

January 2020 Daily Devotional



My heart has heard you say,
“Come and talk with me.”
And my heart responds,
“Lord, I am coming.”
Psalms 27:8

Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

I don't often quote from the New Living Translation, but I like what they did with Psalm 27:8, the scripture on the cover of this month's devotions. What a great way to think about starting the year—coming to the Lord to meet with Him over His Word.

As we start our fifth year of daily devotionals, might they build your faith, encourage your walk, and facilitate your spending time with the One who gives you life!

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



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

New Year's Greeting

Wednesday, January 1: Read Psalm 1

As has become our custom, we begin each year with a *Theme of the Year*. This year's theme is the following:

Jesus is Better!

I have two reasons for not going straight to *Jesus is Best!* *Jesus is the One and Only!* First, we are studying the book of Hebrews, and *Jesus is Better* is a recurring theme within the book—something God wants us to appreciate. Second, as a church fellowship we seem ready to ponder this theme during the year ahead in terms of our efforts in both evangelism and discipleship. When it comes to mankind's salvation from heaven to hell through faith in the person and work of Jesus, God's gracious provision for our deliverance is indeed better than anything the mind of man can conceive. In terms of discipleship, God's call is better than any other option, by an impossibly large margin:

. . .put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

The world tells us what we need in terms of retirement, recreation, and happiness. But, *Jesus is better* in terms of knowing Him, abiding in Him, allowing His life to be manifest through ours that we might produce fruit that will last for all eternity. *Jesus is better* than all that this world can offer. I look forward to our year ahead in God's Word, that:

. . .our delight would be in the law of the Lord. . . that we would meditate on it day and night. That our fellowship would be like trees planted by streams of water, which yield its fruit in season. . . whose leaf does not wither. . .that we would spiritually prosper.

Psalm 1:1-3

God bless you in the year ahead! *Pastors Kevin and Peter*

Theme: Jesus is Better!

Thursday, January 2: Read Hebrews 1

For the next few days, allow the Word of God to simply impress you with the supremacy of Jesus Christ! There is no better alternative for an object of your faith than the Lord Jesus—because *Jesus is Better!*

II Peter 2:11 reminds us that angels are stronger and more powerful than mankind. Colossians 2:18 tells us that some have even gone so far as to worship angels. Perhaps you know someone who has an unhealthy fascination with angels (or demons). That's a waste of time and a place of misguided interest for the Christian! Why? Because, although Jesus came to this world in a humble way and obedient to the Father's will, that was not His condition before His First Advent. Nor, is it His condition following His ascension, now, and for the future:



After He (Jesus) had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (That's the place of honor.) So He became as much superior to the angels as the Name He has inherited is superior to theirs. Hebrews 1:3-4

Theme: Jesus is Better!

Thursday, January 2: Read Hebrews 1 (Continued)

Jesus is better than the angels! Why? First, because the Father said:

I will be His Father, and He will be My Son.

Hebrews 1:5

Did the Father ever say any such thing to an angel? Then, the Father added this:

Let all God's angels worship Him.

Hebrews 1:6

It makes no sense for us to worship an intermediary. Go straight to the only object of worship—the Creator God, Father and Son.

Finally, do the angels have a kingdom? No! But what about the Son?

But about the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of Your kingdom."

Hebrews 1:8

Then as this first chapter of Hebrews comes to a close, we read:

To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?"

Hebrews 1:13

The answer to the question posed by this Scripture is, of course, God said this to none of the angels. It is only the Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Surely, *Jesus is Better!*

Theme: Jesus is Better!

Friday, January 3: Read Hebrews 3

Did you find the reference to *Jesus is Better* in today's scripture reading?

Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses. . . Hebrews 3:3

Now keep in mind that the book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians—those who had a long history of revering Moses. But the author of Hebrews is making sure there is no confusion in their minds that Jesus is better than Moses! Why?

Moses was found faithful as a servant in all God's house. . . But Christ is faithful as a Son over God's house. Hebrews 3:5-6

Did you catch both reasons? Moses was a servant, a very good one, but still a servant. Jesus is better because He is the Son—very God Himself. Second, Moses was "*in God's house.*" Jesus is better, because as the second person of the Trinity, He is "*over God's house.*" In short, Jesus is better because:

He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him. . . Colossians 1:18

God has had many faithful servants through the ages, but there is no comparison to the faithfulness exhibited by our Lord. For He said:

"Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll—I have come to do your will O God." Hebrews 10:7

Theme: Jesus is Better!

Friday, January 3: Read Hebrews 3 (Continued)

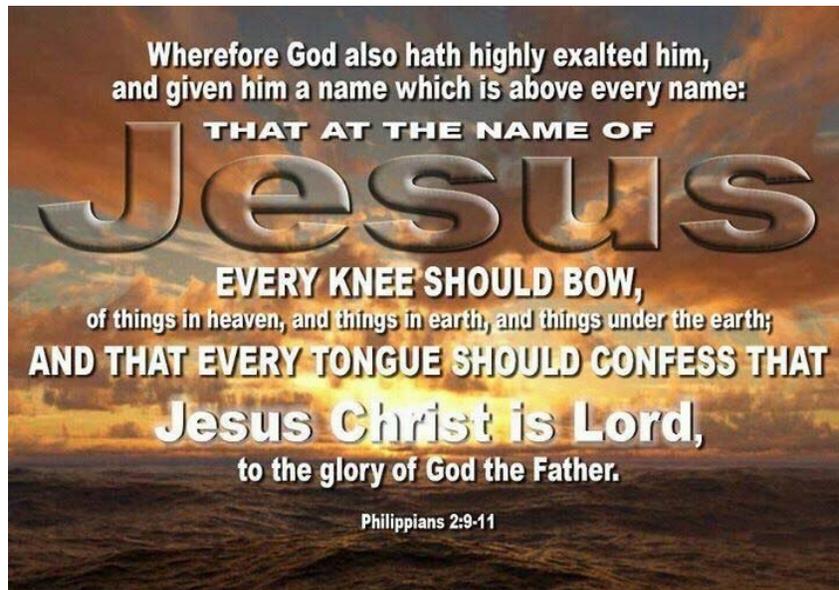
This is followed by the Lord Jesus choosing to make:

. . .Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Philippians 2:7-8

Because of His better role as Son, this is how the Father responded:

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess. . .that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

Jesus! No one is better!



Theme: Jesus is Better!

Monday, January 6: Read Hebrews 4

We are choosing our readings in the book of Hebrews, not doing an exhaustive study, simply because we are focusing upon our theme of the year—*Jesus is Better!* We'll be back in more detail later. But for today, did you notice:

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Hebrews 4:8-9

We have another comparison—Jesus is better than Joshua! How so? Joshua led the people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land—that which was to be a place of *rest* for the people. This world has all kinds of messaging for us regarding entering our own place of rest—you need this amount of money saved up, the place of rest needs to have these kinds of activities, and on and on the list goes. But this passage reminds us: "*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. . .*"

We enter the place of rest, that God has provided, when we cease from our own efforts to work everything out, and instead *rest* in the promises of God! Read the passage again and see if that isn't exactly what Verses 8-9 say, and then add Verse 11 for good measure. Why is Jesus better than Joshua? Joshua led the people into the physical place of rest God provided, Jesus provides spiritual rest.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will learn rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-29

Rest for the soul—only in Jesus! He is better!

Theme: Jesus is Better!

Tuesday, January 7: Read Hebrews 7

This is our final day of introducing our theme of the year. Today the lesson is *Jesus is Better* than Aaron. For Jesus is a greater priest, representing mankind to God in a way that Aaron or his descendants could never do. How is He better? Let's look at this carefully.

1. Jesus is not from the tribe of Levi and stands outside the Aaronic priesthood.

For it is declared: "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 7:17

2. Did you also note that Jesus' priesthood is going to last forever. Look at what this means to us:

Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

Hebrews 7:23-25

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Theme: Jesus is Better!

Tuesday, January 7: Read Hebrews 7 (Continued)

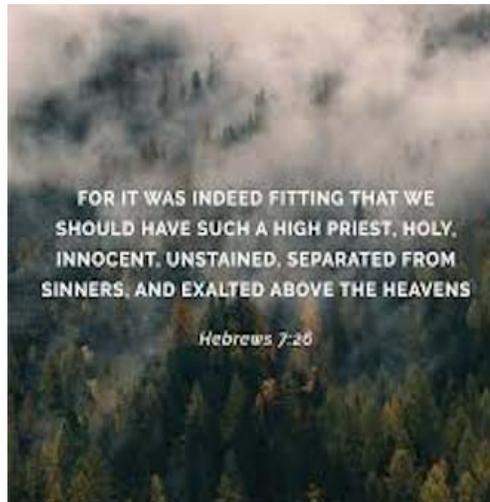
I placed my faith in Christ, and He in turn is going to save me completely for He always lives to intercede on my behalf. God intercedes for me on my good days, and, even more importantly, on my bad days! *Jesus is better!*

3. But wait, there is more! Jesus is:

. . . holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. . .

Hebrews 7:26

That's the kind of priest you want representing you to God.



Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. Hebrews 7:27

But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. . . because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Hebrews 10:12-14

If you want cleansing from sin, representation before God the Father, and a perfect standing before Him, Jesus is not only better He is the One and Only!

In the Beginning

Wednesday, January 8: Read Genesis 1

Of all the ways God could have chosen to begin His revelation to us, He chose the approach of Genesis 1. Why? If we consider Genesis 1 to be God's way of introducing Himself, we can answer the question by asking what kind of God could do the things revealed in this first chapter of the Bible. What does it take to create, out of nothing, the raw material of our entire physical universe in an instant of time? At a minimum, it takes an omnipotent God.

What does it take to shape that raw material over a period of six days into the balanced universe which we see today? Add omniscience to the list. What can we say about a God who creates man in His image and likeness, provides everything for His special creation, and then pronounces



it *very good*? Why, that would make God relational, loving, and moral. From another angle, what can be said about a God who creates, forms, and establishes in this way? We can say that He owns what He has created!

For some reason, many people think the beginning of the Bible is obscure or controversial, and not worth studying. On the contrary, it reveals a tremendous amount to us about our God, much of which we would have no other way of knowing. I wouldn't give it away for anything, and I recognize attacks upon it for what they are—an effort to denigrate the nature of our great God.

Don't give away what He has revealed about Himself. Go ahead, spend a little bit more time meditating on this first chapter. You will be amazed at what else you can find.

In the Beginning

Thursday, January 9: Read Genesis 2

Chapter 2 is no less revealing than Chapter 1. For example, how poignant is it that everything God had made was good until He made man—by himself? How gracious was God to make for man a *helper-suitable*, a complementary-partner? We could easily spend a whole lesson on just those two words and their ramification for valuing your marriage partner. And, of course, in just our second day of reading in Genesis, we have set to rest the confusion going on in our courts. For marriage has clearly been defined by the same God who created the heavens and earth, and there is no greater authority than His. Thus, no one else has the prerogative to redefine marriage.

Consider Verses 16-17. In the midst of a perfect creation and perfect environment—one without sin of any kind—God lays down a moral *requirement* for Adam. Calling this a moral requirement is simply to acknowledge that to eat would be wrong and to not eat would be right. Have you ever thought about why God does this? My opinion is that, even in the Garden of Eden, God leaves room for man to make choices. There are many things wrapped up in these choices: the choice to obey or disobey, the choice to trust (depend upon) or to act independently, the choice to recognize the sovereignty of God or to rebel.

I would also tell you that this is an inherent part of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God, and is equally true today, even in a fallen world. Mankind has choices to make. Will lost man choose to receive Christ or reject Him? Will the Christian choose to walk in dependence or independently? And, just as there was in the garden, there continue to be consequences for the choices we make. Let this be an encouragement for us to choose to *trust and obey!*

In the Beginning

Friday, January 10: Read Genesis 3

First, there is a great irony in this third chapter of Genesis. What we have is the real story behind what we call *the fall of man*. The fall is a pretty innocuous term for what is deception and open disobedience whereby mankind chooses to listen to Satan—the archenemy of God—rather than live in dependent obedience. What makes this so ironic is that Eve was deceived because she weighed the Word of God against the word of Satan and chose the lie.



I can tell you that mankind has learned absolutely nothing. In our day, we are still weighing the Word of God regarding the origin of our physical universe, the origin of man, and the purpose of man against the word of scientists and philosophers who have rejected the existence of God. Once again we seem prone to choose the lie, and, for this reason, the tragedy is perpetuated.

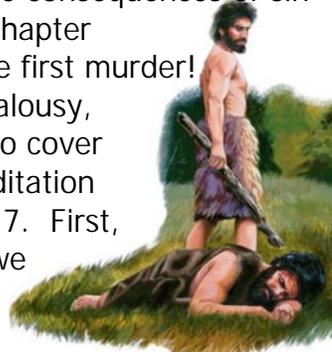
A second thing to note, as you read Verses 14 through the end of the chapter, is the consequences of the fall. I can't tell you how many times I have heard people say, how could a loving God let this natural disaster kill so many, this illness cause so much suffering, and so on. In truth, the Scriptures tell us that every disease, every death, every natural disaster (Romans 8:20) is the result of sin. I have to admit when I look at the ongoing rebellion of man, rather than blame God, I am absolutely amazed at the extent of God's love, His long-suffering with His rebellious creation, and His so-great mercy to man.

If you can, let your friend, neighbor, family member have a glimpse of the hope of God's love for them.

In the Beginning

Monday, January 13: Read Genesis 4

It doesn't take long for death and the consequences of sin to become evident—for in the very chapter following the fall of man we have the first murder! And, it is not just murder, we see jealousy, anger, and deceit as Cain attempts to cover up his sin and self-pity. For our meditation today, I want to focus just on Verse 7. First, even after the fall, do you see that we live in a moral universe? By that I mean issues of right and wrong go on. Cain is told, "If you will do what is right. . ." Part of God's claim on every human being, by virtue of His being the Creator of all things, is to do *right!* And, Oh, how much we all struggle with this!



The second aspect of Verse 7 that I want to draw to your attention is the amazingly clear way, right from the beginning, that the sin nature has been such a foe for mankind. With the call to do right is also the pull to do wrong and this pull comes from the sin nature. In fact, even as Christians, the sin nature would like to control every aspect of our lives if we will let it. (See Galatians 5:17-f.) God tells Cain very clearly that he must control the sin nature—he must master it! Of course, it is not possible to do this apart from the provision of God—that is one of the reasons Christ had to come and go to the cross. You can see the work He accomplished to this end in Romans 6:6 and 6:14. So to be clear—the same sinful nature that tempted Cain to kill his brother is active in our lives, desperately seeking to be in charge.

We must first recognize the battle, and then turn to the Lord for His provision for we are to *"reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 6:11)

In The Beginning

Tuesday, January 14: Read Genesis 5

Chapter five, although still early in the history of mankind, comes after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. The first thing to note is the birth of Seth. The remainder of the chapter is a listing of the lineage through Seth all the way to Noah and his sons.



For today's meditation, I want you to consider Verses 1 and 3. Verse 1 repeats the great truth of Genesis 1:27, which tells us that mankind is made in the *image and likeness of God*. Although I believe some of this *image and likeness* is still visible, much has been compromised by the fall. By that, I mean the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden. One example of the change and deterioration would be Cain's sin nature as discussed in Chapter 4—it certainly is not part of the original "*image and likeness*."

Now consider Verse 3. It tells us that Seth was born in Adam's likeness—in his image. This is a startling change from the original *very good* creation. The whole issue of Adam's lost spiritual capacity and the consequences of sin have been passed on down from Adam to every succeeding generation of the human race. It is for this reason Adam is said to be the *federal* (representative) *head* of the human race. You can see this described clearly in the New Testament in the fifth chapter of Romans:

. . . sin entered the world through one man. . . and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men. . .
Romans 5:12

Can you see why it is not just Adam, but all of mankind that needs a Savior?

Spiritual Warfare

Wednesday, January 15:
Read Ephesians 6:10-24

As we return to our study of spiritual warfare from Ephesians Chapter 6, I want to bring to your attention a potential pitfall of studying this important topic. As we better understand our adversary in the spiritual realm, it is possible for Satan—his forces and plans—to loom too large in our thinking. We can become overly sensitized to the point that Satan is seen lurking behind every sniffle, every trial, and every red light. We have to guard against this over emphasis. For, as it is advisable to know our *foe*, we should know our *friend* even better. Of course, by *friend* I refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is both sovereign and Savior and He alone should dominate our thinking. Clearly this is the message of Scripture:

Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. . . Hebrews 12:2

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

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

Satan, through his influence upon this world can prompt the persecution of Christians even unto physical death, but it is God who determines the eternal destiny of man. And, of course, God has chosen to give eternal life to all those who will place their faith in the person and work of Christ. So, for the next few days, here is what I would like to do: 1) Show you the contrast between our Savior and our adversary; and 2) Encourage you with the exalted status of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Spiritual Warfare

Thursday, January 16: Read Hebrews 5

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

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

Jesus, on the other hand, exalts the Father :

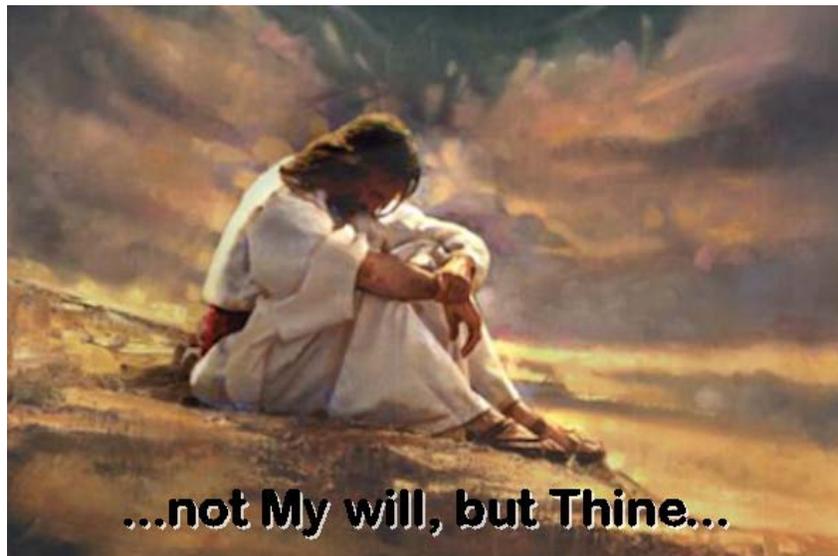
"Lo, I come to do thy will O God." Hebrews 10:7

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

". . . nevertheless, not My will but Thine. . ." Matthew 26:39

The creature (Satan)—who was made and is obligated to respond—rebelled. While the Son of God, sovereign in His

Continued on the next page.



Spiritual Warfare

Thursday, January 16: Read Hebrews 5 (Continued)

own right, subordinated His will to the plans and purposes of the Father—and that's why we can be saved!

Secondly, Satan plays the role of accuser:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Warfare

Friday, January 17: Read Hebrews 2

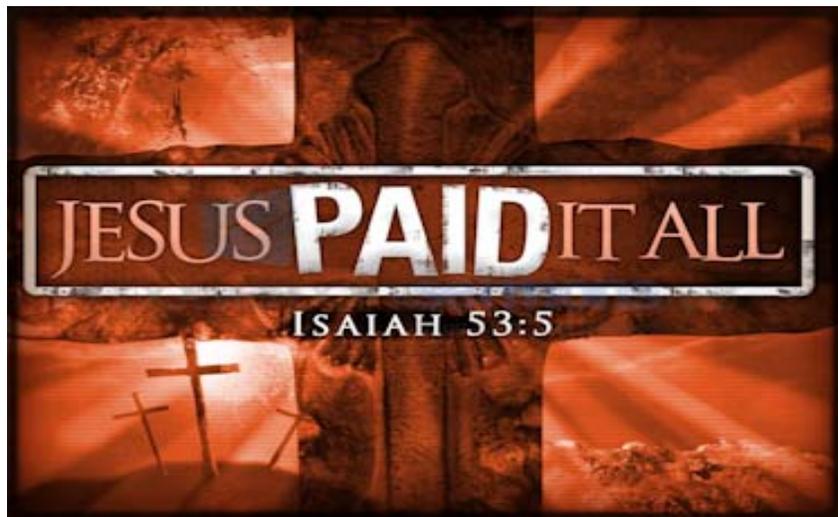
Today, we continue the contrast between our *friend* Jesus and *foe* Satan. First, understand that Satan holds death over us—Jesus died for us! In Hebrews 2:14-15 we see clearly who holds death over us:

. . .by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is the devil. . .and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.
Hebrews 2:14-15

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

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Continued on the next page.



Spiritual Warfare

Friday, January 17: Read Hebrews 2 (Continued)

Romans 8:32 takes it even a step further:

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

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

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

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

John 8:44

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

God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son. . .

John 3:16

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

I John 5:11

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

Spiritual Warfare

Monday, January 20: Read Colossians 1

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

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



Satan is a creature. He didn't create his followers, headquarters, or earthly subjects. Instead, he stole them away by deceit, for his power is limited. Jesus, on the other hand, is the great *I Am*. He is referred to this way 23 times in the Gospel of John. Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life. He has always been, created this physical universe, and will judge the living and the dead! Continued on the next page.

Spiritual Warfare

Monday, January 20: Read Colossians 1 (Continued)

There is no comparison between our Savior and our adversary, for the Creator and the creature are separated by a gulf that cannot be bridged.

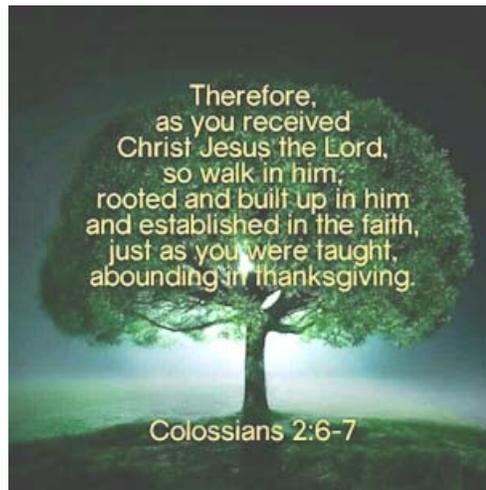
Further, Jesus may have come in humility, but He wrought a great victory nonetheless!

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. I John 3:8

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

Colossians 2:13-15

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



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

Spiritual Warfare

Tuesday, January 21: Read Philippians 2

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

. . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:8-11

Although not voluntarily, the devil and his demons are going to bow and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord! Finally, when Jesus returns, He will not come as a suffering servant. According to Revelation 19:11, 16:

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

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

*For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.
Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His name, From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle!*

Our Sin Nature

Wednesday, January 22: Read Genesis 6

The world says, "*A loving God would never condemn anyone to hell! We just need to be sincere about our beliefs, basically good, and as long as you are not a Hitler or anything, it will all turn out okay in the end!*" But, that does not seem to be the message of Genesis Chapter 6.

In Genesis 4:10 we learn about the sin nature that is "*crouching at the door,*" wanting to control our lives. In Genesis 6, we see that the human race has become almost completely dominated by the sin nature. So much so, that another aspect of God's character comes to the foreground; specifically, His justice acting against the evil hearts and behavior of mankind. Furthermore, He did so in a decisive and sovereign manner, against which the evil of the day had no ability to resist.

No wonder Satan, and those who march to his tune, want so desperately to suppress the truth of the Noahic flood. For, right from the very beginnings of the Bible, God is making it clear that He will judge evil. Perhaps you are thinking, "Where is the love of God in all this?" There are two things to consider. First, Noah—reported to be a righteous man—is said to have "*found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*" The word translated *favor* is probably better translated grace. God's love always provides, in grace, what we need. In the case of Noah that was a special accommodation in the form of the ark, which preserved Noah and his family from the wrath of God.

Second, II Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God's love was displayed to the sinful generation of Noah because He allowed them to hear the Gospel for the 100 years it took to build the ark. Here is the principle: If you reject the love of God offered on His terms expect His judgment.

Our Sin Nature

Thursday, January 23: Read Genesis 7

There is one straight-forward point of application from this chapter. Can you tell that our society is undergoing a steadily increasing rate of decay? Are the visible manifestations of sin in our society becoming more and more manifest? If you said yes to these two questions, I would agree with you. But still, I am not sure it has gotten as bad as the situation in Genesis Chapter 6. Do you have a sense that impending judgment is about to fall on America? I do. But that judgment is not going to be as bad as the judgment that fell on civilization during the days of Noah!

Do you see what Chapter 7 teaches us? The evil was worse during Noah's day, and the judgment that fell was worse than what might be coming our way. Yet,



God, in grace, preserved Noah and his family through both the evil times and the judgment that fell. That means that God can preserve us as long as He still has a purpose for our lives. As the ark was a *safe-haven* for Noah and his family during over a year of judgment, so too we can take shelter under the wings of the Almighty until whatever calamity that might befall our nation has also passed. (Psalm 91)

For our God is a strong tower, and the righteous run into it and are safe. (Proverbs 18:10) He is the one sure Rock upon which to build. (Matthew 7:24) Thanks be to God who preserves His own—ours is to *trust and obey*.

Our Sin Nature

Friday, January 24: Read Genesis 8

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, the topography of the earth was certainly quite different, and it is possible that they had moved quite some distance from the point where they had built and entered the ark. I surely would be curious about my new surroundings, wouldn't you? Furthermore, it is quite possible that the earth's environment and climate had drastically changed with the flood—many creation scientists think so. So it would also have been very natural for Noah to be thinking about how he and his family were going to survive in this new and much more hostile environment.

No doubt, there was lots of work to be done in order to meet the challenges of survival in the postdiluvian world! And yet, what does Noah do as the first recorded event after he releases the animals and comes



out of the ark? He builds an altar and presents a sacrifice to God! He worships the God who has saved and preserved them, and I would expect he also gave thanks.

What a great model of godliness for us. Should we not also—in the midst of trying circumstances and many things vying for our attention—make sure that we regularly pause to worship and to give thanks that we too might find favor in the eyes of the Lord?

Our Sin Nature

Monday, January 27: Read Genesis 9

If the Bible were written by man, then Chapter 9 of Genesis would read something like the following, “And all the evil people perished in the great flood, but Noah and his family were preserved by almighty God who left His rainbow in the sky as a promise He would never do such a thing again. And they all lived happily ever after!”

But it wasn't written by man, and since man still has a sin nature, it is also not how the story unfolds. God does preserve Noah and his family and does promise to never again send a world-wide flood. But Noah and his family do not live so happily ever after. By pre-flood standards, their behavior is not particularly terrible; nevertheless, sin can be found in the behavior of both Noah and of his son Ham.



And, we have a hint of worse things to come.

For a mighty flood of judgment may have swept the earth, but if mankind remains, then the sin of Adam remains and fallen man's sinful nature remains. This is what it means when we say man has *fallen*. We are going to see this get worse and worse in the chapters ahead, so be prepared. One point of application for us—man is a sinner in need of a savior. And, that is true of every man! Even a righteous man like Noah has a sin nature and needs a redeemer!

Our Sin Nature

Tuesday, January 28: Read Genesis 10

I know what you are thinking: "What's up with all these genealogies? Nothing important here! Can I skip this chapter?" A few observations for you:

- First, we have to realize that space is tight in the Bible. As a result, there has to be a reason why, out of all of the things He could have told us, God chose to communicate to us those things that have been recorded in His Word.
- Perhaps one reason is so that the people groups associated with the offspring of Noah would catch our attention. People like the Philistines, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites. You should be thinking, "Aren't those the pagan people who grew so wicked in Canaan and/or that persecuted the Jews?" Yes, they were. What's happening to the godly line of Noah? We can see that through the generations to follow, it is descending back to gross sin, even after God has reset things with the great flood. Man is broken on the inside, and it is not just a matter of cleaning up the environment.
- And then there is Nimrod, mentioned in Verses 8-11. Notice the centers of his kingdom and the location of these great cities and compare this with Genesis 11:2. Many theologians consider Nimrod to be the leader under whose direction work on the Tower of Babel began. At any rate, he is certainly a great source of industry, but these are all works of man that turned into centers of great evil.



There is a climax of sorts building. What is God going to do about fallen man?

Our Sin Nature

Wednesday, January 29: Read Genesis 11

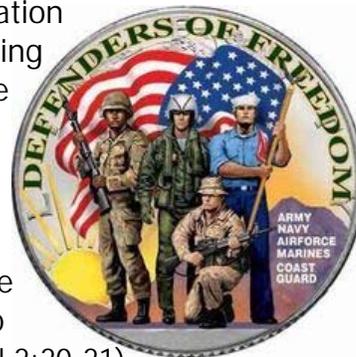
Verse 4 is of particular note—for it points out the fallen condition of man as well as any text in the Bible. Consider what we already know. Of the first two children born into the human race, one kills the other. In time, the heart of man is so evil, God needs to cleanse the earth of all humanity—except for one family.

Then, an even shorter time goes by, and here we are in Chapter 11 headed down the same path. God says in Genesis 9:1 to *increase and fill the earth*. In Genesis 11:4, man says, “. . . let us build ourselves a tower. . . and keep from being scattered.” Their plan is in direct disobedience to the command of God. Furthermore, their intent is to make a *name for themselves* rather than honor the One who created, and more recently, preserved them through the flood. How quickly mankind loses the Fear of the Lord.

God, however, is not going to let the whole thing unravel again. In short, He establishes nations. He does this by mixing up the languages of the people, so they can no longer collectively pursue disobedience. God scattered them over the face of the earth, and from that day we have had nations with boundaries ascribed by God. (Acts 17:26)

Can you see how a multiplicity of nations would help both keep evil in check and the concentration of evil in any one place from becoming too great? For a hundred years the United States was used mightily in this role. However, I must admit, I now wonder if soon we will be the evil that needs to be checked.

Although God has promised no more floods, He can certainly still raise up nations and tear them down. (Daniel 2:20-21)



A New Covenant

Thursday, January 30: Read Genesis 12

It is extremely important to recognize the change God institutes in Chapter 12; specifically, a change in the way in which He is unfolding His great plan of redemption. Let me break it down for you. First, although it is tempting to move from the Tower of Babel to the call of Abraham as if they were unrelated events, they must be seen as the unbroken thread of the Biblical story line. As I have developed in the past few devotionals, because man is fallen, he keeps spiraling down into sin. With the Tower of Babel incident, God slowed this process by the sudden advent of language and the dispersal of mankind. So far so good.

In Chapter 12, He takes the next step. Rather than work with a godly line and the human race at large, He is narrowing down His redemptive plan through one man, and his offspring (which eventually includes our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ). This man is Abraham and the nation is Israel. Do you see how completely different this is from what God had previously been doing?

Furthermore, look at the scope of the promises given to Abraham in Verses 2 and 3. A great nation will come from Abraham. God places a sort of *divine bubble* around Abraham and his descendants (something that continues to this day) and He promises that all nations will be blessed through the descendants of Abraham. This latter promise has been proven over and over in terms of medicine, science, technology, music, literature, but has its culmination in the so-great salvation that is available through Jesus Christ.

At this point, the Biblical story line, and the book of Genesis, is going to change dramatically and concentrate on Abraham and his progeny.

A New Covenant

Friday, January 31: Read Genesis 15

We skip to Chapter 15 to make the essential connection between God's promise in Genesis 12 and Abraham's response in Genesis 15. So, why did God choose Abraham? It certainly wasn't because Abraham had inherent character, bravery, or had accomplished a great work. No, God selected Abraham because He is gracious and *"He works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform."* (Habakkuk 1:5)

Note that Genesis 12:2 was not a one-time promise to Abraham. God brings up all or part of the promises (collectively called the Abrahamic Covenant) in Chapters 13, 15, and 17, and repeatedly confirms it to Abraham's offspring in later chapters. Look at Abraham's response:

Abraham believed the Lord, and He (God) credited it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6

To have righteousness credited to you is to be justified, and this is the kind of standing Abraham now had before God. His belief wasn't perfect or continual, as the book of Genesis clearly documents. Nonetheless, his response of faith to the promise of God changed his standing before God forever. This continues to be the way every one of us can obtain righteousness, or be justified before God.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:22

We are . . . justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24

This is a life-changing, eternity-changing truth. Our standing before God is based upon our belief in His provision for our salvation—the Lord Jesus Christ. When we trust His work on the cross to have paid for our sins, God to this very day, credits it to us as righteousness.

VISTOSO

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

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