up the independent use of our lives and following after Him. Why would we want to do that? First, because He is calling us to do so and, second, because Jesus has revealed:

> **"My Father will honor the one who serves Me."**
>
> John 12:26

Do you desire to be honored by the Father?



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

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