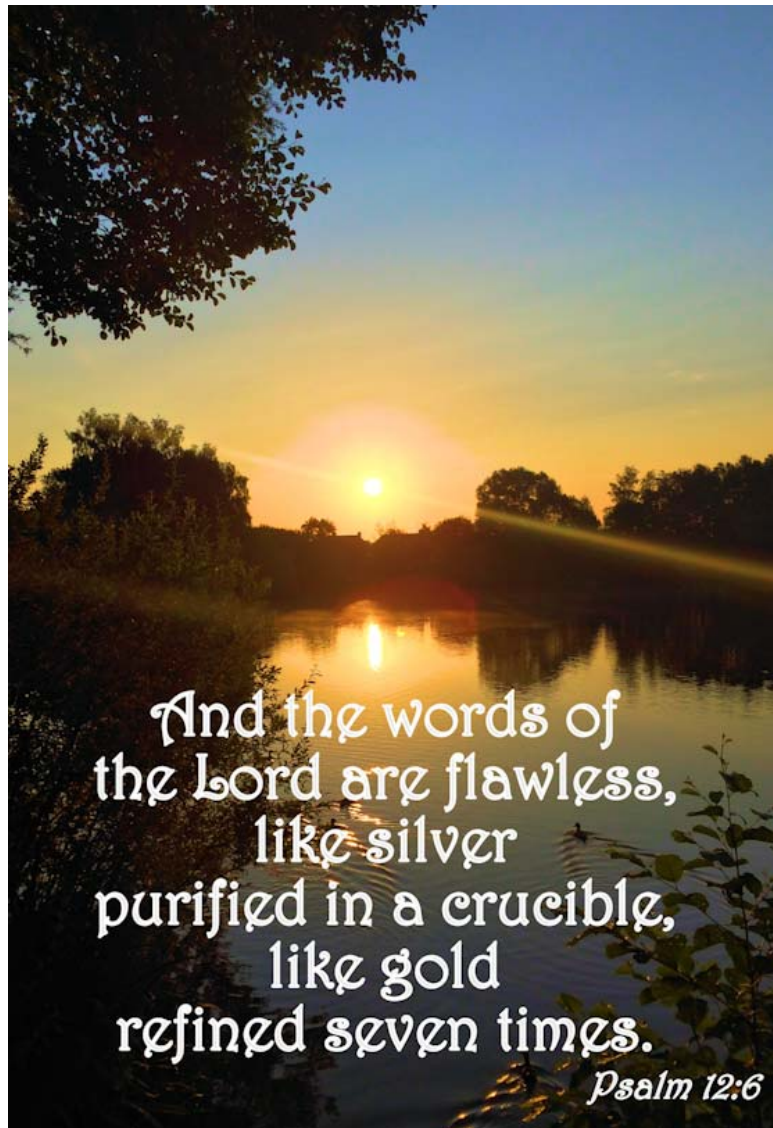


Daily Devotional

March 2016



And the words of
the Lord are flawless,
like silver
purified in a crucible,
like gold
refined seven times.

Psalm 12:6

Foreword

If you are continuing to get into God's Word each day as we begin our third month—praise God for your faithfulness to study His Word!

We will spend our time this month in three different ways. We will begin by continuing our study of the book of Exodus. From there we will spend some time going through a selection from the book of Psalms. And finally, we will spend a week of readings in preparation for the celebration of Easter.

I trust you will continue to be blessed by spending time in the Word personally, and be encouraged to do so by knowing that many others within our fellowship are doing exactly the same thing.

In His grace,



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

Kevin Redig

Introducing Exodus

Tuesday, March 1: Read Exodus 15

What a contrast between Moses' recognition of his shortcomings in Exodus 3 and the song celebrating the Lord's victory in Exodus 15! What can we learn?

First, we need to recognize the difference between the plans of man versus the plans of God. The plans of man, at best, produce a "cloud of dust" as evidenced in the actions of a self-directed Moses. On the other hand, the plans of God result in a God-honoring glorious and complete success. (Exodus 14-15) Let me reinforce this further with just a few of the abundant passages of Scripture that support this principle.

"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the Lord, to those who carry out plans that are not mine. Isaiah 30:1

This is what the Lord says, "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength. . ." Jeremiah 17:5

"Apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Second, as we realize the limitations of our own abilities, we are right where God wants us! Ready to consider His plans as the first option—both personally and corporately (within a church fellowship). Or stated another way, ready to turn and *tap* the limitless resources of God, rather than trust in our own strength. *Older Is Better* is something every one of us can learn as we mature in the Lord—Moses did!

And third, could this mean there are victories yet in store for us no matter what our stage of life? If you have begun to think you are too far past your *prime* then you have forgotten who really accomplishes things in the Christian Life!

"Was My arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert. . ." Isaiah 50:2

Introducing Exodus

Wednesday, March 2: Read Isaiah 66

(Highlight Verse 2)

Turning from self-dependence to dependence upon the Lord doesn't come easily, so I would like to reinforce this principle for another few days. Consider the following:

1. **God seems more inclined to use those who are humble and meek, than aggressive go-getters!** (I am thinking of Moses at age 80 rather than at age 40.) Why do you think this might be the case? Could it be that the humble are more likely to depend upon God and give Him the credit for results that are achieved? Is this concept Biblical? Consider the following:

"This is the one I esteem; he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." Isaiah 66:2

*God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
James 4:6*

2. **When I think of humility and meekness, I immediately think of its application to the ministry.** For example, as the body of Christ in our local geographic region, do our efforts at outreach and discipleship begin with a time of repentance? They need to! In this context I am thinking of how easy it is to plan things from man's perspective and in our own power and forget the principle of Psalm 127:1:

Unless the Lord builds the house, the laborers labor in vain!

Thus in humility we need to seek His guidance first! Along the same lines, but at a deeper level of application—it is so essential to do things God's way and in His timing. For the fact stands that although the Lord will not yield His glory to another (Isaiah 48:11); He most certainly is willing and desirous of reflecting it in His people! (II Corinthians 3:18)

Introducing Exodus

Thursday, March 3: Read Philippians 2

(Highlight Verses 12-13)

Continuing from yesterday's devotion, a third and final point of application regarding turning from self-dependence to dependence upon the Lord.

3. The "call" of God and the grace provision of God seem to go hand in hand. When we head out on our own, sometimes there is nothing left to do but to "flee to Midian!" On the other hand, if we are walking with the Lord and allowing Him to work through us, look at what the Scriptures say can occur:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13

And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

"My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

... His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10



Continued on the next page

Introducing Exodus

Thursday, March 3: Read Philippians 2 (continued)
(Highlight Verses 12-13)

So, in reality, there is an important balance for us to strike: Zeal without the Spirit of God is fruitless. On the other hand, despondency is to doubt the ability of God. Look at how the two fit together in Philippians 2:12-13:

. . .continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

We have spent 30 days looking closely at the book of Exodus and we'll be back to Exodus later in the year.

Before we move on, consider the glorious picture of who we are as a church body:

- Sinners saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8)
- Wise enough to know it is not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit sayeth the Lord (Zechariah 4:6)
- Manifesting humility and meekness as we maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)



Spending Time in Psalms

Friday, March 4: Read Psalm 1

Did you notice the contrasts? Psalm 1 is built on them. As is so often the case in Scripture, it comes down to two alternatives: the way of the wicked or the way of the righteous. And so naturally, from God's perspective, the man who avoids the snares of the wicked will be blessed—that is the message of Verse 1. Furthermore, the alternative is so clearly laid out. To even dabble in the affairs of evil is to risk bringing your life to a grinding halt.

Look carefully at how Verse 1 describes a life slowly winding down.

- First, to *walk in the way of the wicked*. This is to expose oneself to their way of thinking, to hang out with them, to give tacit approval.
- The next step is to *stand in the way of sinners*. This is to do what they do—to enjoy the wages of sin for a time.
- And then finally, to *sit in the seat of the mocker*. This is to become hardened by sin. To begin to mock those who try to live uprightly before God.

This Psalm wants us to keep as far away from this downward cycle as possible, and it promises we will be blessed if we do so. Now you might expect the psalmist to have an alternative list as the way the righteous should walk. Instead, it lists just one thing, because it is more important than anything else we can do—and that is to delight oneself in the law of the Lord! If we do, instead of eventually reaching the dead-end existence of the mocker, there is the marvelous alternative of being like a strong and flourishing tree—one that is well-watered, yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Every now and then, it is a very healthy practice, to bring this Psalm to the Lord and ask, “Lord, how am I doing?”

Spending Time in Psalms

Monday, March 7: Read Psalm 2

I find Psalm 2 to be like a fresh ocean breeze that clears the mind and sharpens the senses. I say that because sometimes I get caught up in the evil that seems to almost be growing by the day. It really does seem like the nations have conspired against God (Verse 1), and society has taken a stand against God and against the loving work of our Savior (Verses 2-3). Oh, what are we to do?

From time to time I seem to forget—it is not the nations of this earth that sit on the throne of this universe, but God Himself! And Verse 4 reminds me that He just laughs at the threat to His plans posed by man.

For He has issued a decree (Verse 7): the Lord Jesus Christ is going to rule over this world as King of kings and Lord of lords from one end of the earth to another, and His rule is going to be firm and just. The rulers and people of this earth have been put on notice (Verse 10), and now we know how to pray:

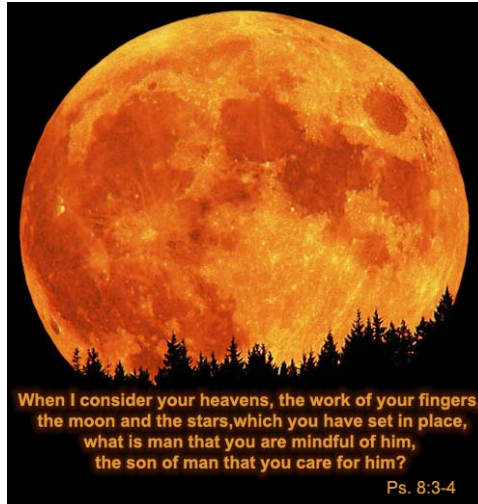
*O Lord, I pray that the people of our land would serve the Lord with the true Fear of the Lord, that they would respond to the person and work of Jesus Christ.
For Lord, if we do not take refuge in Him—there is nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment.
Lord, use me to hold out the truth to the people You bring my way. Let me not be discouraged by the hardness of hearts, but instead take comfort in Your sovereignty and Your power to set wrongs to right.
In the meantime, help me to be used to bring one more soul into Your Kingdom.
Amen!*

Spending Time in Psalms

Tuesday, March 8: Read Psalm 8

This is a great psalm of praise, of which there are many. Note the attribution of creative acts to God in Verse 3. Genesis is not the only place that clearly declares that God is Creator.

And when we consider the scope of our universe, and all that was necessary to create at that level of magnitude, the psalmist asks a very pertinent question in Verse 4. What is man that You are mindful of him?



Man is less than the heavenly beings, yet God has crowned man with glory and honor. We might ask, what is it that has caused God to go to the lengths He has to redeem man from his lost condition? That answer is back in Genesis 1:27. God fashioned mankind in His own image and likeness. This is something that is never said of the angels. As a result, what other response is there than that of the psalmist in the closing verse:

*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is
your name in all the earth!"*

This is a worthwhile psalm to meditate upon periodically throughout the year!

Spending Time in Psalms

Wednesday, March 9: Read Psalm 18

Psalm 18 is not only written by David, it is filled with references to the kinds of events and situations that would only be faced by someone in his shoes—a national leader with many enemies. Even though I am not in David's position; nonetheless, I love Psalm 18 because I can identify so many of the *echoes* of my own life that remind me of God's faithfulness. I'll bet, if you look closely, you can too. Let me show you.

- **Verse 2:** There is one rock, one refuge, to which we can always turn and that is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- **Verses 4-6:** I suspect we (or someone in our family) have faced some difficult circumstances that overwhelmed our own ability to manage the situation. In our desperation, we called out to the Lord—and He answered! He reached down and drew us out of deep waters (Verse 16). Oh, that we would learn to turn to the Lord as a first recourse and not a last option.
- **Verse 30:** As we turn to God's word, He gives us the strength to accomplish all that He desires (Verses 32-35), no matter whether it is the work of a king or just you and me going about the Lord's work in our time and place. The Lord may not have subdued nations under our feet (Verse 47), but He has been more than willing and more than able to see us through the difficulties of our lives. He has helped us overcome every obstacle, and brought us to the place of resting in Him—for He shows unfailing kindness to His anointed (Verse 50). And all God's people said, "Amen!"



Spending Time in Psalms

Thursday, March 10: Read Psalm 19

It has become quite common for Christians in our day to take the position, “Oh yes, I believe what the Bible says!” Then at the same time to express a position on origins that go something like this, “You can’t expect anyone in this day and age to take the creation account in Genesis literally!” I know why people hold this position—the pressure from universally skeptical academia. But I am not sure how many people realize the incoherence of this position, and God really challenges it in the 19th Psalm.

Let’s start with the second half of the Psalm beginning in Verse 7. So you agree that the “Law of the Lord” is perfect and able to revive the soul, that His statutes are trustworthy, and His ordinances are sure and altogether righteous? All of these terms—statutes, ordinances, law, precepts—collectively refer to the Word of God. And the descriptions of God’s word are very emphatic: it is perfect, life-giving, trustworthy, enduring, certain. Now that that is settled—take a look at Verse 1. The heavens not only declare His glory, but they are the work of His hands. Not only that, they do so to every corner of this earth and to every language group—day after day and night after night.

Psalm 33 tells us that God commanded this universe to be formed—it was—and then He told it to stand firm. Psalm 147 says He calls each star by name. Psalm 139 declares His creative acts are not just on the heavenly scale, but the human scale as well. You cannot reject God as Creator without disbelieving the Word of God; and you cannot believe the Word of God without believing that God is capable of the great creative acts that declare themselves to us day after day after day. May, as the closing verse of this Psalm suggests, our thoughts and words on this subject be pleasing in God’s sight.

Spending Time in Psalms

Friday, March 11: Read Psalm 20

I think of Psalm 20 as an Old Testament version of I Thessalonians 5:17. I say that because of all the different ways the psalmist suggests we make supplication to God: when you are in distress, when you need protection, when you need help, as part of worship, and with respect to your plans and desires.

This really is the point of the New Testament guidance to pray continually. It is not that we are to walk around, oblivious to our surroundings, and somehow in constant prayer, it is that we are to bring everything to the Lord. We are to develop a dependent attitude—dependence upon Him and His ability to provide.

When we get bad news, the first thing we should do is pause for a moment and take it to the Lord. When we really are anxious about something—same thing. When our heart goes out to a family member or acquaintance—stop and pray for them. And of course, when blessing comes into our life—give Him thanks!

Why would we want to be so intentional about doing this? Back to the Old Testament and Verse 7 of our psalm:

*"Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."*

According to Verse 8, this is what will cause us to stand firm. Praise God that He is an ever-present help in time of trouble! (Psalm 46:1)



“Be joyful always;
pray continually;
give thanks in all
circumstances, for this
is GOD’s will for you
in CHRIST JESUS.”

~ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Spending Time in Psalms

Monday, March 14: Read Psalm 23

Could any reading of selected psalms be complete without the 23rd Psalm? Spend a few minutes meditating upon the Psalm, and then let me show you how it connects to the New Testament.

- ***“The Lord is my shepherd”***—in truth Jesus is the one *Good Shepherd!* (John 10:11)



Spending Time in Psalms

Monday, March 14: Read Psalm 23 (continued)

- ***“I shall not be in want”*** — of course not, for
“. . . how will He who did not spare His own Son. . . not . . . graciously, give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)
- ***“He makes me lie down in green pastures. . . leads me beside still waters”*** —
“Come to Me, you all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. . .” (Matthew 11:28)
- ***“He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”*** —
“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Romans 3:2)
- ***“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”*** —
“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)
- ***“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”***—
“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. . . in all these things we are more than conquerors. . .”
(Romans 8:35-37)
- ***“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life”*** —
“Christ in you the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27)
- ***“and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.”***
“Do not let your hearts be troubled. . . I go and prepare a place for you.” (John 14:1-3)

Do you see? Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd, and we can know Him personally in a way that exceeds the imagery of even this beloved psalm. For behind the written Word of God is the Living Word, and He calls us to “abide in Him.”

Spending Time in Psalms

Tuesday, March 15: Read Psalm 25

Have you noticed how often the psalms just cause you to pause and meditate upon your own life and walk with the Lord? Psalm 25 is a perfect example. It prompts us to reflect upon a number of recurring themes.

First, our obligation to trust God:

To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in You I trust. . .
(Verse 1)

No one whose hope is in You will ever be put to shame. . .
(Verse 3)

*".. for You are God my savior, and my hope
is in You all day long." (Verse 5)*

Second, the psalm prompts us to consider the issue of sin in our lives. We should know that Christ paid the debt for all of our sins, that we can confess them and be cleansed, but we have to be willing to turn from them (repent) and confess. This psalm helps remind us to do so:

*Remember not the sins of my youth and
my rebellious ways (Verse 6)*

*Good and upright is the Lord, therefore
He instructs sinners in His ways (Verse 8)*

*For the sake of Your name, O Lord, forgive my
iniquity, though it is great. (Verse 11)*

Spending Time in Psalms

Tuesday, March 15: Read Psalm 25 (continued)

And finally, the psalm speaks of the blessings God bestows on those who Fear the Lord. Remember, we have learned this means to have a Biblical recognition of who He is and deep reverence or respect for what He is like, both of which prompt obedience to Him:

Who, then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. (Verse 12)

The Lord confides in those who fear Him. . .(Verse 14)

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way. (Verse 9)

You can find other patterns, but what a powerful mediation for the day: the call and blessings to trust in Almighty God; His provision to cleanse us from all sin; and the blessings He pours upon those who walk in the Fear of the Lord.



Spending Time in Psalms

Wednesday, March 16: Read Psalm 27

Several years ago I taught a message entitled “The One Thing.” It focused on “the one thing” that we need to make sure is a part of our spiritual life, and was an application of Jesus himself saying,

“ . . . you are upset and worried about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better. . . ” Luke 10:41-42

And in the context, Mary had chosen to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to what He had to say—this is the one thing we all need to find time to do. Did you notice that Psalm 27 is a reinforcement of this very same “one thing” principle?

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple. Psalm 27:4

So David considers “dwelling in the house of the Lord,” “gazing upon His beauty” and “seeking Him” to all be part of that one thing. What do you suppose He is saying? I don’t think he physically wants to live in the temple—but rather, to be where God is—in His presence, or as John describes it, in fellowship with Him. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord is to know Him—in particular to know what He is like. To have the veil of our unbelief removed that we might see Him as He really is. And lastly, to “seek Him” is to set our hearts upon Him.

To fix our eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 12:1

To know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him. . . .” Philippians 3:10-11

Should we not be asking God the same “one thing” that David did?

Spending Time in Psalms

Thursday, March 17: Read Psalm 32

The subject matter of Psalm 32 is sin, and it powerfully addresses our need to confess sin and remain in fellowship with our heavenly Father. David uses himself as an example—probably with respect to his adultery with Bathsheba and the additional sins that followed.

After an initial reading of the entire psalm, begin again in Verse 3. David is describing the internal stress that comes from being under the control of the sinful nature. Verse 4 adds to it the pressure that God can apply in order to bring us to the point of repentance. In Verse 5 David has finally come to the point that he acknowledges his sin to God. God—as He always does when we turn to Him (repent) and confess our sin (agree with Him about how our thoughts, words, or deeds have *missed the mark*)—forgives us. What is the outcome—not only forgiveness, but the testimony that each of us needs to be able to give virtually every hour of the day:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. Verses 1-2

Notice, it doesn't say that we have no sin, but rather that they are forgiven. It also adds blessing for the one in whose spirit is no deceit. I take that to be the one who makes no effort to get away with sin or to cover it up, but instead takes God's side on the matter of sin every time he or she is convicted by the Holy Spirit. How is this grace to us possible? As New Testament Christians, the answer is straightforward for our sins were poured out on Christ while He was on the cross (1 Peter 2:24) and He was judged for them. Therefore, when we acknowledge those sins to God, He can apply the work of the cross and thereby cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Where would we be without the cross?

Spending Time in Psalms

Friday, March 18: Read Psalm 33

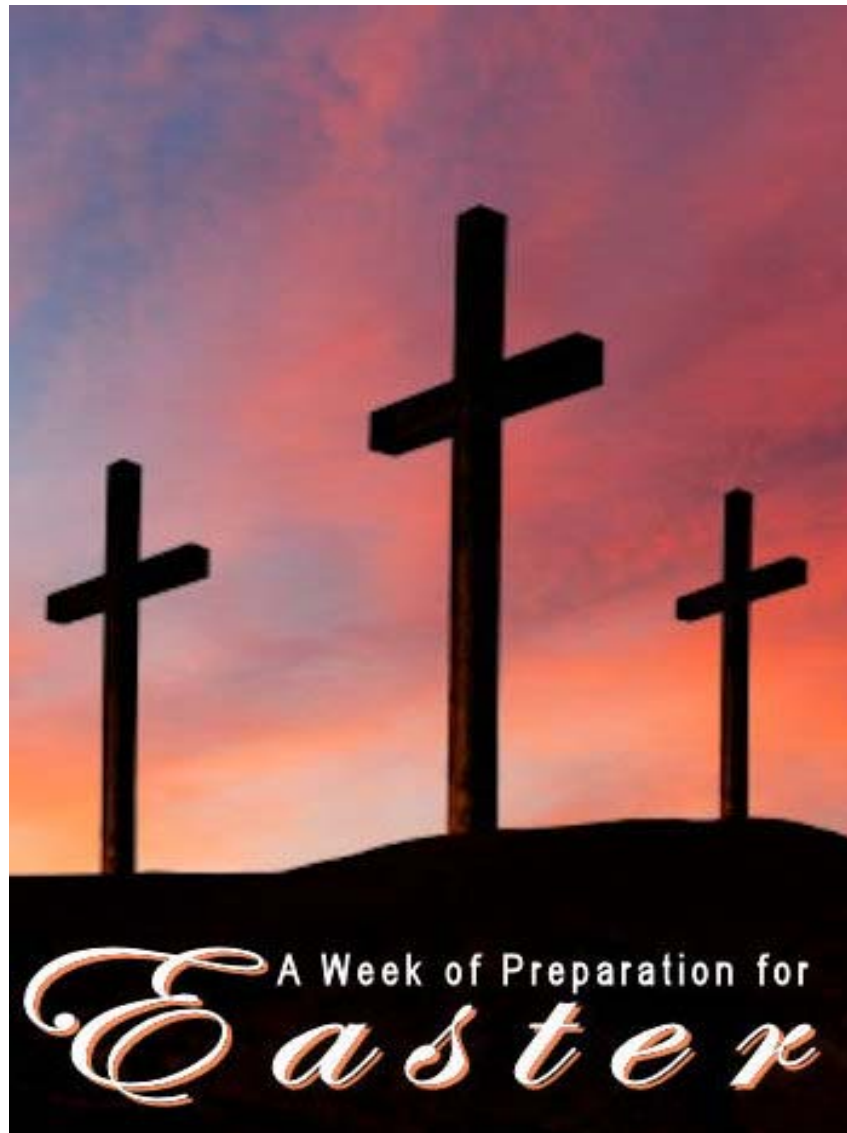
How often do you find yourself saying, “This is one of my favorite psalms!” I know I say that regularly and that is because the psalms so beautifully capture truth in a way that speaks to the soul. Take Psalm 33 for example: It begins with a call to praise the Lord and sing joyfully to Him. And then it systematically provides the reasons why we should do so. He has given us His Word—which is right and a refuge of truth. All His interactions with us are faithful. The earth bears witness to His unfailing love.

Then the psalm moves on to His limitless capability: He spoke the physical universe into being, and by His command it stands firm. 2 Peter, Chapter 3 tells us that in some future day this command will be revoked and this earth will literally dissolve in intense heat. And, of course, if God can speak the universe into being, it is no harder for Him to manipulate the machinations of men while His plans alone stand firm.

It is no wonder the psalmist says, “Blessed” is the nation whose God is the Lord—the nation who aligns itself with this kind of God. Then the psalmist concludes by making it very personal—it is not the size of the army, the strength of the warrior, or the speed of a horse that saves a man. It is the Lord who delivers those who fear Him. He delivers those who have a clear understanding of the reverence due a God who can speak this universe into being and command it to stand firm. He delivers those who respect the capability of a God who can reach into any set of circumstances and deliver all those who respond in obedience.

If this kind of God is your help and shield, then you are saved indeed.

Let us trust in His holy name and let His unfailing love rest upon us!



During this coming week, we will have a devotion each day that helps us focus upon the message and meaning of Easter. Then, when this week is completed, I ask you to spend some time over Easter weekend reading the narrative surrounding the Resurrection. You can find this narrative in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.

Preparation for Easter

Monday, March 21: Read Psalm 16

The text of Scripture makes it clear that David wrote this psalm. It has much value for us as a model from which we can give thanks and express our dependence and praise. For today's meditation, I want to draw your attention to Verse 8, where a change occurs. I drew your attention to David as the author because he begins to speak prophetically in Verse 8 and the verses that follow.

How can we know this? Look at Verse 10. Did David die and did his body decay? Absolutely! So is Verse 10 simply untrue, or is it speaking of someone else? David is speaking of One who also has a special place at the right hand of the Father. David is speaking prophetically of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in doing so, is speaking of the resurrection. For although Jesus died physically and spiritually as part of providing payment for our sins—His body did not “see decay.” The bodies of Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, and all the rest have returned to the *dust* from which they were made—but not so the body of Jesus Christ. For He:

*...was declared with power to be the Son of God
by His resurrection from the dead:
Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 1:4*

Not only that, God has said to Him,

*“Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies
a footstool for Your feet.” Hebrew 1:13*

Make no mistake about it! The Lord Jesus Christ stands in contrast to every other religious leader of all time--for only He is the Son of God. And God has been declaring His special role to us, by means of the resurrection, down through the centuries. We celebrate God's plan of redemption and we honor the Lord Jesus Christ as we celebrate Easter.

Preparation for Easter

Tuesday, March 22: Read I Timothy 2

As our church calendar leads us to a time of remembering the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, this second chapter of I Timothy reminds us of a number of things. First, Verse 1 reminds us of the importance of prayer—and its scope is very broad. Did you note the direction to pray for those in authority--this is a particularly important point for us to remember in our day. If nothing else, pray for their salvation, their families and their discernment in leadership.

Second, does not Verse 4 make clear the heart of our Savior? Just who is it that He wants to be saved? All men! We certainly need to know that this is a possibility as we pray for others. And third, the reason to consider this passage prior to Easter—there is one mediator between God and men, and it is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider these things:

- This mediator is between God and mankind. Who would be qualified for such a role? Only one who could represent both parties. Why that would mean they would need to be both Divine and human. Exactly! And that is who Jesus is—eternal God who took on humanity during His First Advent.
- This is why He is the one mediator. For no one else meets these qualifications only the Lord Jesus Christ.
- How did He mediate? Look at Verse 6—He gave Himself as the ransom for many. When He died on the cross, He received in Himself the judgment for sin that was really ours. In doing so, He paid our “ransom” and, therefore, for those who will trust in Him there is a release from the “slave market of sin,” and an ushering into the freedom that is ours as “new creatures” in Christ.

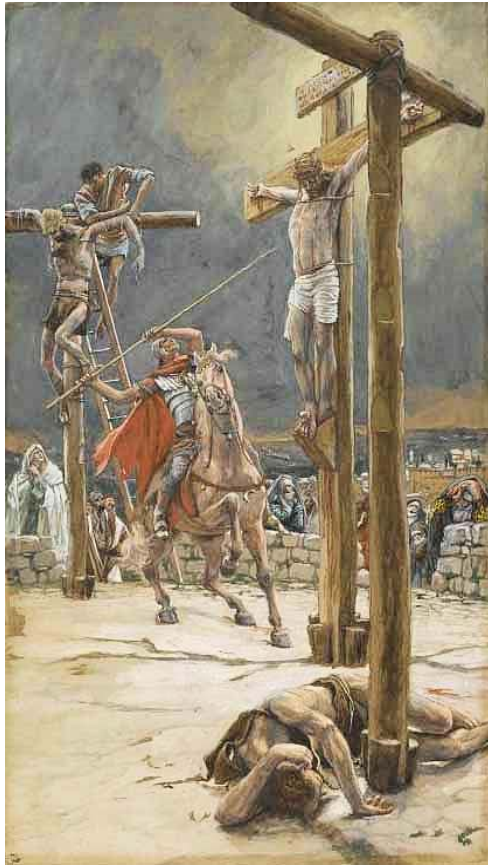
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Preparation for Easter

Wednesday, March 23: Read Psalm 16

Just enjoy reading through the prophetic 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Then look more carefully at this Psalm and make all of the connections with events that were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Consider these connections and the New Testament verses that corroborate Isaiah's prophecies as examples for your study:

- **Verse 3:** Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ was rejected by the religious establishment.
- **Verse 4:** Jesus Himself bore our sins while on the cross. (1 Peter 2:24)
- **Verse 4:** The Jews considered Jesus' crucifixion as punishment by God for His sins and heaped insults on Him while He was dying for our sins. (Luke 23:35)
- **Verse 5:** He was pierced when the soldier ran a spear through His side as part of the crucifixion. (John 19:34)



Preparation for Easter

Wednesday, March 23: Read Psalm 16 (Continued)

- **Verse 5:** We got peace with God and Jesus got our punishment. (Romans 5:1)
- **Verse 6:** We are reminded that none of us is righteous, no not one! (Romans 3:10)
- **Verse 7:** Jesus did not open His mouth to defend Himself before the Sanhedrin and during His illegal trial. (Mark 14:61)
- **Verse 8:** He was cut off from the land of the living by His death. And by His wounds we are healed. (I Peter 2:24)
- **Verse 9:** He was assigned a grave with the wicked and the rich—how could that be? As a crucified criminal He would have been thrown into Gehenna and burned, but instead Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, placed Him in his own grave.
- **Verse 12:** Jesus will indeed be given a portion among the great as the returning King of kings and Lord of lords.
- **Verse 12:** Again—Jesus bore the sin of the entire human race.

And there are many more prophecies in this chapter that I glossed over. What an absolutely phenomenal chapter. How could anyone, especially a devout Jew, miss the literal fulfillment? The answer, developed elsewhere, is hardness of heart—unbelief!

Praise God the Spirit still convicts hearts and “removes the veil.”

Preparation for Easter

Thursday, March 24: Read Romans 1

As part of our meditations leading up to Easter, I would like to focus today on Romans 1:1-6. Did you note in Verse 1 that Paul was set apart for the Gospel? You and I as believers are set apart as well—for we have been given a *Great Commission* to go and make disciples. In fact, every believer is an ambassador for Christ—holding out a very important message to a lost and dying world! (II Corinthians 5:20).

Read on to Verse 2. As we have seen, the Gospel was not an afterthought with God, nor was it *Plan B*. God promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior after they had sinned, and in the fullness of time He sent His Son to go to the cross on our behalf. (Hebrews 1:2)

As pointed out earlier this week, Verse 3 is perhaps the most important of all. We serve a risen Savior, one who promises to prepare a place for us and to come and take us to Himself so that where He is, we may be also. (John 14:1-3) So which is it: the claims of a dead prophet or the promises of a risen Savior? I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day! (II Timothy 1:12)

In Verse 5 we are once again reminded of our responsibility to spread the Gospel in such a way that the call to obedience through faith is clear. And did you notice? We do this not in the power of the flesh, but through the enablement that comes from Christ and for His glory (His name's sake). Pray to God that our motivation would be pure. And brother or sister, if you have placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ then, according to Verse 6, you are of those who down through the centuries have become part of the "called", that is "the elect" of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Praise God for His great plan of redemption that would allow such as us to be His elect!

Preparation for Easter

Friday, March 25: Read John 19

You will recognize that some of the prophetic claims of Isaiah 53 are fulfilled right here in John 19. In fact, there is much rich detail and much other fulfilled prophecy in this chapter—compare John 19:24 with Psalm 22:18 as just one example of many. I would like us to consider more deeply, just one verse, Verse 30. Note, first of all, that Jesus' work on the cross was finished while He was still alive, for He declared it to be so! And only after it was finished, after the purpose for which He came had been accomplished, did He simply dismiss His spirit from His physical body.

Second, the words translated "It is finished" is one word in Greek—the word *teleo*. It means to finish, to bring to a close, to discharge a debt, or to accomplish. This is a cry of victory from Christ for He has concluded the work that the Father had given Him. His soon resurrection will bear witness to heaven and earth that the Father has found the work of the Son to be completely satisfactory in terms of paying in full the debt of sin that separates man from God. In that regard, Christ is crying out "Paid in Full" as He triumphs over the issue of sin.

Furthermore, this verb is in the perfect tense and the passive voice. The perfect tense is used for a verb when the action happened in the past and the results continue right up to the present time. For the work of Christ happened on the cross 2000 years ago and yet the results, the sin debt completely discharged, continue right up until our day and covers our sins. The passive voice means that the subject (the Father's great work of redemption) receives the action of the verb. Sins were poured onto Christ—they were judged by the Father when He turned His back on His Son. And now the work is done—salvation is available in Jesus Christ. What a Savior!

A Return to Revival

Monday, March 28: Read Joshua 3

I like the idea of periodically revisiting the topic of revival. For it is a topic that we cannot revisit too often and a goal against which we should continually measure our lives. And what a perfect way to follow up Easter and its focus on new life. For here is the definition of revival that we have developed by studying it within the Scriptures:

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

I remind you that revival is something that is personal, daily, and meant to be perpetuated through time. And as it occurs—it encourages others with whom we fellowship to also pursue a similar condition of flourishing spiritually so that we are on our way to having a vital fellowship of believers who are able to impact their surroundings for Christ.

So now is a good time to take a look at yourself as we close out our Easter remembrance, and ask, "Am I flourishing spiritually? Am I adding in the One True Vine?" As we read about the Jews preparing to cross the Jordan and into the Promised Land, we can ask ourselves, are we spiritually ready for what the Lord has in store for the year ahead? If not, we know what we need to do—turn to the Lord in repentance, confess any sin of which He convicts our heart, and trust Him to "Revive us again!"



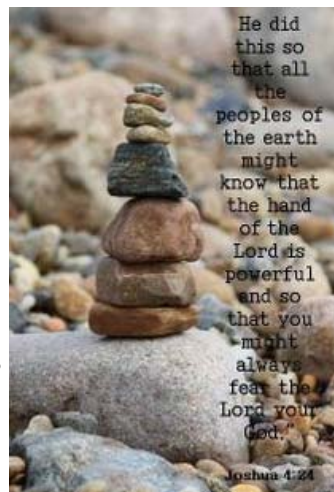
A Return to Revival

Tuesday, March 29: Read Joshua 4

So here are the Israelites at the boundary of the Promised Land. It has taken them 40 years to complete an 11 month journey because of their contempt for the Lord 39 years before. Moses is dead, and Joshua is now leading the people. God supernaturally provided a means for the people to cross the Jordan River and gave Joshua an unusual command—to choose 12 men, one from each tribe, to carry a stone from the middle of the Jordan River and pile them up at the scene of their first night's camp in the Land.

The text is very clear about the intent of this memorial: to stand as a memorial to future generations of Israelites of how God fulfilled His promises (Verse 7), that all peoples on the earth might know that the hand of the God of the Israelites is mighty, and to prompt the Fear of the Lord on the part of the Israelites (Verse 24). The Hebrew word translated “memorial” in Verse 7 simply means that which prompts remembrance.

Let's ask ourselves two questions: What was so important for the Israelites to remember? And, what kinds of things were they likely to forget? I think the answers to these questions are contained within the story of the Israelites and are of great application to us as well. Both we and the Israelites need to remember: 1) The Capability of our God; 2) The Holiness of our God; and 3) The Salvation (deliverance) that is available through our God. We'll investigate further during the course of the next few days.



A Return to Revival

Wednesday, March 30: Read Judges 2

I would like to reinforce what I claimed was the intent of the stone Memorial the Israelites pitched at Gilgal after they supernaturally crossed the Jordan.

The first purpose was to recall to their minds *the capability of God!* The name God gave Moses to give to the people was “I AM!” God is the self-existent one who reached into Egypt with an outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgment through the ten plagues, and then constantly demonstrated His capability to the Israelites during their time in the desert by providing water, food, clothes that didn't wear out, and military victory. The outcome God was after can be found in Exodus 14:31. But, despite God's faithfulness, the Israelites, like believers of all ages, are prone to wander and need to be reminded.

Second, the people needed to be reminded of *the holiness of God!* What happened when the people felt Moses was gone on the Mountain for a little bit too long? They engaged in idolatry and wild pagan revelry. Did they think God wouldn't care? Three thousand died for this transgression. In just a few days—many more are going to die because of the incomplete obedience of the people during the attack of Ai.

Third, the people needed to remember the *Salvation (deliverance) that God provides.* They were delivered from bondage in Egypt, delivered from thirst and hunger, and delivered from the judgment of the destroying angel upon the firstborn. The Jews had experienced both physical and spiritual salvation and they needed a memorial to prompt their remembrance in the days ahead. The second chapter of Judges tells us what happened in just one generation after Joshua died. Something tells me we have the same desperate need to remember—we'll consider that tomorrow.

A Return to Revival

Thursday, March 31: Read I Corinthians 11

In order for each of us to spiritually flourish, that is live a *re-lived* life, we need to remember exactly the same things Israel was called to remember. We too need to set a memorial before our hearts that we might not forget. So, how is it that we figuratively pile up memorial stones in our own lives?"

- We corporately "pile up stones" through real fellowship!

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

This would include sitting under the accurate and authoritative teaching of the Word of God, authentic worship, and the iron-sharpening-iron potential of fellowship around the things of the Lord with other believers.

- We individually "pile up stones" through Bible study, prayer, scripture memorization, and meditation. For:

...blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at my doors. Proverbs 8:34

For true revival we need to *sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what He has to say* (Luke 10:42) and respond to the call of our Lord to *abide in Me, for apart from Me you can do nothing* (John 15:5). These Scriptures remind us that our time in the Word is to be for the purpose of relationship and not scholarship!

- Then, Jesus left us one specific memorial by means of the bread, the cup, and His future coming. Through the communion remembrance, our Lord built a lasting memorial upon which we are to focus until He returns. And at that point, we won't have to worry about forgetting any more—for we shall see Him face to face! 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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