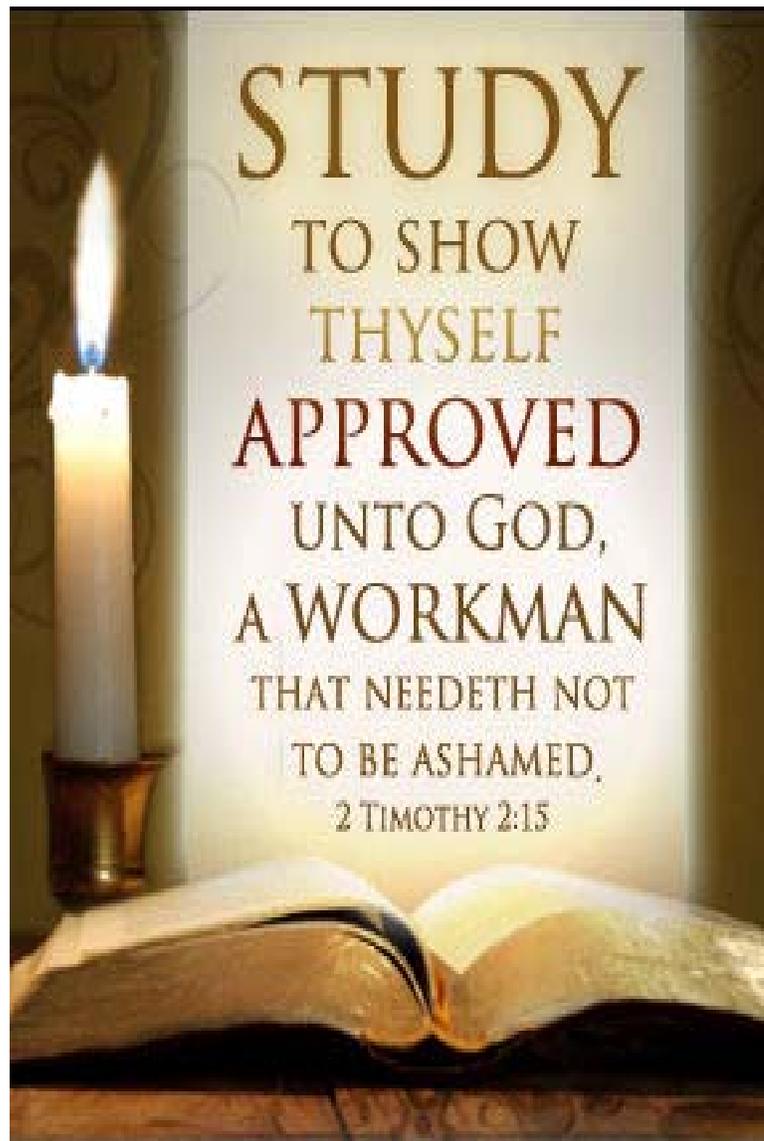


Daily Devotional

April 2016



Foreword

If you are still with us, I trust it is because you have been blessed by the regular contact with God's Word, and by now it is becoming something you look forward to daily.

This month will begin with our final look at the subject of revival. I loved that series on revival, and this closing section includes the idea of legacy—of finishing well—which for me is an important subject. And then we will move into a study of Philippians. You will find the character of the daily devotionals changes with our study of Philippians. We will be moving very slowly through the book, while typically continuing to read a chapter a day from Paul's other epistles.



You will have to let me know if you think this approach works. Consider it an experiment at going deeper, while continuing to expose ourselves to the breadth of Scripture.

Again, let me know what you think.

In His grace,

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

Kevin Redig

Return to Revival

Tuesday, April 1: Read Psalm 61

Our final set of meditations on the topic of revival will focus upon the idea of *heritage*. Did you catch the concept in Psalm 61? After calling to the Lord to be led to the Rock that is above all, David reflects upon the Lord's faithfulness and exclaims,

*You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name.*

At this point, even though I might not be sure exactly what this heritage might be, just the way David frames his plea causes me to know that this is something that all of us should want also. But this brings us to a number of questions: "What is this heritage that David is talking about? What does it have to do with the subject of revival? And, how is it connected with the Fear of the Lord?"

Let me answer that last question first. Thus far in our study of revival we have defined revival; investigated the signs of revival; identified the agents of revival; answered the question, "Can it Fail;" and highlighted the importance of building memorials to revival. The presence of the Fear of the Lord is simply the mark of the revived. For those who are spiritually flourishing have a great reverence for God, they recognize how high and exalted He is, and they respond in obedience to His revealed will. So whatever this heritage is—it is the heritage of not only those who fear the Lord, but those who live spiritually flourishing lives.

To finish today's study, a reminder of our revival definition:

Spiritual revival is characteristic of a Christian who returns to a condition of spiritual vigor, by means of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The revived see God as bigger than any obstacle, faithful to keep all His promises, and are simultaneously convicted of their need for and the wonders of God's grace.

Return to Revival

Monday, April 4: Read II Timothy 4

*You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name. Psalm 61:5*

The Hebrew word translated “heritage” means inheritance, or that which is a possession. In other words, those who Fear the Lord, those who live spiritually revived lives, have a certain spiritual possession that cannot be lost—even by a life cut short by circumstances. Furthermore, they have an expectation of something that will come to them as an inheritance from the Lord. Eternity is a blessing for all Christians, but I am talking about those who persevere day by day, and attempt to appropriate the agents of revival and flourish spiritually in whatever calling the Lord may have. The Scriptures say it this way:

*These all died in faith. . . confessed that they were
strangers and pilgrims on this earth. For those who say
such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. . .
they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.*

Hebrews 11:14-16

*All the days ordained for me were written in Your book
before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:16*

*Now that all has been heard, here is the conclusion of the
matter, Fear God and obey His commandments. For
this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13*

*I have fought the good fight. . . now there is in store for
me the crown of righteousness. . . II Timothy 4:7-8*

Now in order for this to really make sense, here is what you need to carefully think through: for two days I have equated living a revived life, with walking in the Fear of the Lord. Is it Biblically sound to do that? Think about it, and don't decide until after the next few meditations.

Return to Revival

Tuesday, April 5: Read II Kings 23

*You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name. Psalm 61:5*

This is the heritage that we, too, should want! Consider two kings of Israel. Read about Jeroboam beginning in I Kings 11. He was a man of great valor and administrative skill. When Solomon sinned, Jeroboam was chosen by God to lead the northern kingdom of Israel. God promised him that he would head a dynasty as enduring as David's if he was faithful to the Lord. Yet, when things began to unfold exactly as God had said, he doubted God. To solidify his grasp over his new kingdom, he introduced pagan worship and instituted his own priesthood. Here is his legacy: he was disciplined personally, his family line was cut off, and in the remainder of the book of Kings he is remembered as, "Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. . ."

On the other hand, read about Josiah beginning in II Kings 22. He becomes king at a young age, after a period of great apostasy. He is not remarkable, and yet when he hears the Word of God, he repents. His repentance causes a great repentance throughout the land—and he leads the people into a time of spiritual revival. Here is his legacy:

Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him. II Kings 23:25

Josiah was revived and left the legacy of the revived. Now did Josiah live a long life? No, he died in battle. But it is not about length of life, nor about giftedness; rather, it is about faith versus unbelief. I close as I started—we should long to leave a spiritual legacy of a revived life, and it is never too late to start.

Return to Revival

Wednesday, April 6: Read Malachi 3

*You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name. Psalm 61:5*

We should desire to belong to this group—to be one of those! Just meditate upon the words of Malachi 3:16-17:

*Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another,
and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of
remembrance was written before Him for those who fear
the Lord and who meditate on His name.*

“They shall be mine, says the Lord of Hosts. . .”

In our study of revival we have learned that it must start individually—each of us must make the choices necessary to flourish spiritually:

- To recognize the sovereign and capable God portrayed in the Scriptures
- To depend upon Him
- To build memorials to Him that we might not forget
- To walk in the Fear of the Lord
- And, finally, to realize that the only thing that can cause revival to fail in our lives is unbelief.

However, and this is very important, neither in the Old Testament and perhaps even more so in the New Testament—revival was never meant to be an individual commodity. In the Old Testament, it was meant to be the heritage of the people of God, lived out as the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, it is meant to be the heritage of the Bride of Christ—His Church!

Return to Revival

Wednesday, April 6: Read Malachi 3 (continued)

You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name. Psalm 61:5

This truth is easily proved in Malachi 3—for God has a book of Remembrance in which are written the names of those who Fear Him; that is, the names of those who have spiritually revived lives. This is the group to which we want to belong!

Now look at the corporate nature of those who are commended in the New Testament for the quality of their lives:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. . . Hebrews 12:1-2



Did you catch that we are part of a “great cloud”. And then consider how Jesus offers an evaluation—church by church in Revelation chapters two and three:

To the angel of the church
of _____ write: . . .

Return to Revival

Thursday, April 7: Read Psalm 90

You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name. Psalm 61:5

The last of three items I would like you to consider regarding the heritage of those who are revived is that of time! Consider II Kings 23:29

...Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria. . . and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo. . .

How do we make sense out of this? Why was one of the few great kings over Israel killed in battle? Josiah had



taken a bad situation, turned it around and was making a real difference—and he was a godly man.

We do not have to ponder this for very long before we ask the question, “Why God?” Here are parts of the answer, and as you can see, they have a great

deal of applicability to us.

Josiah responded to the revelation he had from God. Therefore, he possessed an inheritance that was guaranteed in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy. In other words, his heritage had been established—as it is for all those who walk by faith, living revived lives.

Return to Revival

Thursday, April 7: Read Psalm 90

*You have given me the heritage of those
who fear Your name. Psalm 61:5*

We guard this capacity for heritage by understanding the thrust of the following admonishments:

- Make the most of every opportunity. Colossians 4:5
- “Be careful how you live. . .as the wise, make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:16)
- “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord. . . knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. . .” Colossians 3:23-24

So it is not really about length of days, but how they are lived. And this is exactly the attitude we should have as expressed in Verse 12 of today’s reading:

*Teach us to number our days aright, that
we may gain a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12*

The revived do not need to be long-lived, prosper materially, produce visible fruit, or be famous. The revived just need to live a spiritually vigorous life for as many days as the Lord has written in His book so that they too would have the heritage of those who Fear The Lord!

Return to Revival

Friday, April 8: Read Psalm 85 and Revelation 3:7-13

So we are back where we began with our study of revival beginning in Psalm 85 and ending in Revelation 3 with the Church of Philadelphia.

(Interestingly enough, the Schofield version of the Bible inserts an editor's note above Verse 7 which says, "The Church in Revival.")



In closing our investigation of revival, I would like to challenge you to think about the ramifications of the choices we make. To begin with, God's offer of salvation is very broad, very inclusive:

He gave His only Son that whosoever believeth. . .

But almost immediately we see the consequences of that choice:

...believeth on Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

There are only two options—either perish (eternally) or live (eternally)! In other words, will we choose to join the company of the redeemed through faith in the person and work of Christ, or choose to remain in the company of the lost. For, if we don't do something to change our status, we are going to end up in the same condition in which we started—in the dominion of darkness and an object of God's wrath.

Return to Revival

Friday, April 8: Read Psalm 85 and Revelation 3:7-13 (Continued)

After we have made the choice of salvation, the Christian has further choices to make. These are the choices of the quality of life lived—choices of heritage:

- Will each of us choose to live a spiritually vigorous and flourishing life; or one that is like a wilted flower, choked out by the concerns of this world?
- Will we be among those who have a large view of a promise-keeping God, or will we be among those who let outward appearance, the lures of this world, and the fear of man shape their walk.
- Will we be open to the Lord who daily puts to use the agents of revival in our lives, who builds memorials to His capability, holiness and ability to save, or will we be found among those who seek the adulation and the memorials of this world.
- Will we be among those who walk in the Fear of the Lord or among those who live in love with the world.

From God's side, He has provided everything necessary for our salvation and for us to live a life of spiritual vigor, that our name might be added to the Book of Life and then to the Book of Remembrance. The only thing that can prevent salvation first and spiritually flourishing second is unbelief as to the plans and the capability of God. Revival is a cry to God of a people who have decided they want what God has provided, no matter the cost. I trust that will be your heart-cry and the cry of our fellowship.

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

Lessons from Philippians

Monday, April 11: Read Acts 15

This next section of devotion lessons is in the book of Philippians, and it will take several blocks of lessons before we finish the entire book. At a minimum, we will read through the book of Philippians several times before we are done, so you will get a feel for the rich content that can be found throughout its four chapters.

The devotionals are from a study I did in the past which are quite detailed, and so you will find we will be working our way slowly through the text. To offset the slow pace, we will continue to read a chapter a day, primarily from Paul's other epistles. In this way we can take a detailed look at Philippians, while continuing our overall exposure to the text of Scripture. The first thing we might want to know—who are the Philippians? The short answer is the people of Philippi.

As you can see on the map below, Philippi was located in the northern part of what we now call Greece.



Lessons from Philippians

Monday, April 11: Read Acts 15 (Continued)

The existing town was annexed by Philip of Macedon (Alexander the Great's Father) in 356 BC and named after himself. Its location was strategic at the time because of its close proximity to a valuable gold mine, as well as its oversight of important trade routes. The city was conquered by Rome in 168 BC and the scene of an important battle between warring Roman factions in 42 BC. As the result of Roman activity in this area, by the time of the writing of the New Testament, Philippi had become home to a large number of ex-Roman Legionnaires. It was for this reason the town had been given a special Roman status, "Ius Italicum," meaning it was governed by Roman Law.

You might also be wondering, how Paul came to be involved with the people of Philippi? It all started with what we call Paul's Second Missionary Journey. The route of this journey, which actually spanned a number of years, can be seen below.



Lessons from Philipians

Monday, April 11: Read Acts 15 (Continued)

You will recognize a number of cities, which like Philippi, are best known as books of the Bible, that is Corinth, Thessalonica, and so on. These are all cities where Paul preached the Gospel and started churches. Then he eventually corresponded with the fledgling churches as part of his ministry to them.

Now here is where it begins to get interesting, because here is where the introduction to Philipians takes on a spiritual dimension. When Paul left on his journey, he had intended to go to Asia. However, the Spirit wouldn't allow him to do so. Next, he made an effort to go to Bithynia, and again the Spirit checked his intentions. Acts 16:9 makes it clear that God intended for Paul to continue his missionary efforts, beginning with the town of Philippi.

Paul left immediately in response to his direction from the Lord and began his ministry in the continent of Europe for the first time. His efforts, and the legacy he left us in the form of letters to these churches, continue to this day as a rich source of divine truth for the believers in Jesus Christ.

Here are two of points of application for you to ponder:

- God's plans and man's are not always the same. Do we accept changes from the hand of God with the same eagerness to move forward as did the Apostle Paul?
- God had scheduled a divine appointment for Paul in Philippi, beginning with a woman named Lydia who is going to accept the Gospel. Is there any reason why we shouldn't see the people God brings our way on a daily basis as divine appointments? Both your neighbor and your doctor need the same thing—to come in contact with the truth about the saving work of God through Jesus Christ!

Lessons from Philippians

Tuesday, April 12: Read Acts 16

As we have discussed, Paul visits Philippi during what we refer to as his Second Missionary Journey. But what about his first Journey and the events between these two adventures? The first Journey is recorded beginning in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas are commissioned by the Church at Antioch and sent out to preach the Gospel.

Both Gentiles and Jews responded to their preaching, and they founded churches in several towns in the face of strong opposition from legalistic Jews. In fact, Paul was stoned and left for dead after legalistic Jews stirred up trouble for him at Lystra. Paul and Barnabas concluded their first Journey by returning to Antioch and reporting all that had happened to them. It was during this interlude between missionary journeys that the events of Acts 15 occurred beginning with the following:

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers; "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved. Acts 15:1

As the passage makes clear, Paul and Barnabas sharply disagreed with this claim. This led Paul and Barnabas to journey to Jerusalem and discuss this matter with the Apostles. Peter gives an impassioned speech (no surprise), the last line of which summarizes the council's answer:

No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we (Jews) are saved, just as they (Gentiles) are.
Acts 15:11-parenthesis mine

It is after this decision, that Paul is again ready to depart on further missionary travels. By way of application: the Gospel of grace will always come under attack when rightly proclaimed to a lost and dying world. So don't be surprised by opposition!

Lessons from Philippians

Wednesday, April 13: Review and Highlight Referenced Passages

The background to the book of Philippians is important to us because of its extremely strong evangelistic message. Consider first the vision in Acts 16:9-10, which prompted Paul to change his plans and head to Philippi. When God looks at mankind, He sees a field that is ready for harvest. That is, God sees people who are ready to hear the gospel and become children of God (John 4:35).

In other words, God sees the spiritual dimension associated with what our eyes see physically. That prompts the question: Have you and I developed our spiritual sensitivity to the point that we begin to see the same things? Do we understand that the Lord wants to use us to reveal Himself to neighbors, relatives, even those we encounter casually? Do we see these people as lost and needy—begging you to “come over to Macedonia and help us?” Oh, that the Lord would develop our spiritual sight!

Second, the dialogue with the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:29-34 reveals much about the thinking of the unbeliever; as well as reinforces key principles associated with standing for the faith. The jailor, on the brink of suicide, is desperate as he falls on his knees before Paul. He typifies the completely desperate situation of every member of the human race who is without a saving relationship with Christ. However the jailor, who is familiar with religion, frames his request for help in religious terms. The present tense verb of Verse 30 reveals that the jailor is really asking:

“what works (of religion) must I keep on doing (in your religious system) in order to be saved?” (parenthesis mine)

The jailor is just about to get his second shock for the evening—for Christianity is not a religion!

Lessons from Philippians

Wednesday, April 13: Review and Highlight Referenced Passages (Continued)

Paul is going to use the aorist tense in Verse 31, which simply refers to a moment of time, and the verb “believe” has nothing to do with religious works. Religion is all about how man, by his efforts, can please god(s). On the contrary, Christianity is all about what God has done, through His Son, to rescue man from his desperate situation and restore him to relationship with Himself.

In Verse 33, Paul and Silas go on to explain the details of the Gospel to the jailor—Christ’s substitutionary payment for sin on the cross, the free gift of eternal life and relationship with God, and so on. The message of the Gospel is exclusive and divisive—think about it.

For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

It is this that makes the Gospel, in particular, and Christianity, in general, so *politically incorrect* in the day and age in which we live. The world likes to think we are in the process of societal improvement—the Bible says the condition of lost mankind is desperate! The world likes to think there are many ways to enlightenment—the Bible says there is one way, and that way is narrow !

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

Lord, let us hold fast to the truth of mankind’s desperate need, and the person and work of Jesus Christ as the sole answer. Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel, for

...it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

Lessons from Philippians

Thursday, April 14: Highlight Acts 16:30-31
and then Acts 15:25

In Acts 16:30-31 we have one of the greatest *snapshots* of the Gospel in the pages of Scripture. Acts 16:32 makes it very clear that Paul and Silas provided supporting information to their summary statement in Verse. 31. First, the summary statement, and then the supporting truth from the Word, led to a decision for Christ—not only on the part of the jailor but his entire family as well! God's Word does not return empty and void from His purposes for it.

We have seen that salvation is apart from any type of doing, or works, on the part of man. Instead, it is by faith, and not just faith in the idea of God, but in a specific object—the person and work of Jesus Christ! From the basis of two specific household's—Lydia's and the jailor's, we now have the start of a church in Philippi.

Paul's relationship with this Church, through his Epistle to them, continues to bless us today. Now I want you to think for a minute about the situation, just before this passage with which we are so familiar. Paul and Silas have been brutally beaten, and are chained in the dank dark of the innermost cell of the jail. Think about how you would feel were you in their situation. As the moment of the great earthquake that would rock the jail drew closer, do you think these two missionaries knew the jailor was about to rush in and ask what was necessary in order to be saved? Do you think they knew that a whole family was about to be saved, or that their conversation was about to be preserved forever in the pages of Scripture? You know the old saying—hindsight is always 20/20, and in hindsight Paul and Silas suffered for the advance of the Gospel and they would most certainly say it was worth it.

Lessons from Philippians

Thursday, April 14: Highlight Acts 16:30-31
and then Acts 15:25 (Continued)

But did they know things were going to turn out the way they did? I think you would agree the answer is clear. Paul and Silas had no way of knowing the momentous events that God was about to initiate. We can't either. Our job is to be faithful in "growing in grace and knowledge" and following our Savior in sacrificial service (the very topic of the book of Philippians). God will take care of producing the results.



This is something to which we must hold fast in faith, even when our circumstances have *beaten* us up and *imprisoned* us! Furthermore, if you are like me, the mental battle is the key. Difficult circumstances or setbacks are a challenge to being ready to be used by God. Had I received the treatment Paul had, I doubt I could have been ready to so succinctly and with obvious sincerity share the Gospel with a lost individual—even if he or she should be on their knees asking for it.

But one thing you and I can do, we can follow the example of Paul and Silas after being beaten up by this world, and that is to pray and sing hymns to God. Settle the matter in your own mind, with the Word of God as truth to which you anchor your soul, and you never know when an earthquake of God's making will be right around the corner!

Lessons from Philippians

**Friday, April 15: Read a Philippians Sampler
consisting of 1:21-24, 2:4, 3:10-11, 4:13**

We have investigated Paul's first visit to Philippi as recorded in Acts 15-16. This visit, which corresponds to the start of the Church in Philippi, occurred some time just prior to 50 AD. So then, what is the situation at the time of Paul's letter to the Philippians—likely between 60-62 AD? During the intervening years, Paul has kept in touch with the fledgling Church through Timothy, and has returned to the city on at least two other occasions (Acts 20:1-6).

It is clear from the first chapter of Philippians that Paul is now in prison (Philippians 1:7, 13-14, 20-24, 30). His life is most certainly on the line. He is most likely imprisoned in Rome, waiting for Caesar to pass judgment on his case. We should also consider the purpose for which the book of Philippians was written. There are, of course, Paul's purposes for writing, such as a thank-you for financial support and a health update on Epaphroditus. I would call these *surface purposes*. There are also God's purposes in preserving this letter as part of His Word. I would like to suggest three purposes that are interwoven throughout the book: 1) to display the life of a servant; 2) to reveal the thinking (heart) of a servant; and 3) to emphasize the great care needed to guard one's servant heart!

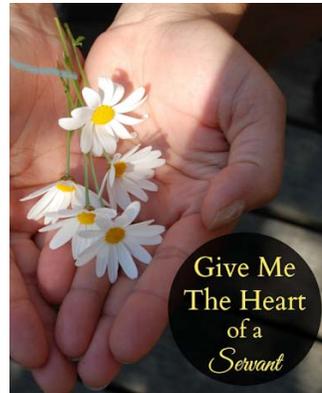
I will do my best to develop each of these during the course of our study. In closing today's meditation, here is a point of application for you to consider: Paul is in prison, on a trumped up charge—waiting to be freed or executed at the hand of a capricious emperor. Yet his heart turns to ministry and the service of others. Are we ready to do the same in the midst of whatever challenges God brings our way? Even now I hope that Paul's servant heart will convict our hearts to follow his example, while at the same time remembering that such service can only be done in the strength the Lord provides.

Lessons from Philippians

Monday, April 18: Read Philippians 1
Highlight Verse 6

What a remarkable church has grown and developed in Philippi! By the time Paul writes this letter, that church is somewhere between 10 and 14 years old, and yet there is barely a hint of any type of problem within the Church. In contrast, although the Church at Corinth is roughly the same age, by this time it has warring factions and areas of overt sin, which include incest and drunken celebrations of communion.

What is it that made the Church at Philippi so different? If you will permit me to say so, I actually think the fellowship at Vistoso Community Church is remarkably similar to the one at Philippi. We share a number of surface similarities, such as a significant presence of retired military within the congregation. In addition, I have observed a great deal of similarity in terms of heart attitude. For you, too, manifest a servant's heart. I tell you this, not so that you will *rest on your laurels*, but so that you will be doubly ready to pay attention to the message of Philippians—for it is a message to those with a servant's heart.



Philippians challenges us to develop our servant's heart further in following the example of Christ, and it warns of the threats that will so easily compromise our potential future ministry. In fact, we will discuss a few of those threats in the next several lessons. In the weeks ahead, I hope the unfolding of this letter, which could so easily have been written directly to our Church, will help stimulate us to further growth and development that we might glorify the Lord in the same way as did the Church at Philippi.

Lessons from Philipppians

Tuesday, April 19: Read I Kings 11

Let me remind you of the purposes for which I think God has preserved the letter to the Philippian Church: to display the life of a servant; to reveal the thinking (heart) of a servant; and to emphasize the great care needed to guard one's servant heart! So before we even begin to look for these things in the book of Philipppians, let me show you what it looks like when a servant's heart is absent—we will do so by looking today and tomorrow at the three kings who followed David. For their failures kept Israel from accomplishing "fruitful service" in keeping with God's expectations for His people and demonstrate three things that can keep us from fruitful service.

First, Consider Solomon—and the Untamed Passions of a Gifted Man

1 Kings 7:1-8 gives us two pieces of information. First, Solomon spent 13 years building his palace. Second, he married Pharaoh's daughter. If you look back into the closing verses of Chapter 6, you will see that Solomon spent seven years building the Temple. As his power and fame grew, he reached the point of building the most grandiose structure ever built in Israel as his own home, and disobeyed God's decree about not marrying foreign women.

As time goes on, 1 Kings 11:1-8 reveals the outcome of these acts of disobedience. Solomon has over a thousand wives and concubines whom he loved. According to R. Zacharias, every relationship has a moral commitment. It is well worth thinking about that fact in terms of our relationships with others and the effect those relationships might have on our walk with the Lord.

Lessons from Philippians

Tuesday, April 19: Read I Kings 11 (Continued)

And Solomon was no exception. His commitment to these foreign women allowed them to lead him into idolatry—even including that of child sacrifice. Worse yet, Solomon took the nation with him!

What a platform and ministry to the world Solomon had.

But Solomon's ministry was all compromised because he could not tame his passions.

We too need to be on guard that we have not settled into patterns which excuse a certain area of sin in our lives—imagining that it will not impact our ministry.

It is never too late to appropriate the Lord's provision that we might grow ever more pure in our walk that we might be used by the Lord to accomplish all that he has planned for us—to His glory.



SO IN SOLOMON WE SEE THE FIRST OF THE THREE THINGS THAT CAN KEEP US FROM FRUITFUL SERVICE TO THE LORD, WE SEE THE UNTAMED PASSIONS OF A GIFTED MAN!

Lessons from Philippians

Wednesday, April 20: Read I Kings 12

Second, Consider Rehoboam—and the Worldly Lusts of a Self-Centered Man

In 1 Kings 11:42-43 we learn that Rehoboam was Solomon's son and came to power after his death. 1 Kings 12:4-f is an amazing passage regarding leadership, legacy and a host of other items. To give you a brief summary: Rehoboam goes to the people who ask to have their load lightened. That is, they are asking for relief from the taxation and heavy labor they experienced under Solomon's reign. What's more, the elders of Israel clearly recognize this same need, giving Rehoboam very wise advice,

If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.

However, this isn't enough for Rehoboam and he also consults his younger contemporaries. They convince him to put the people under even a harsher load. Rehoboam, in an ill-advised speech, tells the people,

*My father scourged you with whips;
I will scourge you with scorpions.*

The people rebel, and as foretold by God, the kingdom is divided and a large portion removed from the line of Solomon as the result of his sin of idolatry. Did you catch the fact that the elders of Israel named his role as king for what it was—a servant to the people? He could have made the choice to serve, walk with the Lord, and accomplish much. Instead, his desire for power and material possessions caused him to focus on self, putting an end to the united kingdom, which had been established under David and which God most certainly desired to bless.

**SO REHOBOAM ILLUSTRATES THE
WORLDLY LUSTS OF A SELF-CENTERED MAN!**

Lessons from Philippians

Wednesday, April 20: Read I Kings 12 (Continued)

Third, Consider Jeroboam—and the Double Minded Nature of a Faithless Man

1 Kings 11:29-40 records one of the most remarkable promises in the Word of God. Because of Solomon's sin, God has declared He is going to split the kingdom. In this passage, we see he is going to make Jeroboam king over what we call the Northern Kingdom and God promises:

"If you do whatever I command you and walk in My ways. . . I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."

Can you believe the blessing promised to Jeroboam? He has already seen God at work in both preserving his life and taking the kingdom away from the line of Solomon—God has the power to do what He declares. Now, Jeroboam has a promise from God that he will be the start of a new dynasty. His role is simply to obey—taking God at His word. However, in 1 Kings 12:20-f we see Jeroboam default on his part of the relationship with God. He is worried about being able to hold onto his subjects, so rather than trust God to carry out what He has promised, he constructs idols and leads the northern kingdom into idolatry.

How often do we begin by trusting in God, only to shift our focus to the cares and concerns of this world? When we do, it causes us to be set aside in terms of accomplishing what God intends. However, we can *get back in the game* by confessing our unbelief for what it is—sin, and moving forward by building a reservoir of truth through the intake of the Word, and learning to steadfastly walk by faith in the truth we do hold. Let us encourage each other to do so at every opportunity!

**SO JEROBOAM ILLUSTRATES THE
DOUBLE-MINDED NATURE OF A FAITHLESS MAN!**

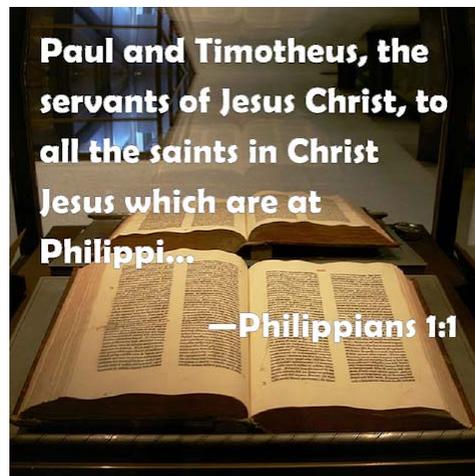
Lessons from Philippians

**Thursday, April 21: Read Philippians 1:1-18
Especially Note Philippians 1:1-8**

We can begin to see the “heartbeat” of Paul’s letter to the Church in Philippi, right in the very first verse, as Paul refers to both himself and Timothy as servants (slaves) of Christ Jesus. When Paul has to be tough with a congregation, he introduces himself via his office of “apostle” which most definitely carries the connotation of authority. Not so in this letter. Rather than present his credentials, he displays the attitude of his heart.

Paul continues his salutation by addressing the “saints” in Philippi. It is very important for us to understand this word. In its various forms you will also find it translated “holy,” and in either case, the word has three basic ideas associated with it:

- To be removed
- To be set apart
- To be dedicated to special use.



All of us have objects in our homes that meet this definition. For example, in my home, my wife has some special Danish china. This china has been removed from the cupboards where the rest of the dishes are kept. It has been set apart in its own special location—a china hutch. And it is dedicated to special use—for company on special occasions.

Lessons from Philippians

Thursday, April 21: Read Philippians 1:1-18
Especially Note Philippians 1:1-8 (Continued)

So what does Paul have in mind when he calls the believers in Philippi saints? There is some great application for us all, for this title doesn't apply to a special few, but to every single member of the family of God.

The believer in Christ has been:

- **Removed** from his or her standing among fallen humanity through his salvation.
- **Set apart** as children of God.
- **Dedicated** to the Lord's service. This is God's intent for every believer—something we will see shortly in Philippians 2:12-13.



Our standing as saints, ones set apart and holy unto God, is something that should be firmly in mind and affect our daily outlook—for it is our daily calling.

This passage in Philippians reminds us as we start the day that we have been removed from the world and are not to again become entangled in it. What's more, we are set apart for the Lord's service. For some days, that means that we are just working on the refinement of our character and dependence upon the Lord. For other days, the Lord has a specific work for us to do. In either event, we need to never lose sight of who we really are—saints of God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Lessons from Philippians

Friday, April 22: Read Ephesians 1

As we have seen in yesterday's study, the believer in Jesus Christ has a title—saint! We have this title because each and every believer is set apart unto God for His special purposes.

We can firm up this concept even further by looking at the believer's unassailable *position in Christ*. Consider just one supporting passage:

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. . .

Ephesians 2:4-6

Note carefully the three things that are called out by my underlines in this passage and that are true of every believer. Every believer in Christ is the following:

- Made alive
- Raised up
- Seated in the heavenly realms.

What's more, in each case, we have these things as part of a standing that is ours "in" or "with" Christ.

These aspects of the new life we have in Christ are often called positional truth. It is called this because, through faith in Christ, we have been given a position, or standing, in our Lord and Savior. It is this union with Christ which is the basis of our spiritual life and the "new creation" we are in Christ. This union is so complete and far-reaching, that we are even told to see ourselves associated with Christ at the right hand of the Father.

Lessons from Philipians

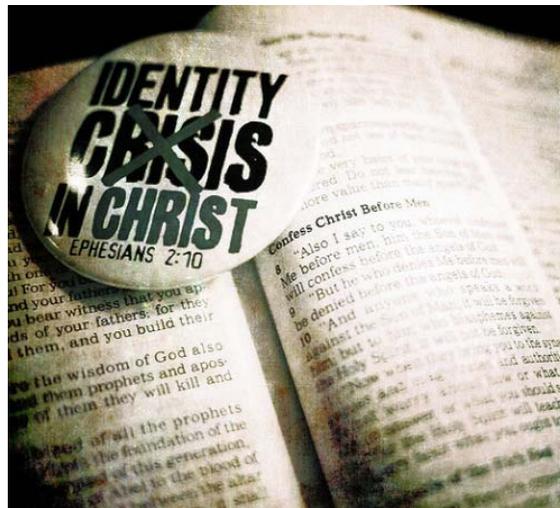
Friday, April 22: Read Ephesians 1 (Continued)

With this in mind, consider one natural application. Have you ever noticed how mightily the world seems to struggle with the concept of self-esteem? On the one hand, there are those who spend a lifetime struggling under a load of guilt and a low view of themselves. Then there are those who constantly display the need to elevate themselves by pushing down those around them. And we have all met individuals who have a grossly inflated view of self.

As the truth of who and what we are in Christ dawns in our consciousness, we realize how far off the mark is the thinking of the world around us.

For if you want to have the correct view of self, it is not about looking subjectively inward, but instead looking objectively outward toward Jesus Christ.

We should have a high and exalted view of Him, and He is the One in whom we find ourselves! Christ is the ultimately worthy one, and yet we find ourselves irrevocably connected to Him. There really isn't any room for a "Woe is me" or guilt-laden attitude in the Christian life, and our moment-by-moment position in Christ is the reason why.



Lessons from Philippians

Monday, April 25: Read I Peter 1

We are still working on the very first verse of Philippians where we have discovered that we are saints—those set apart unto God, by virtue of our union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Fortunately, we are drawing together what other parts of the Bible have to say on this topic—for example, consider these verses from I Peter:

According to the standard of holiness of Him who called you, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, "You will be holy as I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16 (my translation)

Now perhaps you are thinking, "Wait a minute, you have switched from *saint* to *holiness*!" Although they are quite different English words, the Greek word for each is basically the same, and carries the connotation of being set apart unto special service.

So when God declares the believer in Christ to be a saint, He has also called him to be holy. Now note that we are called to be holy, according to the standard of God's holiness. This is an impossible standard, and yet it is clearly declared to be God's ultimate end for each of His children. Furthermore, given the perfectly righteous nature of God and the fact He must condemn anything that falls short of His holy/righteous nature, just how is it that we are going to be able to stand before God?

If I focus on my personal failings, it doesn't take too long until I develop a certain sense of apprehension about my relationship with God—about how He views me and intends to interact with me.

Lessons from Philippians

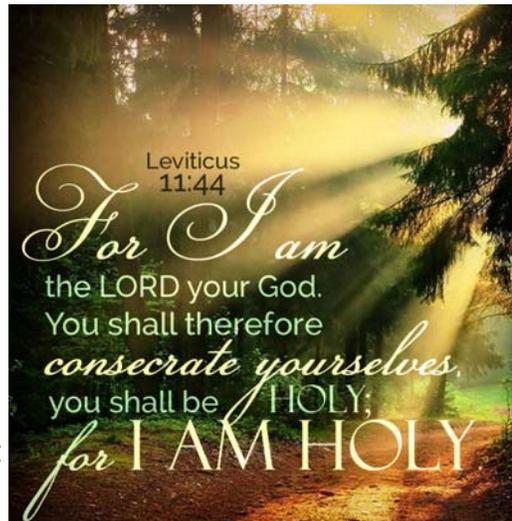
Monday, April 25: Read I Peter 1 (Continued)

Yet this is to forget my position in Christ. Verse 2 of the first chapter of Philippians will put us back on solid footing and clarify God's intent.

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

There is nothing else like Christianity. God has a very high calling for His followers, yet at the same time a provision for dealing with our shortcomings.

Let me just close by expounding on *grace and peace*. Peace carries the concept of wholeness of relationship. You see we were God's enemies, objects of His wrath. And yet, through the work of His Son, we can return to a wholeness of relationship with God that has always been His intent for mankind.



Grace is God providing to man what we desperately need, but do not deserve. We often think it just applies to the concept of salvation; but, ultimately, it applies to every need we have throughout the Christian Life.

Lessons from Philippians

Tuesday, April 26: Read Luke 23

(Note the thief crucified with Christ)

What exactly does it mean to have grace extended to you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ? (Philippians 1:2) To help reinforce the wonderful concept of grace, I would like to develop an illustration and then make application.

First, The Illustration

Let's investigate the believing thief who was crucified along with Jesus. (You can find a description in Luke 23:39-f.) I have a number of questions I would like you to consider regarding this individual:

- **What was his past?** He is presented to us as a criminal—in essence he doesn't have a past other than his connection to crime.
- **What was his present?** He was being crucified—suffering the ignominious death of a criminal.
- **What was his future?** He had none—his body destined to be thrown on a garbage heap and mauled by wild animals.
- **What did the thief deserve?** Punishment!
- **What did he realize about his ability to help himself?** There was nothing that he could do to address his situation. He was in a predicament in which he was absolutely helpless.
- **What did he realize about the Lord Jesus Christ?** He saw the Lord as able to act on his behalf. Look carefully at Lk 23:41-42. You can see that he recognized Jesus as innocent, divine and a king. Verse 43 makes it clear the thief had exercised saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lessons from Philippians

Tuesday, April 26: Read Luke 23 (Continued)
(Note the thief crucified with Christ)

Now, For the application:

In order to become a Christian, a member of God's family, we must have arrived at the point where we see ourselves in the place of the thief. For, as lost members of the human race, we are in exactly the same predicament. For we also had a past of no account before God: "for in Adam all die." As for our present, "we were dead in our trespasses and sins." And the future holds nothing but eternal separation from God in a place of unending suffering.

Now here is where much of the human race becomes confused. What can mankind do about their awful predicament, with respect to relationship with God? Why they can find enlightenment, follow the pillars, do good works—the works of religion go on and on. This is tantamount to telling the thief to address his needs by any of a hundred religious practices. The problem is, he was tied to the cross—completely helpless to do anything to help himself.

Christianity is absolutely unique, and I believe the sole source of truth with respect to an answer regarding our hopeless estate. On the one hand, we can do absolutely nothing to help ourselves. On the other hand, God has done everything to rescue and save us through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ! The work that God requires of us is to simply trust in what He has accomplished and provided (John 6:29). This is what grace looks like—God does all of the work, and we receive the blessing through faith. Here's the really hard part for most of us—grace also applies to the Christian Way of Life, that is, our call to holiness.

More on that in the next lesson.

Lessons from Philippians

Wednesday, April 27: Read Philippians 3
(Also note Philippians 1:3)

Verse 2 of the first chapter of Philippians declares the amazing truth that God's "points of contact" with His people are grace and peace. To better understand the concept of grace, we have been investigating the illustration of the believing thief on the cross in Luke 23:39-f. We have seen that the thief perfectly illustrates the lost spiritual condition of every member of the human race—a helpless and hopeless condition in which the individual is powerless to save himself; and instead is saved by accepting, by faith, the work of Jesus Christ on his or her behalf.

This is what we mean when we say God's plan of salvation is a grace-plan. But what about the believer in Jesus Christ? Does the illustration of grace associated with the thief still apply? It most certainly does, and for many, the grace basis of the Christian Way of Life is a much harder lesson to learn than its association with our salvation. Let me explain. With respect to the Christian Way of Life, we tend to think in the following terms:

- The resources we *bring to the table*
- The abilities and skills we possess
- The ability we have to *do our share*

After all, Christ died for us, the least we can do is to try and do our part! Listen, this might be a good way to present yourself at a job interview, but it is not God's plan for the Christian Way of Life. For His plan is a grace-based plan from start to finish.

Consider the following grace-based response to each of the above examples of our thinking:

- **The resources we *bring to the table*.** We bring nothing of consequence! In and of ourselves, we are not

Lessons from Philippians

Wednesday, April 27: Read Philippians 3
(Also note Philippians 1:3) (Continued)

inherently spiritual, we do not have the power to follow through on the things we decide to do, and we do not have the ability to *reason* our way to God's will. On the other hand, if we take a grace approach, we realize we are needy and look to the provision of God. If we do, we will find that He has given His children a new life (Romans 6:4), the enablement and empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6), and guidance via the enduring Word of Truth (II Timothy 3:16-17).

- **The abilities and skills we possess.** Any skill or ability can be used for either spiritual or carnal purposes. So first, we are to present our bodies to God as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1-2). Then as we abide in the vine that is Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will produce fruit through us (John 15:4-9, Galatians 5:23-f). Fruit is a natural result of abiding in the vine, of occupation with Christ so that the new life can work in and through us.
- **The ability to *do our share*.** The Christian Way of Life is not a division of labor. Rather it is about a needy servant coming to his or her gracious Lord (II Corinthians 12:9-f). Our God can then do great things through those who come to Him (Philippians 4:13).

Study the Scriptures listed above and II Peter 3:18 and I John 5:4. They show us that when we are weak and powerless, God has us right where He wants us! That is the place where we are forced to turn from our own skills and abilities and depend upon Him. When we do so, His power will be manifest right in the midst of, and in spite of, our weaknesses. This is what grace is all about. This is what gives testimony to the greatness and love of God and thereby brings glory to Him.

Lessons from Philippians

Thursday, April 28: Read Philippians 4
Highlight Verse 13

In our last few lessons, we have been investigating the grace of God as it relates to both our salvation and the Christian Way of Life. If it truly is a grace plan, then the Christian Way of Life is not about what we bring by way of talents, effort, and so on. But rather, it is about what God provides. For what we *bring to the table* pales to insignificance in comparison to the provision of God— a new life, the enablement of the Spirit, and the enduring Word of God. By this point, you are no doubt ready to ask, “What then do we do? What are our obligations?”

These, of course, are important questions. The Jews asked our Lord this very same question in John 6:29, and Jesus answered:

*“The work of God is this: to believe
in the One He has sent.”*

When Jesus tells them to believe (exercise faith), He is not telling them to do a work. Rather, He provides what must have been a shocking answer to their question. In essence, He is telling them the work that God requires is not a work at all. Instead, it is to trust, and that trust must begin by trusting in the Savior! Let me give you a simple model of God’s plan for the Christian Way of Life that focuses not on works, but on a faith-response to God.

First, we are directed in II Peter 3:18 to “grow in grace and knowledge.” We grow in knowledge through the study of the Word of God. To do so we must choose to study the Word, sit under teaching, and meditate upon it.

Lessons from Philippians

Thursday, April 28: Read Philippians 4
Highlight Verse 13 (Continued)

Perhaps you are thinking, “Finally, here is something that I have to do!” It is true, you will be “doing”, but let me show you how this remains in the realm of grace, and at its core is a faith response on our part.

We have been taught the Word is “God-breathed” as well as alive and powerful. We have been taught the Word is the very mind of Christ and will never pass away. Are we going to trust this to be so, and as a result choose to “hide the Word in our heart that we might not sin against thee”? Most importantly of all, we have been given a teacher to “lead us into all truth” that is the truths of the Word of God. Can’t this best be described as God provides (His Word and His Spirit), and we respond? That would make the growth of the believer a grace provision of God.

So what’s up with the Nike athletic shoe?

I John 5:4 is a very important verse in terms of establishing the role of the believer in the plan of God.

The previous verses we have studied lay out the requirement for us to obey the commands of God as well as the fact that the Child of God has overcome the world. Sounds like a pretty tall order. However, I John 5:4 makes clear the means by which we accomplish what God requires.



*This is the victory that has overcome
the world, even our faith.*

The Greek word for victory is “nike.”

Lessons from Philippians

Thursday, April 28: Read Philippians 4
Highlight Verse 13 (Continued)

When all is said and done, the requirement for the believer is to depend upon God, for Jesus Christ is the victor and He has already won the victory. Ours is to depend upon Him—through thick and thin.

And lest you think the emphasis is on the *strength* of our faith, let me give you an illustration from the Old Testament. Shortly after the Israelites left Egypt, they came under attack by the Amalekites (Exodus 17). While Joshua led a group in counterattack, Moses overlooked the battle holding his arms and staff toward heaven. This is analogous to us coming in contact with the promises in God's Word and trusting in them.



However, as the battle wore on, Moses arms grew fatigued and started to drop. As they did so, the Israelites began to lose the battle. So Aaron and Hur came alongside Moses and held his arms high and steady. As they did so, the Israelites began again to become victorious. This is to teach us that although we may start off well in terms of trusting the promises of God, the circumstances and attacks of this world may cause our faith to waiver. It is essential for us to know that the Christian Way of Life is not about our strength—not even the strength of our faith! For we are to keep our eyes on the Lord and through His Spirit He will come alongside and strengthen and buttress our faith in the face of every difficulty.

Lessons from Philippians

Friday, April 29: Read Philippians 1

Today's Scripture is a glimpse into Paul's heart, and is in keeping with the purposes for which God has preserved this letter. Consider these few things we can observe:

- Paul is in regular prayer for those with whom he shares a spiritual bond.
- Remembrance of those with whom Paul had fellowship caused thanksgiving to God and prayers of joy.
- Paul's bond with the Philippians is based on shared ministry.
- The sharing of ministry results in affections of the heart.

Paul's tenderness of heart toward those with whom he has shared ministry is readily evident, and provides a great example for us. Consider just a few points of application:

- Sharing in ministry leads to intimacy of relationship, which can lead to genuine friendship. We sometimes turn this around and focus on our desire for friendship, but it is really most appropriately an effect. Ministry (service) as unto the Lord is the *cause* while the *effect* is the building of intimate relationships.
- Now ministry within a body of believers is bound to lead to a bit of *friction*. How should we respond to this? This passage presents an excellent starting point. Start by going to the Lord in prayer and *thanking* him for others—especially those with whom we might be having trouble. This shifts our preoccupation with self to an appreciation for others and their place in the body of Christ. This can turn friction to *joy* as we pray for those with whom we partner in ministry.

As we look further (Philippians 1: 9-f), we find a model regarding the further content of prayer on behalf of others. The way we think about others in the fellowship of believers and the way we handle the beginnings of conflict is an excellent way to test whether the truth we have learned and the life of Christ are working within our lives!

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

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