

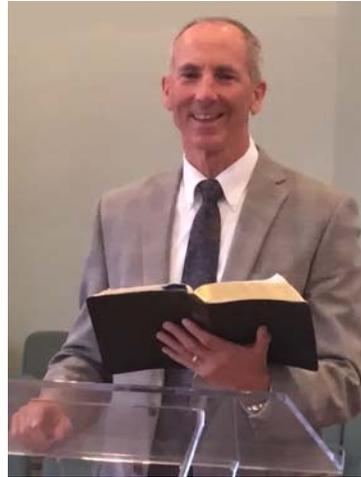
# February 2020 Daily Devotional



**Vistoso Community Church**

## Foreword

As we move into the second month of the year, we will continue to make steady progress in reading through Genesis. We will also finish our study of Old Testament Characters by looking at three of the kings that followed David through selected readings in I Kings. Then in the New Testament we will be continuing our readings in I John.



No matter where we read, one thing is a constant—there is nothing like a steady exposure to the Divine Viewpoint of the Word to build us up in the faith and challenge our thinking. May the Lord bless you in the reading and pondering of His Word.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Redig

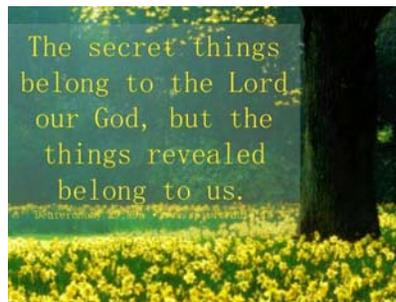
*All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).*

# A New Covenant

## Monday, February 3: Read Deuteronomy 29

You are without a doubt wondering why we have left Genesis and gone to Deuteronomy—and in particular this chapter of Deuteronomy! There are several reasons. First, after looking at the first 12 chapters of Genesis, we are going to move in a new direction with tomorrow's reading. These 12 chapters, however, provide a tremendous framework for the rest of the Bible. They tell us what God is like and His capabilities. They tell how mankind was created perfect, and then, through their own choice, fell to the consequences of sin. We see the guiding and preserving hand of God in the face of man's spiraling depravity. We learn of the call of Israel starting with Abraham and a tremendous amount of truth, which we would have no other way of knowing if God hadn't told us.

Second, we now move to Deuteronomy 29 because in this chapter we see God in the midst of establishing a covenant with His people—something He has done a number of times. Do the first 12 chapters of Genesis reveal to us whether or not God is capable of fulfilling each and every one of the promises He makes with man? They most certainly do! He is the one *promise-keeper!* In addition, notice Verse 29. The things God has chosen to reveal belong to us—His people. This includes the content of Genesis 1-12. Don't let anyone take from you what God has provided, for it belongs to us—it is our legacy as God's people. The only way we can lose it is through unbelief!



# Old Testament Characters

## Tuesday, February 4: Read I Kings 11

We are back to our study of Old Testament Characters, and the next in our list is King Solomon. This chapter tells such a sad, sad story:

**As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God. . . I Kings 11:4**

There are those who look at this and say, “Well, if this happened to the wisest man on the face of the earth, what hope is there for me?” What do you think? Do we, as Christians, have an excuse for falling into sin? Of course not! And, to understand that, the life of Solomon can be very instructive.

For today, consider this—we learned from our study of Judges that we are meant to pursue an ongoing process of progressive sanctification. In Judges it is called *enlarging one's territory*. The process consists of knowing God through His Word, driving anything that distracts out of our lives, and living in ongoing dependence upon Him.

So how did Solomon do?

- In I Kings 6:37, we can read that Solomon completed construction of the Temple in a seven-year period—and it was a magnificent building dedicated to God. But in I Kings 7:1-5, we read that Solomon's palace took 13 years to construct and was perhaps even more spectacular.
- In I Kings 7:8, Scripture tells us that Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter. In today's reading, we see he had 100's of additional foreign wives and concubines. These might have been helpful for political alliances, but do you think they were helpful in terms of his spiritual life?

# Old Testament Characters

Tuesday, February 4: Read I Kings 11  
(Continued)

- I Kings 4:27-28 tells us that Solomon violated the prohibition in I Samuel 8:10 regarding the accumulating of horses.

Those are enough examples to prove my point. Sin is so prevalent that even the wisest man on earth can fall into it. Solomon is an example of the truth that if you disobey the command of God to continually enlarge your spiritual territory, you can't avoid falling into sin no matter how smart you are! Apparently, there are no exceptions to our need to grow spiritually! That tells me that I need to watch closely what I am doing, and what distractions I might be allowing to take hold—for they can trip me up too!



# Old Testament Characters

## Wednesday, February 5: Read Ecclesiastes 2

Yesterday we learned that even the smartest man on earth cannot avoid falling into sin if he neglects his spiritual growth. Today we are going to learn what happens if even the most gifted of men allows his passions to go untamed. The book of Ecclesiastes is full of far too many spiritual lessons to cover in one devotional, but Verse 10 in today's reading should jump off the page:

**I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure.** Ecclesiastes 2:10

And, in the light of yesterday's reading, that included 700 wives and 300 concubines! How did that work out for Solomon? As we saw:

**The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord. . .** I Kings 11:9

To be blunt—to *deny yourself nothing your eyes desire. . . no pleasure* is to give free-rein to your sin nature. And we know from our New Testament studies that:

**The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery. . .** Galatians 5:19

The list continues, but the first three tell exactly what Solomon pursued. I once heard a preacher whose name I have forgotten say: "*Solomon was a gifted man with untamed passions.*" The lesson was: Our spiritual lives are not so much about spiritual gifts, but about how we turn, from who we were in Adam, to walk in the newness of life that is ours in Christ so that the Spirit of God could produce fruit in our lives. For who wants to end up like Solomon? Where is God's glory or personal blessing in all that mess? We can learn and do better—through Christ!

# Old Testament Characters

## Thursday, February 6: Read I Kings 8

In our reflection upon Solomon, I want to make sure we don't fail to recognize the greatness and spirituality of the man. This is a marvelous chapter, along with both the chapters before and after it. In particular, I love Solomon's prayer of dedication for the Temple found in today's reading. Did you notice how Solomon: exalts the name of God (Verse 23); recognizes that God transcends any building no matter how spectacular (Verse 27); and how he in humility recognizes the potential for sin on the part of the people (Verses 31, 33, 35, 38, 46-47)?

This is one of the few places in the Old Testament where any Jewish individual shows an understanding of the evangelistic thrust that Judaism was supposed to have (Verses 41-43). It is simply a great prayer and God answers in approval in Chapter 9. So, what point do I want you to make for you? In I Kings 8, we see the spirituality of Solomon and by Chapter 11 we see his great turning away. This should really strike a chord with all of us, for there is no level of spiritual standing or accomplishment today that guarantees our walk with the Lord tomorrow.

As a pastor, I take my marching orders on this from I Timothy 4:16:

**Watch your life and doctrine closely** (this needs to come before any ministry). **Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourselves and your hearers.**

This doesn't mean saved from hell to heaven. It is to save your life, your Christian walk, from the spiritually pitiful end that was Solomon's. I am sure you know I don't think this is just for pastors. Let us encourage each other as a church fellowship to watch our lives and doctrine closely—that we might *save* the days that the Lord has given us.

# Old Testament Characters

## Friday, February 7: Read I Kings 12

Raising godly children is a very challenging task isn't it? A task for which we ultimately cannot control the outcome. Nonetheless, one has to wonder if Solomon's "*denying himself nothing his eyes desired*" is at least partially responsible for the arrogance shown by his son, the newly-crowned King Rehoboam. Solomon began his kingship with humility, as he prayed to God:

**But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. . . So give your servant a discerning heart to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours.** I Kings 3:7-9

How did Rehoboam view his standing before the people?

**The king answered the people harshly. . . "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."** I Kings 12:13-14

Wow! The progression is from humbly asking for discernment to the arrogant misuse of authority. Something failed to be transferred from Solomon to Rehoboam. So, what can we learn? Solomon was a gifted man with untamed passions which eventually had disastrous results for both himself and the nation. But, let me suggest that Rehoboam was a proud man with the absence of the greatest of leadership qualities—a servant's heart.

**Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.** John 13:14

There is none greater than our Lord, and yet what a servant's heart he modeled. In whatever measure the Lord entrusts ministry to us, might we never bluster like Rehoboam, but rather serve like the Lord Jesus!

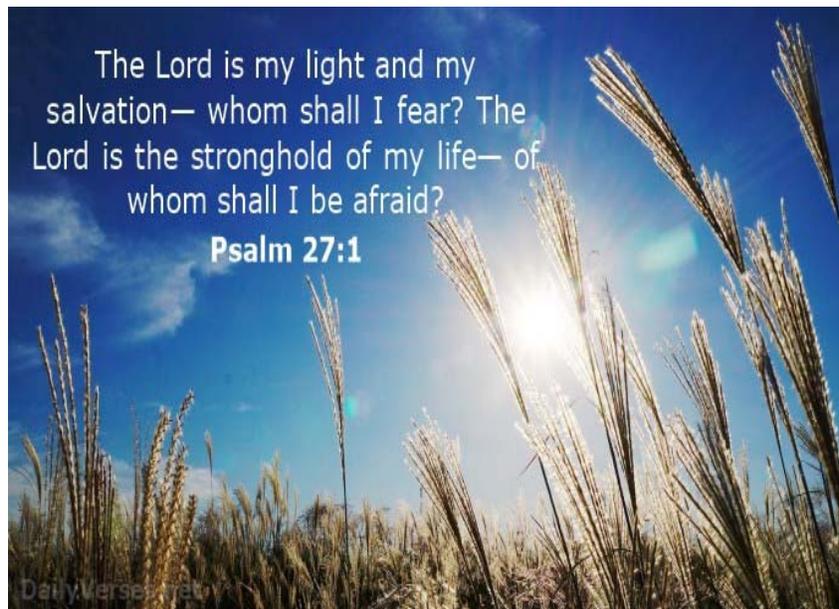
# Old Testament Characters

## Monday, February 10: Read I Kings 13

The final Old Testament character in our study will be Jeroboam. After Rehoboam's folly, the tribes living in the northern part of the land rebelled against Rehoboam and chose Jeroboam to be their first king. Not surprisingly, there is a back-story. Jeroboam was a very able administrator under King Solomon. When Solomon sinned by turning to idolatry, Ahijah, the prophet, delivered a very startling message from God to Jeroboam:

**"See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. . . If you do whatever I command you and walk in My ways and do what is right in My eyes by keeping My statutes and commands. . . I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."** I Kings 11:31, 38

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## Back in Acts

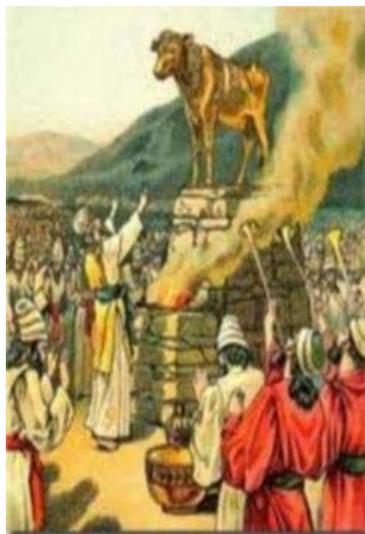
### Monday, February 10: Read I Kings 13 (Continued)

So Jeroboam has this great promise, directly from God—but then:

**Jeroboam thought to himself, “The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.”**

I Kings 12:26-27

I trust you understand what is going on in the mind of Jeroboam. On the one hand, he has a promise from God. On the other hand, the practical nature of Jerusalem being the center of worship seems likely to lead people back to whoever is king in the south. The rest of Chapter 12 is about Jeroboam’s solution to this problem—introducing idolatry to the northern kingdom. And Chapter 13 is about the terrible consequences for doing so.



Listen, if you have a promise from God—and it seems contrary to earthly circumstances—you are going to have to decide which one takes precedence. Jeroboam was a faithless man, who allowed circumstances to loom larger in his thinking than the Word of the omnipotent, sovereign Creator of this universe! It didn’t work out very well for him—and it won’t for us either!

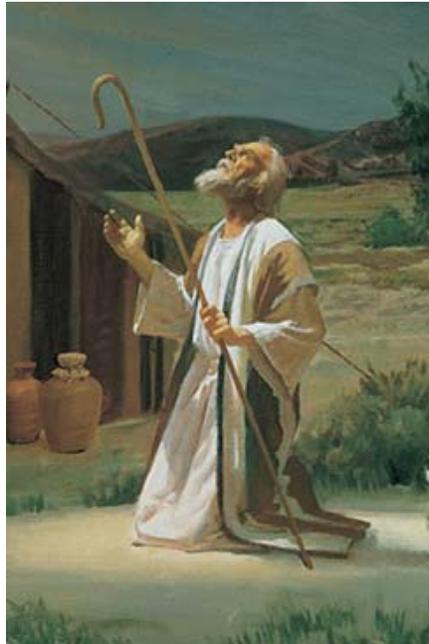
# In the Beginning

## Tuesday, February 11: Read Genesis 12

As we return to our reading in Genesis, you will notice we are going to read a few of the chapters for the second time. That is simply because there is something new to show you, and these chapters are so pivotal in the unfolding of God's plans that it is good for us to read through them again.

The first three verses of this chapter establish something often referred to as the *Abrahamic Covenant*. Notice the three components contained within this covenant or contract:

- **I will make you into a great nation.** God says that from Abraham will come a people who will become a great nation—Israel.
- **I will bless you.** This is a promise of personal blessing to Abraham as well as to his progeny.
- **I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse.** This is the part of the contract to which we need to pay the most attention. For this blessing and curse applies to Gentiles (that's us) and the consequences associated with how they (we) treat the offspring of Abraham, the Jewish people.



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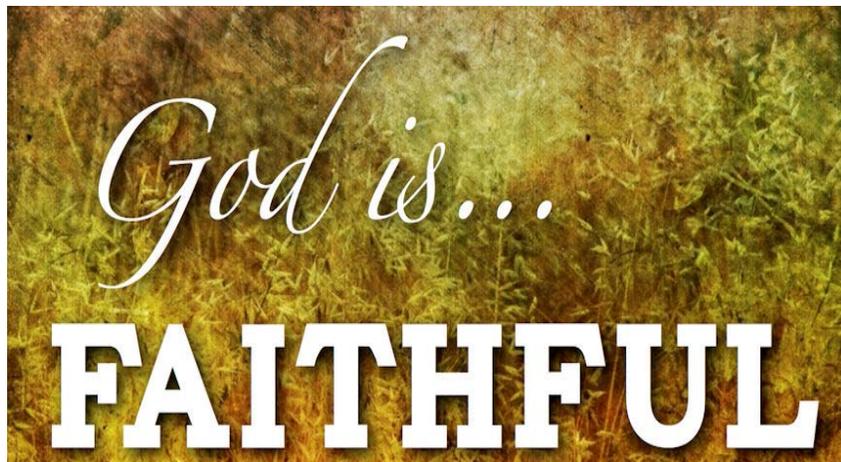
## In the Beginning

Tuesday, February 11: Read Genesis 12  
(Continued)

There are two things we can immediately learn about this covenant in the second half of Chapter 12. First, we can clearly learn that this is an unconditional covenant. What that means is that the promise given by God is dependent upon the faithfulness of God as the promise-giver and not upon any action of Abraham as its recipient. For clearly, Abraham's behavior in Egypt with his wife is hardly worthy of the blessing of God, and yet he is going to receive it regardless.

Second, notice how the blessing/cursing aspect of the covenant is already in operation. For Pharaoh and his household come under judgment for unknowingly bringing Sarah into the king's household. Although Abraham does not yet show us much by way of character, we can already see that God is faithful to the promise He has made to bless him and make his name great.

In the same way, God is just as faithful to all of His promises that have been given to us in His Word.



# In the Beginning

## Wednesday, February 12: Read Genesis 13

Abraham was in Bethel, which is part of the mountainous backbone that runs north/south throughout most of the length of Israel, when God said to him in Verse 14:

**“Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west.”**

From here God goes on to make a promise to Abraham that we refer to as the Palestinian Covenant. Here is the contract God made with Abraham:

**“All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth . . . Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”**  
Genesis 13:15-17

As you can see, the Palestinian Covenant fits neatly within the broader scope of the Abrahamic Covenant. Now here are a couple of things I would like you to note:

- **Who is making the contract?** By that I am asking, who is promising to give a specific parcel of land to Abraham and his offspring? As you can clearly see, God is making this promise!
- **What is the length of the promise?** For how long is this land going to belong to Abraham’s descendants, the Jews? The answer is easy to extract—forever!
- **What are the conditions?** One final thing to note: upon what is this covenant conditioned? Nothing! It is a promise directly from God to Abraham and his posterity without any *strings* attached.

Again, this is what makes this an unconditional covenant.

Continued on the next page.

# In the Beginning

Wednesday, February 12:  
Read Genesis 13 (Continued)

Let's go on to some application: To whom does Israel belong today? Although world leaders and the UN pay scant attention to the Bible, God's Word is very clear on this issue and every Christian should be too. Israel belongs to the Jews for the unassailable reason that God gave it to them and a much greater area as shown on the map below. The issue is not what happened in 1947 or who occupied the land at various times in history.

The Bible does not say the Jews will always occupy the land, they have been displaced for reasons of discipline a number of times. However, what it does make very clear is that even when they were not occupying the Land, they still owned it. Furthermore, their right of ownership can be traced to the sovereign Creator of this universe. And since the promise of blessing and cursing from Chapter 12 still stands in our day as well, as Christians, we do well to recognize and support their claim of ownership on the Land lest we become part of those who make trouble for Israel and as a result are cursed by God.



# In the Beginning

## Thursday, February 13: Read Jeremiah 33

The very day I wrote yesterday's devotional, I read a commentary by the pastor of a large protestant church who said something to the effect:

*I don't understand our support for the nation of Israel. The promises given to the Old Testament patriarchs are not directly related to the current nation of Israel, and we don't need to give them a blanket endorsement. Furthermore, doing so will negatively impact Muslim evangelism in the area.*

Let's give this pastor credit for raising some good issues. But let's also hold them up to the light of Scripture, so that we face the issues he raises in light of Divine Viewpoint. First, everything we know about modern day Israel leads us to believe that it is a secular nation. Not only have the Jews of Israel not turned to Christ in large numbers, they are not even, for the most part, practitioners of Judaism. Does this mean they cease to be God's chosen people? It does not! Do the promises of Jeremiah 33 no longer have any applicability? Of course they do!

The Jews of Zechariah 12 who look on "*Him who they have pierced*" and believe, are going to be the lost Jews of Israel who are either currently living in the Land of Israel (if Jesus returns soon) or their descendants (if Jesus returns in the more distant future). In either case, we should recognize that, for the most part, the Jews are in a state of unbelief, just as the Bible says they will be, while God works through His Church. But we should also know that the Abrahamic Covenant is still in effect, and it is in the best interests of the Church to recognize the special relationship God has with His chosen people and the yet glorious future for those Jews who will believe.

Continued on the next page.

# In the Beginning

Thursday, February 13: Read Jeremiah 3  
(Continued)

Does this mean that we need to approve of everything secular Israel does? Certainly not. But it is not hard to see that we have much more in common with the current mindset of Israel than any of the nations surrounding it. More to the point, we should have a special sense of Israel's history, past and future, by means of God's clear revelation to us.

As for Muslim evangelism, the issue is, as always, faith in Jesus Christ—a Jew who was crucified. Rather than downplay Jewish support so as to avoid offending Muslims (the cross already does), rejoice in this great truth of the Scriptures:

**In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance."**

Isaiah 19:23-25



The message is clear, not only does believing Israel have a glorious future, but a glorious future is promised to all those who will turn and believe in Jesus as Savior—Jew or Muslim! There is no other way for peace between the descendants of Sarah and the descendants of Hagar!

# In the Beginning

## Friday, February 14: Read Genesis 14

This is a fascinating chapter because of how much is unsaid! I have lots of questions, don't you? Let me share a few observations:

- Abraham has already shown character when, at God's command, he picks up and leaves Haran to go to Canaan (Chapter 12). Now he shows it again when, without hesitation, he gathers the trained men of his household and sets off to rescue his nephew. Although the kings mentioned in the narrative are leaders of cities and not countries, this is still a very bold and courageous thing to do.
- After obtaining victory, the mysterious Melchizedek arrives on the scene and blesses Abraham. Just to set the record straight, Melchizedek makes it clear to Abraham that it was God who had delivered Kedorlaomer and his allies into Abraham's hand.
- Given the fact that this portion of Genesis is all about Abraham and God's promises to him, we should note with surprise that Melchizedek actually plays the role of someone more significant than Abraham. I say that because it is always customary for the greater to bless the lesser (Melchizedek blessed Abraham); and Abraham offered a tenth of the plunder to Melchizedek. We'll straighten this out in tomorrow's devotional.
- And then notice how even now Abraham separates himself from the king of Sodom by rejecting any blessing from his hand, a contrast with his interaction with Melchizedek. It is almost as if even now he recognizes that anything from Sodom would be tainted.

I see a point of application here: Lot saw how close he could get to sin, while Abraham did his best to keep his distance from it. We'll see how that plays later.

# In the Beginning

## Monday, February 17: Read Hebrews 7

After yesterday's reading you may still wonder about Melchizedek, and how he could possibly be greater than Abraham. I trust Hebrews 7 clears that up. First, Melchizedek was a real person. He was both a king and a priest of the most high God, and he really did bless Abraham and receive a tenth of the plunder from him. However, as the New Testament reveals, Melchizedek was a *type* of Christ. Perhaps you remember the concept of a type from our study of Exodus. A Biblical *type* is a person or thing that presents in a limited way a future and more glorious fulfillment. The future fulfillment is said to be the *antitype*. So Melchizedek is a *type* of Jesus Christ.

Can you see the connection between Melchizedek's name, which means *king of righteousness* and *king of peace*, and its fulfillment in Christ? Of course, as a type of Christ, Melchizedek really was greater than Abraham and so the offering of the tithe was most appropriate. There is another very important issue grounded in the typology of Melchizedek, the Kingship of Christ can be traced back through David and all the way to the kingly tribe of Judah. (See Genesis 49:10.) But what about the priesthood of Christ, for it is essential that He represent us before God? Under the Mosaic Law, priests had to come from the line of Levi. There were no priests from the tribe of Judah. Via Melchizedek the problem is solved, for God declared:

**"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."** Hebrews 7:17

It is very good news for us that Jesus has a permanent priesthood! Why?

**Therefore He (Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.** Hebrews 7:25

# In the Beginning

## Tuesday, February 18: Read Genesis 15

As you can see, in the face of Abraham's uncertainty, God reiterates the Abrahamic Covenant in Verses 5 and 7:



**"Look up at the heavens and count the stars. . . so shall your offspring be. . . I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."**

And in case there was any doubt about Abraham's response, Verse 6 settles it:

**Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.**

Abraham was declared to be righteous (justified) before God, and what was the means by which he obtained this *saved* status? The same as it always is—faith in who God is and what He has done!

Let me ask you a question, "What work did Abraham do in order to be declared righteous?" Before you answer, let me show you that God answers this very question for us in the second half of Chapter 15. God has Abraham set up animal sacrifices, typical of the way in which covenants were established. The two parties making the agreement would walk through the divided animals, and agree that the same thing should happen to the one who did not keep the terms of the agreement.

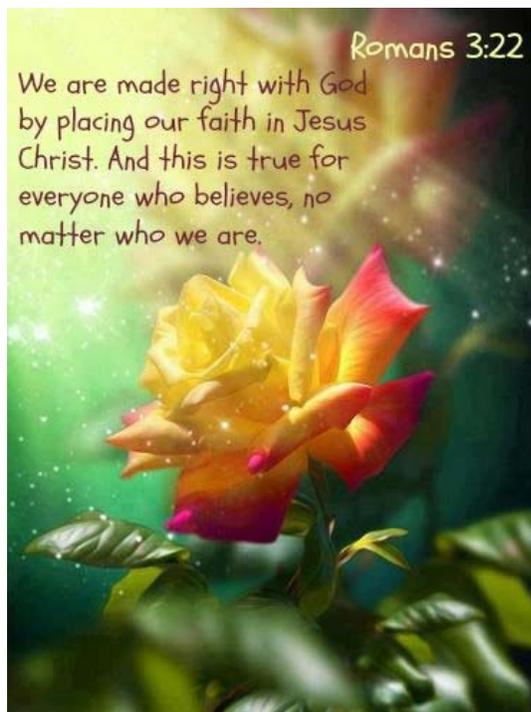
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# In the Beginning

Tuesday, February 18: Read Genesis 15  
(Continued)

But in Verse 12, a deep sleep comes over Abraham. Only a smoking firepot and blazing torch, representing the presence of God, pass between the pieces to seal the agreement. But where is Abraham? That's the whole point. The Lord made a covenant, a contractual agreement, with Abraham in which Abraham did nothing. The whole thing is predicated on the faithfulness of God and His capability to fulfill what He has promised.

Now back to our question, what work did Abraham do in order to be declared righteous before God? The answer is



that he did no work at all! His only action was to believe in the promise of God. When he believed God, he was declared righteous before God.

The same thing is true for us in the Church age:

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

Romans 3:22

# In the Beginning

## Wednesday, February 19: Read Genesis 16

Chapter 16 is meant to be a study in contrasts. We ended Chapter 15 with God not only making a covenantal promise to Abraham, but making it very clear that it was God and God alone who would fulfill the promise. Do you see how Chapter 16 starts out with Sarah thinking that God needs a little help and Abraham going along with what can only be described as an act of unbelief? And so we have what I like to call *Operation Hagar*.

How well does it work out for Abraham and Sarah to take things into their own hands? In no time at all there is conflict between Sarah and Hagar (no surprises there). Then, in Chapter 21, conflict arises between the child of promise (Isaac) and that of human scheming (Ishmael). And, how well has it worked out through the centuries? Many of the Arab peoples trace their lineage back through Ishmael, including Mohammed. And, you can see that there is a long history of conflict between the offspring of Abraham that are a fulfillment of the promise of God and those that are the result of human effort and planning.

Over and over we see the difference between man's ways and God's ways. (Isaiah 55:8) God's ways are indeed higher and better than man's. How much conflict through the centuries, how much wasted effort and frustration in our own lives could be avoided if we would just take God at His Word and trust Him to fulfill His promises in His timing.

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.**

Proverbs 3:5-6

# Lessons from I John

Thursday, February 20:  
Read I John 3:1-3

We are only looking at three verses today, but they should be of great encouragement to us! John 1:12 tells us:

**...all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. . .**

Much later, near the end of his life, John reminds us:

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

John is still enamored with being a child of God—and thinks we should be too! How can we go from enemies to family? The answer, of course, is through faith in the person and work of Christ! To become a child of God is to have love lavished upon you, to be a recipient of God's grace. And, also to have the promise of Verse 2:

**...that when He appears, we shall be like Him. . .**

At least part of what this verse means is very clear, but in Philippians 3:21 we learn that Jesus Christ Himself:

**...will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.**

As children of God we will have a resurrection body like our Lord's. This is truly a gift from the love of God. What should be the result of such love?

**Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.** I John 1:3

Our family relationship with the Father and the Son, and our future hope of glory, is to have a purifying effect on our life now. Why? Would anything else fit with such a present reality and future hope? Of course we are to: *walk-worthy of the calling which we have received.* (Ephesians 4:1), a calling to sonship with the Father and kinship with our Lord and Savior!

# Lessons from I John

Friday, February 21:  
Read I John 3:4-10

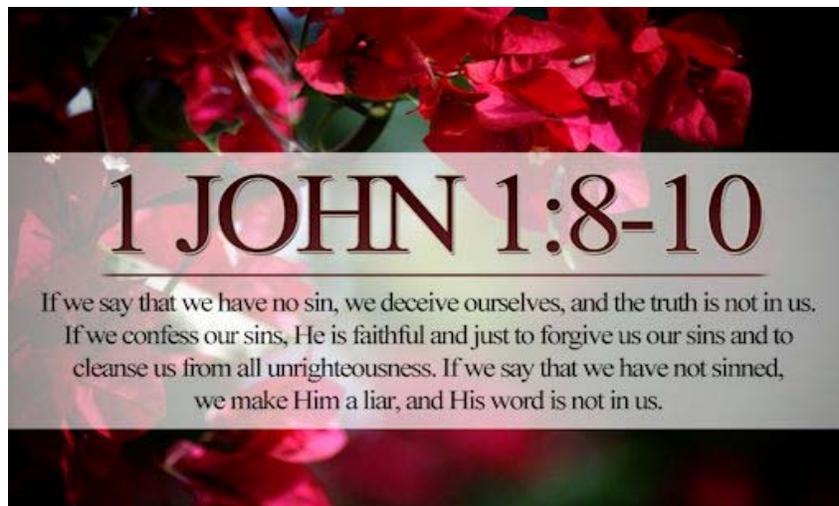
This is a very challenging passage, and so a thorough analysis is beyond the scope of this devotional. Nonetheless, it is next in our reading, so let me give you something to think about. We have already learned that I John was written to promote vertical fellowship with God and horizontal fellowship with other like-minded believers. To do this, we must walk in the light as our holy God is in the light. So Chapter 1 encouraged us to watch our lives closely, and confess sin as need be. This great treatise on fellowship closes with the following:

**If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar,  
and His word is not in us.** I John 1:10

And then we come to Chapter 3 and find the following:

**Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His  
seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he  
has been born of God.** I John 3:9

Do you see the problem? Continued on the next page.



# Lessons from I John

Friday, February 21:  
Read I John 3:4-10 (Continued)

There are those who will use this to try and prove that someone living in sin could never have been saved. But, in context, that is not really what the verse says! For it says a believer *does not sin*. . .*he cannot sin*. If that's the case, you and I have a problem! Furthermore, it would seem to directly contradict I John 1:10 cited on the previous page. So how do we understand this?

Again, I remind you that I John is about fellowship—about depth of relationship with God. So let's look further within the context of Chapter 3 at Verse 6.

**Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.** I John 3:6

Now we can be dogmatic: You are most definitely not abiding in Christ if you are engaged in sin! The new life that is part of being born again cannot sin! That means that, when you do sin, it is the old sinful nature that is involved.

This is challenging, but very helpful. The new life that is ours in Christ will never sin. But the fact remains, we are going to have to choose to walk in that new life rather than the old. In short, you have to walk the walk of the Christian Life, or you simply don't know Him—where knowing Him is being in fellowship with Him and having His life manifest in your life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And, the firm way in which I John 3 states this lesson means that God is not negotiating on this point!

# Lessons from I John

Monday, February 24:  
Read I John 3:11-24

This section is so rich that we could spend days in it! Instead we will explore one verse:

**And this is His (God's) command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us.** I John 3:23

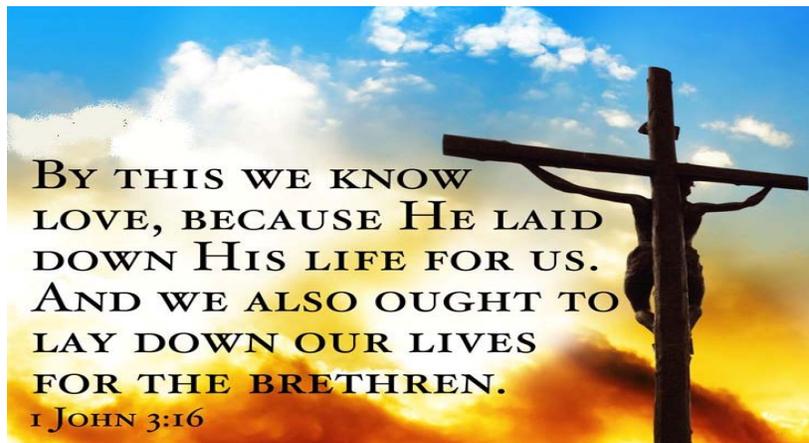
Please consider the following:

- This verse gives us important sequence: First we believe, then we love one another in obedience to the command of Christ.
- The sequence matters because the kind of love we are to show to one another is defined in this passage:

**This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.** I John 3:16

That kind of love—is surely supernatural in quality.

Continued on the next page.



# Lessons from I John

## Monday, February 24: Read I John 3:11-24 (Continued)

Therefore, it requires supernatural enablement. There you have it. Believe first in the person and work of Christ that you might be a new creation in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17) and be indwelt with His Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). Only an individual *in Christ* and enabled by the Holy Spirit could love his or her brother in the same sacrificial way that Jesus loved.

- There is a distinction between much of what passes for religion and what the Bible is actually teaching. Religion uses passages like those in I John 3 as a club to get you to love others. And, if you don't, they tell you that you are a bad Christian or not one at all. What the Bible actually teaches is this:

**If anyone sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?**

I John 3:17

This verse actually exhorts us on two fronts! First, meet the need of our brother. And then second, if we cannot, the problem is the absence of the life of Christ in us.

So, now you know what to work on. Reckon yourself dead to (separated from) the sin nature and alive unto God in Christ. Then, put that new life at God's disposal for the accomplishment of His purposes. It gets a lot simpler to analyze whether or not we are living the Christian life when we ask ourselves:

*Was that the love of Christ being manifested in me?"*

If not, confess your sin. If so, keep on walking in the Spirit!

# Lessons from I John

Tuesday, February 25:  
Read I John 4:1-10

There is a spirit of ecumenicalism in our day that is summed up by Brazilian author P. Coelho:

*All religions lead to the same God, and all deserve the same respect.* "

Others say it this way, "We each need to be the best \_\_\_\_\_ we can be." Simply fill in the blank with any religious persuasion you prefer. But, what does the Word of God have to say about this?

**Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

I John 4:1

Is the author of the above quote a false prophet? Have those who believe that every religious adherent just needs to be the best follower they can be listened to a false spirit? John's answer is convicting.

**This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist. . .**

I John 4:2-3

Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism do not lead to the same God. They are errors that blind the lost and hold out a future that ends in the Lake of Fire for all eternity. Those are harsh words in our day, but they are Biblically solid. And when our worldview is centered in "*just be the best you that you can be,*" we have followed the tune of the anti-christ, behind whom is Satan. Let us be firmly in step with the Holy Spirit, who convicts the world of sin because they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! (John 16:8)

# Lessons from I John

Wednesday, February 26:  
Read 1 John 4:11-21

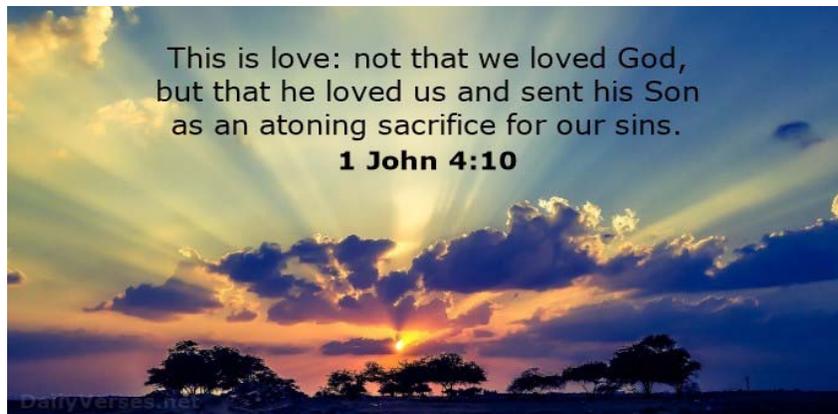
A theme we have seen through I John is quite dominant in today's reading—that of loving our brothers. Let's work with Verse 11 as a means of stimulating our thinking:

**Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

Here is a sequence of ideas for you to ponder:

1. Love doesn't start with us; rather, it starts with God: *God is love* (Verse 16) and *We love because He first loved us* (Verse 19). In short, God is the initiator of love.
2. When we think of loving one another, we should think of the example God has already given us. Reaching back to the first part of this chapter:

**This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.** I John 4:10



# Lessons from I John

## Wednesday, February 26: Read 1 John 4:11-21 (Continued)

Let me suggest that we cannot follow His example of providing atonement, but we can most certainly follow His example of sacrificially doing what is best for someone else. That's what agape love is, and that is the form used throughout this chapter.

3. Loving the brethren is a huge part of what it means to manifest the life of Christ.

**No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.** I John 4:12

The kind of love we are talking about here is only possible through the manifestation of the life of Christ in us. And, when that happens, His love is made complete in us.

4. If we know Christ is at work in us, why would we fear the judgment to come.

**Perfect love drives out fear. . .** I John 4:18

Why? If we know Christ is at work in us, why would we fear the judgment to come? You see, there is no room for fear when love is at work.

5. Lastly, a sobering *self-check*. Don't be saying you love God, unless. . .

**Whoever loves God must also love his brother.** I John 4:21

What a glorious thought that this kind of love would be manifest in our fellowship!

# In the Beginning

## Thursday, February 27: Read Genesis 17

In this chapter we have the inauguration of circumcision as an outward sign that the Jews were the covenant people of God. Because God placed such a premium upon it (*"any uncircumcised male will be cut off from his people"*), it has been a very important observance for the Jews down through the centuries. Here are a few observations:

- Did you note that God told Abraham to, "*Walk before me and be blameless*" at the beginning of the chapter? This makes clear God's desire for every justified person. It also sets the stage for circumcision to be a sign for a people who have already been called to be holy.
- In this chapter God changes Abram's name to the more familiar Abraham. In keeping with the promises given to him, his name now means *father of many nations*.
- Notice the repetition of the promises given to Abraham: he is going to have many descendants, be the father of many nations, and own Canaan as an everlasting possession. These were given as unconditional covenants.
- One last thing to note about circumcision. The Jews eventually took this sign and turned it into something that made them feel superior to others, but acted as if it was without obligation. I say superior to others because calling someone uncircumcised was a mark of derision. (I Samuel 17:26) It is true, circumcision did set the Jews apart, but was it without any obligation, without any call upon their lives? On the contrary:  
**...circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.**

Romans 2:29

This is always God's way!

# In the Beginning

## Friday, February 28: Read Genesis 18

The Lord appears to Abraham, along with two angels, and once again personally reiterates something that Abraham has been waiting to happen for decades. He tried to force it with Hagar and that turned into a disaster. By now, both he and Sarah have gotten so old that it seems hopeless. Of course, I am talking about Abraham having a son. God has given Abraham great promises about being the father of a great nation, owning the land of Palestine, and being a blessing to the whole world. Yet none of these can really be fulfilled without having children by Sarah and now that has left the realm of human possibility. I don't think we often consider the struggle to trust the Lord that had to be going on in the soul of Abraham for so many years. Verse 14 tells us the one thing that Abraham and every Christian today has to deal with:

**Is anything too hard for the Lord?**      Genesis 18:14

Of course, the answer is no. But the answer is a lot easier in theory than it is to believe in practice when waiting year after year. Can God still act in the heart of an unrepentant child or spouse, can He see you through a difficult medical situation, can He give you boldness to bear witness to Him? *Is anything too hard for God?* Let me suggest that we *can do all things through Christ Who gives us strength!* Recall another time that God said something very similar to one of His servants:

**"For nothing is impossible with God."**      Luke 1:37

This is a reference to both the promise of the birth of John the Baptist and the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. God made it clear that His plans and purposes are not dependent upon the laws of probability, but upon His faithfulness to His promises. And all God's people said, "Amen!"

VISTOSO  
  
Community Church

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

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