

WEEK 66 PUTTING OFF THE “OLD SELF”----- Chris Watson

In **Romans 7:19-20** Paul says, *“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”* Paul understood what it meant to struggle with the “old self.” I think we can all attest to what Paul was saying, in fact, I say “Amen.” This week we will see that the only way we can continuously put off our “old self” is through Christ.

Day 1

First Read Ephesians 4:17-24

Pigs wallow in the mud, it’s what they do. You can wash them up, give them a bath, and they might stay clean for a few minutes, but if there is mud around, they will find their way back to it. Pigs want to get dirty, they enjoy wallowing in filth. Paul tells us this should not be the case for the believer. If we have been truly saved, cleaned by the blood of Jesus, we should not want to go back to our old ways. Paul tells us in Romans that it is a constant battle. Why should we not want to go back to such ways? In verse 20 of today’s passage it says, *“But have you not learned Christ.”* It doesn’t say, “Have you not learned about Christ” but rather, it says *“not learned Christ Himself.”* There is a big difference. One can learn “about” Christ and not know Him, but when one learns Christ Himself, he or she has come to know the person of Christ; they have experienced Him and realize that knowing Jesus is so much better than wallowing in the mud.

Warren Wiersbe says we have taken off the “grave clothes” and have put on the “grace clothes.” In other words, we don’t have to live like unbelievers anymore because we are not unbelievers; we have been cleansed and washed with the blood of Jesus. Have you been washed with His blood? Have you trusted Jesus? If so, God has given you the desire to walk with Him. It doesn’t mean you won’t be tempted to go back to your old ways; the temptation will always be there as Paul reminds us. However, God’s grace gives us what it takes to overcome and walk in tune with Him.

Take time today to thank the Lord for saving you and making you clean. If there is willful sin in your life that you keep going back to, ask Him to give you victory over that sin. Daily ask Him to make you new, acknowledge that newness and allow Him to live through you.

Day 2

First Read Ephesians 4:25-32

Paul goes from generic to specific today. In today's reading he lists five sins- lying, anger, stealing, corrupt talk and bitterness. He then takes these five and breaks them down. Let's look at each one of the five.

Lying is contrary to truth and is spoken with intent to deceive. The life of a Christian is to be controlled by truth not lies. We know from scripture that Satan himself is the father of liars. Remember in the garden Satan put the question in Adam and Eve's mind, "did God really say?" Are you a person who speaks truth or lies? Ask God to help you to be a person of truth.

Paul then moves on to anger. Verse 26 tells us to *be angry but sin not*. We know that is easier said than done. In scripture God often had righteous anger but in His anger He did not sin. However, in our anger, sin often creeps in. Warren Weirsbe says, "Sometimes a man's anger smolders, and this we would call malice; but this same anger can suddenly burst forth and destroy, and this we would call wrath." He goes on to say that, "the fire of anger, if not quenched by loving forgiveness, will spread and defile and destroy the work of God."¹

Paul then goes on to speak about stealing. We know the scripture tells us the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy. Proverbs tells us to go to the ant you sluggard and consider its ways. In other words we don't need to steal if we are working and using our hands and minds the way the Lord intended.

Then comes the words, "corrupt speech." The mouth and the heart are connected and Matthew 12:34 tells us that out of the overflow, the mouth speaks. So the words that come out of our mouths tell us what's really in our heart. Satan wants us to use words that tear down and Christ wants us to use words that build up. How are your words, and how are you using them? This is a question that I try to continually ask myself as this is a struggle I deal with.

Lastly, Paul talks about bitterness. "Bitterness refers to a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man."² It has often been said that when things happen we can either become bitter or better. Bitterness is the easy route and yet the wrong way and yet better is the harder route and the right way.

¹ Be Rich, Warren Weirsbe

² ibid

What areas of your life, out of these five, does God need to work on? I have already shared that for me it's my words! Ask God to work in your heart and remember all of the work will be an inward change that results in an outward change.

Day 3

First Read Ephesians 5:1-2

Any time we see the world “therefore” we need to ask what it’s “there for?” If we go back to chapter 4 we see that Paul has reminded the believers that they had put off the “old self” and put on Jesus. He then ended chapter 4 by giving five things that should not be part of their lives as believers. Ephesians 4:32 says to be kind to one another and forgive one another. So going into chapter 5 we now see the connection of the “therefore.” Because we have been forgiven by Christ we can therefore grasp and understand the words of Paul better in the first few verses of chapter 5.

The first thing Paul instructs believers to do is be imitators of God. If Paul hadn't given the second verse, this first part, “imitating God” may seem a little mechanical or even legalistic. Some might say that “I just have to imitate God” and that's it. We know it's more than that; it's not just looking the part but walking and knowing God. We should imitate God but as verse 2 tells us, we should do so as we walk in love. There it is, everything we are to do is because of love. We love because He first loved us, and because of that love, everything we do should be out of the love that He gave us. Christ loves us and showed it when He gave Himself, the greatest sacrifice.

Why do you serve? Why do you love? Why do you go? Why do you teach and nurture? There are tons of questions and sometimes the answer is, “because it's the right thing to do.” But as God works in our lives, the reason, our motivation for doing what we do, should be God's love and His free gift of salvation. We will sometimes get off the path, but when we are in tune and walking with God, our desire should be to imitate and walk with Him in love. All because He first loved us.

Day 4

First Read Ephesians 5:3-21

Wherever you are, go find a dark room. (if it's not completely dark that's ok) Go in and turn on the light. What happened? As soon as you flipped the switch, the light dispelled the darkness. If you turn it off, it will be dark again. You might think this is a pointless exercise but it is a great reminder of the world we live in. Our world is evil and often dark, but as Christians, if we shine the light, then the light will always dispel the darkness.

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" 1 John 1:5-7. Do you have the light of Jesus? If so, your light should shine brightly in this world. John tells us that if we continually walk in the darkness the light is not in us and we are liars.

Matthew 5:14 says, *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden."* We are that light. Just like going into a dark room and turning on a light, we are to be the light to the world. Since we are the light, we don't have time, or can't spend time, on the things of the world that Paul talks about in the first few verses of Ephesians 5. Rather, we are to walk in the light and in the wisdom that comes only from God.

How are you walking today? Is it in the light or darkness? Do you feel the need to "hide" or "cover up" or is everything out in the open with nothing to hide? Walk in the light of Jesus today. Our world needs the light and God has left us here to make that light known. Don't hide it under a bushell, or be ashamed of the light. His light is all we need.

Day 5

First Read Psalm 44:11-22

Paul quotes **Psalm 44:22** in Romans. Here is the quote and context. *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Verse 22 speaks of persecution. Many of the disciples died for their faith and many others since them have as well. Take Stephen, in Acts, for example; He preached the word to a group of people and all of what he said was true. But the people didn't like what He had to say and they stoned him to death. I feel certain Stephen realized that he was about to die and he could have said something or done something to prevent his death. That would have involved going against what he believed and most likely denying Jesus for who He was. Instead, Stephen took the stoning and died a martyr. Acts 1:8 says that we will be Jesus' witnesses. The word witness there is the same word as martyr. We are to be Jesus' witnesses here and around the world even if it means dying for our faith. Knowing we would be dying for the truth.

Because we live in America we haven't experienced persecution in the way we read about in the Bible. We hear of very few that have actually died for their faith today. I personally believe that if God tarries, it may only be a matter of time before we reach this point. Do you have the truth? Do you know the truth, that is, the person of Truth, Jesus? Pray and ask God for you to be able to stand on the truth of Jesus Himself, no matter what may come your way.

WEEK 67 THE ARMOR OF GOD-----Dennis Watson

That we live in a pretty scary world is an obvious and troubling statement. Jesus told us that in this world we would have trouble. Peter reminded us that Satan is like a roaring lion seeking to devour. This can be so scary! However, as God's children we are not to be fearful but to be people of love, power, and a sound mind. Where does that come from? This week's passages deal with this very thing. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). He has provided for us instructions, the Holy Spirit, and armor that fits us for the battle. So put on the armor!

Day 1

First Read Ephesians 6:1-4

A lot of people get really bogged down with the question, "What is God's will for my life?" But while they seek answers to the big question, they ignore many of the things they already know to be God's will. It has correctly been said, "If you take care of the small things, the big things take care of themselves" (Emily Dickinson). Today's passage seems to be rather insignificant, not earth-shaking at all. However, if it were followed faithfully the earth would indeed be shaken. First, Paul told his readers, and us, that children need to obey and honor their parents. The first place to learn how to treat other people with respect is in the home. The first place to learn to be obedient to authority is in the home. He said this is right. If a person wants to be right, that person should obey and honor his or her parents. For how long? Always. Both of my parents have passed away, however, I still seek to honor them. It is right and it has a promise—long life.

Another seemingly little thing, that is not at all little, also concerns parents. Family is so very significant in God's plan for the world. The family is where we grow and learn. It is the place of discovering ourselves and others. It is where we learn to relate. Parents, and more specifically in this context, fathers, are called upon to not provoke their children to wrath. Fathers and mothers provoke and discourage their children by saying one thing and doing another. They also do it by always blaming and never praising. When parents neglect their children, the children are discouraged. Children who do not have good, clear, focused time with their parents are discouraged.

He did not stop with what not to do but he gave parents further instruction. The literal phrase is, "*Nurture them in the training and admonition of the Lord.*" Fathers have the responsibility of nurturing both the wife and their children in the Lord. A good father does this by showing love and giving encouragement in the home to the wife and the children. The father's role is more than simply providing food, clothing, and shelter. He is also to nurture them emotionally and spiritually. When Jesus was a child we read

that, *“He increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52)*. The parents are the ones responsible for nurturing the children.

Fathers and mothers also have the responsibility for disciplining the children. The word here is “admonition.” The word discipline refers to more than the punishment that a child might receive; we all need to be disciplined, so that we can bring our appetites under control. It really offends me to see adults who have no discipline in their lives. They eat what they want, as much as they want. Perhaps they stay up too late or behave like a couch potato. Discipline and disciplines are learned early. Parents need to teach their children to be responsible in their actions, words, and use of time and money. This is to be done in a positive and constructive way. Without anger!

Little things done daily, like obedience, honor, nurture, and discipline all add up.

Day 2

First Read Ephesians 6:10-13

Verses 5-9 have to do with what today would be work relationships between employers and employees. Paul addressed home relationships and then work relationships. We now see what he had to say about the main point of this week: the place of the real struggle. The place of the real struggle for us, as believers, is in the spiritual realm. Our struggle is not against people or even circumstances; our struggle is with our spiritual opponents—Satan and his demons.

Paul exhorted his readers to put on the armor of God. As Paul wrote these words, he spent all of his time chained to a Roman guard. So while Paul had the image of the soldier's armor in his mind, most of his readers were quite familiar with the armor of a Roman soldier. The reason for the armor was the enemy his readers faced. By the way, we face this enemy also. The reason for putting on the armor was to "stand against the wiles of the devil." The word here for "wiles" is the word from which we get our word "methods." He is saying we need the armor to deal with the methods of the devil. There are several different names used for this enemy. "Devil" means accuser, because he accuses God's people day and night. "Satan" means adversary, because he is the enemy of God. He is also called the tempter, murderer, and liar. He is the enemy of God and man. He wants to get people to give up on God and to get God to give up on people. The latter will never happen; God will never give up on you.

Satan, the devil, the accuser, murderer, and liar, was a direct creation of God. He was not created that way but he chose to rebel against God. You can read about this in Isaiah 14:12-15. His name originally was "Lucifer, son of the morning." He was cast down because of his pride and desire to have God's throne. His helpers are found in this passage in Ephesians as "principalities...powers...rulers of the darkness of this world...spiritual hosts of wickedness." This could be the group that was expelled with Satan when he was booted out of heaven, as seen in Revelation 12:4.

We are to take seriously the devil's schemes and realize that God has given us what we need to stand against him. He desires to kill, steal, and destroy. However, we are overcomers through Jesus and the weaponry that He has provided for us. "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

Tomorrow we will look at specific parts of the armor of God. Thank God for His provisions to win the battles we face!

Day 3

First Read Ephesians 6:14-15

A soldier needs to be confident that he or she is ready to go into battle and that his or her weapons are effective for facing the enemy. God has provided believers with weaponry that should instill confidence within us that we can live well and stand firm against the enemy. Today we will look at three of the weapons that Paul wrote about in Ephesians 6.

The first piece of armor mentioned is a girdle or belt. It is called the girdle of truth. The armor of the Roman soldier included a girdle on which other parts of the weaponry were attached. This belt or girdle integrated other parts of the armor, so that the soldier had quick and easy access to the available weapons. This refers to integrity and faithfulness. Everything was right there, available and accessible to be used. This inspired confidence. The believer who is confident in the truth, knowing that what they have and believe is pure and right, is equipped to face and refute the lies and schemes of the enemy.

The next piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate was made of metal plates which covered the front and back of the soldier from the neck to the waist. The believer finds security in knowing that God has provided for righteousness (right standing) for the believer in Christ and that the believer who follows Christ can live a righteous life. The believer can be assured that the righteousness God demands of us has been provided for us by God through Jesus' victory over the enemy. Nothing the enemy can do will take away the righteousness you have in Christ. This brings security.

The last piece of armor for today is the shoes of the gospel of peace. The Roman soldier wore sandals that had hobnails or cleats. These cleats allowed the soldier-warrior to gain a firm footing. It provided a way to stand without slipping. The literal translation is, "And having put on shoes on your feet with the firm footing of the good news of peace." In other words, the believer needs to know that he has a firm place to stand. The believer has the good news of real salvation, salvation that cannot be lost. This brings peace.

So look at this. We have confidence based on truth. We have security based on the righteousness we have which was given to us by Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. We have peace that salvation is real and cannot be lost. We should be confident warriors. The enemy may harass and aggravate but he cannot undo what God has done for us and in us. Give thanks for what He has provided. Stand firm! This connects us to the salvation that God freely gave to us in Jesus.

Day 4

First Read Ephesians 6:16

The last three parts of the armor are the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Today, we will look at these three pieces of the armor.

The shield of the Roman soldier was similar to a door, 2 ½ feet wide and 4 feet tall. It was made of wood, covered with linen and leather to extinguish flaming arrows, and was held in front of the soldier, largely to provide for body protection. Our shield of faith gives us confidence that whatever the enemy shoots or throws our way, Jesus enables us to be kept safe from such attacks and to extinguish them. The shields also were made in such a way that they could be connected, so that a whole line of soldiers could link their shields together. They could then move together like a solid wall, providing safety as they advanced. We are not in this battle alone. We need to be connected together for greater safety.

What the helmet provided is clear protection for the head. This applies more specifically to the mind. When Eve was attacked by the serpent in the garden, the attack was to her mind. The enemy played with her mind and caused her to turn away from what God had said, even to question what He said. The enemy wants to get our thinking off course from God's truth. The enemy uses people and programs in the hope of leading us to question what God has said. A grandmother told me this week about taking her grandchildren to see the Disney movie, "The Jungle Book." One of the children responded to a point in the movie where the panther says, "The elephants created the jungle." The child said, "That's not true!" I love it when even the kids can see through Hollywood's attempts to get us off track! Remember, Satan is not red and carrying a pitchfork around. He is subtle and seeks to gently lead us away from the truth (and the Truth). Put on the helmet of salvation and keep your mind safe from the enemy's lies.

The only offensive weapon in our arsenal is the sword, which is the Word of God. The Roman soldier was on the defense and was to stand against the enemy. Sometimes, he was compelled to go on the attack, so he also had a sword. The Word of God was God's method of creating; he spoke and things came into existence. The Word of God pierces the heart, so people are convicted and saved. Jesus used the Word of God against the enemy when He was being tempted. We use the Word of God to aggressively defeat lies. The Word of God is the Truth and the only way to defeat lies is with the truth.

I'll wrap this up with the words of Warren Wiersbe:

"In one sense, the "whole armor of God" is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), and He is our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and our peace (Eph. 2:14). His faithfulness makes possible our faith (Gal. 2:20); He is our salvation (Luke 2:30); and He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). This means that when we trusted Christ, we received the armor. Paul told the Romans what to do with the armor (Rom. 13:11-14): wake up (Rom. 13:11), cast off sin, and "put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12). We do this by putting "on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). By faith, put on the armor and trust God for the victory. Once and for all, we have put on the armor at the moment of salvation. But there must be a daily appropriation. When, King David put off his armor and returned to his palace, he was in greater danger than when he was on the battlefield (2 Sam. 11). We are never out of reach of Satan's devices, so we must never be without the whole armor of God."³

³Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament - The bible Expositin Commentary - New Testamnet, Volume 2

DAY 5

First Read Psalm 69:19-25

Today is the day we make the connection between Psalms or one of the prophets, Jesus and the gospel message. When David was writing this psalm, he was certainly speaking of his own struggles. As is often the case, his words also spoke of the future, not just about his present circumstance. David expressed that his enemies had treated him so poorly that he had actually become physically sick. There was no one to comfort him or take pity on him. We see the same with Jesus when He was praying in the garden, along with His own disciples who slept while He was “*sorrowful and deeply distressed*” (**Matthew 26:37**). David’s lament points to Jesus and His experience of rejection and crucifixion. He too was given gall, a poisonous herb and vinegar. Even Judas who betrayed Jesus was included in David’s words. Peter quoted Psalm 69:25 in Acts 1:20 when he referenced Judas.

Jesus was mocked and put to shame on the cross, with no one to come to His rescue. Even God His Heavenly Father forsook Him, because He had taken our sins on Himself.

The Bible is a single unit. Of course, it is made up of many different sections, accounts, and writings, but it is one unit that fits all together. Chuck Missler puts it this way:

“The 66 books which we call the Bible constitute a highly integrated message system. What makes this so astonishing is the fact that they were penned by more than forty different people over a period of several thousand years! Yet we now discover that virtually every detail of the Biblical text evidences a highly skillful integrated design from cover to cover. In fact, every word, every place name, every detail was apparently placed there (in the original) deliberately as part of an overall intricate plan.”⁴

God inspired the Bible and we pick it up and read it today. Too often we fail to connect the dots, thereby missing the big picture. God has given us the big picture in many different biblical historical accounts. It all comes out in a tremendous way when we spend the time and effort to properly connect the dots.

David was speaking of himself, but the Spirit of God was telling us about Jesus. Keep on getting the dots connected!

WEEK 68 THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST -----Chris Watson

Jesus did not give off a false sense of humility like we or others can. Jesus was truly humble as He left heaven to come to earth and save us from our sins. In His humility He healed, washed feet, wept with friends and family and spoke truth. Scripture tells us that God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud. This week our scripture demonstrates how Jesus was and is the definition of humility.

Day 1

First Read Philippians 2:1-4

Philippians 1:21 tells us that *“to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* Paul goes on to speak of striving and suffering for Christ. In fact Paul says the suffering and strife that the church at Philippi is facing he has also faced.

Philippians 1:29 says, *“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”* James 1 also tells us that we are to consider it joy when we face trials. So as we begin our reading today this will help us understand the transition with the word “therefore.”

Paul says that in suffering or in the good times we are to be in one mind, being together in one accord. The only way that this can be done is spelled out in verses 3-4. We can't focus on selfish ambition or thoughts and be in one accord, in unison. Think of 10 people who have only their selfish thoughts, desires, and wants in mind. There would be no unity, maybe a lot of pride and selfishness but no unity and togetherness.

Jesus is what brings us together. He is the only person that can bring us together. Jesus Himself was humble and displayed that humility on the cross and how He served others in His short time here on earth. Jesus was always looking out for the needs of others. He was always putting them first, mainly so He could point them to the Father and their need for salvation. Jesus was healing and teaching so He could show and direct other people to God. Jesus wants us to take up our cross and follow Him. How are you doing this? Is your mind only on what you want and desire or is it on Jesus and what His heart is? I admit there are times I can become selfish and seek to make things about me and only me, what about you? No matter what we face we must realize it is not about us but all about Him. Will you pray and commit to make it about Him and in making it about Him, will you serve others?

Day 2

First Read Philippians 2:5-7

Notice the term “bondservant” in today’s scripture? When we see the term servant we usually have negative thoughts. However when we understand the term bondservant this is not always the case. When the word bondservant is used in the New Testament it is used with the highest dignity. It often speaks of believers who are under Christ’s authority as His devoted followers. These are not believers that are “servants” against their will as if to say, “I hope I can get out of this,” but rather, believers who desire to walk with God and be under His guidance and authority.

So when we see our text today that refers to Jesus as taking the “*form of a bondservant*,” hopefully we can see the meaning. Jesus Himself came to earth and submitted to or became the bondservant of God. He came not to do His own will but His father’s. He submitted to what God wanted. We know this from all of scripture but particularly when He was at the Mount of Olives and asked if this cup could pass from Him, then praying “*not My will but Your will be done.*” **Luke 22:42**

Scripture also tells us that Jesus came to serve. He did not come to be served but to serve and serve. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, He healed many, He forgave sins and He met people in times of need, just to name a few. So Jesus was about doing His father’s will but in doing so He was also about serving others. What about us? Are we about our Father’s will or our own? Today would you seek to be about His will and His alone? In doing so we take on the very attributes of Jesus and become a servant ourselves. Serving God but also serving others. Who can you serve today? Your spouse, parents, siblings, friend or co-workers? Remember, it is not about you and me. It is ultimately about God and leading others to Him as we serve Him and serve others. Remember our mission as a Church is, “To love God and lead others to love Him, too.” May this be our focus today.

Day 3

First Read Philippians 2:8

Talk about a bondservant! Today our scripture tells us that Jesus was obedient even to death on the cross. It was no ordinary death but He died and bled for your sins and mine. **Romans 5:6-11** says, *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”*

Have you ever really let this sink in? Jesus, God’s Son, stepped out of heaven and came to our sinful world. God Himself came to earth to fix the problem that we got ourselves in. If you have ever studied any other “religion” you know that no other “god” would do this. First of all, they don’t exist! But for those who say they do, their “god” is either so high and mighty that they can’t be known, or the “god” they serve and follow is dead! Praise the Lord our God is neither. He is definitely not dead and He is not only alive but He is a personal God. So personal that He came to this world to save us so that we could have a relationship with Him.

Take some time to simply give thanks and adore God this morning. During the next few minutes don’t bring any requests to God but rather thank Him for who He is, what He has done and who He continues to be in your life. Truly spend time being thankful and grateful to your Savior.

Day 4

First Read Philippians 2:9-11

You may know this song and it comes to mind as part of today's devotions. Here are just a few of the words:

Come, now is the time to worship
Come, now is the time to give your heart
Come, just as you are to worship
Come, just as you are before your God
Come

One day every tongue will confess You are God
One day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains for those,
Who gladly choose you now⁴

Jesus was obedient to His Father and today's scripture says that God highly exalted Him. Jesus is the name that is above all other names. Think of the names that you know. Now think of the names of the people in our country and world who may be worth a lot of money and who may have a great deal of power. Those names don't come close to the name of Jesus. No money or power can come close to the name of Jesus.

Verse 10 tells us that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven, on the earth and under the earth. To verify, that would be everyone from the beginning of time who has ever lived and will ever live. Every knee will one day bow to Jesus. This includes atheists, agnostics, those who follow no "god" and those who follow false gods as well as Christians. However, look back at the song from this morning. It says the greatest joy is for those who gladly bow to Jesus now. Those who willingly love and bow to Jesus now will also bow to Him in the future, in heaven. We can worship Him, love Him and be loved by Him now and in heaven void of all sin.

Today, would you thank God that you know Him? Would you pray by name for those you know that don't know Him? Ask how God would have you love them and share about Jesus so that they, too, can know Him?

⁴Come Now is the Time to Worshio, Brian Doerksen

Day 5

First Read Psalm 103:8-18

What a wonderful Psalm we read today. David speaks such wonderful and true words. We need to remember these words were spoken before Jesus. Remember our context this week in Philippians and how Jesus came down and died for us and that one day every knee will bow. Verse 8 tells us that the Lord is merciful and gracious. In fact, scripture also tells us that God desires for all to come to repentance, He wants all people to follow and know Him. Verse 10 is one of my favorite verses, *“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.”* Praise the Lord! Just think, what if God gave us what we deserved? Well, we know we would get death that is eternity apart from Him. What if He wasn't merciful and loving? We would really be in a bad way. Thankfully He has forgiven and has cast our sins as far as the east is from the west.

Read verse 17 again. What a great promise! The mercy of the Lord is everlasting to those who know and fear the Lord. Does this mean that after salvation we are perfect? Absolutely not, we mess up and sin. While it's not an excuse to continue in sin, as Paul tells us in Romans, we can know that God loves and forgives us. God is merciful to us as we walk with Him day in and day out. Daily we can know Him more, revere Him more and should desire to obey Him more.

Use the rest of your time this morning for two things:

- 1) Thank the Lord for His mercy, grace and how He has saved you.
- 2) Pray that you would follow God more today than yesterday. That you would hear His voice and obey it.

WEEK 69 KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE-----Dennis Watson

Up through Acts 7, the gospel was only for the Jews and those who had become Jewish converts. But when Paul began his ministry the gospel went to the gentiles also. This change came about in Acts 10. Many of the Jews believed that for a gentile to be saved they must first become a Jew. The Jews were outraged and called Paul to give an account and an answer for his activity among the gentiles. It appeared to be settled but everywhere Paul went he encountered the Judaizers. Judaizers were those Jews who mixed grace and law together. They demanded that the gentiles must adhere to certain Jewish laws and customs to become Christians. Paul address this in Galatians but also in our passages this week.

Day 1

First Read Philippians 3:1-6

Paul introduces what he is about to say with the words, *“Rejoice in the Lord.”* He is about to share with them that he has come to the point of a new value system. What he once valued highly he now counts as “loss.” He looked back on his life, at the past, and shared what was once his source of confidence.

He gives a warning about what he calls, “dogs...evil workers...and the mutilation.” He is warning about Jews who wanted to place law demands on gentiles who were becoming believers in Jesus. This would rob new believers of their joy and confidence in Jesus alone. The Jews, up until the time of Paul’s writings, were still bogged down in behavior and following the law. For this reason they thought it their responsibility to impose the same on new believers.

Paul makes the distinction in verse three saying that we of circumcision *“have no confidence in the flesh.”* He elaborates at this point saying that if anyone had a reason to have confidence in the flesh it was him. Then he tells of the things he once counted as the source of his confidence. His parents had him circumcised on the eighth day according to the law. He was a pure-bred Jew unlike the Samaritans. He came from the best family line—that of Benjamin who was the favorite son of Jacob. He was a leader of the Hebrews regarding their religion. He was also a Pharisee. The Pharisees were a religious-political group with the intent of establishing the kingdom. Paul was, in every way, on top of the world when it came to the flesh. If anyone could feel good about their accomplishments and standing in life, it was Paul. It did not stop there. He was standing firm for Judaism and standing against believers in Jesus by persecuting the church. But with his new value system he said that he did not count these things as gain or advantage, but loss.

I have at times thought of myself as being advantaged: an American citizen, pastor of a great church, husband, father and so forth. Any confidence in the flesh is NOTHING! It is of no advantage. We cannot possess or gain anything in this world which will move us toward perfection. Because in this world we will not gain perfection by our works, achievements or acclaim received!

This is the point Paul is making and he will look at the new value system in the verses which follow. We will look at these tomorrow.

Right now realize that any achievement you have in this life will not have an eternal impact. You need to cling to the new value system.

Day 2

First Read Philippians 3:7-8

At one time in his life Paul, like most of the Jews of his day, thought of themselves as perfect. They had kept the laws and customs. They had been born into the right family lines. All was good! But for Paul, his eyes were opened and he saw himself as he really was—a sinner. Remember it was Paul who wrote, “*All have sinned.*” He also wrote, “*The wages of sin is death.*” Paul came to a new value system that did not originate with his works of performance. He begins verse seven with the coordinating conjunction “but.” Paul now makes a distinction between what he once counted as gain, or advantage, and what he now counts as gain, or advantage. He has a new value system.

Remember the things he once counted as gain—his birth, his law keeping, his position as a Pharisee. Now those things are loss to him because his new value system is a righteousness that comes through Jesus as a gift. The things he now considers loss were things he achieved or which came to him by way of birth.

Jews believed that they could actually earn their way into heaven through keeping the law. Paul came to realize that our good works really are just like trash. That is not to say that doing good is bad. But doing good to be made right in God’s eyes is no good; it does not work. No one is good enough to go to heaven. No one is good enough on their own to have a relationship with God. That is why Paul counted those things as loss. He now knew the truth about Jesus. But not just conversion - He now valued having an ongoing, life-changing, eternity-transforming relationship with Jesus.

I like the way J. Vernon McGee puts it:

Paul’s conversion was not just an experience of a moment. Conversion is not a balloon ascension. A great many people think that you can go down to some altar and have an experience, see a vision, and be carried to the heights -- and that’s it. Oh, my friend, conversion is something that stays with you. It is not for just a moment. Although it happens in a moment of time, it continues for a lifetime. And sanctification is not a great emotional experience; it is a daily walk in dependence upon God.⁵

When Paul met Jesus he lost his religion. Maybe you need to lose yours. Jesus came not for religion but for relationships. Don’t let anyone tell you it is about doing. No, it is about being—being a child of the King.

⁵Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee

Day 3

First Read Philippians 3:8-11

Paul became a child of God through Jesus on the Damascus Road. He was a changed man. When he met Jesus, he lost his religion. Those things he once counted gain he now counted loss. He had a new value system. He now valued knowing Jesus. Why is knowing Jesus so important? Jesus lived a perfect life. He did what no human could ever do. He did not sin, yet He became sin for us. If we come to know Jesus, we can experience a change of life because of His death and resurrection. We can exchange our unrighteousness for His righteousness.

To be righteous is to be made right. I'm right sometimes, but for the most part I am not. I cannot achieve the rightness or righteousness which God demands. In fact scripture says, *"All our righteous acts are like filthy rags"* **Isaiah 64:6**. That is what Paul was saying about his religious achievements. He called them "rubbish." Since today is the third day of the week, we will now connect the week's passage to the gospel. The gospel is the good news of Jesus coming to die for our sins so that we can be forgiven and have an eternal relationship with the God of the universe. We cannot attain or achieve righteousness or right standing with God by our works. That is what Paul meant when he said, *"Not having a righteousness of my own, which is from the law."* It is a righteousness which is from God by faith! Totally the work of God through His work accomplished through His Son, Jesus, at the cross! Our works plays no part! This is the gospel connection. Salvation is a work of God and it is appropriated or received by faith. We can add nothing to it nor take anything away from it.

Paul was a man who in this life had achieved much. However, he came to know the truth; real lasting value is not achieved but received by faith in the work of God through Jesus. Have you received His gift? If so, rejoice in Him!

Day 4

First Read Philippians 3:12-17

Paul was an ambitious man; he was as a lost Jew and he still was as a believer. He says he wanted to know the power of the resurrection and attain the resurrection. He is speaking of the power of the resurrection in the believer's life. The power of the resurrection is not only the resurrection at the end of all things here on earth as we know it. It is also the day-to-day power to conquer and overcome those things which would defeat believers and leave them powerless. We are not powerless; we are power-filled.

In verses 12-13a Paul reveals something all believers should have, divine dissatisfaction. Paul realized that although he was saved he had a long way to go. He was not perfect and he would not be as long as he was living in this flesh existence. I put it this way, "I am not perfect but I am in hot pursuit of the One who is." I am satisfied with Jesus but I am not with my own place and growth. Like Paul, I want more of His resurrection power in me. Do you have spiritual dissatisfaction to the point that you are satisfied with Jesus but you want more of Him and His power in you?

This dissatisfaction resulted in Paul "*pressing on*" and "*reaching forward to those things ahead.*" Paul's dissatisfaction caused him to "*press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus had taken hold of him.*" What a great mental image. Paul is seeking, in every way he can, to discover and experience what God has in store for him. How sad to miss out on God's best. Every believer should be seeking to know and experience the best of what God has for them. Like Paul, I don't want to miss out.

Have you ever had dissatisfaction in your spiritual life? I am confident we all have. Some people get discouraged and even want to give up. Giving up is not the cure. The cure is to do what Paul did. He did not get beat down for where he was spiritually. Instead he was determined to press on and seek God's best no matter the cost.

Will you press on? Will you turn dissatisfaction into hunger for the Lord?

Day 5

First Read Psalm 34:1-8

Day five each week we look at a passage from the Psalms or Old Testament Prophets to see what we can learn about Jesus or the gospel. Today we look at Psalm 34:1-8. This is a prayer that David sang to God. He was inviting everyone to join in this song of praise to God. He says, *“Oh, magnify the Lord with me.”* He wanted everyone to experience the joy, the blessings, and trusting the Lord. David knew that the real joy and confidence in this life comes from the Lord God.

Several times David spent time running for his life because of the jealous rage of King Saul. Saul was pursuing David, seeking to kill him. On one occasion, David pretended to be insane to escape Abimelech. After the escape David wrote this psalm.

I love the way he begins it. He was determined to praise the Lord and bless Him all of the time. I am not convinced that’s the way he felt all of the time but he chose not to be governed by how he felt. He was going to choose to praise the Lord all of the time rather than be beaten down by his circumstances. He knew God was always faithful no matter what the circumstances were. He chose to set his mood with praise and blessing of the Lord.

David praised God for answering his prayers and delivering him from his fears.

The taste of food has memory. A few years ago I lost my sense of smell and with it, much of the taste of food became just a memory. However, things do not seem to taste as good as they once did; I associate it with texture and the memory of the taste. I remember how good it used to taste so I can enjoy it up to a point. David had trusted the Lord and knew that He was faithful because he had tasted the Lord’s goodness and remembered His faithfulness. Try Him by trusting Him and see that He is good. The trusting Him will become one of those good habits that you will find leaves a good taste in your mouth.

David invites us to join in praising and exalting the Lord. He wants us all to enjoy His faithfulness and goodness. Are you enjoying His faithfulness? Give praise to Him and invite others to join you!

WEEK 70 CHARACTER COUNTS-----Chris Watson

It's been said that character is the way a person thinks, feels and behaves. That's not the perfect definition but it helps us see that our character makes us who we are. God does the work, but the way we think and then carry out action really shows what's in our hearts and minds. What does your character, that which you think and do, say about you?

Day 1

First Read Acts 16:1-5

It's always important when reading a passage to see what comes before and after it. Sometimes it is also helpful to cross reference or know of other books that speak of the same people or situations in which you are reading. We will jump into 1 and 2 Timothy this week but we won't look at the passage that introduces Timothy's family. Today our passage mentions Timothy and how Paul wanted Timothy to join him in sharing of the gospel. But first, let's look at the foundations. It is likely that Lois, Eunice, and possibly Timothy, became believers on Paul's first missionary journey.

As we are introduced to Timothy in today's passage note what **2 Timothy 1: 3-5** says, *"I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."* Paul is thankful for the genuine faith in Timothy but he also mentions Eunice, Timothy's mom, and Lois, Timothy's grandmother. Timothy had a godly heritage. He had modeled for him the truth of Jesus and the way in which to go. Because of this, Timothy was a strong believer and God used Him greatly.

You may or may not have had Godly parents and grandparents. If you did, thank God for your Godly heritage. Thank Him for those in your family that modeled Christ and led you to Him. I am so thankful that both sets of my grandparents were believers and that my mom and dad passed on to us the truth of Jesus. They saw to it that we heard the truth daily and, praise the Lord, God saved us. So if you have such a Godly heritage, rejoice and be thankful today.

However, you may not have that heritage and if not, what an opportunity! Maybe your parents and/or grandparents didn't teach you about God or the things of God. Maybe they taught you but it was not modeled. If not, why not begin now? Why not say, "It begins with me?" Be thankful what God has taught you over the years. If you were not raised in a Christian

environment, then you may have different ways of seeing things that others don't see and those ways can often be helpful. In other words, we all bring something to the table.

Whether or not we were raised with a godly worldview, it is up to us to keep that godly worldview and live by it. We can't change our past, we can't go back. However, we have today. What are you living, sharing, and passing on? Maybe some can say of us that they not only remember our children's faith, but the faith of their parents and their grandparents. Continue to pass it on or begin today.

Day 2

First Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7

In today's passage we see the qualifications of an overseer. An overseer could be a Pastor; be it a Senior Pastor or Youth Pastor, full or part time, bi-vocational or volunteer. As a Pastor, God has called us to teach and instruct the Word of God (verse 2) as our main focus. There are many responsibilities of a pastor, but the main focus is to share the truth of God's Word.

One can't take care of the Church of God if he can't first take care of himself and his family. In taking care we are to lead and rule (with the help of our spouse) over our house/family. This is also a good rule of thumb for anyone wanting to serve. In order to be an effective Pastor or volunteer, we must first lead our family.

Two of the greatest downfalls for anyone are pride and temptation. The same is true for a leader/Pastor. When things are going well for a leader/Pastor and he is not carefully in tune with God, he may have the tendency to take the credit for himself, becoming prideful in what he has done. Scripture tells us that if there is any good it comes from the Lord not from any man.

Another downfall is "letting our guard down." Again it can happen to anyone. However, when it happens to pastors, we often hear it on the news or words get out into the community and the effects are devastating. As a pastor, I nor any other Pastor, can afford to be foolish or give into temptation. We are tempted just like any everyone else but just like others we must fight off the temptation with God and His Truth.

Would you pray for your Pastors today? Would you pray that we would continue well and run the race, continuing until God says otherwise? Would you pray that God would continue to raise up mighty men of God to preach His truth? Here are the names of your Pastors so you can pray for each one of them by name:

Dennis Watson
Ken Helms
Keith Turner
Steve Owens
Paul Allen
Chris Watson
Gary Kubik
Harrison Ng

Day 3

First Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Acts 6:1-4 says, *“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’”* This shows us exactly why deacons were put into place. The disciples still wanted to convey the Word of God everywhere and at the same time wanted to make sure the needs of God’s Church, in this case the widows, were being met. So the role of a deacon is to help take care of the needs of the people in God’s Church so that the Pastors can teach and preach the Word. This does not mean the Pastors have the deacons to do all the work but the deacons are to come alongside the Pastors and help shoulder the load.

In our passage today Paul goes on to give the qualifications of a deacon. The qualifications of a deacon are similar to that of a Pastor and yet different. Look again at our verses yesterday and compare the two. In our passages today we read that deacons’ wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate and faithful in all things. So we understand that while the deacon’s role in the Church is important, so is his spouse’s as she is his help and support.

The role of godly men, particularly deacons, are important in God’s Church. Both of our campuses have deacons with whom things are shared, prayed over, and who help carry the load. We are always asking how we can better serve and help. Do you know of someone who would be a good deacon? Reread the qualifications, does someone come to mind? If so, inquire about getting a deacon packet and passing it on to them, asking if they would prayerfully consider becoming a deacon. We are all in this together as we seek to share the Gospel and serve God’s Church. Pray for your deacons and the leaders in your Church today.

Day 4

First Read 1 Timothy 3:14-16

The Church is God's plan, He had it in mind before the beginning of time. Matthew 16:18 tells us that God would build the Church. I have told our congregation many times that mankind can seek to insert ideas and thoughts into God's Church (some good and some bad) but it was never our idea, it was Gods. Can you think of any other institution or organization that has lasted over 2000 years? Exactly, other than the Church there are none. Why? Because the Church was God's idea and it will continue on until the end.

In verse 15 of today's passage we are told that the Church is the pillar and ground of truth. In other words the Church is a big deal. We know from scripture that the Church is God's bride and we know the Church is the believers. It is not a building or a place but it is the people who make up the Church. That is why many times Paul's writings, including the one we read this week, were to instruct the Church. Many of Paul's writings were to either encourage the Church in what it was doing or question and help it get back on track with what God wanted.

If the Church is to be the pillar and ground of truth, we need to confess God as our savior and gather with other believers to worship and be encouraged in the faith. If the Church is the pillar and ground of truth then we must not only stand for truth but live that same truth. Paul knew the importance of this and that is the reason for all of his letters to the Church.

Ask this question for a moment, "If every believer walked with God the way I do, how would the Church (group of believers) function?" Answer it honestly. Do you have good thoughts or bad ones, negative thoughts or positive ones? This is not to say, "I need to do better" or "fix me" but rather to say, "Jesus, I want to be your follower and be part of your Church the way You intended. I want to do my part and follow You with all I have."

Pray for God's Church today, whether it is gathered or scattered. Pray not only for Harp's Hollonville and Fayetteville but for the Church across the world. In praying, ask the Lord how you can committed to His Church and His plan. There is not enough space here but end your devotion today by reading: <http://justwhatiamlearning.blogspot.com/2016/08/that-which-grieves-me.html> "That which grieves me," is something I wrote not too long ago. Take this opportunity to commit to love and be in and a part of God's Church regularly.

Day 5

First Read Psalm 144

Psalms 46 tells us “*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*” **Proverbs 18:10** tell us that “*The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and they are safe.*” Today’s Psalm also reminds us that God leads and guides us and He is who we really need.

As I type, at the Hollonville Campus, we are in the middle of going through a book on Wednesday evenings titled “Praying the Bible,” by Donald Whitney. It is a short book (under 100 pages) and I would HIGHLY recommend it. It teaches how to really pray the Bible, specifically the Psalms. I would like to challenge you to do this today with today’s scripture. Either take verse by verse or a clump of verses, no more than three and pray them. It may go something like this for verse 13, “God thank You that You are my provider, thank You for my job, and thank You for the ability to work. Please continue to provide as You have in the past. Provide for me and my family. Not only for me and my family but provide so that I can provide for others who may have need and so they may be drawn to You. Thank You, God, that You are my ultimate provider.”

Do this exercise with this whole Psalm. Some verses will be easier than others but I think you will find this exercise very useful and realize how much we have to be thankful for.

WEEK 71 GOD BREATHED THE SCRIPTURES-----Dennis Watson

Where would we be without the Word of God? The Word of God comes to us in two forms: the living Word which is Jesus and the written Word which is about Jesus and points us to Jesus. This week we look at Paul's words to Timothy as he encourages him to get about the work God has fit and furnished for him. We will see that Timothy had been taught the Word from his youth and that Paul had been an example and mentor to him. Think about those who have taught and mentored you. Then get about what He has for you to do.

Day 1

First Read 2 Timothy 3:1-9

What a powerful and clear warning we have in today's passage. The danger is that of loving something other than God. This activity, loving something else rather than loving God, will lead to departure from the truth and rebellion. Paul said that in the last days people would be "lovers of themselves...lovers of money...and lovers of pleasure." Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters because you will hate one and love the other. The last days began with the ministry of Jesus and will continue until He returns.

Paul is writing to young Timothy telling him how to respond in the difficult time which will characterize the last days. He is talking in this chapter about knowledge and responsibility. Regarding the nature of the last days Paul listed eighteen characteristics which we see all around us. The fact that the family is in great distress today is all around us. People love themselves. People hate other people and live lives that are characterized by no self-control. Even among church people there are people who go through the motion; "having a form of godliness but denying its power"—where professing believers live lives which include these characteristics. People who fall into this trap of rebellion and disobedience are those who resist the truth. When a person turns away from the truth and the knowledge of the truth they are subject to all kinds of perversion.

The truth is the more we fail to love God, the more sin proliferates; it is part of that one step followed by more and more. When a person takes one step away from the truth and fails to repent and return they are on a dangerous road which will take them to levels of perversion they could never imagine. It all begins with being lovers of things other than God.

Look around you. We are indeed living in perilous times. On the one hand, it is encouraging because the Bible tells us this would happen. However it is very difficult because we see friends, family members and co-workers

falling into the trap of the enemy. The solution is the truth of God. The truth of the Word needs to abide in us and we need to abide in the Word. Be aware, the enemy wants to trip you up. Do not depart from the Word of God to the right or to the left. If you have, return now!

Day 2

First Read 2 Timothy 3:10-15

There is a contrast beginning with these words with what has gone before. In contrast to the apostasy of many in the last days, Timothy had godly examples and teaching. His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois had taught him as a child the Word of God. As a result of their instruction from the Word of God, Timothy had come to salvation. He also had the example of Paul. He knew of Paul's faithfulness even in the midst of suffering and persecution. He had Paul as an example of staying in the battle no matter what came his way. Paul was encouraging Timothy to choose his heroes wisely and I believe that Paul was telling Timothy to follow his example.

Was it haughty or arrogant for Paul to make such a claim? No! All of us should do like Paul and live our lives in such a way as to say, "Follow my example!" Paul wanted Timothy to stay faithful to what he had learned as a child regarding the Word of God and to follow his own example of ministry and service to the Lord and His church.

Soon after I came to Harp's Crossing, back in the early 1980's, I set out on a journey to make sure my faith was my own. I had been taught the Bible, like Timothy, as a young child. I had grown up in a strong Bible believing church. There were examples of spiritual heroes I could look up to and follow their example. But I needed to know that I had not just inherited my faith but I had to own it for myself. After all, I was now the pastor of a church! So I set out to make sure that what I had learned as a child and even a young adult corresponded to what I observed in the world. That is not to say faith is not necessary but I came to see and continue to see that what I find in the Bible best corresponds to the reality I see. It makes sense even from a faith perspective. In this week's passage Paul admonishing Timothy to bolster himself up in the truth because he had a task to do.

Paul wanted Timothy to stick to what he knew to be true. He wanted him to not give up but to keep on going in light of the instructions and examples he had. Paul wanted Timothy to stay on track.

What do you need to do to bolster your faith? Are you digging into the Word? Have you remained true to what the Lord has taught you in the past? Have you wisely chosen your spiritual heroes?

Day 3

First Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I have heard it and read it from many sources: “The Bible is just a book written by men.” It is a book and men were involved in its writing. However, the Bible is a miraculous book. After all it was “inspired by God.” The phrase means that the Bible was God-breathed. Men did write it but they wrote it as God breathed it. The Holy Spirit used men of God to write the Word of God (see 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit did not remove the natural characteristics of the writers. God in His plan prepared the writers. Each writer has his own unique style and vocabulary. In each case the writers were dealing with special circumstances in which God spoke to them inspiring them what to write. God used the writers to speak according to His instruction about the historical setting and what God had to reveal about it.

To speak of biblical inspiration is to speak of the supernatural influence the Holy Spirit had on the writers of the Bible. The word revelation is the fact of God communicating truth to man. The inspired Word of God is the revealing of God and His plan and purpose for His creation. It is completely reliable. God is faithful and if He has a Word it would have to be like Him, perfect and beyond adequate.

Paul tells Timothy that the Word of God is for the man or person of God. Any man or woman who is a child of God can be a man or woman of God. This is by reading, studying and living according to the Word of God. For this purpose the Word of God is “profitable.” It is profitable for doctrine which has to do with what is right. We learn what is right from God’s Word. It is profitable for “reproof” which has to do with pointing out what is not right. It is also profitable for “correction” which is how to get right. Lastly he says it is profitable for “instruction in righteousness” which has to do with staying right. Paul points out that all of this is so that the person of God can be complete and equipped for every good work. “Complete” means in fit shape or in fit condition. It is being fitted for use. “Fully equipped” means the person of God has been given what they need to serve Him.

Timothy was a young leader. He was God’s instrument to minister and serve others with the Word of God. He had been blessed with a godly mother and grandmother. He had been blessed to have been mentored by Paul. He had the richness of God’s teaching in the Word. He was, through all of this, being made fit for every good work which God had in store for Him.

He has been preparing you also as a man or woman of God. He has placed in your life spiritual heroes. He has given you teachers and mentors. Perhaps you need to take a few minutes to text, email, write or call someone who has had a spiritual influence in your life. Take the time to say thank you for allowing God to work through them in your life. Also, continue to dig into God's Word so that you will be fit and equipped to be used by Him in the lives of others.

Day 4

First Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Did you spend some time yesterday thinking about the people who first planted the truth of the gospel in you? Did you reflect on spiritual heroes who were instrumental in your growth as a believer? You see that after Paul told Timothy about how God had worked in his life he then laid down a huge challenge. It was actually more than a challenge it was a charge. Paul charged Timothy to a task. Soldiers have a charge to defend the country. Police officers are charged to protect citizens. Both soldiers and police officers carry out their charge at the peril of loss of life. The "therefore" in verse one connects what comes next to what went before in chapter three. Therefore, since God had given His Word and example Paul charged Timothy to "Preach the Word." Timothy had been made complete and thoroughly equipped for this task so Paul is telling him to get about the work God has fit him for.

What about you? Hasn't God been working in your life? He has taught you. He has given you spiritual heroes and examples of faithful people who have fought the fight of faith. What you do with it is a stewardship. Timothy was to preach and he was to do it when times were good and not so good. He was to do it even when it brought suffering. He was to be ready to herald the word at any time and under any circumstance.

All believers have been called to serve and be on mission. Before you cop out and say, "Well I'm not a preacher" this is a word that means to announce. What Timothy was to do we are all to do—herald or announce the Word. This was what Jesus told His followers in the Great Commission and what He sent the Holy Spirit for at Pentecost. We are to be stewards of the Word and the workings God has been doing in our lives. We are, like Paul said, to be ready. Not to stand down but to always be on standby. We are to announce it when we want to and when we don't. We are to announce it when it is convenient and when it is not. We are to announce it when it is easy and when it is difficult. This is what he meant when he said, "Be ready in season and out of season."

Paul warns Timothy that in the future times will come when people will not put up with the teaching of the truth and that all of us need to be aware that when these times come we are still to announce the truth.

You have been taught the Word of God. You have examples of godliness in your life now and in the past. Now, go announce to the world the good news of Jesus. Be ready and do it.

Day 5

First Read Isaiah 59:12-21

This is the day we look at a Psalm or a passage from one of the prophets to connect the dots to Jesus and the gospel. Most all of the prophets spoke of a coming redeemer, deliverer or the Messiah. They did so with anticipation. We are blessed to have this perspective to look and see those prophecies and see how they have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Most people, at least in some way, know that they are sinful. It seems that people feel guilty as if something is just not right. That is true and the problem is spelled out in these verses. *“Our sins testify against us.”* Not only are we aware of it but the Lord looks and sees and knows that there is no one to deliver. There was no intercessor; there was no one to deal with the injustice. Israel had no way of helping herself.

This is the true reality in all times. No one can save or deliver themselves. We cannot fix the problem of sin and accompanying guilt. Only God can forgive sin and change a person’s heart. It is in God’s power that salvation comes. He intercedes to fight for His people and defeat their enemies. God takes vengeance. The Lord himself will send His Messiah, the deliverer, to Zion which is Jerusalem.

When He speaks of the “covenant” in verse 21 He is speaking of the new covenant which He will make and ratify with Jesus, His own Son’s death and resurrection. He will pour out His Spirit and all will have access to the forgiveness of sin that is made available only through Jesus.

Sin is not a new or modern concept. It has been around since Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Every person and every nation since has been plagued by sin. God has taken the initiative to tell us His plan and then to bring His plan to us in the person of Jesus Christ, His Messiah. Give thanks for what He has done and realize only He can take away your sin and guilt.

WEEK 72 THE HEART'S DESIRES-----Chris Watson

What really is our heart's desire? If we are honest, void of Jesus, we would have to say selfishness, pride, hate, bitterness, and anger, just to name a few. We can't "fix" our own heart, only God can, we need Him. Scripture reminds us that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Sometimes I do well with that and sometimes, not so much. What about you? This week we will look at "the heart's desires."

Day 1

First Read James 4:1-2

Could we not all learn something from James, particularly these first two verses? Notice the one main key that causes the wars and fights among believers, "*Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*" Many arguments happen because of what "I want." I want it done my way, my time, I know best, or I have done this before so they need to listen to me. In the end, our fighting is often brought on by our selfishness. It becomes all about us and what we want. Sometimes wars and fights happen from miscommunication but often it's just plain selfishness. Thinking back on your week, did you have any disagreements? If you are honest, were you at fault? Did you want your way?

"Often we veil our religious quarrels under the disguise of 'spirituality.' We are like Miriam and Aaron, who complained about Moses' wife, but who really were envious of Moses' authority (Num. 12). Or we imitate James and John, who asked for special thrones in the kingdom, when what they really wanted was recognition today (Mark 10:35-45). In both of these instances, the result of selfish desire was chastening and division among God's people. Miriam's sin halted the progress of Israel for a whole week! Selfish desires are dangerous things. They lead to wrong actions ("ye kill, ye fight and war," James 4:2), and they even lead to wrong praying ("When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures," James 4:3 NIV). When our praying is wrong, our whole Christian life is wrong. People who are at war with themselves because of selfish desires are always unhappy people. They never enjoy life. Instead of being thankful for the blessings they do have, they complain about the blessings they do not have. They cannot get along with other people because they are always envying others for what they have and do. They are always looking for that 'magic something' that will change their lives, when the real problem is within their own hearts."⁶

⁶James, Warren Wiersbe

OUCH! This one got me, how about you? I don't want to be selfish, I don't want it to be about me. Even when I am standing on truth with another believer, I can do so lovingly and in a kind spirit, I don't need to be mean spirited and begin a fight.

Verse 2 ends with, "*yet, you do not have because you do not ask.*" This helps us see that often our focus is on us. Instead of praying to God, we try to figure it out on our own. Instead of seeking Him to see if we could be in the wrong or how to deal with a situation, we take it into our own hands. Also, if a person is full of lust, hate or meanness, it is truly hard to actively pray and seek God.

How are things going with you? Do you seek God when seeking to make decisions? Do you seek Him when conflicts arise? Do you want your plan or His and are you seeking Him in it? Remember it is not about you or me, it is about Him. If we are going to share the Gospel with the world then we must spend less time on our sinful desires or getting our way and more in walking with God and sharing His truth.

Day 2

First Read James 4:3-5

James doesn't pull any punches here. When I read today's passage the word picture that comes to mind is someone literally sitting on a fence with one leg hanging on one side and one on the other. James says we are not to do that and he makes it quite clear. In fact James calls those of us who do such, "adulterers and adulteresses." Now that seems harsh, right? But it's true. It's true for you and it's true for me.

Have you ever found yourself trying to be a friend of the world and a friend of God? We obviously live in this world, work in this world, play in this world, and raise a family in this world. The world itself isn't bad, it's the sin in this world that makes it bad. James says we can't be a friend of sin and a friend of God. In fact, if one wants to be a friend of this world, by default they become an enemy of God. Romans 5:10 tells us that before we trusted in Christ, we were enemies of God.

As a friend of God we can't be a friend of this world. As believers it's often easy to say, "Well, I am not doing that" or "at least I am not like them" trying to justify our sin. In our minds we often rate sin and sometimes we even rate it out loud. God doesn't though, sin is sin. Murder is a sin just like hate and stealing are sins, and just like gossip and lying. Believers, as Christ followers, can't seek to know and walk with God and yet have ungodliness in their hearts, even if we think we are justified (which we are not).

Who are you a friend of? Have you given your life to Christ? If so are you seeking to straddle the fence? It cannot be done. In doing so others around you will often clearly see it, and to the unbelievers it is a stumbling block. We must pick a side like Joshua did. Joshua gathered the 12 tribes of Israel and told them that they must decide who they would serve. **Joshua 24:14-15** says, "*Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" We must choose whom we will serve. Today will you "draw a line in the sand" and either decide to trust the Lord with your life or recommit to serve the Lord your God?

Day 3

First Read James 4:6-10

Remember our first day in James? We read about fighting and quarrels. Selfishness and pride are what causes the fighting and quarrels. Yesterday we saw that if we seek to walk with God and also be in this world that it is impossible. Today in our reading we learn how to “upright” the ship. Three words stick out from today’s passage; be humble, submit, and cleanse. These three will lead us walking with God and being in peace with others.

Humility is exactly what Jesus was. It’s been said that pride is the opposite of humility. That is true. Humility is not thinking low of yourself per se, it’s not seeking to put ourselves down. However, it’s having a right perspective on God which then gives us a right perspective on others and on ourselves.

The word submit means we are not our own, but God’s; scripture tells us we have been bought with a price. When I trusted Jesus and committed to follow Him, I was also committing, therefore, to push my desires away and let His take over. Too often I submit to what I want instead of what God wants, how about you? James tells us to submit to God, to let Him take over and command, and He will lead us, He will help us resist the devil.

The last word that sticks out to us is cleanse. Only God can cleanse us. We were cleansed when we trusted Him to take away our sins, and only He can wash away our sins. Often our heart gets “dirty” and we need God to wash it clean. This is not to get saved again in regards to regeneration, but being saved from ourselves daily and many times throughout the day. God must regularly cleanse our heart, we must recognize we need it and ask Him to make us clean.

Humility, submission and cleanse. These three words should be the essence of the believer’s life. Just imagine if you humbled yourself before God and others, submitting to what He wants and, when falling short, asking God to cleanse you from going the wrong way? What if this was our way of living? It should be. Is it yours? Ask God to humble you as you submit to Him and have Him cleanse you all throughout the day.

Day 4

First Read James 4:11-17

It's ok to make plans, but we never know what will happen tomorrow. We always know things can change, and it may be that God might change our plans. Some have described sin as sin of commission or sin of omission. A sin of commission is something that we did, said, thought or want in which we shouldn't. However a sin of omission is not doing something that we know God would have us do. This could be something we find in God's Word or something that God speaks to us specifically about. Therefore James says, *"To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."* An example may be the Lord has told you to go and visit the person down the street and check on them. You don't know if they are lonely or maybe there is something that you can help with, but you know the Lord has told you to go. If you don't, you are disobeying, this is a sin of omission.

James reminds us that we are to obey what the Lord tells us to do whether it is in His Word or something that the Holy Spirit speaks directly to us about. What would the Lord have you obey? What has He spoken to you about that you know you are supposed to do but you keep putting off? You know you need to do it, you know it is the Lord's will, but you keep dragging your feet? Don't continue in sin but obey, allow the Lord to use you.

Day 5

First Read Psalm 22:7-8

Today's verse 8 we also read in **Matthew 27:43**, "*He trusts in God; let God deliver him now.*" Psalm 22 speaks of the "*suffering, praise and posterity*" of the Messiah. (be reminded this was hundreds of years before Jesus, Messiah, would come)

We know from the Gospels that people ridiculed, laughed at, mocked and spat on Jesus. In fact, the folks leading this charge were the "religious leaders." They did some awful things to the Son of God. Can you imagine what that must have been like? Being the Son of God, knowing what was to come and at the same time having people mock you, it must have been difficult. Of course, Jesus knew that God would rescue Him in His own time. He would first die for the sins of the world, be buried and then would rise again.

So the Lord did rescue Jesus, not as those who helped put Him to death were thinking, but He did rescue Him. God's delay (which was not a delay but right on time) not only rescued Jesus but rescued us all at the same time. He rescued Jesus from death and the grave and He rescued us from the same thing. Yes, we will experience physical death but not spiritual death, and we will live eternally with Jesus. And to think, the words listed in Matthew 27 are in our scripture today, long before any of this took place.

God is good. He is our ultimate rescuer. He loves us and desires us to know and walk with Him daily. Do you know Him? Has He rescued you from your sins? If so, thank Him for the rescuing that only He could offer.

WEEK 73 BORN AGAIN!-----Dennis Watson

The first century believers went through incredible persecution and rejection. We can only imagine what it was like for them as they were used of God to blaze and prepare the way for the gospel to come to generations, all the way to us. Peter was writing to give encouragement to those first century believers. The fledgling church needed guidance and encouragement. They needed to know that God was at work in them and through them. They needed to be reminded that God was the one who kept them and that He had this.

Day 1

First Read 1 Peter 1:1-2

The apostle Peter, under the inspiration and the breathing of God, through the Holy Spirit writes, 1 Peter. He does so to encourage the believers who live in the region that is known today as northern Turkey.

Peter identifies himself. His Greek name is Peter and in Aramaic it is Cephas; both mean rock. Peter was the rock according to Jesus, describing his faith when he made his confession of Jesus as, "*The Christ the Son of the living God.*"

He is writing to people he calls pilgrims who have been scattered (the Dispersion) across what is today Northern Turkey. They were probably scattered because of the persecution that had come to believers in the first century. He called them pilgrims because this world is not the permanent home of believers. Look at these two passages that help us understand the idea:

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. 1 Peter 2:11 (NKJV)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:20 (NKJV)

This letter was to be circulated among the churches in these five areas. The "elect" are believers; those who have come into a saving relationship with God by His sovereign activity on their behalf through the work of Jesus Christ in His crucifixion and resurrection. Salvation is the amazing work of God—His foreknowledge, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the obedience and blood of Jesus. Peter wants them to know who they are and how they became believers. God, through His mercy, accomplished this on their behalf. Look at how John said it:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12-13 (NKJV)

All of this God did according to His “foreknowledge.” God knows all things and He works all things according to His glorious plan. Warren Wiersbe explains it this way:

“Foreknowledge” does not suggest that God merely knew ahead of time that we would believe, and therefore He chose us. This would raise the question, “Who or what made us decide for Christ?” and would take our salvation completely out of God’s hands. In the Bible, to foreknow means “to set one’s love on a person or persons in a personal way.”⁷

Be encouraged! You are a child of God by His work in and through you! Give thanks for what He has done.

⁷Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament, Volume 2

Day 2

First Read 1 Peter 1:3-5

Peter continues his encouragement even in the simple, traditional, opening of this letter. We saw yesterday that God had, even in the past, worked for their (and our salvation). These words today have a little different emphasis. I like to say, "God has this." In this case the "this" is you and me. God has you; He has me. He has in His work of salvation wrapped us up and He will finish. He has caused us to be born again into a living hope. A living hope is one that has life in it. It is grounded on the living Word of God. We have life from the Word, from the resurrection and from the Spirit. He has made us alive and we live with this living hope.

He has provided for us an inheritance that is real, will never rot, rust, decay or lose value. It can never be cheapened or changed in a negative way. It can only be valued for all of eternity. Think about it: you are an heir of God! All He owns is yours by inheritance!

Now just think what if it was up to you to keep yourself saved. How secure would that make you feel? I am so thankful for what Peter writes here under the inspiration of the Spirit. He is describing who they are by what God has done and refers to them (and us) as those, "*Who are kept by the power of God.*" He keeps us! Thank God! *He is my keeper and He who began a good work will complete it (Philippians 1:6).* Talk about encouragement. God is my keeper! I really enjoy the wording in the Amplified Bible:

Who are being guarded (garrisoned) by God's power through [your] faith [till you fully inherit that final] salvation that is ready to be revealed [for you] in the last time. 1 Peter 1:5 (AMP)

Once again, give thanks and rejoice in the security He has brought to your life both now and forever.

Day 3

First Read 1 Peter 1:6-9

“In this you greatly rejoice.” What is the “this” in this case? God has saved you, secured you and has set you up in His grace and mercy for eternity. It is in this that you greatly rejoice. I know that, for me, I am way too quick to whine and complain when things don’t go my way. However we all need to set our perspective on what God has done; that is one of the only sure things we can know about. He has saved, secured and set us up for eternity in His Kingdom.

Okay, so we rejoice but what about the trials we face? Peter used the word “trials” rather than “tribulations” or “persecutions,” because he was dealing with the general problems that Christians face as they are surrounded by unbelievers (Wiersbe). Also Peter says, “If need be” which lets us know that there are times in our lives when God knows we need to go through some trials. God uses trials to get us back on track when we have made a wrong turn. This is discipline. The trials are also sometimes to prepare us for spiritual growth. “Temporary” lets us know that compared to the blessings of eternity this time will be very short; which is to say, “This too shall pass.”

The major emphasis of the reason for the trials is to test or prove the “genuineness of your faith.” The testing here is for the purpose of proving. This is what is done in the smelting process with metals. The purpose is to get to the pure metal and remove impurities. God is not interested in just testing us to see what we can do but to prove us and enable us to become strong by removing impurities. As you go through these trials you are strengthened and placed in a position to lean more on God—proving or strengthening your faith.

In Ephesians we read that we as God’s people are to be to the “*praise of His glory.*” Peter now shares that same thing here and connects it to the “*revelation of Jesus Christ.*” God has worked in our lives and we are His trophies, to His praise, honor and glory. This will be ultimately expressed at the time of our ultimate salvation. The revelation of Jesus is literally the “*apokalypsei.*” This is connected with the final coming of Jesus as He establishes His eternal Kingdom. We will be complete and be for His praise, honor and glory.

That is what we are. We are His children, the apple of His eye. We are about bringing praise and glory to Him! Let’s do it!

Day 4

First Read 1 Peter 1:10-12

What must it have been like to have been a prophet writing the sacred scriptures under the leading of the Holy Spirit? They wrote with limited understanding of what they were writing. In other words they often wrote having little idea what it all meant. There would have been understanding about the immediate but the far reaching future ramifications they did not have a clue.

In our “dot connecting” we have looked at what was prophesied and at the time we were studying them, we anticipated the dots that would be connected. Now we are in the New Testament and we are seeing in scripture the fulfillment of many of those prophecies particularly about the Messiah, His suffering and the salvation He came to bring. It is a wonderful thing to live in this time perspective. We have read the prophecies. We are reading about the fulfillment. And now we are experiencing the realization for ourselves. The prophets could only anticipate. They could not grasp the suffering of the Messiah. They could not see how suffering would bring benefits. They could not grasp the glory and how it fit with the suffering. They searched and inquired, longing to know and understand. They stood far off and wanted to know when, and for whom, these things would come.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Hebrews 11:39-40 (NKJV)

The Old Testament prophets wrote in anticipation. We live with realization. One day the ones who anticipated and those who realized some fulfillment will all fully realize the grace and mercy which results in God’s salvation.

God, through the Holy Spirit, gave us the Bible. Not only did the writers of the Old Testament long to experience the things of which they wrote but also the angels “*Desire to look into them.*” Angels are created beings. They do not experience salvation nor do they need salvation. Yet we read here that they are so caught up with the splendor and majesty that they long to see and experience.

It is my opinion that the angels, God’s created intelligences, are standing up yonder looking at you and me wondering why we don’t get busy and give out this tremendous message today. They desire to do it themselves. They would love to come and proclaim it to the world.⁸

⁸Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee

You and I are blessed. The Old Testament prophets wanted to know more and even experience the salvation and grace of which they wrote. The angels desire to look into the glorious salvation. But we are the recipients of this marvelous blessing. Don't miss the riches of what you have!

Day 5

First Read Zechariah 13:7-9

This is the day we connect dots by looking at a passage from the Psalms or one of the prophets and how it connects to Jesus. Zechariah was one of the prophets that Peter spoke about in 1 Peter 1:10. Zechariah, like the other prophets, wrote about the Messiah but did not know it would be Jesus. Peter helps us connect some dots.

In our passages today we read that Zechariah spoke about a shepherd who would be struck. Zechariah records this. In this case the Lord God is the speaker and Jesus, the Messiah, is the Shepherd who is spoken of. His deity is revealed when the Lord God says, *"the man of my companions"* which means the Shepherd is equal with God.

The Lord God says of the Shepherd, *"strike the Shepherd and the sheep will scatter."* How do we know that this applies to Jesus? Because Jesus applies this very passage to Himself in Matthew 26:31.

Then Jesus said to them, *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'* **Matthew 26:31 (NKJV)**

This was predictive of Jesus' death and Jesus applied it to Himself. When He was arrested and crucified His followers scattered. Even Peter scattered, running away and denying Christ three times although he said he would never fall away.

Once again, we find ourselves in the privileged point of perspective. We get to read what the prophets wrote about that they did not understand and they could only anticipate its fulfillment. But we also get to see its fulfillment and application. What a blessing it is. I am thankful for God choosing the Jews and, through the people of Israel, bringing the blessing of salvation and Dots Connected to us! Thanks God for His plan and letting us look in on its glorious unveiling!

WEEK 74 GOD'S WORD IS LIVING----- Chris Watson

When God spoke in the Old Testament times He often spoke through prophets and or visions. While some had the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) they did not have the whole Bible as we do today. What we have is worth far more than anything money could buy. It is the very words of God. It leads us in the way we should go and guides and directs in the good and bad times. Often we take God's Word for granted. Today may we treasure God's Word more than ever before.

Day 1

First Read Hebrews 4:12

Warren Wiersbe says, "The Word exposes our heart; and then, if we trust God, the Word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises. This is why each believer should be diligent to apply himself to hear and heed God's Word. In the Word we see God, and we also see how God sees us. We see ourselves as we really are. This experience enables us to be honest with God, to trust His will, and to obey Him."⁹

The word of God is like a sword or a dagger that gets right to the "heart" of the issue. Notice Wiersbe says the Word "exposes our heart." I am thankful my whole heart is only exposed to God, what about you? Sometimes our true heart isn't so great and we need God to do a "makeover." In looking at God's Word we see who we really are if we are truly seeking to see who we truly are. We also see what God desires and what God wants.

God knows not only our hearts but our thoughts and our intent. We may be able to "fool" many but we can't fool God. We must allow God and His Word to not only speak to our heart but to change our heart. If we read it, hear it, but don't follow it, we are like the man who looks in the mirror and immediately looks away and forgets what he looks like.

What kind of condition is your heart in? Is it bitter, unforgiving, hateful or mean spirited? Or is it forgiving, kind, thoughtful and gracious? As we are with God and in His Word the latter should be true. If not, ask God to work on your heart. Ask Him to make His attitude yours and your thoughts His. We all need a heart checkup, what kind of condition is yours in?

⁹Be Confident, Hebrews, Warren Wiersbe

Day 2

First Read Hebrews 4:13

Everyone will give an account to God, everyone. Scripture reminds us that in the end everyone will bow before the Lord, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. All will bow, either willingly now or unwillingly later, and will give an account of our lives. Scripture tells us the things that are done for the Lord with pure and right motives will last; the other things will burn up.

We will give an account of all of our actions, particularly what we have done with Jesus. The Bible tells us that we are without excuse. When we meet the Lord, all of our good works, deeds, words, or anything else will not allow us to spend eternity with the Lord, only what we did with Jesus. That is, did we acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord and call on Him to save us? In doing so we are made disciples of Jesus and we spend the rest of our lives following Jesus. Do you want to know God? Do you want to spend eternity with Him? Then heed His words, *“Follow me.”*

As believers we will give an account of all of our actions, words and deeds. Matthew (12:37) reminds us that we will give an account specifically for our words. Oh my! Sometimes my words are godly and sometimes not so much. As believers we will give an account for everything. God will not say, “Well you have more good than bad so you will spend eternity with Me.” No, remember only Jesus’ blood saves us, but rewards will be given in Heaven.

There are five heavenly crowns mentioned in the New Testament that will be awarded to believers. They are the imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life. The Greek word translated “crown” is *stephanos* (the source for the name Stephen the martyr) and means “a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally. Used during the ancient Greek games, it referred to a wreath or garland of leaves placed on a victor’s head as a reward for winning an athletic contest. As such, this word is used figuratively in the New Testament of the rewards of heaven God promises those who are faithful. Paul’s passage in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 best defines for us how these crowns are awarded.”

Obviously our goal as believers is not to “store up crowns.” If it is, our heart and minds are not in the right place. This reminds us that our actions, words and thoughts matter. How is your heart? How are your actions? How are your words? We can’t straighten up and do better if our answer is “not so good.” We need God to perform a “heart change.” Does your heart need some work? Remember, we will all give an account of our actions.

Day 3

First Read Hebrews 4:14-15

These are some of my favorite verses in all of scripture. The ultimate authority, creator, sustainer and savior is our great High Priest. He is not some “dead God,” or a god of many other religions that can’t be known because they are so great and mighty. In fact, our God is alive and He can be known personally. Hallelujah!

In the Old Testament the high priest was the only priest who could enter the Holy Place, where God’s presence lived. Once a year the high priest would make a sacrifice for the sins of the people. The high priest in the Old Testament was a clear picture of what Jesus has done for us. With His blood He has covered our sins and He is the only one who could.

Jesus, came to earth to die for our sins. He didn’t just spend a few days here, His ministry lasted for three years. If we look at all of Jesus’ ministry, we see that He experienced ridicule, being laughed at, people turning their backs on Him, excruciating physical pain, unimaginable emotional pain and even death. Jesus understands what we go through, He understands our tears, He understands our temptations, He can understand our “bad days,” and He can understand our ridicule because He has been there. God physically came and walked the earth, so we could know Him through His shed blood.

Spend some time today thanking God that He loved us enough to come to earth and save us. Thank Him for being our peace and hope in times of hurt and pain. Remember that without sinning, He came and experienced that same hurt and pain we experience because of our sin.

Day 4

First Read Hebrews 4:16

Wiersbe says, “If we fail to hold fast to our confession, we are not proving that Jesus Christ has failed. We are only telling the world that we failed to draw on His grace and mercy when it is freely available to us.”¹⁰ We have 24/7 direct access to the throne of the Lord. No one has to go for us, or can go for us. We can talk to God directly and when we fail to, we often falter.

Not only can we approach His throne of grace, but we see that we can do so boldly. When are we to do it? We read in verse 16 that we are to approach “*In time of need.*” At first glance we may read that as only when things really get in a pinch. Granted we often need clear direction in times of crisis or what we see as “times of need.” However, if we are honest we are always in a “time of need.” In other words there is never a time when we don’t need mercy and grace from the Lord. There are times that we may recognize that we need it more than others, but we always need it.

Remember the High Priest would go into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice for the people. We now go directly to the Father. We seek Him, we confess our sins to Him, we talk to Him, and we receive instruction and guidance from His Word. When God’s Word pierces our heart (Hebrews 4:12) and convicts us of sin, He shows us what He would have us do. Then we can draw near to Him and confidently confess and be in tune with Him.

Are you boldly approaching the throne of Jesus? Don’t do so lackadaisically, haphazardly, or feeling like you are not worthy. The blood of Jesus, and only the blood of Jesus, has made you worthy to come to Him. Come to Him with your burdens, your sins, and with your requests, and you will receive mercy and grace.

¹⁰Ibid

Day 5

First Read Nahum 1

As we look at a book from the Old Testament today, we know that it will point towards Jesus, as much of the Old Testament does. Nahum was a prophet and was to deliver a message to the city of Nineveh. Remember who else in the Old Testament was to deliver a word to the Ninevites? Jonah. Like Jonah, Nahum's message was not a fun one as it was going to be a message of judgement. In verses 1-15, Nahum gives a message of good news to Judah telling them to keep their feasts, that the wicked one would no longer pass through them.

"Today, looking back on this prophecy, we know that Jesus was the messenger God promised to send to Judah. When he started His ministry, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Jesus also said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:27). In verse 15, Nahum told God's people to remember their feasts, because those feasts, like the Passover feast, pointed to Jesus."¹¹

God's plan is incredible. It's a plan that no human being alone could have come up with. All throughout the Old Testament we see Jesus conveyed. Though we don't see His name, He is all in the Old Testament. Thanks be to God that we get to be part of His plan. He has saved us by His blood and now we can live that good news and share with others.

¹¹ Old Story New, Marty Machowski, pg 396

Chapters 1-10 of Hebrews is doctrinal while the remainder of the book, starting with chapter 11, is practical. The start of the practical section begins with what has been called the “faith chapter.” It has also been called the “hall of faith.” In this chapter we are told about people of old, that is Old Testament saints, who responded to God by faith. They were able to accomplish great and mighty feats as they obeyed God by way of faith. In the opening words faith is defined and then it is demonstrated. The reality of this chapter is faith works. It really does!

Day 1

First Read Hebrews 11:1-4

Right off the bat, in verse 1, we have a definition of faith. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”* Substance is a word that means to stand under; so it means foundations. The word for evidence here means conviction. So this is a foundational belief that God will do what He says. A person who has faith stands on the foundation of what God says and lives with conviction based on what He says. Warren Wiersbe says “True Bible faith is confident obedience to God’s Word in spite of circumstances and consequences.” Oswald Chambers says “faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the unseen as seen.”

I’m not sure if you have ever thought about it but everyone has a guiding compass for their life. They have something or someone who is the guiding light of choices and decisions. This largely answers the question, “Why do you do what you do?” As you read about the Old Testament saints, God’s Word became the guiding principle for their lives, choices, and activity. They lived by faith. They linked up with God and followed what He said and their faith went to work and their faith worked.

The Old Testament saints were commended for this and it was for them the very essence of how they viewed all things. They understood that the universe and all things were ordered by God. For them this became their way of viewing their world and grasping reality. Life only makes sense from understanding that God made all things for His purpose. This sets the stage for one’s worldview.

Surrendering to the truth of God, as revealed to you in the Word of God, is real faith. Taking God at His Word and then living accordingly is liberating surrender. It is liberating because we do not have to live without a compass or try to live with an ever-changing one. To surrender is to give up trying to figure out absolutely everything and trusting and falling on God.

Do you have a working faith? If so, you have discovered that it really does work and the more you work it the more real it becomes.

Day 2

First Read Hebrews 11:4-12

God gave testimony to the faith of these Old Testament saints. This means that He commended them for acting in obedient surrender to His Word. Without a surrendering faith it is not possible to receive such a testimony from God. All of the activity of God pointed to Jesus. In fact, it is safe to say that the Old Testament saints placed their faith in God and the revelation they had of Him at that time. They were all saved or received commendation from God due to that faith. Abraham was considered righteous because of his faith.

In this section today we have five examples or demonstrations of faith that works. All of these were commended for their faith. Abel, by faith, offered a better sacrifice than Cain. By faith Enoch pleased God and was taken not seeing death. By faith Noah built an ark and saved his family and the human race. By faith Abraham moved to a land he knew nothing about and arrived there only by God's leading. By faith Abraham's wife Sarah had a child in her old age. By faith Abraham became the father of a great nation and through him all of the people are blessed.

Faith seems like a small thing; however it is **THE** powerful connection to the sovereign God of the universe. How can we possibly discount the faith that led to the building of the Ark and the new beginning that took place after the flood waters dissipated? Would it be possible to discount the choices of Abraham and Sarah that led to the family line that became the Jewish people who became the line from which Jesus Christ the Messiah came? Now just think about the impact of the Old Testament saints. Through their faith the course of human history was changed; however, not just history but eternity for billions of people.

Faith that works is a faith that saves. It doesn't just save the person exercising the faith but it reaches way beyond just like with Abraham, Sarah and Noah. Think about your own faith. Does it work? Sounds like a loaded question doesn't it? James said that faith without works is dead. Your faith works and in doing so it reaches beyond you. Faith works salvation but it also has a tendency to work on other people as they see you exercise your faith. What are you doing by faith?

Day 3

First Read Hebrews 11:13-28

This is the day that we make the connection of the week's passage with Jesus and the gospel. It is a blessing to be writing and preaching at the same time. Right now we are preaching about the Day of Pentecost in week 45 (July 11) and I am writing about the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. It occurred to me that the Old Testament saints were pioneers of the faith. They had no one to learn from. They were the first. Although they did not know Jesus or even know anything about Him they trusted in God to deliver. Jesus is the deliverer whom the entire Bible is about. These Old Testament saints responded to the revelation they had. In essence they were looking forward to God's saving plan in Jesus and we are looking back. Think about it this way, they had the pull of faith—being pulled forward to what was “far off.” We are being both pulled and pushed by faith. We have the testimony of all of the saints who have believed God in the past. In this we are pushed by the faith of those who have preceded us but we are also being pulled by the promises of God which are yet to be fulfilled.

Talk about some weird people! Can you imagine the first people who lived by faith in the one true living God? What if it had been up to us to be the faith pioneers? I am thankful for the faith pioneers! They believed and lived with vision. Abraham was willing to offer his own son as a sacrifice. He knew that God would take care of it by either raising up his son or providing a sacrifice. God chose to provide a sacrifice.

Moses, with vision, rejected the wealth of Egypt and being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The writer says that Moses rejected the wealth of Egypt by choosing Christ and a heavenly reward. That is amazing that he says Moses “chose Christ” even though He had not yet been born into the world. Moses was living by faith by seeing the invisible!

Dr. George Morrison, a great Scottish preacher, once said, “The important thing is not what we live in, but what we look for.” These men and women of faith lived in tents, but they knew a heavenly city awaited them. God always fulfills His promises to His believing people, either immediately or ultimately.¹²

Jesus pulls it all together. He did for them and He does for us. Give thanks!

¹²Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament - The bible Exposition Commentary -New Testament, Volume 2

Day 4

First Read Hebrews 11:29-38

There are many names written in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 but thank the Lord there was not time or enough room to include them all. All who trust and have trusted in God's salvation through Jesus Christ could be included. It may seem at times that your faith works seem so insignificant. But living by faith is never small or insignificant.

These saints of old were so focused on the truth, word, ways, and promises of God that they would not be distracted. They kept their eyes on the plan and promise of God. By faith they followed through. They went through all kinds of trials and difficulties and some lost their lives in the process. They did not experience the things promised but they surely laid the foundation for us and now their faith is complete. For centuries people have heard their testimony. They prepared the way for the full expression of God's redemption and those of us who have lived since Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead are recipients of their faith and faithfulness. Now their faith is complete—in us. What a blessing it is for them to see and receive those into heaven and hear their testimony and how the faith of these Old Testament saints impacted so many people.

Faith looks to the future, for that is where the greatest rewards are found. The people named in this chapter (and those unnamed) did not receive “the promises” (what was promised, Heb. 11:13) but they had God's witness to their faith that one day they would be rewarded. God's purpose involves Old Testament saints as well as New Testament saints! One day all of us shall share that heavenly city that true saints look for by faith. We today should give thanks for these saints of old, for they were faithful during difficult times, and yet we are the ones who have received the “better blessing.” They saw some of these blessings afar off (see John 8:56), but we enjoy them today through Jesus Christ. If the saints of old had not trusted God and obeyed His will, Israel would have perished and the Messiah would not have been born.¹³

We have been studying now for three years. We have called these events “biblical, historical events.” What are some historical events you have been part of in your life of faith? Those events become life and eternity changing events. They become times when people have an encounter with the living God and begin to trust Him; as a result a testimony is built and God is exalted and glorified.

¹³Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament- The Bible Exposition Commentary- New Testament, Volume 2

The saints of old can teach us many lessons as we read their accounts. One thing we really need to learn and apply daily so that those who come behind us can hear about and see is our faith. We must become so zeroed in on God's truth, His word, His promises and His ways that we can guard against distractions that can hamper our faith. People are watching and need our testimony of faith.

Day 5

First Read Psalm 25

Today is the day we look at a passage from the Psalms or one of the prophets to see how it connects to Jesus or our great salvation. David, the psalmist and King, is mentioned in Hebrews 11:32. He is one of those heroes of the faith. David trusted in God's plan to save him at some point in the future. David was aware that he was a sinner and that he could not save himself. Psalm 25 is a prayer of David for God to forgive him and take his sins away.

David used two words that speak of God's forgiveness of sin. In verse 5 he wrote, *"You are the God of my salvation."* In verse 22 he writes, *"Redeem Israel, oh God."* Redeem means to buy back and salvation points to God's work in Jesus to forgive sin. Both of these words connect to Jesus who is our redeemer and our salvation. God, by His very nature, is the Redeemer and Savior.

Think about it. Why does God forgive sin? David wrote about it in this prayer. God forgives sins because of His character. He is merciful, and full of grace and truth. He forgives sins "for His name's sake." God's forgiveness of our sin show how great He is. His character is on display and He is glorified in forgiving sin.

Give thanks and praise to God that He has saved you. Not because of who you are but because of who He is. Talk about a humbling thought! Our salvation and redemption is all about Him!

WEEK 76 LOVING ONE ANOTHER-----Chris Watson

Scripture tells us the world will know us by our love one for another. However, have you seen how Christians sometimes treat other Christians? Maybe you have been on the receiving or giving end of this behavior. How we relate to each other is a testimony to the entire world. Our treatment of others shows other believers and the world that we love God if we do so in a kind, gracious and loving way.

Day 1

First Read 1 John 3:11-15

“If a person admires and worships God and finds fulfillment by taking refuge in his merciful care, then his behavior toward his fellow man will reflect the love of God.”¹⁴ If I am walking with God as He intends, being obedient and loving Him, then love towards others should be evident. If we are not walking with God, being disobedient, then it will often be clear that we don’t show that same love towards mankind.

We will look at verse 16 more tomorrow but it says, *“This is how we know what love is, He laid down His life for us.”* Love comes only from God, He is the definition of love. He loved and loves us with an everlasting love. Scripture reminds us that Jesus died for us, while we were yet sinners. He showed His love for us when He died on the cross for our sins.

Verse 11 tells us that we should love one another. If God is love and we receive our love from Him, then we can only love others by His love. In other words, we can’t do it in our own love and grace because we have none of our own. That’s why we must yield to God and His love to love others. Scripture reminds us that the world will know we are His disciples by our love one for another. Today’s verses in 1 John (especially verse 10) remind us that we are to love our brother or sister, those who are other believers specifically. We are to love them in word and deed. We are also to love in tough love as Paul often did in his writings; he loved them enough to tell the truth. Richard Blackaby has said, “It is far better to have an enemy who tells you the truth, than a friend who tells you lies.” A true friend loves his brother or sister when they also speak the tough truth; this is real love. We don’t just need “yes” people in our life, but brothers and sisters that will tell us the truth.

If we don’t regularly experience God’s love, we can become bitter, angry, hard-hearted, and downright mean. This is what happened to Cain. He let hate and anger burn in his heart and since he didn’t deal with it, it unfortunately dealt with him.

¹⁴John Piper

Is there another believer who you are having a hard time loving? Have you asked God to help you? If not begin today, ask Him to give you His grace and love for that person, being reminded the only way we can truly love others is through God's love.

Day 2

First Read 1 John 3:16-24

We can say we love someone but actions always speak louder than words. For instance, a person may say he loves us, but if he continues to act in a way that is mean or nasty towards us and continues to apologize, then that love may really not be there. Words must be followed up with actions.

Verse 17 tells us that if we see our brother or sister in need and don't pay attention or see that we can help or meet the need, then the love of God does not abide in us! We saw this happen very clearly in the book of Acts with the beginning of the Church. Remember Acts 2, particularly in verses 42-45, speaks of how they fellowshiped with each other as they sold their possession and gave to anyone who had need. They didn't do so because they had to but they wanted to; they truly loved other believers.

There are believers in need all around us. When we think of needs, we often think financial. It is true that there are those who have financial needs, and God may have you meet such needs. But needs are not just financial, but can be emotional and spiritual. Some people need to be mentored, guided, and instructed. Some just need someone to listen and be there for them as they go through a difficult time.

There are needs of others all around us. What if we as believers were aware of each other's needs? The need to pray, the need to listen and share, the need to give and the need to give or receive guidance. How might you meet such a need today? How might God use you to encourage and love others today? Pray and ask God if He would bring someone specific to mind that you can bless financially, emotionally or spiritually. How might God use you to bless someone?

Day 3

First Read 1 John 4:7-11

Our world often defines love as a feeling or say love is relative, meaning love is whatever you want it to be. Yet to the same folks, money is not relative. If you owed someone \$500, you couldn't say, "I will give you \$250, because it is all relative, it's all the same." Relativism doesn't work in our culture nor in any other culture.

We have already said that God is love; in person He is the very definition of love. Remember this is how we can love others because He first loved us and demonstrated that love on the cross dying for our sins. Verse 8 says, *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."* This is a pretty strong but true statement. This verse means that if we can't or won't love our brother or sister (through God's love), it might be that God's love is not in us, that is we are not a believer. Scripture tell us that faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26). It doesn't say we are saved by works for we can't be. If we could be saved by works, we would not need Jesus, but we can't, so we need Jesus. It does say that faith is dead if it is not followed by works.

The words that Jesus gave to the disciples were, *"Follow Me."* It was a life change. Christ changed their lives, and they followed Him. They wanted to know Him and His will and to have an ever-flowing relationship with Him. It was not just saying a prayer and "got that taken care of." Rather it was put your trust in Jesus, confess your need for Him, and follow Him.

How can you love others today? How can you love your spouse, your kids and or your parents? How can you love your coworkers or class mates? How can you love the person that seems unlovable? How can you love your enemy or that non-believer that mocks you? We can only do this through His love. Ask God to help you love others today, through His power.

Day 4

First Read 1 John 4:12-21

In the New King James Version the word “abide” is used 5 times in verses 12-16. It speaks of both God abiding in us (our hearts and mind) and us abiding in Him. The word “abide” in the Greek simply means to “remain” or to “stay.” God abides in our heart; that means He takes up residence and lives with us, He is always with us everywhere we go. Psalm 139:7-10 says *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”* God abides in us, at all places and at all times.

In verses 15-16 of our passage today we learn that we also abide in God. This means that we are to remain/stay with God. This sounds easy, right? And yet the temptation to walk away is real. The hymn that most of us know says, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above” describes how we have the tendency to not abide in Christ all the time. The problem is that when we don’t abide in Christ, we get ourselves in trouble and give into temptation that we would resist if we were abiding in Him. The importance of “abiding” continues to be revealed to me as a husband, father, Pastor and friend. I must abide in Christ.

We abide in Christ when we read His Word, spend time in prayer, worship, or when we just enjoy His presence. Abiding in Christ most often doesn’t happen by accident, but rather with intentionality. We intentionally make time to be with Jesus for if we don’t make time, we most likely will find ourselves not abiding in Christ. How are you abiding in Christ? How are you letting Him abide in you? Are you intentional about it? Do you look to allow not just routines, but rather time with God daily? Ask God to help you abide in Him today and listen as He speaks.

Day 5

First Read Psalm 35

David was often running for His life. In this Psalm we see David asking God to protect Him and to take care of His enemies. David was seeking not to take vengeance on his own. We should learn from this that we need to let God handle our battles, even things that are said or done to us. He is in control. That's not to say we don't speak up if God leads in that way, but in the end we realize vengeance is not ours.

However, the end of Psalm 35:19 says, *"those who hate me without cause."* David felt that he was hated without cause. We know Jesus was hated without cause. We know this from the whole of the Gospel but also Psalm 69:4 and John 15:25 that say that Jesus would be and was hated without cause. Marty Machowski says, "They wanted an earthly king. The religious rulers hated Jesus for all kinds of reasons; they were jealous for his following, upset that he called them fakes (hypocrites), and furious when Jesus reached out to the Samaritans."¹⁵

Remember what Jesus did when they were mocking Him, spitting on Him, and saying that He was lying about who He really was? He did nothing. He trusted God's plan and knew that God was in control and knew God would right any wrongs that needed to be taken care of. Oh the things we could learn for this! Jesus didn't seek to defend Himself; He let God take care of that. As believers we are to follow God, trust Him, obey Him, and let God do whatever needs to be done. Remember we need to trust Him and know that no matter what, He is in control.

Are you being ridiculed, laughed at, or mocked? Do what God would have you do and then trust Him. What do you need to put in God's hands today?

¹⁵Old Story New, pg 407

WEEK 77 WORTHY IS THE LAMB-----Dennis Watson

The book of Revelation is part of a much larger context: the whole Bible. Whereas Genesis is the book of beginnings, Revelation is the book of consummation. It is the message given to John in the form of visions in which the divine program of redemption is brought to fulfillment. For three years we have been tracing the hand of God as He displays His power, glory and plan to redeem all of creation from the futility of sin. Over the next two weeks we will be looking at the unfolding of God's final plan to bring His plan to its glorious, eternal fulfillment. Seek to have in your mind what it will be like when all of the dots are ultimately connected!

Day 1

First Read Revelation 5:1-5

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is the last chapter of dot connecting. In it we find the wonderful completion of all that God has been doing. He brings it all together in the New Heaven and the New Earth. God gives John visions in which He reveals His final plan. The vision today begins with God the Father seated on the throne in heaven holding a scroll. It was written on both front and back which indicates nothing more could be added. The scroll was sealed with seven seals representing the final plan of God to bring His judgment and sovereign rule to the earth. It was the "title deed" to all that the Father promised Jesus because of His sacrifice on the cross.

However, the seals could only be opened by one who was qualified. There was no one to open the scroll so John was saddened to the point of weeping. A title deed can only be opened by the appointed heir. Jesus is the "heir of all things" (**Hebrews 1:2**). He is also our "Kinsman-redeemer" that we looked at back in Ruth.

One of the elders spoke and encouraged those around by saying there was one who was worthy. He said, "*Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.*" This was clearly referring to Jesus. This is a case of dots being connected. In Genesis 49:9-10, Jacob blessed his son Judah calling him a lion's whelp. He also said that the scepter would not depart from Judah. Jesus is the king Jacob was speaking of.

Jesus was worthy to open the scroll that revealed the final victory plan of God to restore His kingdom and destroy evil forever. He was worthy because He was the one who had won the victory over sin and through the resurrection was proclaimed by God to be the eternal King. Rejoice that the Kingdom of God is at hand and we know the final chapter! Give thanks that He is in control! He will ultimately cause the "*kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ*" (**Revelation 11:15**).

Day 2

First Read Revelation 5:6-8

From yesterday we saw God the Father seated on the throne holding a scroll. The scroll was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. The scroll revealed the final victory of God. There was only one who was worthy to open the scroll revealing its contents and thus unfolding what was to come. An elder in the throne room indicated there was one who could open the scroll and its seven seals who was the Lion of the tribe of Judah which pointed to Jesus. Today He comes forward and receives the scroll.

John sees in his vision a lamb that looked like it had been slain. It had seven horns and seven eyes. It was a strange sight but obviously this was more to reveal that it was Jesus Christ who was the Son of God who died and was raised from the dead. He is the one worthy to take and open the scroll and begin the process of God's judgment and rule on the earth. He looked as though He had been slain because He is the one who was pierced and crucified. The seven horns are indicative of His power. He is all powerful. The seven eyes speak of His all-seeing and all-knowing nature.

He takes the scroll and the elders and living creatures around the throne begin to worship Him. They praise and worship Him because He is omnipotent—all powerful. They praise and worship Him because He is omniscient—all knowing. They praise Him because He is the lamb who has taken away the sin of the world and now is about to begin the final installment of God's plan of judgment and redemption.

It is amazing that God has made all these things known to us. All the way back to the opening pages of Genesis God has been revealing His incredible plan. He has been overseeing it and unfolding it. He is not yet finished but we know He will. That is what Revelation is all about. Give thanks to God for Jesus and His plan of redemption that is still unfolding. We are in His hands!

Day 3

First Read Revelation 5:9-14

This is the day that we make the connection of the week's passage with Jesus and the gospel. After Jesus took the scroll from the elders, the four living creatures representing God's creation and all of the angels began to sing songs of worship, the gospel, missions, and prophecy to the lamb which was Jesus. The old song was the song of creation but the new and eternal son is the song of redemption. The weeping had ended and the praise begun.

They sang a worship song to the lamb because He is worthy. To worship means to ascribe worth. There is none other who is worthy to receive this praise except Jesus. He is worthy because He was slain and accomplished redemption.

The song was a song of the gospel because the lamb had been slain. He was slain to take away sin. He was slain to remove guilt. He was slain so that those who trust in Him will live forever. The song of the gospel is about the cross and the blood. Some people want to remove reference to blood from hymns. Others are offended when blood is mentioned in preaching. But it is by His blood that we are made righteous.

They sang a song of missions. Jesus' death on the cross bought for all people salvation. The redemption Jesus purchased by His blood was for people from all of the tribes, tongues, peoples and nations. The plan of Jesus our Savior was that the message would be taken to all nations.

They sang a prophetic song. In verse ten we see that what Jesus has accomplished would make it possible that "We shall reign on the earth." When Jesus Christ returns to earth in triumph, He will establish His righteous kingdom for 1,000 years; and we shall reign with Him (Rev. 20:1-6). The prayers of the saints, "*Thy kingdom come!*" will then be fulfilled. Creation will then be set free from bondage to sin (Isa. 11:1-10; Rom. 8:17-23), and Christ shall reign in justice and power.

We have so much to sing about now, but can you imagine the songs we will sing then! Can you imagine the power, joy and enthusiasm with which all will sing! We may sing with what appears to be boredom now but I assure you then we will sing with great joy and the sound will be overwhelming.

Start singing the songs of praise and worship anticipating that glorious time. Practice singing like He is the only one listening.

Day 4

First Read Revelation 6

Jesus was worthy to take the scroll and open the seven seals. In breaking the seals the final judgment of God began. The first six seals were opened in rapid succession, one after the other. With each one another judgment of God swept across the earth. We know from scripture that this judgment is coming. It is part of that time known as the Great Tribulation. We also know that it is part of God's plan to deal with sin and establish His reign of justice, righteousness and peace. There is no need to fear these judgments because God has taken care of His own.

When the first seal is opened, the deceiver, who is the Antichrist, goes through the earth as a conqueror who went out conquering. This is the one who imitates Christ pretending to be Him. Jesus opened the seal and He is the one who is in charge.

The second seal is opened by Jesus and war sweeps over the earth. What a contrary picture. The world longs for a worldwide leader believing He will bring peace but instead of peace ultimately war comes. The second seal, again under the control of Jesus, brings war in the midst of the Great Tribulation.

When the third seal is opened, famine sweeps across the earth. War and famine go together. Think about a war that is really a world war. There would be a shortage of food and what food would be available, the price would be exorbitant. This would be one of the ways that the Antichrist would gain control of the economy.

When the fourth seal is opened, death and hades are unleashed. John saw these enemies going forth to claim their prey, armed with weapons of the sword, hunger, pestilence (death), and wild beasts. In ancient times, hunger, pestilence, and the ravages of beasts would be expected to accompany war. We know that Jesus is in control and ultimately both death and hades will be cast into hell (Revelation 20:14)

The fifth seal being opened gives a glimpse of encouragement. Those who have died as witnesses (martyrs) are seen asking "*How long, O Lord, Holy and True, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*" These saints are pleading for justice on the basis of God's law.

The sixth seal brings the appearance on the earth of worldwide convulsions and catastrophes. All of nature will be affected. There are earthquakes, the stars fall and the sun is darkened and the moon becomes like blood. The result is different from what we saw in the fifth seal where the martyrs cried, "Avenge us;" here the unbelievers on earth cry "Hide us."

The opening of the seventh seal will introduce the seven "trumpet judgments" (Rev. 8-11) and the wrath of God will increase both in intensity and scope. But before that occurs, we are assured that in His wrath, God will remember mercy (Hab. 3:2). Despite the wrath of God and the terror inspired by Satan and his helpers, multitudes will be saved through the blood of Jesus Christ. No matter what the age or dispensation, God's way of salvation has always been the same: faith in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.¹⁶

When all of this comes, who can stand? No one can stand against the wrath of God. Our only hope is Jesus.

¹⁶Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Serues) - New Testament- The Bible Exposition Commentary
- New Testament, Volume 2

Day 5

First Read Psalm 89:1-29

Day five is the day that we look at a psalm or one of the prophets and make a connection to Jesus or our great salvation. The New Scofield Reference Bible calls Psalm 89 the psalm of the Davidic Covenant. It is a psalm that is about the faithfulness of God concerning the promise made to King David. It is a Psalm written by a man named Ethan about King David but it was fulfilled by King Jesus.

The main topic of this psalm is the faithfulness of God. The faithfulness of God is mentioned ten times. The word “covenant” is mentioned four times. This is a psalm of great excitement. It is different from the previous psalm which was characterized by gloom. No gloom here, only praise and rejoicing because God will show His faithfulness to King David.

God kept His promise to David by sending Jesus who is “*The Holy One of Israel.*” Victory over sin is the main celebration of the book of Revelation. It was foretold in the Old Testament and in our passage today and celebrated in Revelation. The writer of Psalm 89 began to celebrate what was to come because of God’s faithfulness.

Now we celebrate because we are the “generations to come” in Psalm 89:1&4. God’s covenant to David was that He would be sending One in his line.

J. Vernon McGee spoke of the faithfulness of God that was emphasized in Psalm 89:

The covenant centers on the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him God says, “Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” Look at this -- it is wonderful. When God sent the Lord Jesus into this world, He came as the only begotten Son, and by His incarnation yonder at Bethlehem He became the Son of God. Thus He was revealed in His life of humiliation -- God manifested in the flesh. And after He died a sacrificial death -- for that is the reason He came from heaven -- He became in resurrection the firstborn, the first begotten from the dead. He is speaking of the resurrected Christ:” Also I will make him my firstborn” -- the resurrected Christ, the One who came back from the dead after He had died on the cross. It simply means that the scepter of this universe is in nail pierced hands.¹⁷

God is always and only faithful. It is impossible for God to lie and break His promises. He assures David time and again He would keep His covenant with David. We are the recipients of that! Our salvation is a miracle of God’s plan and purpose! Give praise to Him, always!

¹⁷Thru The bible with J. Vernon McGee

WEEK 78 AT THE THRONE WORSHIPPING-----Chris Watson

Heaven will be a great place where we will enjoy God's presence 24/7 apart from sin and its effects. If that sounds boring or unexciting to you, it could very well be that you are not worshipping God on a regular basis now. It's been said that knowing God on earth is a warm-up for heaven. How are you walking and worshipping Him now?

Day 1

First Read Revelation 7:1-10

It has been said that the end is near. We do know that it is closer today than it was yesterday, and no one knows the day or the hour when Jesus will come back. There are some things that we do know, based on verses 9-10. All people (from all tribes, nations, people and tongues) were praising God. This isn't saying that all peoples are doing this, but that there were people praising God from all tribes and or nations. In other words, God will not come back until every tribe, people group, and nation hears the Gospel, and some from every group will trust in Jesus.

According to the IMB (International Mission Board) there are 11,500 people groups in the world. Of those people groups, 6,808 are less than 2% evangelical. There are 3,058 unreached and unengaged people groups in the world, and of those people groups 329 of them have a population over 1000.¹⁸ So 9,866 people groups either have no access to the Gospel or if they do, only 2% or less of their population are evangelical Christians. This helps us get a perspective of the people who still need to be reached with the Gospel.

Are you looking forward to Jesus coming back? Do you want to do your part? Share your faith, go on a mission trip, and ask God how you might be involved on going and sharing with unreached/unengaged people groups. Just think how God might use you. Think how God has used some of you as you have shared your faith, not only with your friends, but with those in West Virginia, Baltimore, Canada, Southeast Asia and NAME just to name a few. I have been on seven international mission trips and each time I have truly been changed and reminded of the lostness in our world. We are part of God's plan, and He lets us be a part. May we be an obedient part; all need to hear the Good News.

Notice the people are praising God and calling out and recognizing that salvation belongs to the Lord and to the Lord alone. There is only one name under heaven by which men must be saved and that is Jesus. Have you called on His name? Have you shared it with others? How are you sharing it now?

¹⁸ <http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/default.aspx>

Day 2

First Read Revelation 7:11-12

Today's scripture tells us that the angels, elders, and the four living creatures fell on their face worshipping God. Notice what they were saying though, "*blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God.*" In other words God is either all of these things or deserves all of these. God blesses, and knowing God is a blessing. God deserves all the glory; we don't deserve any of it. All wisdom comes from God and God alone. God is also worthy to be honored and to Him all thanksgiving is given. Remember any good and perfect gift comes from the Lord. Lastly, God is mighty, there is no one that compares to Him. The angels could have gone on and on about who God is, for He is everything. In these verses we have the angels, the elders, and the creatures praising the Lord, and in our verses from yesterday we have every tribe, nation, tongue and people group doing the same.

Think about those worshipping the Lord. How did they get there, particularly the tribes and people groups? Through Jesus, right? How do we get to know God and experience Him now and in heaven? Through Jesus, trusting Him as our Savior and Lord and following Him. For if we truly trust Him, we will follow. What about those closest to us? What about your spouse, kids, family, coworkers and friends? Will they be there worshipping with you? Only God knows their true heart. Often times, we don't know or are not sure of whether or not those closest to us are believers. We can share with them and ask if they know God and if they have trusted Him. We can watch their lives and who they are following. It's often the hardest to share with those closest, but it should not be. Those are the ones that we love and want to experience God and heaven along with us.

Who are you praying for today that is lost? Who are you asking God to do a miracle in? With whom today do you need to share your faith? Do you need to pick up the phone and call a friend and ask him where he stands with Jesus? If we truly have experienced Jesus and His blessings, we will want others to experience Him as well. So who will you share and talk with today? May God give you the words and peace that you need to share with others.

Day 3

First Read Revelation 7:13-17

Our passages today speaks of those that are saved during the Tribulation. Other parts of Revelation help us see that the Tribulation will be an awful time. Daniel 9 and 12 also speak of how the Tribulation will be an intense time. The Great Tribulation is mentioned in our passage today. The length of the Tribulation will be 7 years and the Great Tribulation will be the last 3 ½ years and will be the most intense time. Today's scripture does tell us that some will be saved during this time, but it will be an awful time.

Those saved will be saved just like you and I were, their robes washed and, *"made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* The only way that we can be saved is by Jesus' blood. Only His blood can save us. We are saved when we put our faith in Him and what He has done, and if we have done this, we then follow Him for the rest of our lives; we become His disciples, followers of Jesus. Only Jesus' blood can save us.

Jesus loves us so much. Verse 17 tells us that *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* This is true for those coming out of the Tribulation and also true for us as believers. Let's be honest: this sin-ridden world can get discouraging and depressing if our eyes are not on Jesus. We have all been through trying times, and God can and will use those to draw us to Him even more. Those times can be painful. God tells us that He will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no tears, and heaven will be full of God and God's glory. Take a few moments and try to think of a place without sin and the effects of sin. Can you do it? I can't, because all we have ever known is sin dating all the way back to Adam. Thankfully in this world we have the Holy Spirit and God's leading. Can you imagine going through it and not having it? God is good, praise the Lord; thank Him for saving you.

Day 4

First Read Revelation 21:1-8

In studying this week's passage I found something that can help explain our verses today better than I can. It really helps us grasp it.

"The New Jerusalem, which is also called the Tabernacle of God, the Holy City, the City of God, the Celestial City, the City Foursquare, and Heavenly Jerusalem, is literally heaven on earth. It is referred to in the Bible in several places (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22–24; and 13:14), but it is most fully described in Revelation 21.

In Revelation 21, the recorded history of man is at its end. All of the ages have come and gone. Christ has gathered His church in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17). The Tribulation has passed (Revelation 6–18). The battle of Armageddon has been fought and won by our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:17–21). Satan has been chained for the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (Revelation 20:1–3). A new, glorious temple has been established in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40–48). The final rebellion against God has been quashed, and Satan has received his just punishment, an eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7–10.) The Great White Throne Judgment has taken place, and mankind has been judged (Revelation 20:11–15).

In Revelation 21:1 God does a complete make-over of heaven and earth (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:12–13). The new heaven and new earth are what some call the "eternal state" and will be "where righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). After the re-creation, God reveals the New Jerusalem. John sees a glimpse of it in his vision: 'The Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband' (Revelation 21:2). This is the city that Abraham looked for in faith (Hebrews 11:10). It is the place where God will dwell with His people forever (Revelation 21:3). Inhabitants of this celestial city will have all tears wiped away (Revelation 21:4).

The New Jerusalem will be fantastically huge. John records that the city is nearly 1,400 miles long, and it is as wide and as high as it is long—a perfect cube (Revelation 21:15–17). The city will also be dazzling in every way. It is lighted by the glory of God (verse 23). Its twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve apostles, are 'decorated with every kind of precious stone' (verse 19). It has twelve gates, each a single pearl, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (verses 12 and 21). The street will be made of pure gold (verse 21).

The New Jerusalem will be a place of unimagined blessing. The curse of the old earth will be gone (Revelation 22:3). In the city are the tree of life “for the healing of the nations” and the river of life (verses 1–2). It is the place that Paul spoke of: ‘In the coming ages [God] might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:6). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate fulfillment of all God’s promises. The New Jerusalem is God’s goodness made fully manifest.

Who are the residents of the New Jerusalem? The Father and the Lamb are there (Revelation 21:22). Angels are at the gates (verse 12). But the city will be filled with God’s redeemed children. The New Jerusalem is the righteous counter to the evil Babylon (Revelation 17), destroyed by God’s judgment (Revelation 18). The wicked had their city, and God has His. To which city do you belong? Babylon the Great or the New Jerusalem? If you believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died and rose again and have asked God to save you by His grace, then you are a citizen of the New Jerusalem. ‘God raised [you] up with Christ and seated [you] with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:6). You have ‘an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade’ (1 Peter 1:4). If you have not yet trusted Christ as your Savior, then we urge you to receive Him. The invitation is extended: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).¹⁹

God is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, He is all we need! Thank Him for who He is and look forward to worshipping in heaven and also worship and praise Him now.

¹⁹www.gotquestions.org

Day 5

First Read Psalm 96

What a great God we serve. He has provided for us salvation and the blessings that He adds on top of that. He is greatly to be praised. In praising Him we are to take His name across the world. Take some time and re-read this Psalm verse by verse. Take each verse or a verse or two and pray it back to the Lord, or pray what God brings to your heart regarding that verse. Spend some time praising, thanking, and glorifying the Lord.

The Psalm wraps up with *“For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His Truth.”* God is coming, and He is coming sooner today than yesterday, and if tomorrow comes, sooner tomorrow than today. Each second, minute and day we live we are that much closer. Until He comes, however, we are to proclaim His name to our community and to the nations for when He comes He will judge.

Those who have trusted in Jesus will spend eternity with Him, and those who have not will spend eternity without Him. God reminds us in scripture that He is not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. In that He uses us as His ambassadors to our families, friends, and world. He has called us to make known the good news. I trust you know Jesus, and if you do, how are you sharing Him with others, who are you telling, and who are you praying for to come to know Him? Praise the Lord that when He judges those who know Jesus, they will be marked with His seal and marked as His children forever and ever. God has left us here to love, speak truth, and share the word. Today and the rest of our lives, may we walk with Jesus and share Jesus with those we know and those we don't. How will you carry out the greatest commandment today?

It is amazing when I think about the start of this journey over three years ago. I am not sure but, for both Chris and I, it has been the most incredible Bible learning experience we have ever had. We did not cover everything but we did do a fly-over of biblical, historical events. In doing so, many dots were connected that have enabled us to get a far greater grasp of God's Word and to see how His plan continues to unfold. I hope you have benefited at least half as much as we have. If the Lord allows it we anticipate doing this again at some point in the future but probably expanding it to include more of the biblical, historical events that were not included this time. Keep reading and studying His Word, connecting the dots and helping others do the same.

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