



DAYBREAK

UNIT
3

**Matthew, Hebrews, Ephesians, Philippians,
Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians**



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| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 1:1-25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 21:1-22 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 1:1-14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 2:1-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 21:23-46 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 1:15—2:10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 3:1-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 22:1-14 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 2:11-22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 4:1-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 22:15-46 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 3:1-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 4:18—5:16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 23:1-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 4:1-16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 5:17-48 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 24:1-26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 4:17—5:2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 6:1-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 24:27-51 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 5:3-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 6:19—7:6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 25:1-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 5:22—6:9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 7:7-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 25:31-46 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 6:10-24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 8:1-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 26:1-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 1:1-11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 9:1-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 26:31-75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 1:12-30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 9:35—10:15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 27:1-26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 2:1-16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 10:16—11:1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 27:27-56 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 2:17-30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 11:2-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 27:57—28:20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 3:1—4:3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 12:1-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 1:1—2:4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 4:4-23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 12:22-37 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 2:5-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 1:1-14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 12:38-50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 3:1-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 1:15—2:3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 13:1-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 4:1-13 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 2:4-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 13:24-43 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 4:14—5:10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 2:16—3:4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 13:44-58 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 5:11—6:8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 3:5-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 14:1-36 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 6:9-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 3:18—4:6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 15:1-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 7:1-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 4:7-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 15:29-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 8:1-13 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Thessalonians 1:1—2:12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 16:1-12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 9:1-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Thessalonians 2:13—3:13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 16:13-26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 9:11-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 16:27—17:21 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 10:1-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 17:22—18:20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 10:19-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 18:21-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 11:1-22 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 19:1-26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 11:23-40 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 19:27—20:16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 12:1-29 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 20:17-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 13:1-25 | |

Daybreak is a personal Bible study continuum for the high school and adult levels. Scripture references are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. A companion series of Sunday school lessons, titled Discovery, is also available. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Daybreak is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.



Overview for Matthew

Purpose: To present Jesus as the Messiah, the eternal King, to the Jewish people

Author: Most believe the author was Matthew (Levi), a publican who became an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Time Period Covered: 4 B.C.—A.D. 31

Date Written: Probably between A.D. 60—70

Setting: The nation of Israel had already rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and was soon to suffer severe judgment for this in the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The Book of Matthew was the last call of Jehovah to His people before those tragic events took place. Most of the events occurred in the area of Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Galilee, and Judea.

Key People: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the disciples, the religious leaders, Caiaphas, Pilate, Mary Magdalene

Outstanding Characteristics: The Gospel of Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels. Since the Jews' first question would be about a man's lineage, Matthew placed Jesus' genealogy at the beginning of the book, describing Jesus in the very first verse as "the son of David, the son of Abraham." Jewish customs and terms are alluded to but not explained, for the readers already would have understood them.

Matthew referred more often to the Law of Moses than did the authors of the other Gospels, making over one hundred references to the Old Testament. Matthew wove fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in with discourses about the Law and the Kingdom. There is a distinct emphasis on "righteousness," as this was the central idea of the Jewish religion. There is also more emphasis on Jesus' Kingship than is found in the other Gospels.

The other distinctive characteristic of the Book of Matthew is its highly-structured arrangement. Matthew had kept books as a tax collector, and possibly had received some business training. He presents his material very systematically, grouping parables together and arranging the teachings of Jesus into five great discourses.

Summary: The Book of Matthew is the first of the four Gospels, the word *gospel* being an old English word that means "good news." Matthew is one of the three Synoptic (similar) Gospels, along with Mark and

Luke. These three books emphasize many of the same points; however, they do show different aspects or views of what happened. The Book of Matthew, along with the other Gospels, was composed of scenes and sayings from Jesus' life as His disciples remembered them and as God inspired them to write.

The Book of Matthew is sometimes called the Apocalyptic Gospel, as it has the most comprehensive account in all the Gospels of the Coming of the Lord and of end-time events (Matthew 24—25). It is the only Synoptic Gospel that mentions the Church (Matthew 16:13-23; Matthew 18:17).

Matthew began by tracing Jesus' genealogy from Abraham (father of the Jewish covenant), through David (the beginning of the royal line), and finally Joseph (the legal father of Jesus in Jewish eyes). The miraculous birth of Jesus in Matthew's account focuses on Christ as King, and includes the visit of the Magi who brought gifts fit for a king to the young child. Matthew then gives a brief review of Jesus' early years, Jesus' water baptism by John, and His defeat of Satan in the wilderness.

Beginning with chapter 5, Matthew records Jesus' public ministry and the calling of His disciples. Matthew gives proof of Jesus' divine authority by recounting miracles of healing, and that He even raised the dead. Despite the opposition from the religious leaders of the day (chapters 12—15), Jesus continued to teach about the Kingdom of Heaven (chapters 16—20). He prophesied to His disciples of His imminent death and resurrection. As His earthly ministry drew to a close, Jesus entered Jerusalem in a triumphant procession. Matthew then records Jesus' final days before the crucifixion:

- The Last Supper,
- His agony in the Garden,
- Judas' betrayal,
- The mock trial, and
- Jesus' crucifixion.

Finally, Matthew relates how the Messiah conquered death by rising from the dead. Jesus then gave His disciples a commission to continue His work by making disciples in all nations.

The Book of Matthew shows that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy concerning Himself. It also gives a compelling argument to those who doubt that Jesus was and is today the promised Messiah.

Timeline

B.C.				A.D.							
Herod the Great begins to rule 37		Jesus is born 6/5	Herod the Great dies 4		Boy Jesus visits Temple 6/7			Jesus begins ministry 26/27	Jesus feeds 5,000 29		
		Escape to Egypt 5/4	Return to Nazareth 4/3	Judea becomes a Roman Province 6	Tiberius Caesar becomes Emperor 14			Pontius Pilate appointed Governor 26	Jesus chooses Twelve Disciples 28	Jesus is crucified, rises again, ascends 30	

Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The presentation of the King (1:1—4:11)
 - A. The coming of the King (1:1—2:23)
 - B. The courier of the King (3:1-12)
 - C. The certification of the King (3:13—4:11)
- II. The proclamations of the King (4:12—7:29)
 - A. The ministry of the King (4:12-17)
 - B. The call of the King's disciples (4:18-22)
 - C. The confirmation of the King (4:23-25)
 - D. The message of the King (5:1—7:27)
 - E. Response to the King's message (7:28-29)
- III. The proofs of the King's claims (8:1—11:1)
 - A. Authority over sickness (8:1-17)
 - B. Authority over men (8:18-22)
 - C. Authority over nature (8:23-27)
 - D. Authority over demons (8:28-34)
 - E. Authority to forgive sin (9:1-8)
 - F. Authority over men (9:9)
 - G. Authority to meet spiritual needs (9:10-13)
 - H. Authority over tradition (9:14-17)
 - I. Authority over death (9:18-26)
 - J. Authority over blindness (9:27-31)
 - K. Authority over speechlessness (9:32-34)
 - L. Authority to command men (9:35-11:1)
- IV. The opposition to the King (11:2—16:12)
 - A. The commencement of the King's rejection (11:2—12:50)
 - B. The consequences of the King's rejection: characteristics of the mystery (interim) kingdom (13:1-52)
 - C. The consummation of the King's rejection (13:53—16:12)
- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition (16:13—20:34)
 - A. Disclosures in light of His opposition (16:13—17:21)
 - B. Instructions in light of His opposition (17:22—20:34)
- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King (21:1—27:66)
 - A. The official presentation of the King (21:1-22)
 - B. The rejection of the King by the nation (21:23—22:46)
 - C. The rejection of the nation by the King (23:1-39)
 - D. The prophetic announcements of the King (24:1—25:46)
 - E. The sufferings and death of the King (26:1—27:66)
- VII. The conclusive proof of the King's claims and person (28:1-20)
 - A. The resurrection of the King announced (28:1-8)
 - B. The appearance of the King to the women (28:9-10)
 - C. The falsification by the Chief Priests (28:11-15)
 - D. The appearance of the King to the disciples (28:16-17)
 - E. The final instructions of the King (28:18-20)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” (Matthew 1:17)

When I was in high school in Nigeria, our school—in fact, the whole town—experienced a severe water shortage. The water table was low because there had been a shortage of rain, and eventually the problem was so acute that there was no water to cook food for the students. The whole student body had to walk over six miles in search of water, which we finally found on a man’s farm. He sold the water to us so the more than two hundred students could have lunch.

However, that was not the end of the problem: the water that we brought back to school was very muddy and unfit for consumption. We knew the water was priceless, and that somehow we had to make it pure. So we put in a measure of alum—a crystallizing agent—and stirred the water. After a while, the water became crystal clear, and all the impurities settled in the bottom of the buckets. Next, we poured the clear water into clean containers. The meal was cooked, and served, and we had a good and memorable lunch!

As we read the genealogy of our Savior, we observe that it contained what we might think of as “impurities.” Since women were not traditionally included in a Jewish genealogy, Matthew must have deliberately presented the fact that Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba—four women of questionable background—were in Christ’s lineage: Tamar was an adulteress, Rahab was a harlot, Ruth was a Moabite Gentile and thus an enemy of Israel, and Bathsheba was the wife of another man when she conceived David’s son. How could the Savior, who had such a pure nature, allow Himself to be born from such a less-than-stellar lineage?

Matthew’s genealogy is a beautiful demonstration of the fact that Christ took upon Himself the “likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3) when He came to earth. What better proof could there be that even great sinners, upon their repentance, are taken into the nearest relationship to Christ? The impure is made pure. The polluted is made clean. The degenerates of humanity are transformed.

As we focus on the miraculous birth of the Lord, we should also celebrate the miracle of love that made Him choose to come through the lineage of David!

BACKGROUND

All the hope of Israel was focused on the birth of the Messiah. Still, though Old Testament Scriptures prophesied the circumstances that would surround His birth, people had their own ideas as to how the Savior would emerge. Amidst a backdrop of doubts and unrelenting attack from the established religious circle of the day, Matthew set out to write his Gospel to converted Jews. His primary aim was to shore up their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah.

The core of the Judaists’ assault on Christ was that He was only human, and therefore could not be the Savior. Matthew’s faith-building approach was to show that Christ was indeed divine and that His human nature was necessary and foretold. He proceeded to show the interposition of the divine and human nature of Christ.

Because a Jew’s ancestry proved his or her position as one of God’s chosen people and was, therefore, very important, Matthew began by showing that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and David. Next, he showed how the events surrounding Christ’s birth were consistent with the holy prophecies, citing how the birth of Jesus Christ was different from that of any other person, because He was born of a virgin. Matthew’s approach, through the unction of the Holy Spirit, helped to prove to the believing Jews that Jesus Christ was indeed the Savior. Based on Christ’s genealogy, the circumstances surrounding His birth, and the pinpoint accuracy of prophecy about Him, His divinity was unquestionable.

Matthew, in a dramatic conclusion to this genealogical record, said that the lineage of Christ and His miraculous birth were a fulfillment of prophecy about the Messiah and the Name He would be given—Emmanuel, meaning “God with us.” Many Jewish boys were named Jesus, the Greek equivalent of Joshua, which means “Jehovah saves.” Emmanuel, however, portrayed the anointed One. It was a title describing the deity of the Son of God, rather than a name actually used by Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The presentation of the King
 - A. The coming of the King
 - 1. His genealogy (1:1-17)
 - 2. His birth (1:18-25)
 - a. His divine origination (1:18-23)
 - b. His human origination (1:24-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many generations were there between Christ and Abraham?

2. Why is it necessary to make a clear distinction that Mary was a virgin?

3. The name Emmanuel means “God with us.” How has this great truth impacted your life?

CONCLUSION

Just as God used all kinds of people to bring His Son into the world, He calls all kinds of people today to become His children and to serve Him.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”
(Matthew 2:11)**

Another baby is about to arrive! I love giving baby gifts, and I try to make certain that the gift I select is perfect for each special baby. To help me achieve this, I ask the parents whether or not they know the gender of the baby, and what colors and theme have been chosen to decorate the baby room. I also pay attention to the parents’ style and taste. Using the information I gather, I attempt to find or create a meaningful gift that can be appreciated throughout the baby’s life.

Similarly, when the Wise Men began their journey to find the Baby Jesus, they knew He was a special Baby—the Son of God—and they wanted to give Him the very best treasures from their lands. The focus verse says that when they found Him, they worshiped him and presented gifts to Him. The Wise Men’s gifts were very expensive and lavish gifts fit for a king. They knew their carefully-selected treasures would demonstrate their adoration of the newborn King. They did not feel obligated to give Him these things, nor did they do it begrudgingly; the Wise Men gave their best gifts to Baby Jesus because they wanted to, and it gave them joy to do it.

When we give God the best of our gifts, we must be sure in our hearts that we are doing it willingly and joyfully. It will help to consider God’s sacrifice when He sent His Son to the earth to die for our sins. It must have pained Him to see His Son suffer, but He sent Jesus because He knew it was for our salvation. Nothing we give to God will ever equal His ultimate gift, but when we freely give the best of our treasures, God will richly pour out His blessings. James 1:17 reads, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” God’s gifts are worth more than anything in the world that we have to give!

Freely and joyfully giving our best to God will ensure that we receive God’s perfect gifts from Heaven.

BACKGROUND

Tradition says that the Wise Men were men of high position in Parthia, which is near the site of ancient Babylon. Some scholars believe the men were actually from different lands, representing the entire

world bowing before Jesus, the King of kings. The phrase, “wise men” or “magi” refers to a group of scholars who studied the stars. Their title connects them with magic, but it is believed that they were more like astronomers. It is uncertain exactly how many men there were, but from the three gifts listed it has been assumed there were three kings from the East. Whether they were kings or scholars, the Wise Men were Gentiles, seeking Jesus who came to be the “Saviour of the world” (John 4:42).

By the time the Wise Men actually found Jesus, Joseph and Mary were living in a house in Bethlehem (Bethlehem means house of bread, and from here the Bread of life came). The gifts brought by the Wise Men were gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which were very expensive and worthy of a king. Gold was a gift for a king; frankincense, a gift for deity; and myrrh, a burial spice—symbolically appropriate for One who was going to die for the sins of all mankind. These gifts may have been used to finance Joseph and Mary’s trip to Egypt and back.

When the Wise Men asked about a newborn king of the Jews, King Herod, also known as “Herod the Great,” was very disturbed because he was not the rightful heir to the throne of David. Herod was not a full-blooded Israelite. He was an Edomite; a descendent of Esau. The Romans gave him the title, “king of the Jews,” but the Jewish people never accepted him. In an attempt to win the Jewish people’s loyalties, Herod rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem; however, because he also rebuilt various pagan temples, he won little admiration. He was a ruthless man, having killed his own wife and three brothers because he suspected them of treason. In order to fulfill his lusts and to strengthen his political ties, he was married nine times.

When Herod died, God gave Joseph instructions to take his family out of Egypt and return to Israel. When the family arrived in Israel, they found out that Herod’s evil son, Archelaus, had inherited control over Judea. God told Joseph to go on to Galilee, so Joseph and his family settled in Nazareth, which is located in the hilly area of southern Galilee, near the crossroads of great caravan trade routes. The people of Nazareth had constant contact with people all over the world because of the trade routes. The town itself was rather small, and the Roman garrison in charge of Galilee resided there, making Nazareth despised by Jews.

Verse 23 of chapter 2 reads, “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.” The Old Testament does not

record this specific statement; however many scholars believe that Matthew was referring to Isaiah 11:1, which uses the Hebrew word for “Branch,” which is similar to “Nazarene.” Or he may be referencing something not recorded in the Bible. In either case, Matthew was establishing that Jesus was the true Messiah, announced by God through prophets, who was born into humble beginnings, just as the Old Testament had prophesied.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The presentation of the King
 - A. The coming of the King
 - 3. His infancy (2:1-23)
 - a. Early days in Bethlehem (2:1-12)
 - (1) The Magi before Herod (2:1-8)
 - (2) The Magi before the Child (2:9-12)
 - b. Flight into Egypt (2:13-18)
 - (1) The deliverance of the Child (2:13-15)
 - (2) The destruction by Herod (2:16-18)
 - c. Residence in Nazareth (2:19-23)
 - (1) Journey out of Egypt (2:19-20)
 - (2) Arrival in Israel (2:21)
 - (3) Settlement in Galilee (2:22-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Herod react to the visit of the Wise Men? Why?
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2. What can we learn from the actions of the Wise Men?
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3. What “gifts” can we offer God in gratitude for the great Gift He offered us?
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CONCLUSION

Let us purpose to freely and joyfully give God our best gifts.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Matthew 3:1-3)

As children, my brother and I looked forward to the days we could play “jungle” along the creek that ran past our house. The jungle game included clearing paths through the wilderness of willow saplings, rushes, and thick weeds that grew beside the creek. The willow saplings were the greatest challenge. We tried to bend or tie them back, but they still obstructed our progress. One day my brother smuggled a large Old Hickory butcher knife from Mom’s kitchen. This machete-type tool used on the willows improved our progress tremendously. Though I suspect it was a bit hard on the knife, the path was cleared speedily!

John the Baptist had a mission: to challenge his listeners to prepare the way of the Lord. There was urgency in his admonition to “repent” and to “make his paths straight.” The people were expecting someone to deliver them from Roman rule, but John realized that the One he was announcing could deliver from more than human bondage. He could deliver from the curse that dated back to the Garden of Eden. However, John knew that the people’s hearts had to be prepared to receive Him, so he urged his hearers to confess their sins and get rid of the hindrances in their lives.

The one who follows Jesus today must clear paths through another kind of wilderness. Like my childhood jungle or the spiritual wasteland that John the Baptist faced, each one must remove the hindrances that are his personal spiritual wilderness. The hindrances might be an addiction or habit, selfish will, a family member, a business, or even a hobby. We may need to do some “clearing” by making restitutions, laying aside the bondage of opinions of others, or cutting our ties to worldly influences. Whatever these obstructions may be, when we have made the determination to make our paths straight, Jesus is there to help us clear the way. Walking with Jesus on the cleared path will ultimately take us to Heaven.

Today is a good day to assess your path. Where is it leading? Are there hindrances that are causing you to stumble or detour from the path that leads to

Heaven? Follow the advice of John the Baptist, and “prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

BACKGROUND

Almost thirty years had passed since the events happened that are recorded in the second chapter of Matthew. Today’s text describes the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry. Matthew makes clear the reason for John’s preaching: to announce the coming of the King whose urgent message would forever revolutionize the meaning of the kingdom of Heaven.

The key word of John’s message was *repent*. There are two words translated *repentance* in the New Testament. The first denotes a change of mind, or a reformation of life; and the second, sorrow or regret that sin has been committed. The word used here is the former, calling the Jews to a change of life, or a reformation of conduct. In the time of John, the nation had become extremely wicked and corrupt, perhaps more so than at any preceding period. For that reason, both John and Christ began their ministries by calling the nation to repentance.

In verse 3, John’s reference to the prophet Esaias alludes to Isaiah 40:3. Both John and Isaiah taught that those who turn from their sins and seek the forgiveness of God’s love will find salvation, but those who reject the message will cut off their only hope.

Verse 11 describes John’s baptism, which was done as a sign that the individual being baptized had repented, asked God to forgive his sins, and had decided to live for God. Thus, baptism was an outward sign of an inward commitment. To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an inward change of heart. John prophesied that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire—his words looking ahead to Pentecost, when Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to empower His followers to be His witnesses.

At the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, there was a wonderful exhibit of the Trinity. The Trinity consists of three Persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, perfectly united as one. In this passage, all three Persons of the Trinity were present. God the Father spoke from Heaven, Jesus was being baptized, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove to rest upon Jesus.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. The presentation of the King
- B. The courier of the King (3:1-12)
 - 1. Characteristics of the forerunner (3:1-4)
 - 2. Ministry of the forerunner (3:5-6)

- 3. Message of the forerunner (3:7-12)
 - a. Condemnation (3:7-10)
 - b. Repentance (3:11-12)
- C. The certification of the King
 - 1. His baptism (reveals His divine qualifications to be King) (3:13-17)
 - a. His submission to John's baptism (3:13-14)
 - b. His purpose in baptism (3:15)
 - c. His acceptance by God (3:16-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did John call the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to see him baptize, and why?

2. What did John mean by his statement, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”?

3. After reading Matthew 3:9, how would you reply to a friend who feels he is a Christian because he was raised in a Christian home?

CONCLUSION

From the time when John the Baptist introduced Jesus and described Him as the One who would separate the wheat from the chaff, the need for repentance has not decreased in importance, nor has the power of the Blood of Christ decreased in saving the “whosoever will.”

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” (Matthew 4:1)

Most of us have heard warnings about the danger of putting gasoline or other flammable fluids on a fire to get it going, but how many of us have done it? If caution was used, perhaps nothing bad happened and no harm was done. If we were successful, we likely tried it again, possibly using just a little less care the next time. This is, in the truest sense, “playing with fire.” A while ago, a friend of mine thought he could get a pile of brush and stumps to burn by pouring gasoline on the brush after the flames from his earlier attempt had seemingly gone out. John’s “harmless” act turned out to be anything but harmless. The gasoline connected with some smoldering embers, and John ended up with second-degree burns on his hands and face. (In reality, it could have been much worse.)

It is also possible to “play with fire” when it comes to temptation. Contemplating seemingly harmless actions can lead to very harmful consequences. In today’s text, the devil’s first effort to tempt Jesus simply involved encouraging Him to turn a stone into bread. One could argue that such an action was of no consequence. We all need food, so what could be the harm? However, if Jesus had listened to Satan, it would have meant that He was being distracted from His purpose. He went to the desert to prepare for His ministry here on earth, and His fasting was part of that preparation.

Notice how the devil’s temptations became increasingly more serious. That is exactly his game plan with us. Just as he tried with Jesus, he looks for little things to get our attention or distract us. If he can get us to listen to him on small, seemingly harmless issues, he will have a foot in the door for other, clearly more harmful ones. Let us follow Jesus’ example of resisting temptation and not become distracted from our spiritual goal and doing God’s will!

BACKGROUND

The events in this passage took place soon after Christ’s water baptism. Christ went into the desert through the influence of the Spirit of God—the Spirit that had rested upon Him in His baptism. When He was tired, alone, and hungry, and thus most vulnerable, Satan appeared. This still is a tactic Satan employs—assailing one who is already laboring under physical or emotional stress.

Christ’s temptation showed the nature of the environment in which He was to minister. Confrontation with adverse spiritual forces characterized Jesus’ entire ministry on earth. The temptations presented by Satan came in three critical areas: physical desires, power, and pride—the major categories into which our temptations will fall also. Each time Jesus was tempted, He was in a different physical location: the wilderness, the holy city, and an exceeding high mountain.

The record leaves no doubt that Jesus gained the victory. Only Matthew and Luke wrote of the temptations to which Jesus was subjected by the devil, but both Gospels show that He triumphed by appealing to Scripture. In response to the temptation to satisfy His natural desire for food, He used Deuteronomy 8:3. In response to Satan’s second suggestion that He, in essence, dare God to rescue Him, He referenced Deuteronomy 6:16. In response to Satan’s offer of power if Christ would worship him, He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The presentation of the King
 - C. The certification of the King
 - 2. His temptations (reveals His moral qualifications to be King) (4:1-11)
 - a. Test of submission (4:1-4)
 - b. Test of confidence (4:5-7)
 - c. Test of dependence (4:8-11)
- II. The proclamations of the King
 - A. The ministry of the King (4:12-17)
 - 1. The imprisonment of John (4:12)
 - 2. The withdrawal to Capernaum (4:13-16)
 - 3. The message of Christ (4:17)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. List the three temptations Satan used on the Lord and the responses Jesus gave.**

Jesus demonstrated both the importance and effectiveness of knowing and applying Scripture to combat temptation. Let us purpose to follow His example!

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)

Once again, I was being given a detailed accounting of my shortcomings. It was not something I enjoyed, but it was the only way to learn. I had recently taken a new job—one for which I was hired sight-unseen, and for which I had no previous training. Of course I made mistakes! Unfortunately, the person who was my direct supervisor delighted in forcefully and vocally pointing out those mistakes, often within earshot of others in the office. After she had finished her comments, I would ask her to repeat anything I didn’t understand, and would try to thank her for helping me learn the things I needed to know. I knew that I was not totally qualified for the job and I wanted to learn as much as possible, as quickly as possible. Because my family’s finances dictated that I needed to supplement our income, I did not want to lose my job. Therefore, I prayed daily that God would give me the grace to get through those embarrassing sessions.

As this scenario repeated itself, often at first, and then less frequently, something amazing happened. Gradually, my supervisor and I became friends, and as I became more familiar with my job, she assigned more difficult and sensitive work to me. When the time came for me to leave that job, she even gave me a goodbye present.

Through that situation, God helped me to learn a significant spiritual lesson about meekness and humility. Generally, human nature will urge us to defend ourselves when challenged, rather than to quietly accept a humbling experience. Jesus gave us a different set of instructions in Matthew 5:1-12. This portion of Scripture is sometimes called “The Beatitudes.” It could also be called “The Attitudes of the Heart for Christian Living.”

By giving instructions about the condition of our hearts, Jesus was reinforcing that we can do nothing in our own strength. A person who has sin in his heart cannot follow all of these directives—it is impossible without a change that comes from God. But in the Beatitudes, Jesus gave us a step-by-step description of how God desires to rebuild our hearts.

When our hearts are in line with the instructions in the Beatitudes, we can be assured that nothing will hinder His blessings!

BACKGROUND

We read in Matthew 4:18-25 of how Jesus called the group of men who would be His disciples. Simon (called Peter), Andrew, James, and John were fishermen, who dropped their nets at Jesus’ invitation and followed Him to become fishers of men. Verse 23 describes how Jesus went throughout all Galilee, spending considerable time preaching and healing in the area. Jesus then set aside time for further training and admonition of His disciples.

Each statement in the Beatitudes begins with the word “Blessed.” This was a very powerful word, which to His hearers meant that they would have a deep, spiritual joy and happiness.

The first four traits refer to the personal spiritual growth of believers:

- Matthew 5:3 – *Poor in spirit* means the opposite of proud or haughty. It is used to describe those who have been humbled by the grace of God.
- Matthew 5:4 – God’s promise to comfort mourners contains such depth that the promises are virtually endless.
- Matthew 5:5 – *Meek* does not indicate that a person is weak. Rather, that person is absolutely obedient and submissive to God’s will.
- Matthew 5:6 – To lives that are poor and empty, God provides spiritual sustenance to satisfy the spiritual *hunger*, which means to be needy, and *thirst*, which means to have an inner passion.

The next four traits require personal action:

- Matthew 5:7 – *Mercy* is the act of forgiving another even though that one may not deserve forgiveness.
- Matthew 5:8 – A person with a pure heart will have one purpose—that nothing will come between him and God, and nothing will come between him and his fellowman.
- Matthew 5:9 – Peace is a harmony with God and men. It does not necessarily mean an absence of conflict. Peacemakers are not social reformers, rather, they consciously bring God’s holiness into everyday life.
- Matthew 5:10-12 – The plural use of *ye* in verse 11 is indicative that Jesus foresaw this persecution as reaching all of His followers. However, this does not mean that all of His followers will suffer physical abuse, just that those who do will be blessed.

Jesus went on to describe how Christians influence society. Just as salt is used to add flavoring, act as a preservative, melt coldness, and heal wounds, so also will Christ's followers be used in the world. The term "lose its savor" refers to the saltiness of the salt—when it is lost, the salt is worthless. The same is true when Christians lose their savor.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The proclamations of the King
 - B. The call of the King's disciples (4:18-22)
 - 1. Peter and Andrew (4:18-20)
 - 2. James and John (4:21-22)
 - C. The confirmation of the King (4:23-25)
 - 1. The miracles of the King (4:23)
 - 2. The fame of the King (4:24-25)
 - D. The message of the King
 - 1. The inhabitants of the King's kingdom (5:1-16)
 - a. The characteristics of those in the kingdom (5:1-12)
 - b. The influence of those in the kingdom (5:13-16)
 - (1) As salt (5:13)
 - (2) As light (5:14-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Jesus called two sets of brothers to be His disciples. What were their names?

2. What is the result of true humility?

3. How can you fully live the qualities shown in the Beatitudes as a witness to those with whom you come in contact?

CONCLUSION

When we possess each of the qualities listed in the Beatitudes, we will be as "salt" and flavor an unsavory world with the Gospel!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

(Matthew 5:23-24)

A missionary to China, Jonathan Goforth, was searching for the secret to revival. In his studying, he came across a statement by evangelist Charles Finney, who said that it was useless for Christians to expect revival by simply asking for it without bothering to fulfill the laws that govern spiritual blessing. As soon as Goforth read those words, he said, “If Finney is right, then I am going to find out what these laws are and obey them, no matter what it costs.” The very first law he discovered was the one he was not prepared to obey—that it was necessary for reconciliation to take place before God could bless. Goforth realized that he needed to be reconciled with a fellow missionary with whom he had differed. He initially hesitated, but found that God bound him to that law until he would obey. When he did as God’s Word commanded, the clouds burst and revival flooded his life and everyone he touched.

Like Jonathan Goforth, it is easy for us to want God to bless our lives and to work through us. However, it may not be nearly so easy to allow God to work on us until we are *qualified* for Him to use us. We cannot change the motives of our hearts—that must be done by God when we submit to Him and ask Him to do the work in us. Obedience, on the other hand, is something we do ourselves. We make the choices whether to follow God’s directions or not.

Our focus verse, along with the rest of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, is filled with practical instruction. Sometimes we might be tempted to overlook how it applies to our own lives. Yet, if we allow God to show us where we need to come up, He will help us settle differences with others, agree with our adversaries quickly, turn the other cheek, and follow His other commands.

Is there something in your life that God wants you to correct? Take action and obey God today. Then see how He will revive and bless your soul!

BACKGROUND

Having laid the foundation for His Sermon on the Mount through the summary statement of the

Beatitudes, in today’s text Jesus proceeded to show the superiority of His message to that of the Law of Moses. Jesus made it clear that He did not come to contradict or remove the old Law. He came as the righteousness of God in human flesh. He came not only with instruction in doing righteousness, but also with the ability to give mankind the power to *be* righteous.

In addition, He reminded His listeners of what the Law said, but He also took it one step further into the heart and disposition. The Law was exacting in what it required. However, the teachings of Jesus are infinitely more exacting, because they deal with our nature and character. He taught that His followers must not only do righteously, but must “exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” to enter Heaven. We must be righteous in spirit, heart, and disposition. Without a miracle in the heart of man, the instructions of Christ’s message here are absolutely impossible to carry out.

Many times in this text, Jesus revealed the depth of the righteousness God requires in the human heart. Jesus was the fulfillment of the righteousness God requires. Therefore, He alone became the door through which all men must pass to enter into true righteousness. Our only hope of having the righteousness that is revealed in this text carried out in our lives, is to partake of Christ’s nature.

In verses 21 through 48, Jesus gives a series of six teachings illustrating the differences between the Law and the inner attitudes of the heart that are desired by God. These were:

- The law regarding murder contrasted to the inner attitude of no anger (verses 21-26)
- The law regarding adultery contrasted to the inner attitude of no lust (verses 27-30)
- The law regarding divorce contrasted to the inner attitude of commitment (verses 31-32)
- The law regarding oath-taking contrasted to the inner attitude of speaking the truth (verses 33-37)
- The law regarding retaliation contrasted to the inner attitude of forgiveness (verses 38-42)
- The law regarding hatred of an enemy contrasted to the inner attitude of love for an enemy (verses 43-48)

These examples reveal how true Christian character operates. Rather than following a set of commandments to regulate behavior, man can have his inner nature changed so that right actions are the natural response that spring from the heart. God requires a high

standard of holiness, but He gives the power to live as He commands.

There was much debate over who Jesus was. In the crowds who heard Him speak, there was often a mixture of those who rejected and those who believed Him. Today, too, those who come in contact with His message must choose whether to accept or reject the heart change He offers.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- II. The proclamations of the King
 - D. The message of the King
 - 2. The relationship of the King to the Law
 - a. To fulfill, not abolish (5:17-20)
 - b. Repudiation of Pharisaic interpretation of the Law (5:21-48)
 - (1) Murder (5:21-26)
 - (2) Adultery (5:27-30)
 - (3) Divorce (5:31-32)
 - (4) Vows (5:33-37)
 - (5) Retaliation (5:38-42)
 - (6) Love (5:43-48)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jesus say a person should do if he knows someone has something against him?

2. Referring to verses 29-30 of our text, what might be some things that would offend or hinder us?

3. In what way did Jesus mean that we should be “perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”?

4. What steps can we take to develop a hunger for righteousness?

CONCLUSION

Christ did not come and sacrifice Himself to make us better people. He came that we might die with Him, so His life will shine unhindered through us to reach a dying world.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” (Matthew 6:3)

During the last few years of my mother’s life, I was called upon to help with her financial matters. Since her pension was going directly into the bank, she often asked me to make withdrawals. She always stressed that I was to get a certain amount of coins and small bills. She did not give the reason, but I had a feeling why this was important to her.

Following her passing, many people began to tell how my mother gave money to the different ones in their little community, especially children, who she thought had a need. At the funeral, the pastor relayed how she gave him a little money for himself when she paid her tithes and offerings. Others remarked how they had called her to pray for them. Even though we were a close family, much of this was unknown to us. She gave to and prayed for others because she believed these were good works, not because they would give her a good name. She has gone on to receive her reward from the Lord.

Our focus verse indicates the importance of not calling any attention to our acts of kindness or charity. We must go even further, and not focus on them mentally—not even thinking of them or congratulating ourselves on our generosity. They are given to God and should be hidden in Him.

There is a promise to those who are sincere and humble in their almsgiving: the Father who sees in secret shall reward such deeds openly. We must keep our motives pure. Conceit and self-applause are as dangerous as vainglory and ostentation before men.

It is natural to hope for recognition and praise for what we do, but in our almsgiving, in our praying, and in our private fasts, we should be deaf to the applause of men—these are between God and us. To be sure we are not seeking for glory, we should perform our Christian duties quietly or in secret, with no thought of reward.

BACKGROUND

This passage is a continuation of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. In the previous chapter, Christ warned His disciples against the corrupt doctrines and opinions of the scribes and Pharisees. He continued in this chapter by warning them against hypocrisy, or using religion to cover up sin and promote personal gains. The Greek word translated *hypocrite* originally meant

“an actor who wears a mask.” The “righteousness” of the Pharisees was insincere and dishonest. They practiced their religion for the applause of men, not for the reward of God. Within the first eighteen verses of this chapter, Jesus condemned the way the Pharisees practiced three of the Jewish traditions.

Almsgiving was the practice of giving charitable gifts, and in Jesus’ time, it was considered especially praiseworthy. “Sounding the trumpet” was a figurative way of describing the practice of calling others’ attention to what one was doing.

In teaching the disciples about prayer, Jesus condemned the insincere prayers of hypocrites. In order to teach them the proper way to pray, He provided them with a model prayer, which is known as “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is a model prayer because it contains the components and attitudes that Jesus’ disciples should exhibit and incorporate into their lives.

The model prayer consists of three parts.

- The preface: “Our Father which art in heaven.” There must be a personal address to Him with whom business lies.
- The petitions: the first three relate to God and His honor, and the last three to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual.
- The conclusion: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen,” is a form of praise.

Fasting (abstinence from food for a time), was the third practice of the Pharisees that Jesus condemned. Like almsgiving and prayer, fasting must come from the right motive or it loses its value. Jesus declared that the hypocrites made a conspicuous production of their fasting. They did so to gain praise from people rather than from God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The proclamations of the King
 - D. The message of the King
 - 2. The relationship of the King to the Law
 - c. Repudiation of Pharisaic practice
 - (1) Almsgiving (6:1-4)
 - (2) Prayer (6:5-15)
 - (3) Fasting (6:16-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Jesus condemn the Pharisees for their manner of giving alms, praying, and fasting?
-
-

2. Why do you think the Pharisees drew attention to their prayers and almsgiving?

3. What components and attitudes does the Lord's Prayer contain that we should exhibit and incorporate in our daily lives?

CONCLUSION

Jesus did not condemn giving alms to the poor, praying, or fasting, but He did condemn the way they were performed by those who did these things for self-promotion. We must make sure that our hearts are right as we practice these good works.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:20-21)

The surprise of my success left me stunned! My ridiculously low bid had resulted in a wonderful addition to my collection. Now my hand was shaking so much I could barely write a legible check. My auction buddy and I laughingly call ourselves the “bargain treasure-hunters.” That day I earned my title.

As I placed my bargain in the car trunk, I told God that I really appreciated this unexpected earthly blessing. Since then, I have thanked Him each time I’ve admired it or shared it with another collector.

Whenever I enjoy my treasure, however, I am also reminded that it will eventually crumble and decay, no matter how carefully I, or my surviving family, preserve it. So my thoughts always return to my treasures that will last.

Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, which includes today’s text, taught His listeners about the treasures of Heaven. These treasures will far surpass the best of earthly ones that we accumulate down here below. It is so logical and reasonable that our true treasures are stored in the place where we intend to reside in eternity. Heaven is not the place for earthly treasures—they are appropriate for use on earth only. With this in mind, I won’t be crushed if I should lose my earthly treasure or if Christ should ask me to let it go for His sake.

Laying up treasures in Heaven is like making a spiritual investment. Today I need to invest in prayer for my family and friends who do not know Christ as Savior. I need to pray that my sisters and brothers in Christ will remain true to their calling. I need to pray and listen for God’s direction in my life and service for Him. In following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness, I am not only laying up treasures in Heaven for myself, but I will surely influence others to invest wisely for their spiritual futures.

In 1 Timothy 6:7, Paul reminds Timothy in very simple terms, “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” Praise be to God, however, that we can lay up treasures in Heaven before we leave this earth.

Now *that* is a blessed bargain!

BACKGROUND

In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ dealt with a subject that dated back to the Garden of Eden—that of choices.

After warning the people to avoid coveting the praise of men, Christ continued His discourse by warning against coveting the treasures of the world. Every man has something that he makes his treasure—that which his heart is set upon. The wealth of a person of that day was generally measured by changes of raiment, silver and gold, gems, lands, and oil, or anything that improved the comfort or quality of life. A notable display was of great importance in proving one’s wealth; an essential part of this display would have been splendid articles of dress. Such elaborate attire would be vulnerable to the attack of the moth, an insect that eats holes in fabric. The word translated as *rust* signified anything that ate into or consumed one’s property. The houses in the East were often made of clay hardened in the sun, sometimes combined with stones. Thus, it was comparatively easy for thieves to dig through the wall and break into the house in that way. Christ indicated through these specific examples that all earthly treasure would waste away.

Christ pointed out the requirement for man to choose between a focus upon earthly things or a focus upon God. He laid down a general maxim: no man can serve two masters, for then his affection and allegiance would be divided. He then proceeded to apply this maxim, telling his listeners that they could not serve both God and mammon. (*Mammon* was a Syriac name given to an idol worshipped as the god of riches and thus had the meaning of “gain.”)

Christ also warned his listeners against being consumed with worry over the things of life. The phrase “take no thought” did not mean they were not to have forethought, but it meant “have no anxious concern” regarding the needs of this life. Anxious care could trouble their minds to the point that doubts would creep in; this was the danger to which Christ was alluding.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The proclamations of the King
 - D. The message of the King
 - 2. The relationship of the King to the Law
 - c. Repudiation of Pharisaic practice
 - (4)Treasure (6:19-34)
 - (a) Two kinds of treasures (6:19-20)

- (b) The necessity of a choice
(6:21-24)
- (c) Trust the Father for
temporal necessities
(6:25-30)
- (d) Seek eternal treasures
(6:31-34)
- (5) Judging (7:1-6)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How does someone who is poor in material wealth apply the principles in Matthew 6:19-21 to his or her life?

2. In Matthew 6:25, 28, and 31, what does Jesus say that means “don’t worry”?

3. What steps can we take to make sure we focus on heavenly investments?

CONCLUSION

In a world where there is so much emphasis on materialism, our commitment to focus on heavenly treasures will be noticeable. Thank God for His great investment plan!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”
(Matthew 7:24)

Bill, one of my brother’s fellow students in law school, was always at the top of their class. He received the highest marks on every test, every year. However, when it came time to take the bar exam, Bill didn’t fare as well. According to the test results, he knew the material far better than the others did, but he didn’t pass the part of the exam where he was required to put into practice the concepts he had learned. Apparently, he knew the facts but was unable to apply them.

There is a difference between being knowledgeable and being wise. The dictionary defines *wise* as, “marked by deep understanding, keen discernment, a capacity for sound judgment, or exercising sound judgment.” Someone who learns can be knowledgeable without being wise. The wisdom comes with the application of the knowledge.

In the same way, knowing the sayings of Jesus does not necessarily mean that we have wisdom. The focus verse lets us know that we are wise if we apply that knowledge by following His instructions and directives.

This principle is all around us in life. We know the speed limit, and we are wise (and avoid a traffic ticket) if we drive within it. We know that an employee is most valuable if he is prompt and cooperative, and we are wise when we personally develop those attributes. Children are taught not to touch a hot stove and some of them gain wisdom when they learn by experience why they should not do so!

As the text goes on, we see an important contrast. Verse 26 tells us that everyone who hears Jesus’ sayings but does not do them is foolish. There are only two categories—either a person *hears and does* or else he *hears and does not*. The key is in the doing. True wisdom understands that following through in obedience to Jesus’ teachings is the most valuable thing we can do. Are you doing what Jesus said?

BACKGROUND

In this section, Matthew used a topical, rather than a chronological arrangement of his material. This chapter is part of the “Sermon on the Mount,” which presented new moral standards for God’s people. This

discourse does not require a lot of time to read, but its brevity has not diminished its profound influence on the world.

The imperatives “ask,” “seek,” and “knock,” show that God’s people are to pray actively and persistently. They are to pursue God and to search for ways to draw closer to Him. The word *shall* was used in the listed results of all three imperatives: “Ask, and it *shall* be given you; seek, and ye *shall* find; knock, and it *shall* be opened.” This usage denoted certainty and signified an absolute. It was not merely a possibility or one of several options; it would be done. The Lord’s exhortation to prevail illustrated humanity’s dependence on God and His willingness to shower His people with good gifts.

Verse 12 is the passage that has often been referred to as the “Golden Rule.” The Lord wanted this to be the guiding principle for a Christian’s attitudes toward other people. He did not intend it to be a complete statement of the Gospel, but it was a summary of the second commandment. The application of this principle in a life allows God’s love to shine through as a witness to others. Faithful practice of this rule helps prevent pride and criticism of those around us.

Jesus concluded His sermon with four warnings, each featured by paired contrasts: two ways (verses 13-14), two trees (verses 17-20), two claims (verses 21-23), and two builders (verses 24-27).

The rabbis and teachers of the Law cited the opinions of earlier teachers as authority for their views. Jesus’ straightforward preaching was in direct contrast to that of the scribes. He spoke “as one having authority.” Certainly He did, for though He had no approval as an official teacher in the system of the theologians of that day, He was the Son of God! He stunned His listeners with the statement that His Word was enough. It was, and it still is.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The proclamations of the King
 - D. The message of the King
 - 2. The relationship of the King to the Law
 - d. Instructions for those who would enter the kingdom (7:7-27)
 - (1) The way of access to God (7:7-11)
 - (2) True righteousness (7:12)
 - (3) The way of entrance into the kingdom (7:13-14)
 - (4) Warning against the error of Pharisaism (7:15-23)

- (a) Their deceit (7:15)
- (b) Their fruitlessness (7:16-20)
- (c) Their destiny (7:21-23)
- (5) Invitation to enter the Kingdom (7:24-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Jesus describe “false prophets”?

2. How does the analogy of the wise man and the foolish man relate to the lives of people today?

3. What situations in your life could be helped by applying the golden rule?

CONCLUSION

True wisdom is exhibited when one knows the best course of action and takes that action. If we are wise, we will look to the Lord for guidance and instruction, and then follow His directions—not just part of the time, but all of the time, and on every issue.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.” (Matthew 8:21-22)

I was saved when I was a teenager, and one of the first people I told about my salvation was my favorite cousin. Since I really wanted her to be saved, I often spoke to her about Jesus. Several times I invited her to go to church with me, but she always refused. One day, after one of my many invitations, she told me that she liked our church and would become a member some day—after she had buried her mom.

My cousin and I come from a culture where funeral ceremonies are very important, especially for older parents. People in our culture go deep into debt to give their deceased parents a “proper” burial. They spend immense amounts of money on party clothes, food, drinks, and gifts for those who attend the funeral ceremony, which could go on for days. A year after the burial, another memorial ceremony is held that could involve additional expenses. In some cases, these ceremonies continue annually for the next five years! If a family does not provide these parties, they are ridiculed as being stingy and disrespectful to the deceased.

Of course, Christians abstain from such frivolous and ostentatious spending. In fact, Christians are sometimes described in our culture as “people who do not bury their dead” because of their refusal to follow this custom. My cousin knew that if she gave her life to God before her mother died, she would not be able to have those excessive parties. As a result, she told me that she would serve God after she had buried her mother. She did not pay attention to Jesus’ instruction, “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.” Ironically though, my cousin’s mother is still alive today at the age of almost eighty and my cousin died when she was barely fifty years old. She never came to church with me, and I have no assurance that she was saved before she died.

Jesus was always direct with those who came to Him, laying out the requirements so they would count the cost of following Him. Today, as back then, He requires complete loyalty. Even family loyalty must not take priority over obedience to Him. Are you clinging to something in your life that is hindering your relationship with God? Relinquish it! The decision to serve God wholeheartedly should not be postponed,

even though other loyalties compete for your attention. Purpose to give God first place in your affections and goals. You do not know how much longer you have in this life. If something is standing between you and God, give it to Him—and watch Him bless your life in ways you never thought possible!

BACKGROUND

In verses 1-17 of this chapter, Matthew confirmed Christ’s messianic office by highlighting His power to heal.

First, Jesus healed a leper by touching Him. Touching a leper was a violation of the Law, but Jesus’ touch overcame the leprosy. He instructed the cleansed leper to show himself to the priest, as the Law required that the priest verify the leprosy was gone before the man could be restored to his community.

Next, Jesus healed a centurion’s servant of palsy. The fact that Jesus would even enter the house of a Gentile centurion would certainly have been repugnant to the Jews of that time, but Jesus went further and healed a member of the centurion’s household. Rather than downplay this fact, Jesus emphasized it by saying that this Gentile had more faith than any Jew He had seen.

When Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, the Scripture says that He touched her hand, and the fever left, showing that He had power over the physical causes of illness.

In verses 18-22, Jesus taught about the cost of following Him. Many wanted to follow Him because of His power to heal, but Jesus encouraged them to count the cost and put aside any expectations they might have for following Him.

Matthew next recorded how Jesus demonstrated His authority over weather by commanding a storm on the Sea of Galilee to cease. The Sea of Galilee is a relatively small body of water (13 miles long and about 7 miles wide) but it is approximately 150 feet deep and the shoreline is more than 600 feet below sea level. Because of this, sudden storms can build up at the summit of the surrounding mountains and create 20-foot waves on the surface of the sea. Although many of Jesus’ disciples were experienced fishermen, the ferocity of this particular storm terrified them, and they woke Jesus from sleep, crying to Him to save them. Through His calming of the storm, His disciples realized that He not only had power over sickness, but He also had power over the elements.

Finally, Jesus proved His kingship by demonstrating His power and authority over demons. The storm

passed, and Jesus and His disciples landed at the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, in the country of the Gergesenes. The Gergesenes were apparently Gentiles, since they kept pigs. (Jews did not raise pigs because they were deemed unclean animals.) Jesus' deliverance of the two demoniacs was complete. The men, who had been a horror to the people around them, were freed. As a result of this great show of power (and loss of pigs), the Gergesenes desperately wanted Jesus to leave their country. Again, Jesus' ministry was rewarded with rejection, but for the men who had been possessed by a legion of devils, Jesus' ministry meant complete victory.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. The proofs of the King's claims
 - A. Authority over sickness (8:1-17)
 - 1. The leper (8:1-4)
 - 2. The paralytic (8:5-13)
 - 3. The fever (8:14-15)
 - 4. Summary: all diseases (8:16-17)
 - B. Authority over men (8:18-22)
 - C. Authority over nature (8:23-27)
 - D. Authority over demons (8:28-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Jesus' response to the Gentile centurion who made a request to Him?

2. Why do you think some continued to question Jesus' authority after these miracles were done?

3. How has Jesus demonstrated to you His authority over Satan?

CONCLUSION

Jesus' miracles showed that He is the Master of the universe and nothing physical or spiritual in all creation is outside of His authority. His kingship is beyond dispute!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.” (Matthew 9:8)

Recently, I attended a funeral where a man paid tribute to his Christian father. In describing the deceased man’s life, the son listed a number of his father’s accomplishments. First, he shared that his father had become a Christian when eight years old, and for sixty years had been faithful to God and his church. At the age of fourteen, his father quit school to help support their family of eleven. When nineteen, he married. An industrious man, he engaged in commercial fishery, forestry, logging, and trucking. In later years, he operated an oil truck, and ran his own variety store, selling everything from groceries to clothing and furniture. He had ended his working days as a carpenter on construction sites. As the son concluded his description, those in attendance at the funeral realized that his father had truly enjoyed a busy and productive life. His accomplishments proved it!

Today’s focus verse brings out that the miracles Jesus performed convinced people of His divine power. Many of those who associated with Him during His time on earth did not believe He was the Son of God. They saw him as just a carpenter’s son, and could not conceive that one who grew up in Nazareth could be their Messiah and King. However, His miracles, such as forgiving sins, healing the sick, and even raising the dead, confirmed what He said of Himself—that He was the Son of God.

Words do not amount to much if they are not backed up with actions. We can say we love God and are serving Him, but we must be sure that the way we live makes the same statement. When we proclaim we are Christians, then the responsibility lies with us to prove to the whole world that we indeed are. The lives we live will produce the proof!

BACKGROUND

Jesus never stayed where He was not wanted, so after the Gergesenes urged Him to depart from their coasts, Christ returned to Capernaum, the principal place of His residence at that time (see Mark 2:1). We never read that He visited the country of the Gergesenes again.

While at Capernaum, the events recorded in this chapter occurred. Through these manifestations of His power, Jesus proved Himself to be a skillful, faithful

physician, both of the soul and the body. His attention to physical needs was evident when He:

- Healed the man with palsy (verses 2-8)
- Raised to life the ruler’s daughter and healed the diseased woman (verses 18-26)
- Gave sight to two blind men (verses 27-31)
- Cast the devil out of one who was possessed (verses 32-34)
- Healed all manner of sicknesses (verse 35)

Jesus’ care for the spiritual needs of people is also clear in this chapter, as He:

- Forgave sins (verse 2)
- Called Matthew to be a disciple (verse 9)
- Conversed freely with publicans and sinners (verses 10-13)
- Discoursed on the duty of fasting (verses 14-15)
- Preached the Gospel

These were all remarkable instances of the Lord’s power and compassion. The miracles caused people to give glory to God because He had delegated such authority to Jesus. Christ’s works of healing and forgiving were signs that God’s Kingdom was dawning.

In verse 9, we read of the call of Matthew, the author of this Gospel, whom Mark and Luke refer to as Levi. It was customary for a person to have two names: perhaps Matthew was the name he was known by as a publican, and therefore he called himself by that name, rather than by the more honorable name of Levi. Some think Christ gave him the name of Matthew when He called him to be an apostle, just as Simon was surnamed Peter. The name *Matthew* means “the gift of God.” The “receipt of customs” where Matthew was sitting when Christ passed by was the toll booth in the street where tax collectors sat to receive various taxes.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- III. The proofs of the King’s claims
 - E. Authority to forgive sin (9:1-8)
 - F. Authority over men (9:9)
 - G. Authority to meet spiritual needs (9:10-13)
 - H. Authority over tradition (9:14-17)
 - I. Authority over death (9:18-26)
 - J. Authority over blindness (9:27-31)
 - K. Authority over speechlessness (9:32-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did the teachers of the Law believe Jesus was blaspheming?

2. Why do you think the religious leaders were so threatened by Jesus' ministry?

[illegible]

3. What have you experienced that has prompted you to express awe at the power, authority, or compassion of Jesus?

[illegible]

The Gergesenes desired Christ to depart, but the people of Capernaum received Him and were blessed by the miracles He performed in their midst. If Christ is rejected by some, there are others who will receive Him. Those who do so will benefit, both here and in eternity!

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

A gentleman in our congregation tells of an event that occurred when he was about five years old on the old family farm in Minnesota. The family had large fields of wheat, barley, and some oats, and the crops were golden and ripe. It was time to harvest. Suddenly his father got desperately ill with an appendicitis attack. There was no way he could harvest the crops, which needed to be reaped in time for the threshing machine that would soon be in the area. Also, the unharvested crops were vulnerable to summer rain that would cause devastation.

Thankfully, there were brothers and cousins who came to the rescue and reaped, bundled, and shocked the crop in time for the threshing machine. The bundled and shocked sheaves were also safe from any summer rains.

As Jesus beheld the Jewish multitudes, He saw them as a potential spiritual harvest. He knew stormy times were coming, and that much pain and heartache lay ahead. His heart was filled with compassion for these people and He knew they needed to be brought to spiritual safety before the destruction would come. If only there were enough laborers for such a huge task!

Certainly, the souls of mankind are facing troubling times today. As we look around us at the sin and heart-breaking human conditions in this world, our hearts are saddened. War, famine, torture, starvation, crime, abuse, and poverty are rampant. Even more tragically, millions of souls are heading for a lost eternity, and the time for repentance is drawing to a close. Soon, the harvest could be lost.

But there is good news! There is hope for all people through Jesus and His gift of salvation. As we consider the lost condition of so many around us, we need to feel an urgency to get the Gospel out. We need to feel compassion for the lost and hurting, and to pray for a passion for these souls to be saved. As we take up the burden for souls, we must pray that laborers will reach the corners of the earth we cannot touch. Truly, life's greatest responsibility comes from a call to win souls, but the greatest joy comes from a fulfillment of that call.

BACKGROUND

Matthew, having been a tax collector, likely was an expert record-keeper. This could explain why he kept written records of Jesus' actions. In doing so, Matthew gave evidence of Jesus' kingship by giving us examples of many of His words and accomplishments including preaching, teaching, and healing throughout the cities and villages of Israel.

Besides proclaiming God's plan for mankind and His coming Kingdom, Jesus had a heart of compassion for the simple people whom He saw as scattered sheep without a shepherd. Jesus knew there was help for these fainting souls, but who would spread the Word of this wonderful hope? Jesus commissioned His followers to pray for laborers to reap a spiritual harvest of these souls who would believe if they only knew the way, comparing the multitudes to ripened fields.

As Jesus called His twelve disciples to come near to Him, He gave them authority over unclean spirits and to heal sickness and disease. The Scripture in today's text lists the names of the apostles who came from many walks of life. This shows that all types of people are called and all are needed to be laborers in His vineyard. Bartholomew was likely another name for Nathanael, and Thaddeus was also called Judas, the brother of James. Simon the Canaanite was at other times called Simon Zelotes.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to go preach the Gospel to the Jews. It was His plan for the converted Jews to become His messengers to the Gentiles at a later time. The disciples were to declare that God's Kingdom was near. While the Jews were anticipating that their Messiah would come and set up an earthly kingdom that would overthrow their Roman captors, Jesus was referring to His spiritual Kingdom that would take root in the hearts of men.

Jesus went on to commission the disciples to heal people and cast out devils just as He had been doing. Since they had received freely of God's gifts, they were to freely give to others. Then those to whom they ministered were to provide for the disciples, as they were deserving of this sustenance because of their labor.

For those who rejected God's message, the disciples were to shake the dust off their feet, which in that culture was a symbol of separation. Possibly, this would warn the observers that the call of God was ceasing, perhaps never to return. Those who received the message were to be given the blessing of peace.

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L. Authority to command men

- 3.** As you look at those around you who do not know Jesus, what are ways you can impact their lives as you fulfill Christ's commission?

Today, more than ever, there is a world that needs to be saved before it is too late. Let us pray and work with a passion to rescue the lost. What a joy it will be one day to lay sheaves at the Master's feet!

1. What ministries were the disciples commissioned to perform on their missionary journeys?

- [illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”
(Matthew 10:37)**

A scrubby, prickly-branched juniper held a few wax candles and some homemade paper chains on its branches. With eyes shining and wearing wide grins, we children placed our freshly-laundered socks beneath the tree. Christmas was almost here—just a few more hours of anticipation before the big day! Then, as in years past, Mother began sneezing and the familiar red rash appeared. Why did she always have to get sick at Christmas time? It was years before I realized that Mother endured annual misery so her children could have a Christmas tree, the source of her allergic reaction. A juniper was the only tree our family could afford; it was free, because we could cut one from a nearby pasture.

Clearly, making this holiday sacrifice demonstrated my mother’s love for her children. In light of our focus verse, did that mean that she was not “worthy” of the Lord? Since our mother loved us that much, shouldn’t we, as her children, return that love with all our might? Would that make us not worthy of Jesus? For a number of years, such thoughts puzzled me.

When I became a little more spiritually mature, I realized that the key in this verse is three words: “more than me.” That phrase is used twice, referring to both the parents and the children. The Lord deserves our first love. Because God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die, we can be forgiven of our sins. Therefore, the Lord deserves our love, worship, and obedience. Pleasing Him must be more important to us than pleasing our parents or our children. We must not love our family, or anyone, so much that we compromise the values God has put into our lives.

Giving the Lord first place in our hearts will bring us benefits. When we love the Lord in this way, He can show us how to love our family better. If the love of Christ is supreme in our hearts, it has a radiating effect. His love will flow out of us to others, perhaps even sacrificially, as my mother’s love did.

Be sure the Lord is your first love today, and then let His love warm your home and those around you.

BACKGROUND

Persecution of God’s people was not a new thing in the Bible. In this lesson, Christ told His disciples

that they were to expect persecution then and in the future. Along with this warning, He devoted equal time to giving them promises of God’s care and watchful eye.

Christ compared sending His chosen followers out as sending “sheep among wolves,” and He instructed them to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Doves are mentioned more often than any other bird in the Bible. A long list of their characteristics can be compiled from Scripture references, and ornithologists would agree that these traits are still found in the species today. These traits include their timidity when attacked and their lack of self-defense; no doubt these were the traits Jesus was encouraging in His followers. On the other hand, in Jesus’ time, serpents were considered wise animals. The Lord let His followers know that wisdom would be necessary to face the persecution, and yet they were not to be vengeful or retaliatory.

When Jesus said, “Take no thought how or what ye shall speak,” He was referring to a crisis situation. He did not mean that Christians should not study His Word, but rather that they should not worry when they faced their adversaries. If study and prayer had been done, they could trust the Holy Spirit to speak through them.

Jesus referred to Beelzebub, who was considered the prince of devils. At times, Jesus was accused of using Beelzebub’s power to accomplish His miracles. If that accusation was made of Jesus himself, His disciples needed to expect similar indictments.

The Lord called for open confession of faith; secret discipleship was not an option. His followers needed to make public admission of their allegiance to Him and trust Him to help them bear the consequences, which would most certainly follow. He promised that the Father, who noted the sparrows, would certainly be with them in their time of need.

At the close of this section, the Lord indicated that even a seemingly insignificant service would be noticed and rewarded if it was done with the right attitude.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. The proofs of the King’s claims
 - L. Authority to command men
 - 3. The King’s instructions
 - b. The danger in the ministry (10:16-23)
 - c. The comfort in the ministry (10:24-33)

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1. List at least three verses from our text which indicate that following Christ will not be easy.

Jesus wants to be the Lord of our lives every day. Let us challenge ourselves today to be certain that we have given Him first place in each detail and situation.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

A loud clanging and banging coming from my laundry room shattered the quiet peace of the morning. Our twenty-year-old washing machine was protesting fiercely under its heavy load. I hurried in and rearranged the clothes, trying to get the drum of the machine in balance, but to no avail. My washing machine was on overload. Having a large family, I occasionally pack more into the machine than it can handle properly—I push it to its limit trying to save time. However, today my rearranging didn’t solve the clanging and shaking, so I was forced to take out part of the load and set it aside to redo later. What I had thought would save me time ended up taking me more time than I had intended.

Does it ever seem to you that your life is so busy and burdened down with routine tasks that it is out of balance? Do you often rearrange schedules, appointments, and activities, only to find that your day is still overloaded? When a problem interjects itself into your pathway, are you able to stay calm and work smoothly through the situation? Or, do you find yourself caught off balance and frustrated?

The Lord wants us to unload our cares on Him. He brings the balance we need in our lives. He is the One who can keep us from whirling out of control when our day is filled to capacity. He is a sure place of rest and peace in our busy lives. Just as I was able to take half of the load out of my washing machine to deal with later, Jesus removes our burdens and takes care of them for us. With Him in control, there is no need for overload. We can relinquish them at His feet in prayer, and find stability and repose.

Today, God invites you to bring Him your troubles, your exhausted heart, your overworked hands, and your overloaded schedule. As you put them in His hands, you will find rest and balance, and the sustaining strength and grace that only He can give.

BACKGROUND

John the Baptist was in prison in the fortress of Machaerus for denouncing the adulterous marriage of Herod Antipas and Herodias (Luke 3:19-20). He had been there throughout much of Jesus’ ministry and had not been able to see the miracles Jesus was performing. John’s disciples had reported what they were witnessing (Luke 7:18), but John had heard only

partial reports and was not able to see the whole picture. Perhaps it was his lack of understanding that caused him to have a question about Jesus’ mission. Jesus asked John’s disciples to relate to John again those things which they had heard and seen. In doing so, Jesus assured John that He was fulfilling the Father’s will.

After addressing John, Jesus praised John to the crowds, telling them that John was a man of conviction and courage, the greatest of prophets, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the nation for Jesus and present Him to the nation.

However, the leaders of that time were unwilling to accept John as a prophet of God. Matthew 11:16-19 reveals the reason for their unbelief: their hearts were hardened, and they were acting as stubborn children. Jesus issued a warning to them. In verses 16-24, Jesus told the people that judgment would fall upon those who treated lightly their opportunities to see and hear God’s Son. He told the people of Capernaum that if the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, and the godless cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, had seen the miracles Jesus and His disciples had performed, they would have repented. Yet, despite the miracles Jesus performed at Capernaum, many people still chose not to believe.

At the end of this chapter, Jesus invited the people of Capernaum to “come,” and “learn.” The invitation to *come* was extended to those who were exhausted and burdened down. If His listeners chose to accept His invitation, they would receive rest. However, rest did not promise a life free of effort or sorrow. Discipleship does not exempt one from work but, like the yoke that couples oxen together, it makes the load manageable. *Learn*, the final step in Jesus’ invitation, was a lifelong process, which encouraged the people to learn more about Him, and trust Him, and as a result, receive peace.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - A. The commencement of the King’s rejection
 - 1. The anticipation of opposition (11:2-30)
 - a. Opposition to the forerunner (11:2-15)
 - b. Opposition by the inconsistent (11:16-19)
 - c. Opposition by the cities (11:20-24)
 - d. Invitation to the childlike (11:25-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. John the Baptist had prepared the nation for Jesus' ministry, and introduced Jesus to the people. What caused him to now question Jesus' identity?

2. How did Jesus describe this generation? What points in Jesus' description relate to today's generation?

[illegible]

3. Think about a time when you felt overloaded with burdens (busy schedule, money worries, job, school, friends). How could it have been easier with Jesus' help?

CONCLUSION

When you find yourself on overload, remember God's invitation to rest. He is able to relieve us of all our stress, and give us true peace.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.” (Matthew 12:15)

Some years back, one of my family members was seriously ill. Many Christians from all over the country joined with us in holding her up before the Lord in prayer. In addition, we did everything we could to make her comfortable, including frequently changing the dressings, feeding her appropriate foods, and assisting with numerous small tasks. These efforts could not bring healing to her, but we wanted to do all we were able to do.

Reading this passage in Matthew where people thronged Jesus with their sick and infirmed loved ones, I know my family and friends would have been in that group. I think of my cousin who had liver cancer, a brother with heart problems, an aunt with a polio-affected leg, and a dear friend with loss of sight. Without a doubt, all of them would have been brought to Jesus to be healed. We would have encouraged anyone we knew—whether their problems were major or seemingly insignificant—to follow Him. In fact, we would have done everything in our power to *persuade* them of their need to come along.

Although it was still the Sabbath, and Jesus had just been interrogated on the issue of “doing good” on the day of rest, He had compassion on the multitude that followed Him. He had walked quietly away from the Pharisees who were plotting His capture and then, surrounded by the multitude, “He healed them *all*.” What a glorious day that was, and how the crowd must have rejoiced! Imagine the sick, one after another, pushing in close to Jesus and then walking away completely whole! Their outlook on life was changed and their future held hope! Enthusiasm must have been unbridled!

The encouraging thing is that Jesus is the same today and we have the privilege to come to Him at any time—no travel required—to make our requests. He is ever ready to hear them. Just think of the difference in the lives of all who recall His words, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29), and accept His help. Ruined lives, sick bodies, broken relationships, and hopeless outlooks can be completely changed by coming to Jesus. And we need not leave any behind.

Let us do everything possible to bring our loved ones to the One who can make a difference!

BACKGROUND

The Book of Matthew is the first Gospel, or “Good News” of the New Testament, also referred to as the Gospel of the King. Bible scholars believe Matthew the Apostle, also known as Levi the publican, wrote it somewhere around A.D. 60. In his account, Matthew presented Jesus to the Jews as their Messiah by quoting several prophecies and their fulfillments in Christ, thus providing a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Some consider this book to be God’s official ultimatum to the Jewish nation—the last call of Jehovah introducing His Son, Jesus, to His people. If it was indeed written around A.D. 60, it was penned just ten years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and thus was indeed the “last call.”

In chapter 12, Jesus and His disciples gathered some grain to eat as they went through a field on the Sabbath. The word translated *corn* is a generic term meaning “the sown” or “grain.” In this case, the grain was likely wheat. In the United States, corn is generally understood to be maize, and other grains are referred to by their own names.

While it was lawful for Jewish travelers to eat grain from the fields if they were hungry, their law forbade work on the Sabbath, and reaping was considered work. A few Pharisees were spying to see if they could catch Jesus breaking a law, and they seized upon this seeming infraction. Consider the inequity of their accusation—after all, Jesus was the Creator of the Sabbath, grain, and mankind! Miniscule points were addressed in the laws of the Jews, but greater precepts such as mercy and compassion were ignored, leaving them bound by hundreds of minute regulations of their own making. In Mark’s account of this incident, Jesus said, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27), meaning that God created the Sabbath for man’s benefit.

In His discussion, Jesus cited prophet, priest, and king, in each instance claiming a greater authority. In fact He is our Prophet, High Priest, and King, but the Pharisees chose not to accept it. When they asked if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, Jesus healed the man’s withered hand and parried their question with a question of His own. The disgusted Pharisees then began plotting to destroy Him. This was the first explicit mention of their murderous designs against the Lord.

Verses 15 through 21 relate how, rather than disputing with them, Jesus quietly left the area followed

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A. The commencement of the King's rejection

a. Controversy over Sabbath labor
(12:1-8)

- b. Controversy over Sabbath healing
(12:9-21)

- ## A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.” (Matthew 12:33)

What kind of spiritual “fruit” would be produced by this religious movement? Not any of value, if you listened to what its detractors had to say. When the Pentecostal outpouring began in Los Angeles, newspapers described the building on Azusa Street where the services were held as a “tumble-down shack” and called the leader “an old colored exhorter, blind in one eye.” The *Los Angeles Daily Times* published a front-page story with the heading, “New Sect of Fanatics is Breaking Loose.” After the Apostolic Faith headquarters was established in Portland, crowds gathered at times around the buildings where believers were meeting and raised a commotion, claiming the worshipers were under some kind of hypnotic spell. Among other things, the interracial mixing of nationalities in the services was frowned upon. Hoodlums sought to disrupt the meetings and at times, the building was pelted with bottles and stones, and the windows broken out.

Accusations and ridicule were common in the early days of the Pentecostal movement. However, as our key verse brings out, the nature of a man or doctrine or movement can be rightly evaluated only when the results have had time to develop.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Azusa Street began in 1906. Florence Crawford arrived in Portland, Oregon, in late December of 1906, when the first church services were held in an old converted blacksmith shop. That is long enough ago to evaluate the “fruit” of the Pentecostal movement and the Apostolic Faith Church. From a simple beginning among hungry hearts eager to serve God, a worldwide work sprang up. Today, Apostolic Faith churches have been established around the world. A literature ministry has covered the globe with Gospel publications produced and mailed out free of charge in more than seventy different languages. No historian will ever calculate the impact of the thousands who have been saved, sanctified, and baptized by the power of the Holy Ghost, and then scattered, through the efforts of this work, to the ends of the earth. Lives have been transformed, broken homes reunited, and alcoholics, gamblers, and drug users delivered instantly from the bondage of addiction. Clearly, the “fruit” has been good fruit.

Today, pause and thank God for a spiritual heritage that has stood the test of time!

BACKGROUND

The Pharisees were envious of Jesus, and this passage reveals their carnal hearts by their crass and cruel opposition. They knew He was doing great things, but they could not explain His miracles, so they accused Him of working through the power of Satan rather than the power of God. They did not want Jesus’ fame to become any greater, possibly fearing their positions would be taken from them or that the Jews would look to Jesus instead of them.

Jesus refuted their illogical accusation by pointing out that if a kingdom is divided, it cannot stand. If Satan were to do away with his own demonic helpers, he would be destroying his own kingdom. The defeat of Satan had to be accomplished by One who was against Satan, and that was the Son of God. Jesus drew a further picture, saying that no one could enter a strong man’s house and spoil (carry off) his goods without first restraining the strong man. Again, the logic was irrefutable. Satan was a conquered foe, or Jesus could not be “seizing” his property.

In verses 31-32, Jesus spoke of what has been termed the “unpardonable sin.” Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is persisting to reject the very One who convicts of sin. The person who does this rejects the only One that can draw him to repentance, and thus loses any opportunity to be pardoned.

Jesus went on to point out that one can know a tree by the fruit it bears. So it is with mankind: what a person says and does shows his character. The connection to the preceding verses is clear, for the Pharisees had just revealed what was in their hearts by the blasphemous words they had spoken.

In verses 36-37, Jesus put forth another solemn warning: people at the judgment will be required to give an account for idle words. The word *idle* means “lazy, useless, or barren.” Jesus’ warning against careless speech is tied to the fact that one’s conversation reveals the condition of his heart.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - A. The commencement of the King’s rejection
 - 2. The actual opposition by the religious leaders
 - c. Controversy over the healing of a demoniac (12:22-37)
 - (1) The miracle by Christ (12:22)
 - (2) The reaction of the multitude (12:23)

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1. What event precipitated the Pharisees' accusation of Jesus?

People will evaluate our Christianity by our words and actions, whether good or bad. Let us be sure that when people watch our lives, the “fruit” they observe is truly Christlike.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” (Matthew 12:41)

Amy Carmichael was a missionary to India in the early 1900s. One afternoon, a Hindu father and his beautiful young daughter named Mimosa came to visit. While they were there, the mission people told Mimosa of a God who had made everything and loved her. Because the visit was short, they did not have time to tell her much about Jesus or how He died on the Cross, and the young child pled with her father to allow her to stay and learn more. He denied her request, and she was forced to return home with him that day.

Later Amy wrote, “One look at that loveliness [of the Lord Jesus], and, though the one who looked did not even remember His name, she was His forever.”¹ Mimosa went home to serve this loving God through long and extreme persecution. Although at first she knew nothing of God but what she had heard in that brief visit, she learned to know Him through personal communication. She served God even though her family and then her husband opposed her. It was twenty-two years before she had the opportunity to visit Amy again and “officially” learn more about the Gospel. By that time she had endured so much hardship that she looked like an old woman. Yet, her faith in God had held and grown strong.

Mimosa responded to a mere fragment of knowledge about God. How much knowledge do we have, and how have we responded? Jesus indicated that the people of Nineveh had taken action because of Jonah’s message, yet the Israelites of Jesus’ time did not respond although He was greater than Jonah. We do not want to be like them; we want to heed and take advantage of the entire Gospel understanding that God has given us. Let us ask God today to give us hearts like Mimosa’s that we may believe and obey Him in everything.

BACKGROUND

The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day were not satisfied that the prophecies He fulfilled were, indeed, proof that He was the Savior. They asked Him to give them a sign. Their demand was not an honest request, but an indication that they were not ready to believe Him, regardless of whatever proof he gave

them. Some of those same leaders had earlier accused Jesus of using the spirit of Beelzebub to perform miracles — suggesting He was exercising the same satanic power as the magicians of their day.

Jesus indeed performed miracles and wonders, but they were not done to satisfy the curiosity of those present. He performed miracles to bring glory to God. He compared Himself to King Solomon, whom the people referred to as the wisest man who ever lived. However, though Solomon enjoyed wealth and knowledge, he exploited his subjects. Yet, in spite of Solomon’s limitations, the Queen of Sheba came from a Gentile country far away to seek his knowledge, and was fascinated by it. Jesus not only was infinitely greater than Solomon in the wealth of His knowledge, wisdom, and power, but He had an intense compassion for sinners. As the King of mankind, Jesus showed His love for His subjects. In His love for them, He did not want anyone to perish; and He would even die to prevent them from perishing.

Jonah was well known in Jesus’ time as a prophet of God who had experienced in the whale a stunning miracle that was a type of resurrection. Jesus reminded the people that Jonah went to the Gentile people of Nineveh, and they repented. They responded to the words of warning by one from an enemy country, and sought no proof because of the truth behind it. In contrast, Jesus came to His own people, offering clear evidence of His miraculous powers, but His message was rejected. Jesus knew that even though He would die and come back to life by His own power, they would not believe (see John 10:18).

By using the examples of Solomon and Jonah, Jesus exposed the pretenses of the Jewish leaders’ spirituality. They were not truly seeking after the truth of God as the Queen of Sheba and the people of Nineveh did. These had sought God when imperfect situations were presented to them. Yet, the Jewish leaders would not believe Christ when all the evidences of His divinity were presented before them.

Jesus warned them that it was not enough to seek God and attempt to cleanse their hearts, but their hearts had to be occupied with the love of the truth of God. Without the love of truth, their efforts to purify themselves would only bring more spiritual woe. He illustrated this with the example of one who cleansed his heart but did not occupy it with the love of God, which allowed a greater number of devils to return and occupy his heart. Jesus emphasized to the people that it is the love of truth that would allow them to be a part of His kingdom.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - A. The commencement of the King's rejection
 - 3. The announcement by the King of Israel's rejection (12:38-50)
 - a. The Pharisaic demand for proof of Christ's claims (12:38)
 - b. The sign of Jonah (12:39-42)
 - c. Israel's predicament (12:43-45)
 - d. Christ's individual invitation (12:46-50)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus to do?

2. What was the sign of Jonah and how is it central to the true identity of Jesus?

3. What must we do to be in Christ's kingdom and be a member of His family?

CONCLUSION

Jesus' death, resurrection, and centuries of work in the lives of believers are irrefutable evidence that He is, indeed, the Son of God. How have you responded to this evidence? Instead of looking for additional evidence or miracles, accept what God has already given!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”
(Matthew 13:23)**

The story is told of a man who sat on his porch during the services in a neighboring church. He enjoyed listening to the musical portion of the service, but would plug his ears during the sermon. One day, while he was plugging his ears, a fly landed on his nose. He twisted and turned to get the fly off but couldn't shake it loose. Finally, he took one hand off his ear and rid himself of the fly. The moment he uncovered his ear, the minister said, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” His attention was captured, and he listened to the rest of the sermon. When the Word of God is sown, we have a choice of “plugging our ears” spiritually or listening and applying what we hear to our daily lives.

When Jesus told his hearers, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear,” He was referring to more than just perceiving an auditory stimulus. There is a deeper kind of listening that results in spiritual understanding and application. In today's text, Jesus described this in the parable of the sower and the seed. His description of four types of soil portrayed the various levels of receptivity in people's hearts.

What kind of person is compared to good soil? As good soil hearers, we pay close attention to God's Word and love the truth that is in it. As we study it and daily apply it to our lives, we understand what the will of God is and what the Word of God means. Our hearts are pliable, receptive, and carefully maintained to allow the good seeds to grow and the “weeds” placed by the enemy to be removed quickly and completely.

How much return should be expected from the seeds that are planted in a Christian's heart? Each of us has the opportunity to bring forth a hundredfold. Yet, becoming truly good ground may not always be easy. Perhaps we may only bear a hundredfold after being broken to pieces by adversity. Many times the Word and will of God work like a plow, His “blade” cutting in to make us pliable and free of hindrances that would choke His truth. We want to allow what God has permitted in our lives to shape us into the Christians the Lord desires us to be.

BACKGROUND

Jesus, the Master Teacher, used everyday objects and illustrations to speak to those to whom He ministered, rather than the difficult terminology or verbiage used in the schools of the day. Parables were some of the Lord's favorite teaching tools, and His use of them was a fulfillment of prophecy (Psalm 78:2). The word *parable* means, “A fictitious narrative of common life containing a moral.”

In the Bible, parables provided an earthly comparison to make a spiritual point. Those who heard the parables had to apply themselves to ascertain the meaning. The truths were hidden from the ungodly. Jesus indicated that the unrighteous chose to have their understanding hindered, saying, “[Their] heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed” (Matthew 13:15). Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10.

In Jesus' time, it was a common practice for the farmers to put seed in a bag. As they walked through the plowed fields, they took the seed out by handfuls and scattered it. The seed fell on four types of ground: hard-packed earth, areas where there was only a little soil over the rocks, among thorns on unplowed land, and on good ground.

Jesus explained the meaning of many of His parables, including this one, to His disciples. When the seeds of the Gospel are spread, the hearts that it touches have different levels of receptivity. The success of the spiritual growth of the seed is dependent upon the preparation of the hearts. Some hearts are hard, and the seed never starts to grow. Some hearts are shallow, and although the seed grows quickly, it withers when the sun of persecution and trials shine on it. Cares and deceitful riches choke the seed in some hearts. However, some seed falls on receptive hearts. Jesus indicated that in receptive hearts, the amount of fruit would vary, but clearly He expected there to be fruit.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - B. The consequences of the King's rejection: characteristics of the mystery (interim) kingdom
 - 1. Parables to the multitudes
 - a. The sower: proclamation in the kingdom (13:1-23)
 - (1) The parable (13:1-9)

- (2) The purpose of parables
(13:10-17)
- (3) The point of the parable
(13:18-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Where was Jesus when He told this parable?

2. Why do you think Jesus told a parable about farming?

3. Why are some people unable to understand the meaning of the Lord's parables? What can we do to make sure the meaning is clear and it is applied to our lives?

4. After reading His Word, what is God saying to you today concerning your fruit?

CONCLUSION

What is the condition of the "ground" in your heart today? We want to yield to God so that our hearts can be receptive and fruit bearing.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” (Matthew 13:30)

The Titanic was deemed unsinkable, but on a tragic night in 1912, the massive ship struck an iceberg and rapidly sank beneath the waves of the cold Atlantic Ocean. More than fifteen hundred lives were lost that night.

As news of the tragedy spread, a great crowd of relatives of those who had been on board thronged the street outside the shipping company’s office in Liverpool. On either side of the main entrance, a large board had been placed. Above one was printed the words, “KNOWN TO BE SAVED.” The words above the opposite board were, “KNOWN TO BE LOST.” From time to time, a man would appear from the office bearing a large piece of cardboard on which was written the name of one of the passengers. As he held up the name, a deathly stillness would sweep over the crowd as they waited to see where he would post the name. There were only two categories there—the saved and the lost.

Unbelievers and Christians exist side by side in this world. However, someday a time of separation will come, and in that day there will be only two categories: the saved and the lost. In today’s focus verse, Jesus referenced that time of separation.

At times, we may wonder why the wicked seem to continue on without remorse or penalty. However, we do not need to concern ourselves about what God is going to do with them or when judgment will be meted out. That is God’s area. He knows exactly what is going on in each heart. One reason He does not execute judgement immediately is the desire that some will repent and find a real relationship with Him before it is too late.

Our concern is what *we* do with the truth. We must determine to live for God, no matter what others do. When we encounter “tares” among those around us, we will love these people and pray for them. In the meantime, we will continue to serve God because He—not the individuals who surround us—is our primary emphasis. At God’s harvest time, we know that the tares will be uprooted and destroyed, while the wheat is gathered in, to spend eternity with God himself. Let’s make sure we are ready for that day!

BACKGROUND

Jesus used many parables—illustrations that compare something familiar to something unfamiliar—as a method of teaching His hearers. In this portion of text, Jesus gave three parables. All of the parables in this chapter taught about God and His kingdom. The kingdom of Heaven, as presented here, means the spiritual realm in which God rules.

The parable of the wheat and tares is told in verses 24-30, and explained in verses 36-43. The “field” represents the world in which the Gospel is preached. The “good seed” was the truths preached by Christ and His Apostles. The point of this story was that God allows unbelievers to remain unpunished for a time, just as a farmer allows weeds to grow up for a time in his field. The farmer knows that uprooting the weeds could destroy some wheat with it, so he allows the two to grow together until harvest. In the spiritual realm, a day of judgment is coming for all mankind, and at that time the believers will be separated from the unbelievers.

The parable of the mustard seed (verses 31-32) illustrates that the kingdom of God has small beginnings but will grow and produce great results in time. The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds with a diameter of about 2 millimeters and may grow into a tree of six to eight feet tall. It is also notable that mustard is widely considered easy to grow in its proper climate.

The parable of the leaven (verse 33) makes the same point as the preceding parable. While leaven is often used in the Bible as an illustration of sin, in this parable it is a positive symbol, representing the growth of God’s kingdom.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The opposition to the King

B. The consequences of the King’s rejection: characteristics of the mystery (interim) kingdom

1. Parables to the multitudes
 - b. The wheat and tares: professor and possessor in the kingdom (13:24-30)
 - c. The mustard seed: growth of the kingdom (13:31-32)
 - d. The yeast: growth of the kingdom (13:33)
 - e. Prophecy fulfilled in the parables (13:34-35)

2. Parables to the disciples
 - a. The wheat and tares explained (13:36-43)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the householder say would eventually happen to the tares?

2. What does the parable of the weeds teach us about our treatment of non-Christians?

3. What steps can we take to make sure we are ready to enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven?

CONCLUSION

The Kingdom of Heaven is more valuable than anything on earth. It will be worth any price to make sure it is our final Home!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” (Matthew 13:44)

A number of years ago, a friend of mine was persuaded to get involved in recreational salmon fishing. Before he could actually go fishing, he had to purchase the necessary equipment: the fishing rod, a special reel, tackle, boots, bait, etc. His initial purchase cost him around \$200, and added to that was the cost of travel to and from the river. In spite of the financial outlay, he was convinced that his new interest was worth the investment. After a few trips, he actually was successful in landing a four-pound salmon. What excitement! What a feeling, landing that first catch! Even though the real cost of the fish came to more than \$50 per pound, the thrill of catching it and the satisfaction in eating what he had caught made it worth every dollar. If he had decided to forego trying the sport because of the high price, he would have missed out on the great rewards of salmon fishing.

Fishing may not appeal to everyone. However, there is one treasure that we should all be willing to “sell out” to obtain—the treasure of the Gospel! Sometimes people focus too much on the cost of giving up their sinful lives to serve the Lord. It seems the more the Lord deals with them, the tighter they cling to their worldly friends, sinful activities, or places of amusement. If only they could experience the rich rewards that are part of God’s treasure! While it may seem that denying self and making deep consecrations to God are too high of a price to pay, they would receive so much more in exchange. Nothing on earth is worth more than the eternal treasures of Heaven.

When we give up our earthly desires to follow God, He gives us peace in our hearts. There is excitement in salvation, in knowing that God has a special and fulfilling plan all mapped out for our lives. Following salvation, there are other benefits, such as sanctification (heart purity), the baptism of the Holy Ghost (power for service), the fellowship of the saints, healing for our bodies, deliverance from Hell, and a home prepared for us in Heaven. And let’s not forget the privilege of spending eternity with the Lord! How could any earthly “joy” compare with these?

When we choose to obtain, at any cost, what God offers, we will not be disappointed. The benefits of

serving God far exceed any price, and the dividends we reap will make us spiritually and eternally rich!

BACKGROUND

Jesus’ parables about the hidden treasure (13:44), and the pearl merchant (13:45-46), both describe the value of Heaven compared to the things on earth. The parable of the fishing net (13:47-50) has been paralleled to the parable of the wheat and tares (13:24-30) in that they both teach that people are to obey God and spread His Word to others. However, the sorting of who is and who is not part of the Kingdom of Heaven will be done at the Rapture.

In verses 51-52, Jesus inquired whether His hearers understood. He pointed out to them that every man who is acquainted with the Gospel truth should have it as a resource, or treasure, that could be brought forth when necessary. Like a householder who would bring forth from his treasures, they could share the Gospel as occasion demanded—whether the need be sickness, or calamity, or poverty.

Jesus returned to Nazareth after He was in the Gergesene country, where He healed the two demon-possessed men (Matthew 8:28-34). He re-crossed the sea to Capernaum and from there traveled to His hometown of Nazareth. When Jesus arrived, He discovered the people in His hometown did not believe that He was Christ. Many Bible scholars believe that because the people of Nazareth were acquainted with Jesus’ family, and had known Jesus since He was a young child, they could not bring themselves to look beyond the man to hear His message. Because of the Nazarenes’ unbelief, Jesus did few miracles there.

Jesus says in verse 57, “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.” In other words, a prophet is often honored everywhere except in his own hometown.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - B. The consequences of the King’s rejection: characteristics of the mystery (interim) kingdom
 - 2. Parables to the disciples
 - b. The hidden treasure: Jews in the kingdom (13:44)
 - c. The pearl: Gentiles in the kingdom (13:45-46)
 - d. The dragnet: judgment at the end of the kingdom (13:47-50)

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.”
(Matthew 14:23)**

The school bus will be coming any minute, and your second-grader can't find his shoe. You breathe a quick prayer, and then thank the Lord when the shoe is located behind the couch. Quickly you grab your briefcase and head for work, hoping the traffic will not be slow today, since you're running late. When you get there, your boss has a rush job, and before you finish it your telephone rings—not once, but five times!

While we all hope that stressful issues will not pile one on top of another, we recognize the sort of day that leaves a person almost panting by its end. A little time to be quiet and connect with the Lord becomes a welcome relief.

My wife and I like to go out of town occasionally for what we call the 3-Rs: Rest, Relax, and Renew. We get away from the stress of our jobs, the responsibilities of ministry and church, and best of all the telephone. During these times away we enjoy the obvious: rest and relaxation. But more importantly, we study and discuss God's Word, and spend time in prayer. We set goals for our spiritual lives, and also for our home. We have found that these times away help us return to our post of duty renewed in our souls and more focused on the ministries God has called us to in our local church.

When He was on earth, Jesus had stressful days, too. In this text, His day started with bad news: John the Baptist had been martyred. When Jesus heard the news, He went apart to a desert place, but the people followed Him. As the day progressed, He ministered to the crowd and fed five thousand men, plus women and children. By the evening, He needed physical rest and comfort, and to meet with his Father so He could gain the strength to go on. He sent the people and the disciples away and went up into a mountain alone to pray.

If Jesus recognized the importance of making time in His busy schedule to get away and be alone with God the Father, how much more important it is for us to follow His example! We must set aside time in our everyday activities to come apart from responsibilities and stresses, and to seek God and His will for our lives.

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, Jesus was about two years into His earthly ministry. The chapter begins with the account of the beheading of John the Baptist. The king in this chapter was Herod Antipas. He was a son of Herod the Great (who had the babies of Bethlehem killed). Jesus stood before Herod Antipas during the crucifixion trial. The word *tetrarch* indicates that he ruled one of the four districts of Palestine. Another of the districts was ruled by his half brother, Philip. Philip's wife, Herodias, left him to be with Herod Antipas. She hated John for crying out against their immorality, and connived to have him executed and his head brought to Herod on a charger (a table platter).

John had been the forerunner, the one who had “prepared the way” for Jesus. He was the one who had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, and declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). His death surely grieved Jesus. However, even though His own heart ached, Jesus “was moved with compassion” toward the multitudes. The original word for this phrase indicated a concern that was more fervent than sympathy. Jesus truly cared deeply about the people.

The four Gospels all recount the feeding of the 5,000. In Jewish culture at that time, often men and women did not eat together. Since there were 5,000 men, the total crowd could have been 10,000 or 15,000. Through the years, some have tried to explain the miracle away, but its validity is confirmed in John 6:14-15, when the people tried to make Jesus a king because of this miracle.

Another outstanding miracle is recounted in this chapter. Between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., Jesus walked on the sea toward the disciples. Although impulsive, Peter's “bid me come” showed faith, and the result was that he found himself in a very unusual situation—walking on the water toward Jesus! When Peter looked at the waves, he began to sink. What an object lesson to the disciples of the value of keeping their eyes on Jesus!

Following that event, Jesus again went among the people, healing the sick who came and touched Him. Fringes were on the borders of the garments worn by Jewish men at this time; possibly that is what people reached to touch.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The opposition to the King

C. The consummation of the King's rejection

2. Rejection of the forerunner (14:1-36)
 - a. The murder of John (14:1-12)
 - b. Christ's withdrawal: further teaching (14:13-36)
 - (1) Lesson of His sufficiency (14:13-21)
 - (2) Lesson of His presence (14:22-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who did Herod the tetrarch think Jesus was?

2. What does Jesus' strong desire to get alone and pray reveal about His relationship with His Heavenly Father?

3. Reflect on your own spiritual life. How strong is your desire to get alone with God the Father and pray? What can be done to intensify this desire?

CONCLUSION

Ask yourself today: when was the last time I physically got away to be alone with God to read His Word, pray, and seek His will? Then make a determination today to set time aside soon, where you can be without distractions, and get away with God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” (Matthew 15:8)

“Oh, please, may I have a kitty? He’s a beautiful kitty and he’s FREE!” Our daughter’s enthusiasm was not diminished by our parental reluctance and many questions. So kitty came to our house—actually to our barn—and was promptly named Henry. In spite of our initial hesitation, Henry quickly earned our favor by proving himself to be a professional mouser as well as a little girl’s pride and joy.

A few months later we became somewhat suspicious of Henry’s true identity. One morning the truth came out when Henry was discovered in the hay-mow with a family of kittens. My husband suggested changing Henry’s name to Henrietta, but it never happened. She was still Henry after many years and mothering dozens of kittens. The name did not change the truth, however; Henry was a female cat. Giving her a masculine name and assuming she was a male did not make it so.

In the same way, what we say does not change what actually lies deep within our hearts. Eventually, the truth comes out. In today’s text, Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that it was not enough to sound religious or even to act religious. Fine-sounding words and outward forms meant nothing if the heart was far from Him. Ceremonial hand washing or scrupulous following of other tradition was not sufficient; the state of the heart was what was important.

In our day, too, it is possible to know a lot about God but not really know Him. While it is good and important to study the Bible, attend church, sing songs of the faith, and do good deeds, none of these will change the heart. It would be possible to carefully perform all of these activities, and still have a heart that was far from God. What a tragedy that would be!

God’s blessings are reserved for those whose hearts are right with Him. When one’s heart is right, then his words, thoughts, and actions will reflect a true relationship with Him.

BACKGROUND

This passage deals with the contrast between the external religious observances of man and the internal condition of the heart. It appears that the central religious leaders had come from Jerusalem to investigate the ministry of Jesus. In responding to their questions,

Christ spoke plainly regarding their traditions. These religious leaders were faithful in their forms of worship; they were strict in ceremonial observances, and they kept the law outwardly. However, God requires the heart of every individual, and this they had not given to Him.

The specific question these men brought to Jesus regarded the practice of ceremonial washing. Supposedly, this was done for the sake of cleanliness, but it had also become a matter of superstition. They had many rules detailing the quantity of water that was to be used, the way in which it should be applied, the number of times it should be changed, the number of those that might wash at a time, etc. Jesus did not think it necessary to regard these rules, and this was the reason they found fault with Him.

In verses 3-6, Christ gave an example of a tradition that could cause people to actually disobey the fifth Commandment, found in Exodus 20:12, concerning honoring of one’s parents. He referred to the tradition of *corban*, a Hebrew word meaning “a gift,” (see Mark 7:11). *Corban* was a gift designated for the Lord, and so forbidden for any other use. Some people deliberately avoided giving needed care to their parents by declaring as “corban” the money or goods that should have been used to provide such care. Thus, what should have been a religious act of offering became a way of avoiding a commanded duty toward one’s parents.

The prophecy Jesus referred to in verses 7 and 8 is found in Isaiah 29:13. Jesus quoted Isaiah’s criticism of hypocrites to the religious leaders to teach them about the importance of inner purity. Jesus reminded them that it was not enough to merely act religious and claim to honor God if the heart is far from Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - C. The consummation of the King’s rejection
 - 3. Rejection by the Pharisees and scribes
 - a. The dispute over tradition (15:1-20)
 - b. The withdrawal of Christ
 - (1) To Tyre and Sidon: healing of the Canaanite (15:21-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Jesus respond to the question of the scribes and Pharisees?
-

2. Jesus was teaching the multitude, which included many Gentiles, a truth which could change their lives. In your own words explain verse 11. You may also refer to verses 17-20.

3. As Christians, what are some ways we can outwardly demonstrate what God has done in our hearts?

CONCLUSION

Christ wanted the disciples, the multitude, and people today to understand that true worship of God consists in the union of the heart with Him. Where this does not exist, no true devotion can be found.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them.” (Matthew 15:30)

Certain individuals seem to have the know-how and skill to do almost anything. Many times I have admired one of our church brothers for the many things he can do. It seems that whatever problems arise around the church property, you can just hand him the list, and within a short time he comes back to let you know that they’ve all been taken care of. The vacuum cleaner is not working? There is an unusual noise in the furnace? One of the staircase railings is loose? You noticed a door lock that needs replacing? He’s your man! Only occasionally has the needed work been beyond his ability.

Man can accomplish some amazing things, but there are problems that no man can solve. For example, in today’s text we read of those coming to Jesus who were maimed, lame, unable to speak, and blind. Their cases were apparently beyond the skill of man to remedy. Even though medical science has made tremendous advances since the time of Christ, there are many diseases and physical ailments for which man has no cure or solution.

Today, doctors would evaluate a maimed or withered hand, and perhaps determine to amputate it and replace it with an artificial one. The blind learn to rely on the aid of another person or on a dog for guidance. Those with a speech or hearing impairment are taught sign language. We admire the abilities of those who overcome and compensate for their physical limitations and respect the work of physicians who help them—but Jesus healed all those who came to Him. One touch by Jesus made crippled limbs whole, restored sight, and even raised the dead!

Man may try ever so diligently to rehabilitate the one whose life has been ruined by sin, yet often self-help books, crisis hotlines, counseling services, drug rehab programs, courts of law, and even penal institutions fail to achieve lasting results. But one touch from Jesus, through His shed Blood, will instantly transform a ruined life and deliver that individual from sin.

What a wonderful God we serve! We just need to trust in Him and never limit His ability in any thing, situation, or problem. Jesus never fails.

BACKGROUND

After Jesus departed from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, He went to the region of Decapolis. This was predominantly Gentile territory. Following Jesus’ healing of those brought to Him, the Gentiles “glorified the God of Israel.” What a different response than that of the Jewish leaders who said that Jesus was in league with Satan (Matthew 12:22-24). Jesus marveled at the faith of the Gentiles, but was amazed at the unbelief of His own people.

With the crowd of 4,000 being with Jesus for three days, they had used up their own supply of food. His compassion caused Him to perform another miracle, which met their human needs. This miracle was a completely separate event from when He fed the 5,000 (see Matthew 14:15-21) as the following comparison shows:

Feeding the 5,000

- Primarily Jews
- North shore of Galilee (near Bethsaida)
- 5 loaves, 2 fish
- 12 baskets remaining
- Crowd with Him 1 day
- Spring

Feeding the 4,000

- Primarily Gentiles
- Southeast shore of Galilee (near Gentile Decapolis)
- 7 loaves, a few fishes
- 7 baskets remaining
- Crowd with Him 3 days
- Summer

Jesus referred to both feedings as separate events—even referring to the different numbers and using different words to describe the baskets. Jesus did not preach a sermon to the Gentile crowd on the bread of life as He did to the Jews, but He proved who He was by the miracles He performed.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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IV. The opposition to the King

- C. The consummation of the King’s rejection
 - 3. Rejection by the Pharisees and scribes
 - b. The withdrawal of Christ
 - (2) To the Sea of Galilee (15:29-39)
 - (a) Healing the multitudes (15:29-31)
 - (b) Feeding of the 4000 (15:32-39)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Before feeding the four thousand, Jesus performed many other miracles. List them and describe how the crowd reacted.

2. If you had been there, which miracle would have reminded you of creation? Why?

3. What have you experienced that proves Jesus can perform miracles today?

CONCLUSION

We dare not limit Christ to any one particular need or situation. His cures are many. The tokens of His power and goodness are neither scarce nor scanty. He is not limited to any one people or nation. Jesus' power is for all men everywhere!

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.” (Matthew 16:1)

Each of us is surrounded by miracles if we will just open our eyes and see them. One lady said, “The first miracle I remember was when I was about four years old. My finger was smashed while playing in the yard. My father put the Bible on it, and then he prayed. The Lord took the pain away instantly, and I went out to play after it was wrapped.”

Another woman was born a month prematurely, and then broke out with smallpox. She was so sick and tiny, it did not seem that she could live, and the doctor expected just to sign her death certificate. However, her parents put in a request for prayer, and the Lord healed her.

A young man was called to be a pastor in another city. He and his wife had recently purchased a home and had done some remodeling. The sales market was slow and prospects for selling their house looked dim. Yet, one week after it was put on the market, the house sold for a good price. They knew it was a miracle.

In the springtime, flowers shoot out of the ground from bulbs that have spent the winter buried in the dirt. A field turns green with tender shoots of grain. The rivers run into the ocean, but the ocean does not overflow. These are all God’s miracles—witnesses in nature of His power.

Although miracles are all around us, we must have a desire to see God’s workings in order for them to generate faith in our souls. Jesus chided the people of His time because they would not believe His works that were performed in their midst. No matter how many miracles people may hear about or personally witness, if they do not want to believe what God has done, nothing will make them believe.

Remembering previous miracles that God has performed for us will help us see His hand in subsequent events in our lives. Let us remember His past goodness so that when we come across similar situations, we can look back and say, “If God could take care of that situation, He can take care of this one as well.”

BACKGROUND

This chapter begins with a challenge to Jesus’ ministry by the Pharisees and Sadducees. They asked Him to produce a sign from Heaven to prove He was the Messiah. Here, as elsewhere, these two groups were

teamed up against Jesus. Ordinarily, due to various philosophical differences, they were strong rivals of each other. They united when they faced Jesus, however, because in Him they had a common enemy.

Jesus responded by saying that their generation was wicked and adulterous. By *adulterous* He meant that they had turned aside from God and they worshiped false gods. Jesus said that the only sign given to them would be the sign of the prophet Jonah, which referred to the fact that He would die and rise again the third day.

There were many signs in Jesus’ ministry: healings, calming the sea, casting out devils, even raising the dead. But those were signs for people who believed in Jesus. For the wicked and (spiritually) adulterous, the only sign would be the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By refusing to believe His message, the Pharisees and Sadducees barred themselves from seeing the signs that would have given them faith.

Jesus warned His disciples against false doctrine. He said to have no part in the leaven (symbolic of sin) of the scribes and Pharisees. Leaven, or yeast, spreads through a whole lump of dough and makes all of it rise. By this comparison, Jesus tried to warn His followers so the faithless enemies of His mission would not influence them. He knew that if His disciples spent time with the unbelieving, their own faith would soon weaken and crumble.

The faithlessness of the scribes and Pharisees is referred to here as their “doctrine.” Doctrine is not simply what we speak, but our actions and our attitudes as well. The Pharisees’ stiff-necked attitude was as much a part of their doctrine as anything they taught about the Bible.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- IV. The opposition to the King
 - C. The consummation of the King’s rejection
 - 4. Rejection of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:1-12)
 - a. The request for a sign in the midst of their rejection (16:1)
 - b. The rejection by the King (16:2-4)
 - c. A warning concerning Pharisaic doctrine (16:5-12)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jesus say the people of His time could discern?

2. If Jesus was walking with us today, what doctrines might He bid us beware of?

3. Jesus said to the disciples, “O ye of little faith.” How can we increase our faith today?

CONCLUSION

When God performs a miracle in our lives, we must take note of it. God wants to use that miracle to strengthen our faith and bring us closer to Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 16:25)

Do you know what it means to lose your life for the sake of Christ? Read this statement attributed to a young African pastor in Zimbabwe:

“I’m a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I’m a disciple of His and I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

“My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I’m done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don’t have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognized, or praised, or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power.

“My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is Heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my Guide is reliable and my mission is clear.

“I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice or hesitate in the presence of the adversary. I will not negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won’t give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

“I am a disciple of Jesus. I must give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He does come for His own, He’ll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear!”

Were these mere words? Talk is cheap, you may be thinking. Would the young pastor be willing to stand behind them? The fact is, he did. This statement was found among his papers after he was martyred for the cause of Christ.

How about you? Real discipleship means real commitment. If you compromise to save your physical life from death, pain, or discomfort, you risk losing eternal life. Ponder the example of this young African pastor, and purpose to commit yourself fully to Christ and His cause.

BACKGROUND

Jesus and His disciples had journeyed into Gentile country when He asked them the question, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” They were about 120 miles from Jerusalem in a northern part of Palestine ruled by the tetrarch Philip—hence the city name, Caesarea Philippi. It was in this center of pagan worship and superstition that Peter professed that Jesus was the Son of the living God.

Jesus responded by announcing His purpose for coming to earth. First, His intention was not to set up an earthly kingdom, but to establish His Church. Secondly, He would die for the souls of men. In spite of the spoken faith of His disciples, they misunderstood both declarations and continued to perceive the kingdom of Jesus through earthly eyes.

The Greek word for *church* is *ekklesia*, meaning “a called-out assembly.” Jesus called it His Church, and it was established by God, not Peter. Through Peter, and other ordained men and women, God gave authority to establish guidelines that would help people live in a godly manner. The Greek word *peter* means “a rock.” Peter later called Christians “lively stones” (1 Peter 2:5). Every Christian is a lively part of the building of the Church. Through giving His life, Jesus conquered death; neither death nor the powers of Hell can overcome it. The Church will stand.

Jesus admonished His followers regarding the responsibility of holy living. In order for the church to unite with God and each other, it was essential that every individual learned self-denial.

With Peter’s confession and belief that Jesus was the Christ, he represented the soul that is converted. Jesus wanted His disciples to step further into consecration and sacrifice. He was leading them to an experience of sanctification.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition
 - A. Disclosures in light of His opposition
 - 1. The King’s person (16:13-17)
 - 2. The King’s program (16:18-26)
 - a. His church (16:18-20)
 - b. His death (16:21-26)
 - (1) The King’s announcement (16:21)
 - (2) Peter’s amazement (16:22)
 - (3) The King’s rebuke (16:23)
 - (4) The King’s invitation (16:24-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did the disciples respond to Jesus' first question? To His second question?

2. What is the difference between simply denying oneself and denying oneself for Christ's sake?

[illegible]

3. List ways we might need to deny ourselves in order to maintain unity as an assembly of believers.

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Just as Jesus conquered death by dying, He promised that we will be partakers of life if we die to self. We will then be a part of the most powerful establishment on earth—the Church of Christ.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” (Matthew 17:1-2)

As we huddled under our schoolroom tables, I specifically remember watching the windows—they looked as though vertical waves were traveling through them. Someone near me called out God’s name, and I wondered if she was praying or cursing. We were experiencing an earthquake. Although it took place over thirty years ago, the details are clear in my mind.

Some people know exactly where they were when John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, was shot. Those who experienced 9/11 have only to close their eyes to relive the trauma. All of us have memorable events. Maybe yours is the day your husband proposed or the day your child was born. Even if those events took place years ago, we can see the scenes in sharp detail in our mind’s eye.

Imagine the thrill that Peter, James, and John must have felt as they heard the voice of the Father and viewed the transfigured Christ. These disciples had seen Jesus perform remarkable miracles, but until that day on the mountain, they had only seen Jesus in His mortal body. At this time, however, these three disciples received a glimpse of His divine glory. Not only did they see Jesus’ face shine as the sun and His clothes turn white as light, but they also saw Moses and Elijah and heard the thundering voice of God the Father. What an overpowering display of the divinity of Christ! What a memorable day!

None of us have actually seen Jesus in His glory as Peter, James, and John did. Yet, we all need that moment of divine revelation when God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, witnesses to our souls concerning Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” When that moment occurs, our hearts are transformed. We can experience the glory of God radiating through our lives.

BACKGROUND

The scene on the Mount of Transfiguration took place only a week after the confession of Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” There is no account that Jesus and His disciples had yet returned from Caesarea Philippi. It is possible, therefore, that Jesus and the three disciples ascended

Mount Hermon, a nearby peak that was higher than any of the other mountains of Israel.

Many Bible scholars say that the presence of Moses and Elijah (whom the disciples saw and recognized) was significant because Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the prophets. The Gospel of Luke tells us that these two men talked to Jesus about His death at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). It was significant that they should appear, for Jesus came to fulfill the “law and the prophets.” Thus Moses and Elijah substantiated His deity, His mission, His teachings, His good works, His death and resurrection.

Peter, in his impetuous way, spoke up. The Jewish people of that day believed the Messiah would immediately set up His Kingdom, and deliver them out of the hand of their enemies. So perhaps Peter thought it would be good for Moses and Elijah to tarry with Jesus. When God’s voice spoke out of the cloud, the disciples fell on their faces and were extremely afraid. God gave His full affirmation and sanction to the Son, “Hear ye him.”

When Jesus touched the disciples, they saw that Moses and Elijah had vanished, illustrating how Jesus himself would soon fulfill the Law and the prophets. With the coming of Jesus, the Old Covenant, made at Mount Sinai, passed away, and the New Covenant, sealed on Mount Calvary, was ushered in.

In verses 11 and 12, Jesus’ mention that “Elias is come already” referred to John the Baptist.

Note that Matthew followed the account of the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13) with an account of the disciples’ inability to heal a devil-possession boy (Matthew 17:14-21). Matthew pointed out a contrast between divine revelation and human unbelief. Jesus let His disciples know that the faith to do such works for God required prayer and fasting. Those who possess such faith do not give up when their prayers are not answered immediately. The power to perform the miracles comes from God, but faith is necessary. Some situations require extra dependence on God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition
 - A. Disclosures in light of His opposition
 - 3. The King’s kingdom (16:27—17:21)
 - a. The King’s kingdom promised (16:27-28)
 - b. The King’s kingdom in miniature (17:1-13)
 - c. The King’s kingdom postponed by unbelief (17:14-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were Jesus' instructions to His disciples as they began to descend the mountain?

2. Why do you suppose He told them that?

3. How did God reveal to you that Jesus was His beloved Son? What impact has this revelation had on your life?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Has Christ, the Son of God, entered into your heart? If so, that was a memorable day in your life. Now, let His glory shine through you!

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)

My three-year-old granddaughter, wearing an ankle-length apron tied around her tiny frame, busily washed my measuring cups and spoons along with her toy dishes. She carefully placed them in her mini-version of my drain rack, which had been placed on a pullout shelf about two feet from the floor. She clearly was doing her best to imitate my homemaking skills! This wasn't the only place she worked faithfully beside me. She carried a gallon pail of grain to the calves while I carried a much larger one. When I sat down at my desk to do paper work, I would discover her intently “writing letters” or pasting cutout pictures on scraps of paper. The job didn't really matter, as long as she was near me. She never once asked me about being paid or when she could be the boss!

What an illustration of Jesus' words in today's focus verse! To a great extent, children are free of ambition and pride. Characteristically trusting and teachable, they love to spend time with and mimic those they love. Jesus wants His followers of every age to model the same characteristics—to love to spend time with Him, and to have their hearts and minds set on following His example rather than searching for position or planning a life around their own aspirations.

Some years ago, a lady more than eighty years of age met Jesus and gave her heart to Him. I observed in her the same eagerness to follow Jesus in the smallest matters that my granddaughter had in modeling after me. This woman's humble attitude and simple faith was evidence of her growth in the Lord during the last fourteen years of her life. Although she was an elderly woman, she had that childlike faith.

It is not surprising that Jesus used a simple, but perfect illustration—a little child—to teach a lesson that will help each of us make Heaven.

BACKGROUND

Peter, James, and John witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, heard the voice of God, and saw Jesus heal the demoniac son after the other disciples' failure to do so. In today's text, they were trying to absorb Christ's words regarding His approaching death and resurrection.

Matthew was the only Gospel writer to record the miracle of Christ providing a way to pay the tribute

tax for himself and Peter (Matthew 17:24-27). Jesus, the King of Glory, had no money to pay the tax. This is the only recorded miracle Jesus performed to meet His own needs, and the only miracle using money.

After providing for the material need of the tax, Jesus went on to teach His disciples the principles for unity among His followers. They were wondering which of them would be greatest in the Kingdom. Jesus taught them how to successfully enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It would not be difficult if each one had the attitude of an obedient child: dependent upon the Father, possessing an attitude of trust, and desirous of pleasing Him with no thought of position.

Matthew used the phrase “kingdom of heaven” where the other Gospel writers used “kingdom of God.” This was probably because Matthew was writing mainly for Jewish readers, who refrained from using the sacred word *God* too frequently.

Christ's instruction in chapter 18, verses 15-18 regarded conflict resolution with the church. His words were not intended to give license for an attack on those who have offended, but rather to provide the means of reconciliation so believers can live in harmony. The words *bind* and *loose* in verse 18 refer to the discipline and authority of the church. Believers are to bring problems between brethren to the church, and the leaders seek God's guidance regarding the manner in which the conflict should be resolved.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition
 - B. Instructions in light of His opposition
 - 1. Instruction concerning His death and resurrection (17:22-23)
 - 2. Instruction concerning privilege and liberty (17:24-27)
 - 3. Instruction concerning humility (18:1-5)
 - 4. Instruction concerning stumbling (18:6-14)
 - 5. Instruction concerning discipline (18:15-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What does the miracle of the tribute money say about our governmental responsibilities?

2. How did Jesus answer the disciple’s question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

3. What is the difference between being “childlike” and “childish”? Which word best describes the way a Christian should live, and why?

CONCLUSION

It is more important to enter God’s Kingdom than to worry about one’s position there.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

Years ago, a grave injustice happened to me. I was a new Christian at the time, and this could have been a big hurdle for me. However, while I was vacuuming one day, God prepared me. Three times He asked me how I would respond if a particular wrong were done to me. I thought the enemy was causing me to imagine such a scenario, and initially I pushed those thoughts from my mind. A short time later, however, two letters came in the mail from someone close to me; they contained a confession of a wrong done against me.

The writer had become a Christian and was seeking forgiveness. I did forgive. I never mentioned the incident to anyone, and treated that person as though it had never happened—but I kept the letters. I did not know what I intended to do with them, but I had them hidden in a safe place. One day, years later, I asked myself the question, “Why am I holding onto these letters?” If anyone found them, the writer could have been hurt.

In our focus verse, Jesus’ instruction to Peter reveals how important it is for us to forgive others. After all, God forgave us! It is wonderful that in God’s Word we find promises like, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12) and “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins” (Isaiah 44:22). We must be willing to extend to those who trespass against us the same grace that God gives to us.

I must confess that although I thought it was sufficient to forgive, I did not take forgetting seriously. I had kept those letters, which had that person’s misdeeds written in black and white. I finally destroyed them, making my forgiveness complete. God’s forgiveness is complete, and ours must be also!

BACKGROUND

Christ’s dissertation on forgiveness was prompted by a question from Peter regarding how often he should forgive one who had sinned against him. Seemingly thinking to be gracious, Peter suggested, “Till seven times?” Jesus offered the astonishing response that he should forgive not seven times, but

seventy times seven. This number was not as a “cut-off point,” but rather indicated that there should be no limit to the forgiveness extended to an offending party. No matter how many times someone offends, a Christian never has the right to withhold forgiveness.

Jesus then explained the reason with a parable about a servant who owed a king ten thousand talents. According to one commentator, one talent was worth nearly twenty years of pay for the average servant. This means the servant’s debt in the parable could not have been paid by thousands of years of honest work! Jesus clearly indicated that this was a debt that would have been impossible to repay. Yet, when the servant pleaded for mercy, the king forgave him that impossible debt.

The debt owed by the servant represents the state of every sinner, whose debt to God is every bit as hopeless as the servant’s debt to the king. As with the servant, the debt will result in certain destruction. The servant promised that if the king would spare him, he would pay it all, but that certainly was a pathetic promise. Yet, the king forgave the servant. What generosity! That is the generosity of God toward us.

In the parable, the servant soon met another servant who owed him a hundred pence. A pence referred to a denarius, which was worth about a day’s wage for most servants. This was actually quite a bit of money from the servant’s point of view, but obviously a mere pittance when compared with the immense debt forgiven by the king. When the first servant refused to show mercy to the second, he found himself treated in like manner by the king. The message of this parable is that those who fail to forgive others’ offences will suffer the loss of God’s forgiveness.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition
 - B. Instructions in light of His opposition
 - 6. Instruction concerning forgiveness (18:21-35)
 - a. Peter’s inquiry (18:21)
 - b. Christ’s reply (18:22-35)
 - (1) His statement (18:22)
 - (2) His statement illustrated (18:23-35)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the promise made by the first servant to the king concerning his debt?
-

[illegible][illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:6)

At traditional Jewish wedding ceremonies, a glass is broken as part of the ceremony. At the conclusion of the blessings, after the couple drinks from the glass, the groom breaks it with his right foot. This act is a reminder to those present that even at the height of personal joy, they must remember the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

One Jewish rabbi offered a slightly different interpretation. He said, “We hold aloft a glass, let it fall and be shattered to atoms, and then, pointing to its fragments, we exhort the young people to guard jealously the sacred relationship into which they have entered since, once it is fractured, it can never be restored.”

While a broken marriage actually can be restored through the forgiveness and grace of God, the rabbi’s words do point to an important truth: the vital necessity of carefully guarding the marriage vows. In today’s text, the Pharisees confronted Jesus and tried to force Him to choose sides in a theological controversy regarding divorce. In His answer, Jesus focused on marriage rather than the dissolution of marriage, pointing out that God intended marriage to be permanent.

Possibly in your own wedding ceremony, our focus verse was read. Or perhaps you will hear it read in the future, if you are not yet married. If you and your spouse take seriously the fact that divorce is not an option, you have gone a long way toward building a happy and lasting marriage. No matter what problems you face, resolution will be reached more easily if you both work from the premise that the only option is to solve them.

Even in the best marriages, over a period of time, stress points and controversial issues will arise and there will be times when the two of you are “out of harmony” with each other. The quicker and more gently these issues can be dealt with and harmony restored, the better. You will realize that a problem moment is not a time for convincing your spouse how he/she is in the wrong and that you are blameless (often not the case anyway). Rather, it is a time to exercise great love, gentleness, and understanding. Instead of looking at problems as a justification to leave each other, you and your spouse should view them as a challenge that, if handled correctly, can strengthen your union and commitment to each other.

Prayerfully seek God’s will before you plunge into the lifelong commitment of marriage. Once you have taken the plunge, resolve with the help of God to stick together!

BACKGROUND

Three significant events occurred in this portion of text: Jesus faced a challenge by the religious leaders regarding marriage and divorce, He blessed the little children, and He discoursed with the rich young ruler.

Notice the context in which Jesus delivered His comments on marriage. The Pharisees were not interested in knowing what Jesus really thought, but rather were looking for ways to try to trap Him by a debate about Moses’ words recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In Moses’ day, as well as in the time of Christ, the way marriage was practiced did not always align with God’s intention. Permanent marriage was and is God’s plan, but because of man’s fallen nature and the inevitable fact that divorces would occur, Moses made civil laws to protect the victim. The two groups confronting Jesus had opposing views concerning Moses’ law. One group held that divorce was allowable for almost any reason; the other stipulated that the only justifiable reason was marital unfaithfulness. Rather than responding to them, Jesus pointed out that God intended marriage to be indissoluble. (Note that while divorces still occur, neither partner is given liberty in Scripture to marry again as long as the first companion lives.)

Concerning little children, Jesus made it clear that parents bringing their children to Him did not bother Him. In fact, He heartily encouraged this. He wanted the children to come to Him because He loves them, and because they exemplify to older generations the type of attitude needed to approach God. The receptivity of these little ones was in great contrast to the hard-hearted and arrogant attitudes of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. An additional reason for bringing children to Jesus is, what children learn in early childhood will go a long way toward determining what kind of a man or woman they will become. Often, children have much to teach their own parents when it comes to faith and trust in God.

The rich young ruler, although seemingly religious, sensed that something was missing in his life. After a few questions, Jesus put His finger on the key issue: this young man was more interested in his possessions and all that they entailed than in serving Jesus. He needed to submit humbly to the lordship of Christ, but when confronted with this, he made a choice—the wrong choice.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition

B. Instructions in light of His opposition

8. Instruction concerning children (19:13-15)

9. Instruction concerning wealth
(19:16-26)

a. The snare of wealth (19:16-22)

b. The disadvantage of wealth
(19:23-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus concerning divorce?

2. What do you think Jesus meant by saying that a man should leave his father and mother and “cleave to his wife”?

3. What great principle is set forth in Jesus' words to the rich young ruler? What are some ways you can demonstrate this principle in your daily life?

CONCLUSION

Because marriage is a lifelong commitment, why not do all you can to make it the best possible experience? Here is an easy way that won't cost you a cent. At least once a day, without being coaxed, whisper those three famous little words, "I love you," to your spouse!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.” (Matthew 20:12)

“It’s my turn!” “How come they always get to be first?” “That’s no fair!” If you have ever lived in a household with children, phrases such as these were probably heard quite frequently. Even as adults, we can sometimes fall into the trap of wanting everything to be fair.

About a year ago, the printer for our computer reached the end of its life. It was at least six years old, and since I had used it to produce documents for a job I performed at home, it had printed thousands of pages. However, the time had come to replace it. When I started looking at newspaper ads in an effort to find a bargain on the most modern product, I was attracted to the new models which would not only print documents from the computer, but also scan a document or picture, send or receive a fax, or serve as either a black and white or color copy machine. What a great deal! Then, I was even able to shop at a store that not only advertised a great price, but also offered two rebates. Feeling very pleased with myself, I purchased this wonderful new machine. Imagine my chagrin, when less than six months later, the company manufactured the same product with an additional feature—the ability to print digital photographs directly from a memory card. No fair! It’s amazing how quickly the feeling of satisfaction caused by the fantastic price, money saved through rebates, and convenience of a machine that would do several operations was replaced by the feeling that somehow I had gotten a bad deal. And we don’t even own a digital camera that would allow us to take advantage of the additional feature!

In today’s text, the first workers hired must have had similar feelings: They had negotiated with the owner of the vineyard to receive certain wages for a day’s work. As the day progressed, they noticed that new workers came to the job site—some arriving only an hour before quitting time. When it came time to receive their wages, those who had been hired first watched the latecomers receive payment. They no doubt calculated that since these latecomers received the amount that had been agreed upon early that morning, then those who had been there all day would surely receive more. How great was their

disappointment when they realized that they, too, would only be receiving the agreed-upon “penny” for their labors! That just didn’t seem fair!

Providing motivation by the promise of a reward is a strategy often used with children, and is called “positive reinforcement.” Perhaps the parent will tell the child, “If you will do thus and so, then you will get this reward.” However, God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, not because we are adding up the blessings and rewards we expect to receive for our service! Our desire should be to do whatever we can to further His kingdom, without expectation of reward here on earth. True, a fellow Christian may have been blessed with a bigger house, a nicer car, better looks, or any of the other things that are important in our society. But in the long run, what does that matter?

Instead of complaining, “It’s not fair,” let us focus on the fact that God promises to provide our every need here on earth, and that a much greater reward awaits us in Heaven!

BACKGROUND

It is likely that the disciples were present when the exchange between Jesus and the rich young ruler took place which is recorded in Matthew 19:16-22. Since the Jewish people of that day believed that riches were a sign of God’s blessing, they may have felt that the more good works a person did, the more deserving they would be and the greater their chance of obtaining an eternal reward.

In Matthew 19:27, Peter voiced what the other disciples were thinking when he exclaimed with dismay to the Lord that they had given up everything to follow Him. Surely they would receive a reward for doing so! Perhaps the thought of a reward was a partial reason that some of them had become followers. The hardships, rebuke, and scorn they had endured while following Christ may have made them feel that they deserved special rewards.

As He often did, Jesus chose to illustrate a point to His followers by using a parable. The landholder represents God, and the workers represent Christians throughout the ages. Even though they were called to service at different times throughout the day, they were rewarded equally when it came time to distribute the payroll. This is a reminder to us that whether we are one of the first called, as the disciples were, or the last person saved before our Lord’s return, we will each receive the reward of eternal life.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition
 - B. Instructions in light of His opposition
 - 10. Instruction concerning rewards (19:27 — 20:16)
 - a. Peter's question (19:27)
 - b. Christ's answer (19:28-30)
 - c. Christ's answer illustrated (20:1-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many groups of laborers were sent to the vineyard, and how long did each group labor?

2. In Matthew 19:29, Jesus promised the disciples that if they forsook their earthly belongings for His name's sake, they would receive an hundredfold. Does this mean that they would receive a hundred houses, etc. in place of the one they gave up? Explain your answer.

3. Note an area in your life where you can be "last" now in order to be "first" in eternity. What are some specific ways you can demonstrate that willingness to be "last"?

CONCLUSION

Have you purposed to follow Jesus whatever the cost, and without thought of how great a reward you will receive? If your desire is to serve Him because you love Him, then you will receive untold riches in Heaven.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:27-28)

Jesus said the “chief among you” should be a servant. What does it mean to be a servant? We may have met many “servants” who are obeying that command without even realizing they are doing so!

Teacher Vi was a servant, although she didn’t view herself that way. She taught Sunday school to preschoolers for thirty-nine years. In each class, she made every child feel loved and important. She went beyond the call of duty and bought socks, made dresses, and delivered bags of groceries when she saw her students had a need.

Pastor George is a servant. If you could observe him fulltime, you would probably find that he performs a number of duties. He gets up in the middle of the night to pray for the sick, helps clean the church, counsels a couple with a troubled marriage, makes visitations to encourage the elderly, mows the church lawn, and numerous other activities.

No doubt you can think of other people among your acquaintances that are servants. It seems they are always available to help when there is a need. Often they seem to notice and do what is necessary without even being asked.

Jesus clearly instructs His followers that if we want to be great, we need to serve others. It is not the exalted positions that make people great, but the “lower” tasks of servanthood. He indicates that sufferings, not worldly honors, are to be the lot of the Lord’s most faithful followers.

Sometimes we sing, “If you want to be great in God’s Kingdom, learn to be the servant of all.” Those are easy words to sing, but they might not be such easy words to live when we are called upon to do a task that is unappealing to the natural man.

Every day we find opportunities to serve. Are we taking advantage of them? Are we willing to put ourselves out for others? Do we have a servant’s heart?

BACKGROUND

The opening verses of this passage are the third time that Jesus had spoken openly of His death and resurrection. However, this was the first time He had said He would die by crucifixion. Clearly, the disciples did not understand what He was telling them.

James and John and their mother came and worshiped Jesus. Apparently, the mother’s worship was not entirely of praise, but was also a request, and the request was a very ambitious one: that her sons would sit on Jesus’ right and left hand in His Kingdom. Some Bible scholars believe that this woman was a sister to Jesus’ mother. If so, that may have given her more boldness to make such a request.

Shortly before this, Jesus had taken James, John, and Peter to the Mount of Transfiguration. Perhaps they thought Jesus had exalted them above the other nine disciples. Maybe James and John thought if they asked in time, they would be granted those positions ahead of Peter.

Jesus told James and John and their mother that they did not know what they asked. He implied there would be much suffering connected with their discipleship. They told Him that they were able to drink of the same cup as His, and their future lives proved that to be true, but their steadfastness was only by the grace of God. Eventually, James was beheaded by Herod, and John was banished to the Isle of Patmos for the Gospel. Tradition tells us that John was also cast alive into a pot of boiling oil, but God intervened and spared his life.

Jesus took the opportunity to teach a lesson in leadership to His disciples. In the kingdoms of this world, those who are great exercise dominion and authority over those under them, but Jesus instructed His followers that it was not to be that way in the spiritual Kingdom that He was establishing. In verse 26, *minister* means “a servant.” In verse 27, *servant* means “a slave.” *Ransom*, in verse 28, refers to the cost of freeing a slave. Jesus gave His life to redeem mankind.

The final portion of this text shows that Jesus practiced what He had just told His disciples. He helped (or served) two blind beggars. These men acknowledged Him as the Messiah when they called Him “son of David.” This incident took place as Jesus traveled on His last journey from the Jericho area to Jerusalem, prior to His triumphal entry into the city (Palm Sunday) and His betrayal, suffering, and death.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- V. Instructions of the King in light of His opposition
 - B. Instructions in light of His opposition
 - 11. Instruction concerning His death and resurrection (20:17-19)
 - 12. Instruction concerning position (20:20-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What specific disclosures did Jesus make related to His last days prior to His death?

2. James and John indicated that they were ready to drink of the same cup that Jesus would drink from. What might they have thought that meant? What did Jesus mean?

[illegible]

3. In what specific ways can you apply the principles of ministering to others and of servanthood in your life?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Jesus tells us that our service and servanthood as Christians may not be easy, but it is essential if we are to follow Him.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Matthew 21:22)

Maddie, my friend's two-year-old daughter, greets the day with vigor. When she awakes in the morning she calls out, “Mama, Dada!” Soon, her daddy is trudging down the hallway to her bedroom. As he opens the door to her room, her face lights up. She stands tall in her crib with her arms stretched toward him. Never for a moment has she doubted that he would come to her. He picks her up, and she wraps her arms and legs around him. She knows the routine. They will creep down the hall to give Mama a *surprise* wakeup call. As they near the door, Maddie can take the suspense no longer, and she shouts out, “Mama! Morning, Mama!”

This done, she looks up at her father and says, “Breakfast?” There is no need for lengthy sentences. Communication is clear, and they happily head down to the kitchen. There, Maddie pulls open the refrigerator door and shouts, “Eggs! Toast!” with the energy only a two-year-old could muster so early in the morning.

Maddie could not do any of the routine things in her day without the help of her father. Yet, through clear communication she is able to accomplish great things. She simply asks and she receives.

This delightful child has helped me to relearn an old lesson. I, too, could never wake up in the morning and get out of bed without my Heavenly Father's help. The tasks before me each day seem impossible. There is so much to be done and so little time. I am a teacher, and the children in my classroom have many needs to be met! Yet, when I call on my Father in Heaven and rely on Him to carry me, I find that the impossible tasks become possible. My load is lighter, and I am more enthusiastic about the plan God has for me each day.

Because of Maddie, I have had a refresher course in the benefits of trusting God. My faith is strengthened, and I am believing and receiving from God. How my day unfolds depends on how I begin it. I am learning that what is impossible to me is possible with God.

BACKGROUND

Today's text took place around the time of Passover. Historical records indicate that about two million people were in and around Jerusalem at the time.

Jesus had never before planned and promoted a public demonstration such as this, but in doing so, He obeyed the Word of God and fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9. Upon seeing the townspeople declare Jesus as their King, the Jewish leaders concluded that Jesus must be destroyed. This fulfilled the prophecy that the Lamb of God was to be crucified on Passover.

In verses 12-22, Jesus performed two acts of judgment: He cleansed the Temple and cursed the fig tree. Both of these acts were symbolic of the hypocrisy of Israel: The Temple was a den of thieves, and the nation was without fruit (inward corruption and outward fruitlessness). Three years had gone by since the first cleansing of the Temple near the beginning of Christ's ministry (John 2:13-17): at this point, it had again been defiled by the “religious business” of the leaders. The court of the Gentiles, which had originally been intended to give “outcasts” the chance to enter the Temple and learn about the true God, had been turned into a place where foreign Jews could exchange money and purchase sacrifices. The presence of the market in actuality turned many sensitive Gentiles away from the witness of Israel.

The Temple market moneychangers ran a very lucrative business, since every adult Jew had to pay an annual Temple tax in Phoenician coin. Because most of the Jewish people used Greek or Roman money, they were forced to get their money exchanged. The priests were permitted to charge fifteen percent for each exchange, earning them around \$40,000 per year, which was a tremendous income in those days. Another thriving business in the Temple market was the buying and selling of sheep and oxen for sacrifices. The Law instructed that all sacrifices be “without blemish,” so the people decided it was safer to purchase sacrifices from the relatives of the high priest who sold in the Temple market, since everything bought in the Temple was approved. Also, it was inconvenient for the pilgrims from Galilee to carry their sheep on the long journey. There was a brisk sale of sacrifices every day.

The first time the Sadducees are mentioned as being in opposition to Jesus is Matthew 16:6. Before then, it had been the Pharisees with whom He came into conflict. However, when Jesus cleansed the Temple, He hurt the prestige and the pocketbooks of the priests. For this, they never forgave Him and it was they who led the final attack on Him.

In cursing the fig tree, Jesus was teaching the disciples a lesson. The fig tree, with all its leaves, may

have looked impressive, but without fruit it had lost its purpose. In comparison, Israel claimed to be God's children, but revealed the falsehood of their claim by ungodly conduct.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King

A. The official presentation of the King
(21:1-22)

1. The entrance of the King into Jerusalem (21:1-11)
2. The entrance of the King into the temple (21:12-17)
 - a. The temple cleansed (21:12-13)
 - b. The infirm healed (21:14)
 - c. The accompanying reactions (21:15-17)
3. The King's symbolic rejection of the nation (21:18-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jesus tell the people in the Temple as He threw out the merchants and the moneychangers?

2. Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem the way He did? How were His actions in this portion of text different from other acts in His ministry?

3. What can we learn today from Israel's attitude toward Jesus at that time?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

When we call on our Father in Heaven and rely on Him to carry us, the impossible tasks become possible.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” (Matthew 21:44)

As a teenage girl, I loved going places with my dad. He used to take me fishing in the middle of the forest where the streams came straight from the mountain—it was freezing cold glacier water. One summer afternoon, our outing became a bit competitive. His catch always turned out to be a little bigger than mine. I wasn’t about to be outdone by him, so I determined I would catch the longest, fattest fish he had ever dreamed of! I walked downstream from him and found a quiet pool created by large woody debris. Before long, there it came—the perfect fish. And he took my bait! As I started reeling in my catch, I stepped out on the pine-needled ground between some fallen trees. There was one problem: the pine needles didn’t cover the shore; they covered six feet of water! Splash! I was in the middle of the stream and my dad was howling with laughter. (The perfect fish, of course, safely swam away.)

I would not have chosen to fall into the stream that day, but I did learn a lesson. Falling has a way of humbling people. When Jesus said that whoever would choose to fall on the Cornerstone would break, He knew it would be an act of humility. People must admit that they have failed in their own righteousness and that they need help. They must be willing to give complete control of their lives to God, and be willing to let go of their status and the esteem of others. It may shatter every preconceived idea of how their lives should be lived. When people fall on God, it will break them. Jesus will pick up the pieces, however, and remake them into something beautiful.

The alternative to falling on God would not only be humiliating, but irreparable. People who neglect to fall on Jesus will, instead, be crushed beneath the Cornerstone. God must judge those who are not willing to humble themselves before Him.

Let Him remake your life into something beautiful. Surrender your life to Jesus today!

BACKGROUND

The two parables in today’s text were given in response to the demand of the chief priests and elders of Jerusalem to know under whose authority Jesus was acting when He cleansed the Temple. Although they initially had a right to question Him, Jesus was

amazed at their continual unbelief. After three years of His teaching and performing miracles, they still needed evidence. Instead of defending Himself or pushing His point, Jesus simply directed them to the one through whom God had designed to reveal His Son; John the Baptist. The leaders did not believe John, Jesus, or the Authority who had sent them.

In the parable of the vineyard (21:28-32), the two sons represent the two classes of the nation of Israel: the self-righteous religious people and the publicans and sinners. The religious leaders professed obedience to God, but did not follow through with John’s admonition. On the other hand, the publicans claimed no righteousness, but obediently followed when John preached repentance.

The religious people’s rejection of John was actually rejection of the Father. Through His second parable (21:33-46), Jesus explained that after the prophets and John were rejected, God sent His own Son to earth. Then, He quoted Psalm 118 in His reference to the Messiah being the Cornerstone. The crowds of Jerusalem had quoted the same Psalm only days before when they welcomed Jesus into the city (Psalm 118:26), signifying that Jesus was that prophesied One. The rulers of Jerusalem pronounced their own judgment when they declared the righteous retribution of the husbandmen.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - B. The rejection of the King by the nation
 - 1. The conflict with the Priests and Elders
 - a. Their question (21:23)
 - b. His silencing reply (21:24-27)
 - c. His attack
 - (1) Parable of the two sons (21:28-32)
 - (2) Parable of the householder (21:33-46)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. After hearing the parable of the vineyard, what did the chief priests say should happen to the wicked husbandmen?

2. Why do you think Jesus refused to tell the chief priests that His authority was from God?

3. In what ways do you think we may change when we fall on Christ Jesus?

CONCLUSION

It will require courage to fall on God and be broken, but how rewarding it will be when Jesus takes our offering and makes us into His children! The glory of following Jesus is greater than any glory the world can offer.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.” (Matthew 22:11)

One morning, I received a phone call inviting me to a breakfast that was to take place one week later. There was a hitch: it was a “Come As You Are” breakfast, and I was to appear just as I was dressed at the moment I received the invitation!

Needless to say, if I had known the call was coming, I would have made sure I was dressed differently than I was! My pajamas weren’t too bad, but the robe I was wearing was absolutely despicable. It was over ten years old and had seen much wear and tear. I had mended a hole in it with material of another color, since I had none to match the robe. The chenille was not in good shape—many of the tufts were missing where the back of the robe rubbed against the chair where I sit to eat breakfast. My personal appearance wasn’t that great either. I had felt lazy that morning and had seen no need to comb my hair and make myself presentable. So I was not a pretty sight!

A “Come As You Are” party, though potentially embarrassing, can be good fun between friends. What I was wearing on that morning did not make much difference one way or another. However, one day we will get an important call from Christ to “come as you are.” What we are “wearing” at that moment will be of eternal importance. If we are not prepared for the Rapture of the Church—if we are not spiritually clad in righteous garments—we will be left behind. There will be no time to “change clothes” after the Trumpet sounds.

In our text today, the account of one who came to the wedding without a wedding garment gives us insight into the fate of those who are not ready when Christ returns. Check your spiritual attire at this moment. If the call came today to meet Christ in the air, would you be ready? Would you be happy to stand before Christ just as you are at this moment? Let us make sure our preparations are made and that we are clothed in the spotless robes of Christ’s righteousness!

BACKGROUND

This parable, while similar to the parable of the Great Supper recorded in Luke 14, is different in occasion and details. In this account, guests are invited to a feast prepared for them by a king. By rejecting his invitation, the bidden guests showed disloyalty to the

king and disrespect to the son. Because the guests rejected the invitation and even killed the servants who extended it, the king destroyed them and their city.

The king in this parable is God and the son is Christ. The bidden guests are the people of Israel, while those in the highways are the Gentiles. It was typical in this culture to extend two invitations to a banquet. The first asked the guests to attend; the second informed the guests that all was ready. In this parable, the king announced, “The wedding is ready,” and he sent his servants out to bid those who had been invited to come. Christ’s atonement and salvation are available—the invitation has gone out. God instructs His servants to call as many as possible to His wedding banquet, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The phrase “both bad and good” in verse 10 refers to moral and immoral sinners, all who need God’s gracious invitation. All are called. All are welcome.

Verses 11 and 12 describe a man who came to the wedding without a wedding garment. It was customary in those times for guests to be provided with a garment to wear at the banquet. It was a great affront to the host to refuse to wear it. A wedding garment also is necessary to participate in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Those without it will be doomed to the outer darkness of a lost eternity (verse 13).

The closing verse of our text states that many are called but few are chosen. When the Holy Spirit deals with a human heart, that soul is called. Christ calls everyone. However, we are not chosen until we respond to that call.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - B. The rejection of the King by the nation
 - 1. The conflict with the Priests and Elders
 - c. His attack
 - (3) Parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did the invited guests respond to the king’s invitation to the marriage of his son?

[illegible][illegible]

It would be a grave mistake to think that this parable applies exclusively to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. There is a serious warning for us also. Let us be sure we respond to God's invitation!

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

Love will cause a person to do some strange things. When I began dating the young lady who later became my wife, we lived a six-hour drive apart, yet I went to visit her every weekend for about two years. Often I was working up to nineteen or twenty hours a day. By the end of the week I was tired, but I would start out anyway. Sometimes I bought three big cups of coffee to keep me awake until the next town. Other times I would stop, get out of the car, run down the road to wake myself up, and then jump back in and drive a few more miles. I was completely driven by love.

Have you ever loved someone so much that you wanted to be near that person as often as possible? When you weren't together, they were on your mind constantly. You listened to that person's opinions and ideas, and you began to take them as your own. You wanted to please that person in every way—in fact, you looked for ways to express your devotion to them.

When we love God deeply, that is just how we feel. We look forward to spending time with Him. He is often on our minds, even when we are busy with the cares and duties of life. We do our best to pay careful attention to His Word so that we can have His attitudes and precepts showing in our lives. We have a desire to please Him and to express our devotion to Him.

Jesus told the lawyer in today's text that he should love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and mind. How do we do that? To love God with all our hearts means that our affections will be affixed on Him more strongly than anything else, and we will be willing to give up all that we hold dear in response to His command. To love God with all our souls means that we love Him with our spirits and our vitality, and we are willing to devote our lives to Him for His service. To love God with all our minds means that we will apply ourselves to knowing Him and His holy will, desiring His thoughts and perspectives on matters, rather than our own.

Let us endeavor to put Jesus' words into action in our lives. We may find it necessary, at times, to pray that the Lord will put this kind of love for Him into our hearts, but the results will be worth it!

BACKGROUND

The Pharisees were one of the leading religious groups during Jesus' time, and they opposed the Roman government that had the rule over them. The Herodians were a political party who backed Herod and the Roman government. Ordinarily, these groups were against each other, but they united in an endeavor to trap Jesus. They hoped that His answer to their question regarding the paying of the tribute would get Him into trouble. Had Jesus said that they should pay tribute, the Pharisees would have stirred the people against Him. Had He said they should not pay tribute, the Herodians would have reported Him to the Roman government.

Jesus knew that they were not seeking the truth. Their scheme was cleverly planned, but it did not work because they were dealing with the Son of God, whose wisdom is greater than all others. Jesus asked whose image was on the money. A maxim of those times said that whoever had his image upon the money of commerce was the acknowledged ruler. Jesus' response was both an answer as well as a rebuke, and those trying to trap Him went away marveling at His wisdom.

Next, the Sadducees tried to set a trap. They were a religious group who did not believe in the resurrection. Their question, which was both hypothetical and improbable, referenced the Law's direction that a widow without a son should be cared for by her brother-in-law. The Sadducees thought they had given Jesus an unanswerable question, and they expected it to discredit Him.

Jesus told them that they were ignorant of the Scriptures and of the power of God. This rebuke was the strongest one that Jesus gave this religious group. In the beginning, God made man and woman that they might multiply and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28). In the resurrection, the souls of men will be reunited with their bodies, which will have been glorified and made immortal. There will be no marriage, but all shall be as the angels of God.

Since the Sadducees accepted only the five Books of Moses (called the Pentateuch) as sources of law, Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6. When God said, “I am the God of Abraham . . .,” He referred to the patriarchs as being alive. On the basis of what Jesus said, the Sadducees could not easily repudiate the truth of the resurrection, and “they were astonished at his doctrine” and “put . . . to silence.”

At the end of all this questioning, Jesus asked these people who the Messiah was. When they said, “The Son of David,” Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, which the Jews accepted as being prophetic of the Messiah. Jesus asked, “If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” This question baffled the Jews. They believed that the Messiah was to be a mortal man. They understood that He was to be a son of David, that He would inherit the throne of His Father, and that Israel was to be exalted to a great place of honor among the nations under His rule. However, they could or would not see that the Messiah was the divine Son of God.

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- ## A CLOSER LOOK

- 2. What are the differences between godly love and human love?**

4. What are ways that you show your love to God?
How does He manifest His love to you?

The people of Jesus' time set out to trap Him rather than to learn from Him. We want to heed His commands and apply them to our daily lives. Then we will be showing our love for Him by our actions.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” (Matthew 23:28)

I have a friend I call my “button buddy,” because we both collect buttons and often work together to organize and catalog our finds. As we sort our recently acquired buttons, we drop them into labeled boxes, categorizing them by the material they are made from. Is it glass, metal, ceramic, wood, bone, shell, horn, Bakelite, or fabric?

Sometimes we have to put a button in the box labeled with a question mark, to be tested later. For example, we both may think a button is made of horn, but something about the appearance makes us wonder. Another button may resemble Bakelite in appearance, but the feel or the weight doesn’t seem right. Occasionally, a button will stymie one of us, but the other can identify it. Sometimes both of us are completely baffled. Modern buttons deliberately made to imitate older kinds add to the confusion.

When it comes time to do a more careful study of the buttons in the question box, one of the testing methods for determining the type of material is a hot needle. When the hot needle point touches an inconspicuous spot, the truth comes forth, either in an odor, the type of melting reaction, or the needle’s inability to penetrate the button.

As Jesus addressed the multitude and disciples regarding the scribes and Pharisees, He let them know that while they interpreted and taught the Law of Moses, they were not practicing what they preached. The Pharisees were to be separated from anything unclean, but Jesus, who saw their hearts, knew there were many hypocrites among them. Jesus used two illustrations to demonstrate this: the cup and platter, and the sepulcher. They both portrayed the same truth—it is possible to be clean on the outside, but at the same time, defiled on the inside.

Jesus’ assessment of those who have only an outwardly righteous appearance can serve as a reminder in our day. Sooner or later, the truth comes out, just as the hot needle proves the button’s composition. Living our Christianity merely as a show for others is like washing a cup on the outside only. When we are clean on the inside, our outward cleanliness will not be a pretense. If we are tested, we will be Christians clear through. May God help us to be Christlike, inside and out!

BACKGROUND

This chapter, the beginning of Christ’s last message, was one of denunciation. Jesus, King of the Jews, loved people and was the epitome of patience; yet He could not tolerate the sham and pretense of these religious leaders. He knew they might lead new converts into hypocrisy. His reference to them sitting in Moses’ seat, in verse 2, indicates they were expounding the Law, not just reading it, since the custom was to stand while reading the Law.

Jesus gave seven accusations regarding Israel’s leaders. His accusations reached a climax as He showed that the current Jewish leaders were following in the footsteps of their predecessors, who had murdered the prophets of God.

Phylacteries, mentioned in verse 5, were little leather boxes that contained Scripture portions. They were worn on the arms and foreheads, and were to be posted in their homes. This reflected the importance of teaching their children and the next generations the commandments of God. However, the phylacteries had become more important to the Pharisees as a status symbol, than for the truth they contained.

The Zechariah mentioned in verse 35 was probably the son of Jehoiada referred to in 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.

Knowledge of Jerusalem’s approaching destruction brought great grief to Jesus’ heart. He had hoped to nurture the Children of Israel like a mother hen does her baby chicks. However, they rejected Him, and so they would face judgment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - C. The rejection of the nation by the King (23:1-39)
 - 1. The indictment of the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-12)
 - 2. The condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees (23:13-32)
 - a. For willful error (23:13)
 - b. For greediness (23:14)
 - c. For false zeal (23:15)
 - d. For false teaching (23:16-22)
 - e. For inconsistency (23:23-24)
 - f. For externalism (23:25-26)
 - g. For false witness (23:27-32)
 - 3. The rejection of the nation (23:33-39)
 - a. The coming judgment (23:33-36)

- b. His sorrow for Jerusalem (23:37-38)
- c. His farewell (23:39)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. From verses 4-7 of our text, cite specific examples of what the Pharisees did to promote themselves.

2. Write a description of a great person, basing it upon verses 11-12.

3. How can we avoid hypocrisy in our own lives?

CONCLUSION

The Pharisees did not care about *being* holy—their focus was on *looking* holy in order to receive the people’s admiration and praise. Let’s make sure we do not fall into the same trap!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”
(Matthew 24:12-13)**

Imagine being told you have ten days to stop being a Christian. How would you react? Dayaseel, a young man in India, went to minister in a remote village where the people had no knowledge of God. In just two years, he started a church where none had existed. One day, as the believers gathered together, a group of non-Christians began shouting threats from outside: “We are giving you ten days to come back to your old religion or leave the village. Otherwise, we will kill you!” they yelled.

Their angry words did not stop Dayaseel. “If you want to kill me and my family, go ahead, but I will not leave this village because Jesus brought me here,” he told the crowd. After ten days passed, the villagers decided to let Dayaseel stay. They did not kill him, but the believers in the village are not allowed to hold jobs. Also, Dayaseel is not allowed to buy anything in the village. In spite of persecution, this group of Indian believers remains strong in their faith in Christ. They pray that everyone in the village will one day experience the salvation and peace offered in Christ.

The Lord has warned us life will not always be easy as a Christian. We will be tried and tested, and we will face many kinds of hindrances. We cannot do it in our own strength, but the Lord has promised to be with us. Even so, we must determine to endure to the end.

In today’s text, Jesus told His disciples about events that would occur in the end times. He predicted that His followers would be severely persecuted by those who rejected what He taught, and that the love of many would become cold. Today there are various things that could cause that to happen. In our society, we may not face direct persecution, as Dayaseel and the believers in India do. But if we let our eyes stray to the things of this world, whether pleasures, passions, power, or wealth, it will not be long before we become indifferent toward God. Perhaps one of the greatest hindrances in our society is getting too absorbed in the everyday cares of life.

Jesus’ words to His disciples are a warning for our day. When we are pressured to give up and go back on Christ, we must not do it! Let us remember the eternal benefits of endurance, and continue to live for Christ.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text took place only days before Jesus was to be crucified. He spent much time during this final week preparing His disciples for the time He would no longer be with them.

The chapter opens at the beautiful Temple, which Herod had helped to remodel. It was a majestic edifice with its inner sanctum, outer court, long porches, and mighty columns. It seemed inconceivable that such a massive structure could be decimated so completely—but just a few decades later, the Romans destroyed it.

Jesus then took His disciples to Mount Olivet to continue His discourse. In response to the disciples’ question concerning the end of the age, He gave grave warnings about the danger of being deceived. He foretold signs of the end times. Again Jesus warned about false prophets who would deceive many people. Not only would there be danger of deception, but also a great peril of growing cold spiritually. Then Jesus gave a wonderful promise to those who endure hardship, saying that in the end they will be saved. Many end time prophecies of Christ telescoped future and far future events. Some may have already occurred, some are occurring today, and some are still to come.

Jesus once again warned His followers to beware of being deceived, for even the elect would be deceived if it were possible. There will be great signs and miracles, which will seem to belie the truth of the Gospel, but God’s people must keep their eyes only on Jesus and they will be saved.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - D. The prophetic announcements of the King
 - 1. The setting (24:1-2)
 - 2. The questions of the disciples (24:3)
 - 3. The development of prophetic history
 - a. The tribulation (24:4-26)
 - (1) The “beginning of birth pangs” (24:4-8)
 - (2) The “great tribulation” (24:9-26)
 - (a) Characteristics of the period (24:9-14)
 - (b) Conduct during the period (24:15-26)
 - [1] Flee (24:15-22)
 - [2] Do not be deceived (24:23-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Name at least six things that will happen at the end of the Tribulation and prior to the return of Christ to this earth.

2. What did Jesus mean in verse 24 when He said, "If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"?

3. What can you do to make sure your love of God does not become cold?

CONCLUSION

We see signs all around us that the end of this age is near and that Christ is coming soon. Let us keep our hearts in tune with Him and then reach out to a lost world before it is too late.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Matthew 24:42)

Recently, my husband and I had the pleasure of attending the wedding of a young couple in our church family. Along with many other friends and family members, we gathered in the sanctuary late one Saturday afternoon to share in the joy of this special occasion. A string ensemble played soft, romantic music as we waited for the appointed hour to arrive. After a time, the mothers of the bride and groom were escorted to their places. The minister and handsome (though a bit nervous) groom took their places in the front. The lovely bridesmaids walked down the aisle, one by one; the flower girl and Bible-bearer came next. These were all signals that the moment we were awaiting was about to arrive! Then, trumpeters in the balcony sounded forth, announcing, “Here Comes the Bride.” It was time! The audience rose, and all eyes turned toward the double doors opening into the sanctuary, anticipating the first glimpse of the beautiful bride.

An event is coming for which we all need to be watching—Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth again! Only those who are watching will be ready for this great event. We read, “Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time” (Hebrews 9:28).

How do we watch for Christ’s coming? First, we look into the Word of God. The Bible enlightens us, and tells us how to correctly prepare for the return of Christ. As we study His words and put them into practice, we are “watching.”

The second way we watch is by looking at the events that are taking place in the world today. Prophets of old foretold what would occur in the time prior to Christ’s return, and we can see the fulfillment of those prophecies all around us. We watch by taking note and recognizing that the day we are waiting for cannot be far away.

Finally, we watch by looking within. We watch to make sure that we maintain a conscience void of offense before God and man. We watch to make sure that the cares of life do not overwhelm us. We watch to guard against a root of bitterness springing up. We watch by letting God’s mirror of truth reveal the motives of our hearts.

When the trumpet of God sounds, it will not be announcing an earthly bride, but the King of the ages, the Son of God himself! Are you watching for His return?

BACKGROUND

The text for today focuses on the prophesied events at the end of the Tribulation and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. The sun being darkened and the stars falling are a few of the cataclysmic events that will take place. The mention of “the sign of the Son of man in heaven,” in verse 30, is not fully explained here. However, some ancient commentators believed a cross will appear in the sky, while others suggest it will be the glory of Christ himself. What is known is that some visible manifestation will mark the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation period.

The illustration of the fig tree, in verses 32-35, was used to represent the nation of Israel, while the surrounding trees represent the other nations of the world. Just as the budding of the trees is an indicator that summer is near, the signs are an indicator of the imminent Rapture of the Church.

Verses 36-42 compare the days of Noah to the days of the last generation in that they prefigure the condition of humanity at the time of Christ’s return. “Eating and drinking,” and “marrying and giving in marriage” indicate that the last generation, like that in Noah’s day, will be preoccupied with life and not heeding the signs of His return and judgment.

The warning in verse 44 (and again in 25:13) to “watch therefore,” comes from the Greek word *grēgoreo*, which means to “be continuously on guard.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - D. The prophetic announcements of the King
 - 3. The development of prophetic history
 - b. The sign of Christ’s return (24:27-30)
 - c. The regathering of Israel (24:31)
 - d. The coming of Christ (24:32-51)
 - (1) The sign of Christ’s coming (24:32-36)
 - (2) The suddenness of Christ’s coming (24:37-51)
 - (a) The historic precedent (24:37-39)
 - (b) The future events (24:40-42)
 - (c) Instructions to be ready (24:43-44)
 - (d) An illustrative parable (24:45-51)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In the story of the two servants, what is the good servant blessed with?

2. What can we learn from the parable of the fig tree about preparation for the end times?

The days of Noah?

The thief in the night?

3. What must you do in your own life to be prepared for Christ's return?

CONCLUSION

No one knows the day nor the hour of Christ's return. How important it is for us to watch for the signs so we are not caught off guard!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”
(Matthew 25:13)**

As school kids in the Midwest, the very word “Tornado!” was enough to send shivers through our bones. When there was a tornado watch in our area, we would keep a sharp lookout on the skies for any signs of severe weather. If the watch was upgraded to a warning advisory, we were ready to go to the basement if necessary. If we noticed a grayish-green tinge to the lowering clouds, we were probably not far from tornado activity. Since we lived several states north of “tornado alley,” the ones we experienced were shorter and weaker than the huge ones in states such as Texas and Oklahoma. Nonetheless, we paid careful attention when there was any potential for such an event. Although we were not official weather forecasters, we knew enough signs to take warning and watch.

Each of us needs to be a forecaster of a different sort. We know that a major event is approaching—Jesus’ Return. We can be passionate and educated about this subject, and alert to the signs of the times. We should be tuned to the Spirit’s voice and heedful of those who have knowledge of the Scriptures and have experience in successful Christian living. In light of recent world events, we should be vigilant against even the slightest spiritual instability and attend to the very first symptoms of a spiritual barometric pressure drop.

It can be easy to forget our sense of purpose when the wait grows long. However, it is possible to be prayed up and in tune with God, continually learning the lessons that come our way rather than lapsing into a drowsy state where we no longer see our need of attentiveness. Unless we are carefully watching, Jesus could come when we are not looking for Him, and then it will be too late to prepare. As we notice the signs of Jesus’ return, we must consecrate our lives afresh, cling to God’s Word, and keep our ties to this world loose.

Watch!

BACKGROUND

The keyword of chapter 25 is “watch.” In this account, Jesus used parables to explain spiritual concepts to the disciples. A parable by definition is an earthly story with a spiritual lesson. This chapter

gives three parables warning of a time of separation: between the wise and the foolish, the faithful and the slothful, and the blessed and the cursed. The first two parables illustrate that every man must live by his own faith, giving examples of some who were faithfully watching, and others who were not.

In the parable of the ten virgins, we gather that the bridegroom did not come as soon as they had expected. All ten had probably arrived at their post equally interested in receiving the bridegroom, but as he delayed his arrival, they lapsed into dozing, followed by outright sleeping. At the dark hour of midnight, they found themselves struggling out of a deep sleep. Those who had thought ahead and brought extra oil found that their foresight paid off. The strong warning here is to be certain we have made whatever preparations are necessary and that we keep our relationship with God up to date. At some point, the time of preparation will be ended for each individual.

In the second parable of the chapter, talents may be likened to God-given abilities or material blessings. We note the phrase, “according to his ability,” in referring to how the landowner distributed his goods to his own servants. The servants apparently had nothing, expected nothing, and as mere servants, deserved nothing. An interesting point in this parable is that the emphasis is not on how much the servants were given, nor on whether they were capable or clever, but on their faithfulness in using what had been given to them.

This parable does not teach salvation by good works, but rather teaches of Christ’s coming, and that there will be a time of commendation for profitable servants. The words, “Thou hast been faithful . . . enter thou in” applied equally to the one who doubled two talents and to the one who doubled five talents. Unequal gifts, if used with equal faithfulness, will be equally rewarded. The one who was chastened was the one who did nothing in response to the gift he was given.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - D. The prophetic announcements of the King
 - 3. The development of prophetic history
 - e. Judgment on Israel (25:1-30)
 - (1) Parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13)
 - (2) Parable of the talents (25:14-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What opportunities did each of the individuals in these parables have to be successful?

2. What is the obvious warning in this text to followers of Christ?

3. What happened to the unprofitable servant?

4. Can any talent be considered too small to develop or consecrate to God? Explain.

CONCLUSION

What are we doing with our talents? Are we making diligent use of what we have, however great or small? We can be ready to give a joyful account when our Lord returns.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?”
(Matthew 25:38-39)**

Emma Booth-Tucker was the daughter of the founders of the Salvation Army, and she was the one who planned and oversaw the first Christmas basket distributions. It was said of her, “She never saw or heard of sorrow without wanting to assuage it; never knew of trouble but she tried to find some way to relieve it.”¹

One time Emma visited a thirteen-year-old boy in prison. He had committed a murder and seemed hard and unrepentant, but she felt he could be reached for God. The boy was surprised when Emma spoke to him gently, telling him that she wanted to help him. The Christmas season had just passed, and she commented that no doubt his Christmas had not been happy. She spoke to him of his family and found out that his mother had died when he was a baby. Before long, the boy was sobbing and telling her he was afraid and sorry. She encouraged the boy to pray and repent, and told him she would pray for him and also make contact with his father. She left him with a New Testament that he was hugging to himself, and with a promise to return again to see him. When he heard that, he smiled for the first time in a long while. Very possibly, Emma had been used to win a soul for the Kingdom.

Does this incident seem like a small act of kindness? Emma Booth-Tucker was living the words that Jesus stated in our focus verse. No doubt you have known of other people who have lived these words. One woman said that in the 1950s, men would knock at their door and ask for money. Her mother would fix food and let them have a picnic on the porch. She would say, “You never know when you may be entertaining angels.” Some have sewn for those who could not buy clothing, distributed food to those who lacked enough to eat, employed those who were recently converted and had been living on the streets.

What have we done? Opportunities are still available today, but are we willing to look for them and then follow through? These may be sobering questions, but someday we will stand before the Lord to be judged. We want to have done what He has commanded us to do.

BACKGROUND

The parables of the ten virgins and the talents, given by Christ in the first part of this chapter, establish the fact that He will return to earth at an unknown time. These parables also illustrate the condition He would like to find people in. Today’s text explains more fully this desired condition.

The Bible is clear that all of mankind from every nation and from every age will have a final judgment, although everyone will not necessarily be judged at the same time. In this text, Christ is described as coming in His glory, and it will be a time of separation. In Judea, during Jesus’ day, it was common for sheep and goats to graze together. At certain times, such as for shearing and also sometimes for protection, the animals had to be separated. Jesus compared those who serve Him to the sheep, and those who do not serve Him to the goats.

The point of this passage was not to indicate that people can be saved by their works. Good works are a result of salvation, not a road to it. However, this text shows that God takes careful note of the actions of each person, and a day of accountability is coming. The Lord wanted His followers to know that service is important. Deeds of kindness will be counted as having been done or not done for Jesus Christ himself.

Jesus also indicated plainly that every person possesses a living soul that will have an eternal destination. There are only two destinations—eternal Heaven or eternal Hell. The preparation made in this life will determine the eternal destination.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - D. The prophetic announcements of the King
 - 3. The development of prophetic history
 - f. Judgment on Gentiles (25:31-46)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What actions did the Lord commend?

2. Why do you think those who were condemned neglected their Christian duties?

3. How can we be sure we are doing what God wants us to do?

CONCLUSION

God sees all we do and records it. Let us challenge ourselves to be certain that we do all we can to please Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.” (Matthew 26:7)

“O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord.” Thus ends the refrain of a well-known Christmas carol. Since I had not gone to church as a child, my earliest introduction to God and His plan of salvation occurred in elementary school, where we learned Christmas carols.

What does it mean to “adore” Christ? The definition of *adore* is “to regard with the utmost esteem, love, and respect.” *Worship* is a related word that means to offer “reverent honor and homage.” That was what Mary was doing when she poured out the ointment.

How can we adore and worship Christ today? One minister tells that the year he graduated from high school, he was looking forward to getting a job. As one of a large family during the 1930s, he wanted to buy some of the “luxuries” of life that were not available to him while growing up. At camp meeting that summer, a preacher challenged everyone, “If you really want God’s best, give Him something that costs you!”

This man prayed, “Lord, what can I give You that costs me something?” Almost immediately, God spoke to his heart, “What about giving Me your life in fulltime service?” The man thought of all his hopes for a job and the things that he wanted to buy. He was sure that those opportunities would not happen if he gave his full time to the Lord. However, in a few days, he knew there was no alternative: either he would give his life completely and experience the fullness of God’s love, or he would withhold his best from God and live with the hope of a much lesser reward. The man promised to serve God in any capacity He chose. He has been a faithful Christian now for over seventy years, and has never regretted that decision.

All of us have something we can give the Lord to show our adoration. When we tell Him that we love Him with all our hearts and that we want to live in a way that pleases Him, we will be worshipping Him. He in turn will amply bless us.

BACKGROUND

During the time of Christ, the high priests were appointed by the Roman government. Caiaphas, a Sadducee, followed his father-in-law Annas, and held

the position for eighteen years, which probably meant that he worked well with the Romans. The religious leaders made a deliberate plan to have Jesus put to death. They were the instigators who turned the public opinion against Jesus.

These were burdensome days for Jesus. Within a short time, He would be facing betrayal, rejection, and the anguish of the cross. Although He was the Son of God, He had to endure these atrocities as a man. Think of the comfort it must have given Him to have one of His followers perform the act of kindness that Mary did. It is not certain whether or not Mary understood clearly the events that were soon to take place, but she was open to the promptings of God, and her loving act was at just the right time.

Mary was sister to Lazarus and Martha. (See John 12:1-3.) The ointment she poured out probably cost the equivalent of a year’s salary. Notice the similarities between this act of worship and the time when she had been sitting at Jesus’ feet, learning from Him, with her sister in the background chiding her for not helping to serve the meal. Notice what Christ said about her on these two occasions: first that she had chosen the better part, and here that her deed was so special that it would be remembered of her for the ages to come.

Chronologically, this incident took place before Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus went through Jericho to Bethany, where Mary lived, then to Bethphage and on to Jerusalem. Perhaps Matthew recounted Mary’s act of adoration here to contrast it with Judas’ betrayal and plotting with the religious leaders. For his treachery, Judas received thirty pieces of silver—the cost of a common slave.

Passover was the annual commemoration of Israel’s escape from Egypt. As Jesus ate with His disciples, He said one of them would betray Him. They were shocked! Their question, “Lord, is it I?” could be translated, “It is not I, is it?” The original language indicates that they thought He would answer, “No.”¹

Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper that night. When He said, “This is my body,” He did not mean that the bread was literally transformed. As part of the Passover feast, the head of the Jewish household took bread and said, “This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.” When instead Jesus said, “This is my body,” He referred to His coming death as the true sacrifice for every soul.

Jesus’ comment, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom,” was yet another

reassurance for His disciples that eternal life was ahead, even though He would die a physical death first. The Lord’s Supper looks back to Calvary and forward to Christ’s return.

Traditionally, Psalms 115-118 were sung during the Passover, and this could have been the hymn that was mentioned in verse 30.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - E. The sufferings and death of the King
 - 1. The preparation of the King
 - a. The prediction of death (26:1-2)
 - b. The plot of the Priests and Elders (26:3-5)
 - c. The preparation for burial (26:6-13)
 - d. The plans for betrayal (26:14-16)
 - e. The Passover supper (26:17-30)
 - (1) The preparation for the supper (26:17-19)
 - (2) The partaking of the supper (26:20-25)
 - (3) The institution of the Lord’s S upper (26:26-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did the religious leaders originally intend not to take Jesus on the feast day?

2. Why do you think Judas betrayed Jesus to the Temple authorities?

3. What can you do personally to show your adoration for the Lord?

CONCLUSION

Mary chose to worship and Judas chose to betray, and their choices have been proclaimed down through the centuries. We also make choices, and ours will be recorded in eternity. Will we choose to worship and adore Christ in our lives today?

NOTES

1. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Loyal: Following the King of Kings* (David C Cook, 2008), pg. 191
Thomas Nelson, *King James Bible Commentary* (Thomas Nelson, 2005), pg. 1226.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.” (Matthew 26:75)

Have you ever wished you could erase an incident from your memory, or at least have the opportunity to do it over? Once, when I was a young child, my mother gave me money to purchase something she needed for baking. She only had one large bill, and she handed it to me hesitantly, along with instructions about the importance of not losing it as I walked to the store. Other items would need to be purchased later with the change I would receive from that same large bill. I recall how sure of myself I was. I laughed and even waved the bill around saying, “Sure, I’ll lose it! I’ll lose it!” Well, you can guess what happened—I did indeed lose it. Oh, what a feeling settled over me as that reality sank in! I’ll never forget the agony I felt as I walked home that day, empty-handed and empty-pocketed. I desperately wanted to erase the whole hour and everything I had said to my mother. I would gladly have deleted that whole day and just lived a day less in my lifetime!

Like Peter discovered, good intentions and boasts can prove to be worthless. What sorrow he felt when the cock crowed, and he realized that he had, indeed, failed his Lord. Peter, no doubt, remembered how lovingly and patiently Jesus had instructed him. How careless he had been with such valuable admonition! Did he rush to Gethsemane and throw himself on the grass where his Master had so recently prayed? Did his tears mingle with the tears his Master had shed? Perhaps he thought back to the time when Jesus had said, “Watch and pray.” How he wished that he had properly valued and heeded those words!

We are subject to failure if we are operating in our own strength. Like being in quicksand, every move only makes matters worse. When we fail and then realize our own inadequacy, what should we do? The answer is simple: we should cry out to our Heavenly Father for help, as Peter must have done through his tears.

Many times people focus on past failures and wonder where to go from there. If that is where you find yourself today, remember that Peter’s story didn’t end with failure and neither should ours. Jesus still loved Peter, and He loves us. In mercy and compassion He restored Peter, and He will restore anyone

who comes to Him today with a broken and a contrite heart. What a wonderful thing that God is willing to forgive!

BACKGROUND

The scenes pictured in today’s text are some of the most moving in all of the New Testament. The Mount of Olives, where Jesus went to pray, actually consists of three hills located to the east of Jerusalem. The half-mile wide Kidron Valley lies between the Mount of Olives and the city. The Garden of Gethsemane was an olive orchard on the western slope of the Mount of Olives; the name *Gethsemane* means *olive press*, a mechanism similar to ones used for crushing grapes.

Christ’s sorrow as He prayed in the Garden was beyond human comprehension. He was not only facing physical torture and death, but He also would take on the burden and penalty of all the world’s sin. He was aware of the great hypocrisy of His accusers, the coming betrayal by His own follower, and the fact that His dearest earthly friends and companions would forsake Him in His hour of greatest need.

Peter, James, and John—the three who had been privileged to witness the glory of Christ’s transfiguration (Matthew 17:1)—were the ones chosen to share His great agony as He prayed in the Garden. However, likely due to emotional fatigue and physical exhaustion, or simply not feeling the urgency of the situation, they fell asleep instead of tarrying in prayer with their Master.

Jesus’ arrest took place in the garden during the middle of the night. No doubt the lights of the soldiers were visible as they approached, but Jesus made no attempt to flee or defend Himself. His restraint was due to His willingness to obey the will of the Father and so fulfill the Scriptures.

Caiaphas, as the high priest, was the head of the Sanhedrin, which was composed of seventy members—the chief priests, elders, and scribes. During the century prior to Roman takeover in 66 B.C., the Sanhedrin appeared to have been at its peak in power. Then the Roman rulers began to appoint the officers and the high priests, and the result was a great decline in the spiritual base of the Sanhedrin. By the time of Christ, the Sanhedrin exercised both civil and criminal jurisdiction. While it was the final court of appeal for all questions connected with Mosaic Law, it had lost its right of mandating capital punishment without the confirmation of the Roman procurator. Therefore, Jesus’ accusers turned Him over to Pilate, the Roman

3. How might we prepare ourselves to always make the right decision in standing up for Christ, and in guarding our own testimonies?

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CONCLUSION

Only as we realize the greatness of our own weakness can we draw from the greatness of God's strength and power.

- ## NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord appointed me.”

(Matthew 27:9-10)

Several years ago our house was robbed while we were out of town. The thieves took a number of items, including a set of silver-plate flatware that had been our wedding gift from my husband’s parents. That silverware was a treasure. By the time it was stolen, my mother-in-law had gone to Heaven. Although we purchased other flatware, we could not truly replace this treasure because its value was in the memories attached to it.

Not long ago, the home of some of our friends burned down. Once we knew everyone was all right, our questions were about what was lost. Were his mounted hunting trophies gone? How about her collection of old books? Most of those items were unsalvageable. However, some of their family pictures were saved. We were glad a few treasures were not destroyed.

What do you value? Stop for a moment and consider what you would classify as treasures. We may have earthly possessions that we cherish as keepsakes, but ultimately what we should value most is relationships—with family members, with friends, and foremost with God.

Judas had the opportunity to be one of Jesus’ friends and followers. He traveled with Jesus and saw His miracles, heard His sermons, and listened to His parables. Yet, Judas did not value Jesus—he betrayed Him for the price of a slave.

Israel as a whole, and the nation’s spiritual leaders specifically, should have placed such a high value on their Messiah that when He came on the scene there would have been no doubt that His claims were genuine. They had studied the Old Testament prophecies and knew the many promises associated with His coming. However, when Jesus ministered to them with all His wisdom and miracles to prove that He fulfilled those prophecies, they did not value Him. Rather, they plotted His death and demanded that He be crucified.

While we are not in a position to physically deny Jesus, as Judas and the Jewish leaders did, we want to be careful that we do not betray Him in our daily walk. Do we value anything more than His love and

approval? Do we neglect what He wants us to do because it is inconvenient or might displease one of our friends or family? Are we following the commands given in His Word? We want to daily look into our own hearts and ask God to show us if we are valuing Him more than anything else.

BACKGROUND

The Sanhedrin reassembled in the morning and delivered the official verdict that Jesus was guilty so that the arrest and late-night meeting would not be deemed unlawful. The Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council during the first century, had seventy-one members and was overseen by the high priest. Sadducees and Pharisees were members of this council.

Judas witnessed the trial of Jesus, and responded with remorse and regret. In verse three, the Greek word translated “repented himself” indicates a regret at being caught, rather than godly sorrow. He took the thirty pieces of silver he had received for betraying Christ, threw it on the Temple floor and fled. Unlike Peter, who wept bitterly and repented, Judas’ regret brought no forgiveness and he went and hanged himself.

The Jewish leaders, so guilty in violating some parts of the Law, were extremely careful to uphold other parts, such as not using blood money for Temple purposes. With this money, they bought a potter’s field in which they buried strangers. In doing so, they fulfilled prophecies from both Jeremiah and Zechariah.

Pontius Pilate was the sixth Roman governor to serve in Judea. He was generally disliked by the Jews, having deliberately violated their law. The Jews needed him, however, to condemn Jesus, since they did not have the authority to sentence someone to death. The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of three crimes: misleading the nation, forbidding the paying of taxes, and claiming to be king. Pilate focused on the third charge, for he could find legal basis for execution by declaring Jesus a “revolutionary.” Instead, he found Jesus to be anything but dangerous, and declared to the Jews that he found no fault in Him. Still the Jews were not satisfied.

Following a Passover tradition, Pilate offered to release a prisoner, but he chose a most treacherous murderer, and asked the Jews to choose between Barabbas and Christ. The Jews, having yielded to the devil, chose to have Barabbas released. At this point, Pilate acted out of convenience rather than out of integrity, and to please the Jews, he ordered that Jesus be crucified.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - E. The sufferings and death of the King
 - 2. The arrest and trial of the King
 - d. The trial of the King before the Sanhedrin (27:1-2)
 - e. The death of Judas (27:3-10)
 - f. The trial of the King before Pilate (27:11-26)
 - (1) The interrogation (27:11-15)
 - (2) The alternative (27:16-23)
 - (3) The concession (27:24-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. When Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate, what did the governor ask Jesus?

2. Why do you think Jesus did not defend Himself?

3. What should we do if we find that we are valuing something more than the Lord?

CONCLUSION

If you are overwhelmed by sin, there is a way to get out of it. Ask Jesus—He can intercede for you. If you have already received the salvation He offers, give thanks! He paid your debt.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”
(Matthew 27:54)**

Why is it that some people are willing to die for the Word of God and others deny its truth? Does God reveal Himself to some and not to others? What is the difference?

One time, some of my family members talked to an older gentleman about the Lord. They attempted to convince him that the Bible is true, that we have a Creator, that Jesus is real, and that we all need to be saved. He stated that at a young age he had asked God to show Himself real to him, but that God had never done so in his eighty years of life.

The Roman centurion in this passage stated clearly at the crucifixion, “Truly this was the Son of God.” He saw the greatest event this earth has ever experienced, and when he felt the earth move beneath his feet, he stated his belief. However, we do not know whether this was just an acknowledgement or a life-changing conviction.

The older gentleman my family members reasoned with had been seen at different times in his life singing a hymn and weeping. Certainly then, and most likely at other times as well, God was revealing Himself to this man, but he had chosen to ignore this “still small voice” and looked for something more spectacular.

Do we require a sign, an earthquake, a bolt of lightning, or a gentle nudge? The Lord knows how to reveal Himself personally. He knows how we are made, our level of understanding, and our personal needs. God has promised to reveal Himself to every soul (John 1:9). Regardless of how the revelation is given to us, we control our response to it, and whether or not we believe God enough to let Him change our lives.

Once we have prayed and received the salvation that Christ’s sacrifice of Himself makes possible, we want to be sensitive to the gentlest prodding by the Spirit of God. He says He will guide us, and we want His help each day to be sure that we say what He wants, go where He wants, and do what He wants. We desire to be quick to believe that God is with us and will allow only those things that are best for us. Then He will be able to truly work in our lives.

BACKGROUND

Jesus suffered a great deal of physical abuse. The soldiers stripped Him, put a scarlet robe on Him, and placed a crown of thorns on His head, mocking Him as royalty. They gave Him a reed for a scepter, bowed before Him, and mocked Him by saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on Him and hit Him with a reed, not knowing this was truly the King, the Son of God. Jesus submitted to this humiliation for us.

Crucifixion was the most demeaning, shameful, and painful of all executions, and was never talked about in polite Roman society. Criminals were forced to carry their crosses, or minimally the cross beam, to the place of execution, and to wear a sign stating their crime. Jesus was probably unable to carry His cross because of the severe abuse He had received, and the Roman soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to do it. Cyrene was in northern Africa, and no doubt Simon had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. It appears that this man’s two sons, Alexander and Rufus, became Christians later (Mark 15:21; Romans 16:13). It is quite likely that carrying Jesus’ cross was a turning point for Simon.

Gall was a narcotic, and mingled with vinegar, it was a drugged wine. This was often given to prisoners before crucifixion, and it was also a fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 69:21. Jesus refused it, no doubt because He wanted to be completely conscious and have a clear mind while He carried out the Father’s plan.

Customarily, the soldiers shared the clothing at an execution. In this case, they threw dice, and unknowingly fulfilled Psalm 22:18.

Executions took place regularly at Golgotha, a public place outside Jerusalem. The intention was that such prominent display would deter criminals. People going by could mock those being punished. The Jewish leaders joined in mocking Jesus, and Psalm 22:6-8 was fulfilled.

Jesus was put on the cross at 9:00 a.m. From the sixth to the ninth hour (from noon to 3:00 p.m.) God sent darkness; it was not an eclipse or a storm. Jesus took the sins of the whole human family upon Himself; He bore God’s wrath, and this agony was worse than the physical abuse He endured. His cry at the end of that time was a quote from Psalm 22:1.

When Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. This was the curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Prior to Jesus’ death, only the High Priest

entered the Holy of Holies, and he went in only once a year. Because Jesus fulfilled the picture illustrated by the Temple worship, He permanently opened the way for man to have direct access to God through His atoning death. The priests and sacrifices were no longer necessary.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King

- E. The sufferings and death of the King
 - 3. The crucifixion of the King
 - a. The scourging of the King (27:27-31)
 - b. The cross of the King (27:32)
 - c. The death of the King (27:33-50)
 - (1) From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 (27:33-44)
 - (a) The King placed on the cross (27:33-36)
 - (b) The crime occasioned by the cross (27:37)
 - (c) The companions on the cross (27:38)
 - (d) The mockery at the cross (27:39-44)
 - (2) From 12:00-3:00 p.m. (27:45-50)
 - (a) The darkness (27:45)
 - (b) The two sayings (27:46-50)
 - [1] The first utterance (27:46)
 - [2] The reaction of the people (27:47-49)
 - [3] The second utterance (27:50)
 - d. The supernatural events at the death of the King (27:51-56)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the accusation put on the Cross over Jesus' head?

2. What was God's reaction when Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, and the sacrifice for sin was finished? What is God's reaction to sin today?

3. What does Jesus' death on the Cross mean to you?

CONCLUSION

No matter how hard we try, we cannot completely fathom the price Jesus paid to purchase our salvation. How have we responded to His love?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”
(Matthew 28:20)**

When our son was seven years old, my wife and I sent him to stay with his aunt for a week. After only two days he called and, with heart-wrenching sobs, asked us to come take him home because he missed us. He clearly had a bad case of “separation anxiety.”

Twelve years later, the tables were turned when our son moved out of our house and to another city to begin a new job. Now my wife and I want to grab the phone and tell him we miss him! It appears that parents suffer from “separation anxiety,” too!

As Christians, how comforting it is to know that nothing can separate us from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples on Mount Olivet and gave them the Great Commission. Then He told them, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The Apostles had suffered the worst kind of separation from the Lord: after vowing to fight to the death for their Master, they had run for their lives and left their Lord to die a painful, humiliating death on the Cross. However, through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, God made the Cross an instrument of reconciliation. The resurrected Christ appeared to His Apostles and showed that He had all power, even power over death. Imagine the joy that these closest associates of the Lord must have felt when they realized that not even death could separate them from their Master!

As followers of Jesus, we have the same promise that Jesus gave to His Apostles: Jesus will never leave us. Yes, on earth we will suffer pain and loss, but as long as we keep our hands in His, nothing can separate us from our Lord and our God—not even distance or death. Christ lives within us. Christ walks beside us. He is ever present, aware and ministering to our needs. What a blessed assurance!

BACKGROUND

Had it not been for the intervention of Joseph of Arimathea, a counselor of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:50-51), and Nicodemus, also a religious leader (John 3:1), the body of Jesus might not have had a decent burial. Since Joseph was a rich man and had prepared a new tomb, his burial of Jesus fulfilled the

prophecy of Isaiah 53:9 that Christ would make his grave “with the rich in his death.”

Pilate gave the Pharisees permission to guard the tomb with Roman troops. The tomb was sealed with an official Roman seal on the stone; this was probably the seal of the governor. Tradition states that Jesus was laid in the tomb on Friday evening and rose on Sunday morning. Using the Jewish method of reckoning time (any part of a day being counted as a day), Christ was in the tomb for three days.

The final chapter of Matthew is a record of victory that provides indisputable evidence of Jesus’ Kingship: His resurrection from the dead. The stone was not rolled away to permit Jesus to emerge, for He had already left the tomb. It was rolled away by the angels so that the people could see for themselves that the tomb was empty.

A Roman soldier who failed in his duty could be punished by death. Possibly for this reason, the soldiers who had been sent to guard the tomb did not report the disappearance of Jesus’ body to Pilate or to their superior officers; instead, they reported it to the Jewish chief priests. They must have known that these men were as concerned about covering up the miracle as the soldiers themselves were! The chief priests, the elders, and the soldiers, fabricated a story to explain the empty tomb: that the body had been stolen.

Unlike the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the Gospel of Matthew does not record the ascension of Jesus into Heaven. Matthew ends his account with Jesus on Mount Olivet with His disciples. This ending is fitting, though, for when Jesus returns, He will descend to this same Mount (Zechariah 14:4).

Matthew 28:18-20 is often called “The Great Commission.” This statement brings the first Gospel to its grand finale, as the triumphant, risen Lord sends forth His ambassadors to spread His message throughout the entire world. The commission is not simply an order, but a pronouncement of victory.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- VI. The official presentation and rejection of the King
 - E. The sufferings and death of the King
 - 3. The crucifixion of the King
 - e. The burial of the King (27:57-66)
 - (1) The burial by Joseph of Arimathea (27:57-62)
 - (2) The burial tomb sealed (27:63-66)

- VII. The conclusive proof of the King's claims and person (28:1-20)
- A. The resurrection of the King announced (28:1-8)
 - B. The appearance of the King to the women (28:9-10)
 - C. The falsification by the Chief Priests (28:11-15)
 - D. The appearance of the King to the disciples (28:16-17)
 - E. The final instructions of the King (28:18-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Matthew 27:64 records that the Pharisees wanted to seal the tomb so that the disciples couldn't steal the body of Jesus and claim that He had risen from the dead, "so the last error shall be worse than the first." What do you think was the "first error" that the Pharisees felt they had made?

2. What were the two different reactions the disciples had when they saw their resurrected Lord?

3. How do you feel Jesus' commission to His disciples applies to you?

CONCLUSION

Christ's closing promise, though given to the Apostles, is passed on to every generation of believers. He intended for His Church of every era to be evangelistically engaged, and He promises to be with us as we take His message into our world.

NOTES



Overview for Hebrews

Purpose: To emphasize the superiority of Christ in relation to the Levitical Law.

Author: Due to the absence of any name in the Biblical text, authorship has been ascribed to several people; namely Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Priscilla. Although uncertain, commentators generally attribute the Book of Hebrews to Paul.

To Whom Written: Hebrew Christians caught in the transition from traditional Hebrew teachings to the radically new teachings of Jesus Christ. Their lives had been changed, but the inclination to go back to what was familiar and comfortable possibly still was very strong.

Date Written: Approximately A.D. 70

Setting: As second generation Christians, these Hebrew believers were most likely experiencing physical and social persecution. Suffering at the hands of the Romans because they were Jews, they found little help and comfort from their Jewish neighbors because of their newfound Christian beliefs. Somewhat disillusioned that Jesus did not establish His Kingdom as many expected, they needed reassurance to hold onto His teachings.

Key people: People of faith from the Old Testament.

Summary: Hebrews presents a clearly-defined portrait of Christ and His fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Instead of downplaying the validity of the Law, the author pointed out how Christ emphasized the Law and applied its precepts to the motive behind an individual's actions rather than the action itself.

Judaism in its design was by far the best religion practiced until that day. Through it, God outlined specific commandments and rituals, and used His prophets to reveal His plan of forgiveness and salvation for mankind. The Law involved many rituals that were symbolic of a better way to come, but also assured any obedient Jew of God's blessing. Christ came to fulfill the Law, conquer sin, and offer eternal life to all who would accept His gift.

The early Jews, steeped in their own system of worship and ceremonial practices at the expense of

the Word of God, had difficulty accepting the message of salvation offered by Christ. Although this did not keep all of them from receiving His message, the vast majority rejected it as heresy. To sufficiently strengthen the tenuous foothold of Christianity for these early Jewish Christians, the writer of Hebrews needed to present an argument strong enough to withstand the entrenched theology of Judaism.

The writer establishes Christ's superiority to the angels (1:4–2:18), to Moses (3:1–19), and to the Old Testament priesthood (4:14–7:28). He describes Christianity's superior covenant to that of Judaism (8:1–13), pointing out that it offers a more sufficient sacrifice for sins (9:1–10:18). The writer does not disregard the divine design of the Law, and thus alienate potential Jewish converts, but instead portrays a good way that has become even better.

After establishing the superiority of Christ and Christianity, the writer goes on to examine what it means to truly follow the teachings of Christ. Realizing that the inclination for people under attack is to retreat to what is safe and familiar, he exhorts these Jewish Christians to hold on to their newfound faith, to find ways to encourage each other, and to anticipate Christ's return (10:19–25). He further warns them against rejecting the sacrifice Christ made for them (10:26–31), and reminds them of the rewards of the faithful (10:32–39).

Following these exhortations and warnings, the writer illustrates his points by the use of Old Testament examples of faithful men and women as patterns to follow for these new believers (11:1–40). The Book of Hebrews concludes with a comparison of the old covenant with the new (12:18–29), moral exhortations (13:1–17), an admonition for prayer (13:18–19), and a benediction (13:20–25).

"Better" is the theme that runs through the entire Book of Hebrews. As you read through the Book, keep in mind that the writer was not proposing that the old Law was bad; just that the New Covenant in Christ was much better. Christ is better than angels, Moses, and Joshua. The Christian faith has a better rest, a better Priesthood, a better sanctuary, and a better Sacrifice.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35				Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50		PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?			Jude martyred 72	
PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46				PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48	50-52	53-57		Paul's trip to Rome 59						Rome destroys Jerusalem 70	
			James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44		Galatians; James 49	1 & 2 Thessalonians 51/52	1 & 2 Corinthians 55	Romans 57	Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60	Philippians 61	St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64	1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64	Jude 65	Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68	Hebrews 68
		Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41						St. Mark 58/60							

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-3)
 - A. The revelation through the Son (1:1-2)
 - B. The person and work of the Son (1:3)
- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work (1:4—10:18)
 - A. The superiority of Christ to the angels (1:4—2:18)
 - B. The superiority of Christ to Moses (3:1-6)
 - C. Parenthesis II: warning against disobedience (3:7—4:13)
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron (4:14—10:18)
- III. The application: the life we should live because of His life and work (10:19—13:19)
 - A. Exhortation to devotion (10:19-39)
 - B. Exhortation to endurance in faith (11:1—12:29)
 - C. Exhortation to walk honorably (13:1-19)
- IV. Conclusion (13:20-25)
 - A. Closing prayer (13:20-21)
 - B. Closing exhortation (13:22)
 - C. Closing greetings (13:23-24)
 - D. Closing benediction (13:25)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” (Hebrews 2:3)

When I was in college, I had to take required classes in various subjects to meet my degree requirements. One of these was a history class dealing with the subject in which I was majoring. I had a busy schedule, so I made that particular class a low priority and rarely attended, figuring it wouldn't take much effort to pass. Unfortunately, I missed one vital class session—the day our professor rescheduled the time for our final exam. You can imagine my dismay when I arrived at school one day and discovered the time change. Due to my neglect of that class, I had missed my final!

Most of us occasionally neglect things in our daily lives. In some areas, neglect comes with a price tag. If education is neglected, children grow up in ignorance. If weeding is neglected, a garden becomes overgrown. If home maintenance is neglected, a house decays. If sowing is neglected, a farmer reaps no harvest. If earthly interests suffer as a result of neglect, how vital it is that we do not neglect spiritual issues, for the price of such neglect is incalculable!

Jesus Christ, the Son of God and appointed Heir of all things in Heaven and earth, spoke to the world the message of salvation. Those who are Christians have believed His Word and become heirs with Him. It was to believers that the author of Hebrews wrote to warn against neglecting or letting their salvation slip. Neglecting is not always denying or rejecting salvation; rather, it is often recognizing but ignoring, or knowing but failing to follow through. The writer was not encouraging sinners to become Christians; rather, he was encouraging believers to pay careful attention to the wonderful salvation they had received.

Today, as in the days of the Early Church, it is possible to take the Word of God for granted. It is possible to grow accustomed to the privilege of prayer and to fail to take advantage of our access to God. It is possible to grow lax in our commitment to the Gospel. It is possible to neglect opportunities for spiritual growth. It is possible, but oh, what a danger!

I neglected my class because I thought I didn't really need to attend on a daily basis. I thought I could get by with little effort. May we never get to that place regarding our salvation!

BACKGROUND

The Epistle to the Hebrews was originally addressed to Jewish Christians to warn them against falling back into Judaism. The writer contrasts God's past method of revealing His word to man through prophets, with the perfect revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. Then he shows the superiority of Christ to angels. Angels were important to the Jewish religion since the time they had assisted in giving the Law on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53), but even they were immeasurably lower than the Son. Even when Christ was made in human form, angels were ministering spirits unto Him, as they are to all who are heirs of salvation.

Having established the superiority of Christ to the angels, in our focus verse the writer gives a warning to believers: If messages given by angels were extremely important, certainly the message given by the Son of God was vital. If God Himself bore witness of His Son with miracles and the Holy Ghost, how could believers neglect the gift He offered?

The original word translated *slip* in the first verse of chapter 2 has a nautical connotation and means, “to drift away,” as an anchorless ship would drift from a harbor. The action is not sudden or premeditated, but subtle.

The writer's warning reached its climax with the phrase, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” He was asking, “What way is there of being saved from punishment, if we allow the great provision of God to be neglected, and do not embrace what it offers?” There is no other way of salvation, and the neglect of this will be followed by destruction.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. Introduction (1:1-3)
 - A. The revelation through the Son (1:1-2)
 - B. The person and work of the Son (1:3)
- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - A. The superiority of Christ to the angels
 - 1. Christ is higher (1:4-2:4)
 - a. His more excellent name (1:4)
 - b. His unique relation to the Father (1:5)
 - c. His worship by angels (1:6)
 - d. He is God, and angels are His servants (1:7-14)
 - e. Parenthesis I: warning against drifting (2:1-4)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the position of Jesus Christ relative to the angels?

2. What might be evidences of neglect in the life of a Christian?

3. What restorative steps would you advise for those who have drifted or neglected this “great salvation”?

CONCLUSION

Our salvation is a “great salvation” and was purchased for us at an infinite price. It brings us abundant promises and incomparable blessings. Let us purpose to never neglect it.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”
(Hebrews 2:18)**

“Been there, done that” has become an often-quoted phrase in recent years. Sometimes we hear it casually tossed about in reference to an activity. At other times, we may say it to acquaintances when they have a car wreck on the way to work, endure resistance from a rebellious teenager, spend sleepless nights with a colicky newborn, endure a difficult employment situation, or negotiate with a “terrible twos” toddler.

When we have been through a specific situation ourselves, it is much easier to empathize with others. Have you ever tried to comfort someone who faces a difficulty that you have never faced? Very likely you feel inadequate. Or perhaps someone who has never experienced a situation like yours has tried to console you. Although that person may have thought he understood, you knew full well that he did not.

If we understand better by experience, consider what our focus verse is saying. Jesus, who is God Himself and one with God the Father, became a human being like us. He experienced life on earth in all its dimensions. Why? So we would know that He understands what we go through.

He not only went through what we do, He went through more than any of us will ever face. Which of us has been without food for forty days while we were tempted of the devil? Have we been betrayed, spat upon, despised, or beaten? If we are reading this, we have not been killed for who we are or what we stand for. Jesus experienced the extremes!

Are you facing something difficult today? Perhaps emotional pain is tearing at your heart, or you confront a situation that looks like a mountain that can never be overcome. Take courage! Jesus understands—He really does—and He cares. He is looking at you with love in His eyes, and He wants to help you. Reach out to Him in prayer at this moment, and expect Him to answer with grace and strength for your time of need.

BACKGROUND

In verses 5-8, the writer quotes Psalm 8. God intended man to have dominion over the earth, but due to sin, man lost the ability to have that control. Jesus, because He lived without sin, had that dominion.

Jesus was made “a little lower than the angels” when, in His humility, He came down to this world. He suffered humiliation so that it could be followed by His exaltation. Humiliation and then exaltation is the order the Lord took, and His disciples will follow the same pattern.

The Lord’s substitutionary offering is clearly set forth in this passage. He tasted death for every man; He suffered for others. One purpose for Christ’s coming is mentioned here: that He might be like His “brethren.” In verse 10, the word *captain* means, “file leader.” It is a military picture of one who takes the lead, and his followers are behind him. Jesus suffered for the supreme purpose of “bringing many sons unto glory.” In this verse, the word *perfect* does not mean without sin or fault, because Jesus was sinless. It means “complete.”

Sanctification is what accomplishes the oneness referred to in verse 11. It makes us like Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one, even as He and His Father are one.

Verses 11-13 reference the bond that God expects us to have with Jesus Christ. When we think of the extent to which God went to meet the needs of sinful humanity, we can begin to glimpse the importance of this great salvation of which we are made partakers.

Satan’s power (verses 14 and 15) is through sin. He presides over the realm of death because of sin. There was no death in the world until sin entered. The sting of death is sin, so when sin is taken away, the sting is taken away also, and the fear of death is dispelled for the Christian.

We see the great purpose that Jesus had in forsaking all. He suffered for several reasons. First, His suffering was necessary so that He could identify with humanity. Next, He suffered death to redeem humanity and to make the power and fear of death ineffective by His resurrection. Finally, His sufferings qualified Him to be our High Priest before God the Father.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - A. The superiority of Christ to the angels
 - 2. Christ was made lower (2:5-18)
 - a. The fact (2:5-9)
 - (1) The destiny of man (2:5-8)
 - (2) The purpose of Christ (2:9)
 - b. The reason (2:10-18)
 - (1) To become man’s Savior (2:10)

- [illegible]

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” (Hebrews 3:14)

In my middle teens, I went through a stage of intense interest in electronics. Based on a design in an amateur electronics magazine, I first built a very simple radio receiver. (This will date me: it had one “tube” and a lot of soldered wire connections.) Once I discovered that clockwise as viewed from the top of the socket is counterclockwise when viewed from underneath, it actually worked.

Emboldened by this success, I set out to build a five-tube superheterodyne receiver. The challenges were many. This was not a kit, so I had to buy the individual components, which required numerous trips to electronics stores. The cost was significant, and I only had a part-time job. Finally, the project was stalled because I could not find one of the necessary components. A year or so later, when I was able to find and purchase the missing piece, the completed set would not work and my enthusiasm for the project had pretty much disappeared, anyway. Looking back, it would have been great if I could have taken the half-completed project to someone who really understood electronics. Perhaps I was just moments away from victory! Eventually, I gave the non-functioning components to someone who showed a slight interest in them, thus ending my short-lived electronics career.

Many people approach their Christian walk much as I did the electronics project. They start off with great enthusiasm. Certainly there are difficulties and obstacles to overcome, but with the Lord’s help, they are victorious. Then, after a period of time, they lose their initial zest for the Gospel. In many cases, the cause is not so much a desire to do the wrong things as a loss of determination to hang in there. And in the end, what will it profit a person if he started out to serve the Lord, but failed to follow through?

In today’s text, we are reminded that only two of the adult males who left Egypt with Moses lived to enter the Promised Land. The majority did not hold their “confidence to the end,” and as a result, they were no better off than if they had never started.

Verse 13 of chapter 3 encourages us to “exhort,” or encourage, one another daily. Our encouragement may be just the thing that will help our brother or sister when they are going through a spiritual battle. By the same token, we need the encouragement of others

from time to time. Just think what might have been if I had received help on my “radio” from someone who knew what they were doing! But I was pretty much on my own, and the project came to nothing because I gave up before it was completed.

Let’s make sure we retain our confidence, and persevere to the end!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 3 shows the superiority of Christ to faithful Moses. If Israel’s rejection of Moses’ leadership in the wilderness prevented them from entering the Promised Land, how much graver the result to those who refuse Jesus Christ. Continuing and persevering in the Christian race is a central theme of the Book of Hebrews. In verse 6 of today’s text, the writer instructs believers to “hold fast” in their faith. In verse 14, he instructs them to “hold steadfast unto the end.” These verses are central to the analogy that Christian living is similar to running a race—just as runners must train and condition to run, then persevere and press on to the finish line, so also must Christians continue and persevere in faith to press on to the end goal, which is Heaven.

The first-century Jews regarded Moses very highly, which is a possible explanation for the writer’s choice to use the Israelites’ experience in the wilderness as the example for his argument (verses 6-11). In this passage, the writer directly quotes Psalm 95:7-11. The verses in this Psalm are quoted three times in Hebrews, in 3:7-8, 15, and 4:7.

In verse 9, the placing of a forty-year time frame possibly parallels the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness, and the period of time that had elapsed since the rejection of Christ in A.D. 30. The Children of Israel saw God’s work in the wilderness for forty years, and in about A.D. 70 when the Book of Hebrews was written, the readers had also had about forty years, since A.D. 30, to examine the evidence of Christ’s work.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - B. The superiority of Christ to Moses (3:1-6)
 - 1. The comparisons between Christ and Moses (3:1-2)
 - 2. The contrasts between Christ and Moses (3:3-6)
 - a. Moses belonged to the house; Christ built the house (3:3-4)

- b. Moses was a servant in the house;
Christ over His house (3:5-6)
- C. Parenthesis II: warning against disobedience
 - 1. The case of Israel's failure (3:7-11)
 - 2. The call to faithfulness (3:12-15)
 - 3. The cause of Israel's failure (3:16-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How does the writer describe those who turn from God?

2. What does it mean to harden your heart?

3. What can you do to encourage other Christians to grow and continue in faith?

CONCLUSION

An old chorus says: "I am determined to hold out to the end. Jesus is with me; on Him I can depend. And I know I have salvation for I feel it in my soul. I am determined to reach that heav'nly goal." Let us be one of those who are determined to go all the way with the Lord—all the way to that heavenly goal!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Hebrews 4:9-11)

One evening, my husband went into the kitchen and proceeded to enthusiastically sweep the floor. I wasn't really sure what else he was planning to do, so I went to bed. The following morning when I came into the kitchen, I saw the mop and bucket sitting in the corner and realized that he had also mopped the floor. I wondered why he hadn't noticed that I had already mopped! Even though my husband had the best of intentions and was sincerely trying to help out, he had labored over a task that was already done.

How many times do we as Christians do the same thing? There is a spiritual rest that God wants us to enter into, but instead of availing ourselves of it, we labor over things that have already been accomplished or that God has promised to do for us. Let us take care not to miss, through unbelief, what God has promised! For example, God may ask us to do a specific task that we feel is beyond our abilities. Instead of struggling to accomplish it in our own strength, we need to remember that He has promised grace to help in time of need. Perhaps we fret over trying to make ends meet, when God has promised to supply all our needs. Maybe we struggle with trying to figure out how to handle a difficult situation, when God's Word assures us that when wisdom is needed, we should simply ask. Yes, we do have to take some action ourselves, but there is a special “repose” in our Christian lives that comes about when we base our actions on trust in God to provide what He has promised.

There is one area where God does instruct us to strive—we are told to labor to enter into His rest. After we pray and believe, we can rest in His promises that whatever the need is, it can be worked out according to God's will.

BACKGROUND

There are two Greek words in this chapter that are translated *rest*. The first signifies “cessation from labor,” indicating that the weary body is physically rested and refreshed. The second means not only a rest from labor, but a religious rest—rest of a sacred kind, in which both soul and body partake.

God rested on the seventh day because His creation was complete. His rest has been available since then, but the Jews of Moses' day failed to enter that rest. The writer of Hebrews reminded the Jewish Christians that their forefathers had the opportunity to enter Canaan, but their unbelief in God's promises kept them from entering. Now God was offering them another opportunity to enter into the rest that comes through Jesus Christ. Just as God rested after His creation was complete, Jesus could offer ultimate rest because of His death and resurrection.

In verse 8, “Jesus” refers to Joshua of the Old Testament. (The names Jesus and Joshua are different English versions of the same Hebrew name: Yeshua.) Joshua led the Children of Israel into the Promised Land, but that did not bring lasting rest. That everlasting, eternal rest came only when they “ceased from their own works.” In verse 11, the writer encouraged them to *labour* (“to strive and give diligence”) to enter into that rest and not fall into the same unbelief their forefathers did.

The word translated *quick* in verse 12 means “alive.” Thus, the Word of God is alive and powerful, and is compared in this text to a sharp sword, penetrating and revealing our inner beings and making apparent what we really are.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - C. Parenthesis II: warning against disobedience
 - 4. The call to fear (4:1-10)
 - 5. The call to faithfulness (4:11-13)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What kept the Children of Israel from entering the Promised Land in Moses' day?

2. How is the rest that comes through faith in Jesus Christ better than the rest that Joshua offered the Children of Israel when they entered Canaan?

[illegible]

God wants us to rest in the promises found in His Word, and to put our confidence in Him no matter what circumstances may come our way. If we do, then we will one day enter into His eternal rest in Heaven.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

Many years ago, a man named Joseph Scriven was born in Ireland. He discovered early in life how much he needed One who could give him help in the time of difficulty. When he graduated from college, he was a Christian, and was looking forward to marriage with the girl he loved. However, on the eve of his wedding, his fiancée accidentally drowned. He was devastated! Then, in addition to his sorrow, health problems made him unable to go on with his training in the military as he had planned.

He moved to Canada at the age of twenty-five, and there he became known in his community as a “Good Samaritan.” He cared about those around him, those who were in need, the down and out. He even gave the clothes off his back to the poor, and shared his own food with those who were without.

One day he got a letter that said his mother was very sick. It had been ten years since he had kissed her goodbye and gone to Canada, but he didn’t have enough money to go back to Ireland. He wanted to encourage her in some way, so he prayed and asked the Lord to help him pen the right words to her. God inspired him to write a beautiful poem. One day a neighbor happened to be in his room and saw this poem on the night stand. He read it, and asked Scriven who had written the beautiful words. Scriven replied, “The Lord and I did it between us.” Later, the words of that poem were put to music, and the song, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” has brought comfort to untold millions since then.

When we approach God in prayer, we are encouraged to come boldly to the Throne of Grace. We can come with assurance because Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, is also our Friend. He is acquainted with human weakness and frailty, for He too was once a man. And now He stands by, willing to extend mercy and give us help in our time of need as no one else can.

What a Friend we have in Jesus!

BACKGROUND

Some of the Hebrew Christians who received this letter were sorely tempted to return to Judaism. The writer encouraged faithfulness on their part by reminding them that they had a great High Priest who had entered Heaven on their behalf. With that in view, the

writer urged his readers to hold fast to their profession of faith.

The great High Priest was God’s only Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was not only great in His person, but also in His position. He would minister mercy and grace. *Mercy* means that God does not give what is deserved; *grace* means that He gives what is not deserved.

Aaron, like every high priest, was chosen by God and duly ordained and installed in office. He was chosen from among men to minister for men. His main task was at the altar: he offered the sacrifices God had appointed. Unless the sacrifices were offered in the right place by the right person, they were not accepted by God. Jesus fulfilled God’s plan by being both the Sacrifice and the High Priest.

When God appointed and ordained Jesus to be man’s High Priest, He did not destroy the old Law. Rather, Jesus fulfilled it. He removed what was no longer needful, such as the sacrifices, and established a better way for mankind to approach God.

Two factors make Christ’s priesthood unique. First, unlike the priests of the Law who eventually died, Jesus is a High Priest forever. Second, He belongs to a different order from the Old Testament priests, as He was not from the lineage of Levi. Christ belongs to the order of Melchizedek. (Melchizedek means “king of righteousness,” and he was also “king of Salem,” which means peace. He was both a priest and king).

During His time on earth, our Lord was prepared for His ministry as High Priest (Hebrews 5:7-8). The phrase, “In the days of his flesh,” means “In the days when He was on earth in a human body.” From birth to death, although sinless, Jesus experienced the infirmities of human nature. He experienced hunger and thirst, as well as weariness. He also faced temptations and persecution from the hands of sinful men. By means of His earthly sufferings, Jesus Christ was equipped for His Heavenly ministry as our High Priest in that He is able to relate to man’s infirmities. He is able to save, keep, and strengthen His people.

Jesus Christ did not need to offer any sacrifices for Himself. He was in perfect fellowship with the Father and needed no cleansing. His sacrifice was for fallen man, which was made once and for all. The Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated. Furthermore, those sacrifices could only cover sins; they alone could not cleanse sins. (See Hebrews 10:4.) It required the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God for sin to be cleansed and removed. Jesus Christ is the “Author of eternal salvation.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 1. Superior because of a better position (4:14-16)
 - 2. Superior because of better qualifications (5:1-10)
 - a. The prerequisites for a priest (5:1-4)
 - (1) Chosen from among men and offers sacrifices for sins (5:1)
 - (2) Identified with the people (5:2-3)
 - (3) Called by God (5:4)
 - b. The fulfillment by Christ (5:5-10)
 - (1) Called by God (5:5-6)
 - (2) Identified with the people (5:7-8)
 - (3) Offered Himself as sacrifice (5:9)
 - (4) Chosen by God (5:10)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What two primary duties were expected from every high priest?

2. What facts should encourage believers to put full confidence in Jesus Christ, the great High Priest?

3. Think of a situation in your life where Christ's intercession for you is especially meaningful right now. Explain why.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is the great High Priest, having made the ultimate sacrifice for our souls. Are you allowing Him to fulfil that role for you today?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” (Hebrews 6:1)

When my brother was young, he began taking piano lessons. I remember the notes drifting up from the basement as he practiced, especially when he repeated the same phrase fifteen or twenty times! He started by playing simple lines with each hand, but gradually the pieces became more complex. Eventually, he could play works by famous composers.

One of the most important elements factoring into his improvement was the constant goals set by his teachers—they regularly challenged his ability with harder exercises and more difficult scales and fingerings. My brother rose to the challenges and steadily became a better player. His teachers also motivated his progress by organizing recitals that featured him. With every performance, he advanced in confidence and ability. Eventually, he became a teacher himself. The years of practice and performance helped him to teach his students how to progress in their personal study of the piano.

As Christians, it is important that we make progress, moving beyond an understanding of the basic doctrines of the Gospel into spiritual maturity. In our focus verse, the writer of Hebrews instructs believers to “go on unto perfection.” The word *perfection* means a state of mental and moral “completeness.” Clearly, after we have been saved, we should pray to receive our sanctification. When our heart has been made pure and holy through that experience, we should press on and seek for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Even after we receive these experiences, we should progress in our spiritual walk. We can regard every challenge as an opportunity to learn how to depend more on Christ. Each trial can become an occasion for deeper faith and trust in God. With every spiritual victory comes more confidence in God.

We can set spiritual goals. We can even push ourselves to meet those goals, as we would an earthly goal. Yes, we may find that Satan fights our progress! When we purpose to grow by increasing time spent in prayer and reading of the Word or performing any other spiritual discipline, the enemy of our souls is not happy. As a result, the challenges may increase, but with the challenges comes God’s supernatural power to help us win the victory over any situation.

BACKGROUND

This passage of Scripture emphasizes how necessary it is to make spiritual progress, moving beyond the elementary principles of the Gospel. The writer warned the Hebrew Christians against being dull hearers; dull hearing is a sign of spiritual immaturity and is marked by apathy or indifference toward the Word, a lack of spiritual discernment, and an inability to teach others.

The Hebrews should have been mentoring others in the Word, but instead, they were “unskillful in the word of righteousness.” Not only does dullness toward the Word keep a Christian from growing, but it hinders his ability to share with others.

In chapter 6, the writer moved beyond a diagnostic rebuke, and admonished the Hebrews to grow up from a state of childhood to the fullness of the stature of the new man in Christ, “leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ” (Hebrews 6:1). The word translated *leaving* has the sense of “quitting with the view to engage in something else.”

The author enumerated the doctrines of repentance, faith, the doctrine of baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. He indicated that the Hebrews should progress beyond these, which were all taught in a rudimentary way in the Old Testament, to a full understanding and practice of the doctrines of Christ.

Verses 4 through 8 of chapter 6 give one of the stern warnings set forth in the Bible: a warning against apostasy. There is a great difference between backsliding and what is described in these verses. The Bible draws a distinction between backsliding and falling away from God.

For the backslider, there is every hope of his restoration if he will repent and renew his vows to the Lord. For the man who has fallen away from God and has reached the final stage that is depicted in these verses, there is no hope. The word that is translated *fall away* means to “apostatize from,” and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity. The one who has fallen away into a state of apostasy has rejected his only means of access to God and is cut off by the position he has taken.

The writer concluded this portion of text by likening Christians to a field for harvest. The field that is receptive to the rain and nutrients from heaven will be blessed of God. The field that is unfruitful and full of thorns and briars will be cursed of and rejected by God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 3. Parenthesis III: admonition to maturity
 - a. The fact of immaturity (5:11-14)
 - b. The need for progression (6:1-8)
 - (1) The exhortation (6:1-3)
 - (2) The reminder (6:4-6)
 - (3) The illustration (6:7-8)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What teachings did the writer identify as “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” or the “milk” of the Word?

2. What do you think the writer meant by saying the Hebrew Christians should be able to “discern both good and evil” (verse 14)?

3. What are some ways we can “go on unto perfection” in our Christian lives?

CONCLUSION

True commitment to Christ will move us out of our comfort zone and into areas where we will be stretched and challenged to grow as Christians. How will we respond?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Hebrews 6:11-12)

My mother loved to have company over to our house for Sunday dinner. She would plan her menu well in advance, and prior to the weekend, she would spend days cleaning the house and carefully preparing each part of the meal. By Saturday morning, the desserts and side dishes were ready, and the house was sparkling clean. She made it look so easy!

After I married, I decided that I would entertain on Sundays just like Mom did. However, I would find myself procrastinating during the week. On Saturday I would have to plan my menu, do my shopping, clean the house, and prepare the food. The day would zip by, and many times I had to stay up until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. trying to get ready for the company we had invited. By the time the guests arrived for dinner, I would be almost too exhausted to enjoy the “fruit of my labors.” If I had followed Mom’s example and spent several days preparing, it would have been far more enjoyable.

A key word in today’s focus verse is *diligence*, which means “strenuous effort, ardor, or zeal.” In the Gospel, if we do not remain diligent and consistent in our walk with the Lord, we may grow weary and slip backwards in our relationship with Him.

A lack of diligence could cause us to be unprepared for what lies ahead—and we never know what lies around the next bend in the road of our lives. Who knows but what we will face a subtle temptation that requires extra watchfulness to avoid? Perhaps we will face a physical trial that will test our faith. Maybe next year will bring a financial stress that will require real determination to maintain our peace and rest in the Lord. The best way to be prepared for these potential situations is to carefully maintain a close connection with God.

Our text encourages us to imitate the example of those who have remained faithful unto the end and have inherited the promises of God. Let’s diligently do so!

BACKGROUND

The opening of chapter 6 is an exhortation to maturity. The writer of Hebrews was not content for his

readers to remain in a spiritually immature state, so he admonishes them to “grow up.” After he warned about the danger of falling away, he told those to whom his letter was addressed that “better things” would accompany their salvation. He told them that God noticed their labor of love and how they were ministering to others. He encouraged them to continue to show the same diligence that they had been evidencing to that point, and to follow the example of those who, through faith and patience, had received the promises of God. He cautioned them not to grow lazy in their service to God.

In verse 11 of this chapter, the writer alludes to a “full assurance of hope.” Hope is a compound emotion made up of an earnest desire for an object and a corresponding expectation of obtaining it. The hope of Heaven is made up of a longing to reach that eternal dwelling place, along with the expectation that it will someday be ours.

The writer reminded his readers that Abraham had to wait patiently for a long time before he obtained the promise. However, God had made an oath that could not be broken, and in His time He kept His promise. Like the covenant made with Abraham, God has made a New Covenant with those who believe in Jesus Christ. This hope gives a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul. The New Covenant through Jesus assures believers that those who keep their trust in Him will also receive the promise.

The writer closes the chapter with an assurance about the validity of God’s promises. His purpose was to show that since God could not swear by one greater than Himself (for no such one existed), He made His promise as certain as an oath taken by people when they solemnly appealed to Him. God appealed to His own existence and veracity, which was the most solemn form of an oath, and thus put the readers’ minds at rest regarding their hope of Heaven.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 3. Parenthesis III: admonition to maturity
 - c. The persuasion of salvation (6:9-20)
 - (1) The certainty (6:9-10)
 - (2) The desire (6:11-12)
 - (3) The illustration (6:13-16)
 - (4) The application (6:17-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the writer's exhortation to the Hebrews in verse 12?

2. In verse 19, the writer says that we have this hope as “an anchor of the soul.” What characteristics come to mind relative to the word “anchor”?

[illegible]

3. Why is it important for us to consider the promise God gave to Abraham when we are looking for God's promises to be fulfilled in our own lives?

CONCLUSION

God wants the very best for us. He is mindful of our labors, and He wants us to remain diligent in our walk with Him. As we follow the example of those who have gone before us and successfully completed their spiritual journey, we will inherit the promises of God just as they did.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.” (Hebrews 7:19)

Are you a person who is easily satisfied? That attitude is fine when the subject is of no great importance. However, there are times when we should settle for no less than the best. For example, what attitude do we have when selecting a caregiver for our children? When we need someone else to stand in for our “mommy” roles, we should want the best we can get. We should not settle for mediocre.

My concern regarding this transfers over to other people’s children too. I used to be director of a large child-care center, where we cared for children as young as six weeks old. I was particular about choosing staff. Why? These weren’t just cans of food being put away, or shirts being hung on hangers. My staff was taking care of the most important valuable asset a family possesses—their child. My motto about care of children could be summed up with this phrase: “Don’t settle for good if better is available!”

One of the key words in the Book of Hebrews is “better.” Under the old Law, sacrifices were made for sins. However, the sacrificial system in itself did not enable people to stop sinning; it simply provided a method for them to obtain judicial acceptance. Under the Law, people came back year after year, making atonement for their sins.

The old Law was God’s plan for atonement until the time of Christ, but it was limited—it was designed for a particular time, place, and people. The Law was designed to point out sin. It was the shadow that pointed to the reality. It looked ahead symbolically to a better dispensation—the dispensation of grace. The old rituals of worship were to be replaced with something better. The “better hope” was the coming of Christ, the One who would perfectly merge the separate offices of prophet, priest, and king of the old Law.

Today, Jesus is not only our Perfect Substitute, but also our faithful High Priest. How blessed we are to live in this better dispensation—a time when we have full access to our Heavenly Father, through Him!

BACKGROUND

Melchizedek is a man of mysterious character. His name means “king of righteousness,” and the first mention of him is in Genesis 14. At the time

Abraham came back from the slaughter of the kings, Melchizedek went out to meet Abraham and blessed him. The Genesis passage states that Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God, and that Abraham paid tithes to him. All other Biblical passages mentioning Melchizedek are references to this Scripture. While he appears in Genesis and silently disappears, he occupies a great place in Scripture because he became a type of Christ’s eternal Priesthood that took the place of the Aaronic priesthood of old.

Hebrews 7:3 indicates that Melchizedek was “without father or mother.” This may mean that his genealogy was not recorded—a fact in contrast to what was required of the Levitical priesthood. Their genealogy was kept very strictly, because their succession to the priesthood depended upon their ancestry.

A contrast is drawn in this chapter between drawing nigh unto God under the old dispensation and drawing nigh in the new dispensation. Under the old Law, the people merely stood by on the outside of the Tabernacle while the high priest went into the Holiest of Holies to minister before the Mercy Seat. Under the new dispensation, men can approach God directly.

Just as the office of priest was filled by one generation following another, so the sacrifices themselves were also repeated. The high priest sacrificed for his own sins and the sins of the people once a year. There were also the daily morning and evening sacrifices by the priests. The animal sacrifices had to be repeated, and they brought only temporary forgiveness. This was kept up continually while the Tabernacle and the Temple stood. In contrast, Christ’s sacrifice was offered once, and it is an availing sacrifice for all times.

The word *uttermost* in verse 25 is one of the most emphatic words found in the Greek language. It means not only a point of time—forever; but it also means a point of perfection—a perfect salvation.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 4. Superior because of a better order (7:1-28)
 - a. Christ’s priesthood is royal (7:1-3)
 - b. Christ’s priesthood is superior to Aaron (7:4-10)
 - c. Christ’s priesthood is effectual (7:11-19)
 - d. Christ’s priesthood is unchangeable (7:20-22)

- e. Christ's priesthood is forever (7:23-25)
- f. Christ's priesthood is unique (7:26-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What two offices did Melchizedek fill?

2. Contrast three features of the Old Covenant priesthood with features of the New Covenant priesthood.

3. How can we “draw nigh” to God (verse 19) in our prayer life?

CONCLUSION

God established Christ as our Perfect Sacrifice, our High Priest, and our King—allowing us true atonement for sins and bridging the separation that was created in the Garden of Eden. His death and resurrection brings us eternal life if we ask for this great gift.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” (Hebrews 8:10)

“Have you finished your homework?” “Don’t forget to pick up your clothes.” “Please put away your backpack.” “Did you remember to brush your teeth?” These are all familiar reminders around homes with children. Training in all the various areas of life is a long-term project, and one that never feels perfectly accomplished. How much easier life would be if children just *wanted* to do everything right without being prodded! What if the guidelines for every facet of life were written on their brains so each child knew exactly what was expected of him or her, and cheerfully obeyed?

God faced similar issues with the Children of Israel, who sometimes carefully followed God’s laws, and at other times drew back. It seemed as if they quickly forgot God’s expectations of them and took other paths. The tables of stone that God handed down to Moses were not sufficient to keep them upright: they needed His words inscribed on their hearts.

Today, that is possible! The new, superior covenant established through Jesus’ supreme sacrifice is not merely a little better than the old practices of the Law: it is perfect! His Blood brings about a radical change in the heart of the repentant sinner. God forgives our sins when we come to Him in sincere repentance in the Name of Jesus, and His Blood covers the penalty. There is no payment necessary from us other than a yielded heart and life, and true belief in Him. We are forgiven and changed! Old things pass away, and all things become new. Our desires change, our actions are different, and we want to learn more and more about this One who redeemed us. He writes His laws in our hearts, and our desire is to live to serve Him.

BACKGROUND

The Hebrew word *covenant* comes from a root word that means “to bind.” Among the ancient Israelites, a covenant was a relationship between two parties wherein each bound himself to perform a certain service for the other. When two men made such a covenant, they invoked divine retribution if either

one tried to avoid fulfilling the covenant obligations. That was how binding such covenants were considered to be.

The Old Testament speaks extensively in terms of covenants. A covenant could be between two equal parties or between unequals. It could be a bilateral agreement (in which two parties made the proposal and agreed on the terms), a pact between friends, a marriage commitment, a political treaty, or a business contract.

God’s covenant with Israel was unilateral between unequal parties, resembling a treaty between a king and his subjects. It was an act of unearned grace for the benefit and blessing of the people. God was motivated by what the Hebrews called *hesed* (loving-kindness, steadfast love, mercy, loyalty, or covenant love).

The Old Covenant was limited, and was replaced by the New Covenant. If there had been no limitations with the Law and the sacrifices, Jesus’ death would not have been necessary. However, under the Law, frequent sacrifices were required to atone for one’s sins. These sacrifices were a reminder that none of the sacrifices in themselves produced salvation. The symbolic act of sacrificing had to be combined with consecration and faith in God in order for a person to be made righteous.

God’s New Covenant, explained in Hebrews 8, was meant to supersede the old. It is better than the Old Covenant in the following ways:

- It provides a perfect sacrifice—the guiltless Christ.
- It brings freedom from burdensome rites and ceremonies.
- It is attended by larger influences of the Spirit.
- It is extended to all mankind.
- It will never be abolished.
- It establishes Christ as our merciful High Priest and Mediator.
- It replaces external rituals and rules with the internal law written on the heart.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 5. Superior because of a better covenant (8:1-13)
 - a. The place of His ministry (8:1-6)
 - b. The promise of a new covenant (8:7-13)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. According to the New Covenant, how do we know the laws of God?

2. What is meant by the term “mediator”?

3. The high priest’s job was to offer sacrifices for the people. Since Jesus is the High Priest for the New Covenant, how does He accomplish this?

4. In what areas of life have you experienced Jesus’ intercession on your behalf?

CONCLUSION

We have entered into a New Covenant. As members of the Blood-washed band, sin no longer has dominion over us. Let us embrace this New Covenant with praise to the One who made it possible!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” (Hebrews 9:8)

“What is a skyscraper?” “What makes a clock work?” “Why do the leaves turn red?” “Why don’t fish live out of water?” “Why is grass green?” “Why do only some balloons go up into the air?” Has a young child ever asked you such questions? Did you respond with a full scientific explanation, or did you give just the amount of information that you knew that child could grasp? Maybe you got out a book and showed a visual illustration to help him understand.

In much the same way, God did not reveal the fullness of His wonderful plan of salvation to mankind from the beginning of time. When He gave the Law to Moses and established the Tabernacle worship system, He was giving a picture. The sacrifices helped make man aware of his need for a Savior. Some recognized this need and connected with God through the prescribed sacrifices. Others became so entrenched in the rituals themselves that they focused only on the formalities of their worship. Yet the message of God’s love toward His creation never changed. He continued to desire a relationship with man.

Jesus fulfilled what the picture of the Tabernacle worship represented. When Jesus died on the Cross, the veil separating the Most Holy Place where God’s presence dwelt was miraculously torn in two. This signified that man no longer needed a priest to be the representative between him and God since free access to God through Jesus was now available. The place of worship was no longer the Tabernacle, but it was the hearts of men who by faith obtained forgiveness of sins and a change of heart.

Although we live in the time when the “picture” is no longer necessary, on occasion we may feel inclined to ask God as many questions as a young child may ask us. Perhaps we are seriously ill, unemployed, have rebellious children, or are grieving the loss of a loved one. Many situations can come our way that could cause us to question. We need to remember that God has a plan for every believer’s life. Just as He unfolded His great plan of salvation, He will unfold the plan for our lives, but we must have patience as He does it. We need to rely upon His wisdom and timing, and realize that as a loving Heavenly Father, He knows exactly how and when to take care of our needs.

BACKGROUND

The arrangement of Tabernacle service is representative of how God taught Israel His great truths. Sometimes they were taught by direct revelation, sometimes by the written Word, and sometimes symbolically. The Tabernacle, with its different areas, utensils, and ceremonies, was a means of keeping truths before the minds of the people. The priest was the people’s link with God. The High Priest entered the Most Holy Place one time a year on the Day of Atonement (also known as Yom Kippur). After first making a sacrifice for himself, he made atonement for the sins of the people by burning incense and sprinkling the blood of a sacrificed animal on the Mercy Seat.

As long as the first Tabernacle stood and the Levitical system was in place, the way into the “holiest of all” was not yet made manifest. The sacrifices and offerings had no virtue in themselves; they “could not make him that did the service perfect” (verse 9) because they were given to Israel as symbols and types. They were fulfilled at Calvary when Christ suffered for man’s sins, the just for the unjust, as the Perfect Sacrifice. However, to many of the religious leaders of this time, the offerings and sacrifices had lost their significance as types, and had become all-important in themselves.

The Greek word for the *time of reformation* (verse 10) is *kahee-ros*, which means “set or proper time, due time, convenient season.” It refers to the Christian age, when the Lord made a new covenant with His people. This covenant was inaugurated by Jesus’ crucifixion. When the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was torn in two, it was a physical evidence that the way for direct access to God had been opened and the time of reformation had come.

Divinely designed, the Commandments, the rituals of the sacrificial system, and the prophets all described God’s promises to man of a better way to salvation and forgiveness of sin. When Christ came, He fulfilled the Law and the prophets, and conquered sin. Though anticipated by many, His message was difficult for the Jews to accept. The writer of Hebrews pointed back to their Old Testament heritage and revealed the meaning of God’s divine design which symbolized the new dispensation.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron

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NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Hebrews 9:12)

Some time ago, my family and I went sightseeing at Miniature World in Victoria, BC, Canada. I decided that the promoters of this tourist attraction gave it an appropriate slogan: “The greatest little show on earth.” We found ourselves captivated by the world’s smallest operational sawmill, the world’s largest doll-houses, an extensive model of the Canadian railway system, and much more.

The objects in the museum look very true to life, except that they are tiny, scaled-down versions of the originals. The appeal of miniatures is in their exquisite detail mimicking the real objects that they represent. However, the tiny models do not function like the originals do. They only provide reference to the scale, proportion, and functions of the reality.

In the same way, when God established the Tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the priesthood for the Children of Israel, He did not intend for these to be the eternal solution for sin. They were only symbols of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. Though the blood of goats and bulls satisfied the legal requirement, the elaborate ceremonies of worship and sacrifice and the objects used to perform them were mere “miniatures” of the redemptive work of Christ.

By contrast, Jesus became the perfect Sacrifice and shed His own Blood for our salvation. His redemptive Blood is applied to the heart of the sinner, giving both legal and moral victory. Because His Blood purges the conscience, it provides a solution for sin by attacking sin at the root—the heart. Jesus’ sacrificial offering was so complete, so immaculate, and so acceptable to God that He had to offer Himself only once for all generations of mankind. His sacrifice was the ultimate fulfillment of all that the Old Testament sacrifices represented.

What a privilege is ours to obtain eternal redemption through Christ!

BACKGROUND

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ reached back into the Old Testament period as well as forward to the New Testament dispensation. Christ’s death was a universal atonement that was all comprehensive and all availing. It included the Jews and the Gentiles, and availed

for those who lived prior to the time of Christ and those who lived during and after His lifetime on earth. Those who lived in the period of the Law had to mix obedience to the Law with faith that looked ahead to the fulfillment through Jesus Christ, in order for them to be saved and made holy. Obedience alone would not make them holy, any more than obedience to Christ’s commands today will avail without faith. Jesus provided the atonement for the whole world, and extended it over all ages and for all times.

In Hebrews 9:15, the writer refers to the “new testament.” The word *testament* is translated in other places as *covenant*.

The Old Covenant, which is recorded in Exodus 24:3-8, was provided as a means of atoning for sin. In the Old Covenant, four distinct entities were involved: the Tabernacle, where the presence of God dwelt; the sinner, who had a mortal need to approach God; the blood of an unblemished animal, sacrificed to grant the sinner pardon; and the high priest, who performed the sacrifice. This provision for sin was established so that man would not die in sin and be lost eternally. God made it as a symbol of the reality to come in the offering of Jesus.

The New Covenant is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In this covenant, too, four entities are involved. In the New Covenant, the Tabernacle’s location is Heaven, where God dwells—a perfect habitation because it is not made with human hands. As under the Old Covenant, the sinner is in a sinful state and in desperate need of an approach to God. In place of the blood of an animal, Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice, shed His own Blood to provide pardon for the sinner. Jesus also permanently fills the role of our High Priest, ever making intercession for us.

The writer of Hebrews outlined two crucial facts to the Hebrews. First, Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice of God, had been offered. Second, Jesus, the sinless High Priest, had entered the Heavenly Tabernacle and had given everyone the opportunity of personal access to God. His point was clearly indicated: it made no sense to continue under the shadow when the reality had become available!

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 7. Superior because of a better sacrifice
 - a. The fact of Christ’s superior sacrifice (9:11-12)

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1. What were the limitations of sacrifices made under the Old Covenant?

With Jesus as our Perfect Sacrifice, we have a perfect solution to sin, for His Blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Because He dwells in the Heavenly Sanctuary of God, we have unlimited access to God through Him. What an incalculable privilege is ours!

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” (Hebrews 10:11-12)

Have you ever fixed something temporarily, only to have to address the same situation over and over again because the actual problem wasn't ever solved? When we moved into our house, the former residents told us that the sewer line to the house had tree roots in it. When we had a problem with that line backing up, we called the plumber to come and clean it out. After dealing with this problem several times, we finally decided to replace the sewer line completely. By correcting the real problem, we eliminated the need to regularly call the plumber for a temporary fix.

How many times in your life have you weeded flowerbeds or a vegetable garden? If that was one of your chores when you were young, no doubt you were taught the importance of digging out the roots of the weeds. If you just broke a weed off at ground level, it was soon back and had to be dealt with again.

In Old Testament times, the priests had to make offerings over and over. Some of these offerings were for themselves; others were for the people. None of the offerings were a complete solution to the problem because they only pointed ahead to Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice.

We, on the other hand, look back to His perfect sacrifice. Jesus' death for our sins was complete and effective. When we ask, He comes into our lives and puts His Word in our hearts and minds. His provision corrects the sin problem in our lives when we allow Him complete access. He does not just deal with the problem temporarily, but He changes our hearts. Our sins are forgiven and God remembers them no more (verse 17).

The price of our sin has been paid in full, and no more animal sacrifices are necessary. Once we have God's salvation in our souls, we will still want daily time with Him for praise and worship.

Have you thanked God today for the ultimate sacrifice He made for you?

BACKGROUND

In our text, the writer reminds his audience that the Law was only intended to be a “shadow,” prefiguring things to come. It was never intended to be the

permanent solution to sin. In verse 2, he states that if the sacrifices had purged sins, there would have been no need for further sacrifices. But that was not what the offerer found. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). The sacrifices only provided a temporary judicial remedy. Further sacrifices were necessary.

Jesus came in obedience to God's will to become the Perfect Sacrifice for sins. His death on the Cross permanently did away with the need for further blood sacrifices. In verses 5-9, the writer quotes from Psalm 40:6-8, making it clear that Jesus was the promised fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices. Jesus came to do God's will by removing the need for the ceremonial sacrifices.

The writer pointed to the difference between the Old Testament priest who had to continually offer the same sacrifices which could never take away sins, and Jesus, who had offered Himself once for the remission of sins, and showed the completeness of His work by sitting down at the right hand of His Father. What a multitude of sacrifices could not accomplish, Jesus accomplished with one sacrifice.

Verses 12 and 13 refer to Psalm 110:1. Jesus is in Heaven sitting on the right hand of God the Father, and when Jesus returns, He will overcome His enemies and establish His Kingdom on earth.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work
 - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron
 - 7. Superior because of a better sacrifice
 - c. The efficacy of Christ's superior sacrifice (10:1-18)
 - (1) The insufficiency of Old Testament sacrifices (10:1-4)
 - (2) The sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice (10:5-10)
 - (3) The finality of Christ's sacrifice (10:11-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. The Law was a “shadow of good things to come.” What would some of those good things be?

2. Why didn't the Old Testament sacrifices provide a permanent solution for sin?

3. List the phrases in verses 12-14 that show Christ's sacrifice was adequate and complete.

[illegible]

4. In what ways does it help us to know that God chooses not to remember our sins?

CONCLUSION

Some people may try to deal with the sin problem in their lives by attempting to do what is right in their own strength. However, the true solution to the problem is in the application to our hearts of the Blood that Jesus shed on Calvary. When we ask Him to put His laws into our hearts and minds, we have the power to live a life free from the bondage of sin.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.” (Hebrews 10:35)

In 1876, a young Scottish woman named Mary Slessor applied to be a missionary after being inspired by the life of David Livingston. After three months of training, she set sail for Africa, arriving in Calabar, Nigeria, just over a month later.

Historians indicate that this was by no means a safe field for a young single woman at that time. While the slave trade had recently been abolished in the country, witchcraft and spiritism still existed. Disease was rife, and many who served on the mission fields there never returned to their homelands.

Despite these daunting facts, Mary bravely threw herself into the work she felt called to do, laboring without a team or a family. Unlike most missionaries, she lived among the native people, despite constant danger and several bouts of severe illness. Over time, she became fluent in the local language, Efik, and developed an extensive knowledge of their culture.

One custom that especially broke her heart was the killing of twins. The common belief at the time was that twins were the result of a curse caused by an evil spirit, so the babies were abandoned in the bush and the mother shunned from society. Mary determined to fight against this practice. One day, overwhelmed and depressed at the immensity of the task, she knelt and prayed, “Lord, the task is impossible for me but not for Thee. Lead the way and I will follow.” Rising from prayer, with her confidence in God’s power renewed, she said, “Why should I fear? I am on a Royal Mission. I am in the service of the King of kings!”¹

God rewarded that confidence. Mary’s determination began to win her the respect and favor of tribal leaders. Over the next several decades, God enabled Mary to rescue many twins and minister to their mothers. She even adopted several babies who had been left to die and raised them in her own home. She urged the leaders to treat women and children better and to put an end to all the killing. By her deep love for the people, she showed them God’s love, and over time many of these practices stopped. The government even gave her the role of magistrate, the first woman ever to hold such a position, so she could continue to help the people solve their problems without killing one another.

Because of her faith in the all-powerful God and her love for the people of Nigeria, God was able to use Mary to transform whole communities with the Gospel. Today, many hospitals, schools, orphanages, and churches exist because of the impact Mary Slessor left in West Africa.

While most of us will not be called to serve on foreign mission fields or accomplish physically dangerous ventures for God, we will face spiritual challenges. How important it is to keep a steadfast confidence in God no matter where we serve Him or what we are called to do! Like Mary Slessor, when the task seems immense, we should turn to God in prayer. He is ever faithful, and He will never fail us.

How is your confidence toward God today? When difficulties arise, are you looking at the circumstances and wondering how God could allow this to happen? Or are you trusting Him implicitly regardless of the challenges? Don’t cast away your confidence when trials come. Follow the example of Mary Slessor and countless others heroes of the faith, and rely upon the One who never fails.

BACKGROUND

Verses 19 through 22 of chapter 10 are the climax of the doctrinal portion of the Book of Hebrews. Here, the writer pointed out that the sacrifices of the Law were insufficient, that Christ’s sacrifice abolished that old sacrificial system, and that believers have been granted access to God through the priesthood of Christ.

The Book of Hebrews is a study in contrasts, and this passage again illustrates that. The Old Covenant was limited, but the New is everlasting; the Old was fearful, the New brings forth boldness in hearts; the Old required many sacrifices to be made continually; in the New Covenant, Christ was offered once for sins forever.

In verses 23 through 29, the writer gave a strong warning about the importance of placing the proper value on the sacrifice Jesus made. If a person who has once been a Christian counts “the blood of the covenant . . . an unholy thing,” what hope does that person have of salvation? For that man, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, because he has rejected his very means of approach to God by denying the power of the Atonement. The writer was dealing with the sin of turning from the faith and forsaking the whole plan of redemption that God has laid out for mankind. This passage in the epistle to the Hebrews served as a reminder to its audience—the Hebrew converts to

Christianity—to keep their confidence in Christ’s atonement.

The Hebrew Christians were exhorted to assemble together and to encourage one another in love and good works. They had evidently gone through much persecution, and they needed to hold on with patience for God’s promises.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. The application: the life we should live because of His life and work
 - A. Exhortation to devotion (10:19-39)
 - 1. The exhortation (10:19-25)
 - 2. The warning (10:26-31)
 - 3. The assurance (10:32-39)
 - a. The past manifestation of faith (10:32-34)
 - b. The present challenge to patience (10:35-39)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Looking again at verses 19-25, list the actions which the readers were exhorted to take.

2. After reading verses 26-31, how would you describe the confidence level of a person who has “sinned willfully” and dishonored Christ?

3. How does your obedience to Christ affect your level of confidence toward God? If there is an area of your life in which you should be “doing the will of God” but are not, what can you do today to obey the Lord in that area?

CONCLUSION

Confidence, boldness, and the absence of fear are all mentioned in this passage. In each case, the blessing—the good part, the benefit—is directly linked to our obedience to Christ. Even our position as “brethren” is contingent upon our remaining faithful.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

My children really enjoy their birthdays. Not only do they enjoy their actual birthdays, but also the days preceding the event. Why? The answer can be simply stated: ANTICIPATION! There are all kinds of details to be planned, along with everything from dreaming to blatant hints about what they would like for a gift. My daughter so anticipates the event that she usually starts inviting people in June, even though her birthday isn't until the following May!

One of the biggest planning aspects at our house is allowing the birthday child to pick the shape of his or her birthday cake. As chief cake-baker, I then dutifully do my best to create some semblance of the request. A castle was my most successful venture; a rocket ship, the least!

The children never doubt that we will celebrate their birthdays. Why? Because we always have! What a picture of our faith in God! Faith in God is not a blind hope or wish, but a firm belief based on trust in an unfailing God. Because God has never failed us, we can trust that He will continue to meet our every need.

In today's world, we anticipate and therefore participate in many daily events based on faith. We use checking accounts, purchase travel tickets, follow maps, and work for promised wages—all because there is an expected and anticipated outcome. History, unfortunately, has proven that some of these earthly things can fail. How much more should we trust our heavenly Father who has never failed!

Someone once said, “True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences.” As we read through this chapter, we see that these characters had just that—true Bible faith, which was evidenced by their obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences. Truly, that is a goal to strive for! No wonder faith is pleasing to God.

Our focus verse says that faith is a substance. How can something unseen be a substance and evidence? How did the people listed have the faith to do what they did? Faith develops through use. A small step of faith in God results in greater assurance when we face the next situation. Practicing obedience and trust, one circumstance at a time, produces this substance in our lives.

BACKGROUND

Hebrews 11 begins with a formal definition of *faith*: “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” A dictionary gives several meanings of the word *faith* including:

- Allegiance to a person
- Fidelity to one's promises
- Belief and trust in and loyalty to God
- Believing with strong conviction
- Complete confidence and firm belief in something for which there is no proof

However, a closer look reveals a great difference between the dictionary definition and that found in Hebrews.

The dictionary definition is from the intellectual standpoint, while the definition found in Hebrews is from the spiritual standpoint, and there is a great difference between intellectual faith and Biblical faith. The phrase “things hoped for,” indicates things based on promises; “things not seen,” points to things beyond the realm of the natural. The word *substance* means “a foundation or basis,” and that foundation is all that we receive from God.

Even more compelling is the word *evidence*, which in this verse is a term Greek mathematicians used in demonstrating their problems; it means a demonstration that is convincing beyond any question. Faith does more than just enable us to believe; it makes us to know.

Once the author had established what faith is, he proceeded to provide a catalog of men and women in the Old Testament age who had victory through faith. These individuals, not having the fullness of the Gospel as we experience it today, attained God's best. They lived in a time of outward religious ceremony, yet they won their victories in exactly the same way that we do in this dispensation of grace—through faith. Everyone in Israel could have done the same. How much more can we experience victory by faith today!

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. The application: the life we should live because of His life and work

- B. Exhortation to endurance in faith
 - 1. The essence of faith (11:1-3)
 - 2. The efficacy of faith
 - a. In the pre-patriarchal period (11:4-7)
 - b. In the patriarchal period (11:8-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What is the spiritual definition of “faith”? Give an example of how one could demonstrate such faith.

[illegible]

2. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews listed these individuals we call the “heroes of faith”?

[illegible]

3. How can you protect and strengthen your faith?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Biblical faith is waning in our society today. There is a prevalent thought that the Bible is simply the ideas of some men concerning God and, therefore, no better than any other religion. Let us guard the faith that God has given us against such trends.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“By faith Moses, when he was come of years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” (Hebrews 11:24-25)

My brother-in-law tells of his father’s conversion in Romania when it was under Communist rule. Petru was the superintendent over several schools. In order to be in a leadership position in education, he had to become part of the Communist Party. His mother was saved and diligently prayed for her son. She was on her deathbed, and Petru prayed that if God would heal her, he would serve Him. When God touched her, Petru kept his word and yielded his life to God.

Every several months, an administrator from the government would meet with each principal to see how things were going. As ritual had it in the past, Petru was expected to pull out a bottle of wine and serve it to his guest before they got down to business. This time, however, Petru did not offer the wine.

The administrator, who had already begun to suspect the change in Petru, asked him, “You didn’t become one of those Christians, did you?”

Petru answered, “Yes.”

The administrator gave him a chance to denounce his faith and to accept the values of the Communist Party or he would lose his job. Petru, however, had faith in a higher Authority and chose to “suffer affliction with the people of God.” Because of his stand, he was soon replaced by another superintendent and dismissed from the education field. He ended up working for a railroad system, going from a position of authority to a menial labor job.

There may be times when we must choose to accept affliction, persecution, and reproach for doing the right thing. Like Moses, who forsook all the riches of Egypt to become poor and exiled, Petru sacrificed his earthly status because he saw what really mattered. God supplied his basic needs, but the world would say he lost everything. Petru however saw the invisible reward and believed in a greater call. He has “obtained a good report through faith” and expects one day to receive his “recompence of the reward.”

BACKGROUND

Hebrews 11 contains only a partial record of those who triumphed through faith. Moses had faithful parents, who taught him in faith during his first years. In

time, Moses chose to suffer with God’s people; his faith made him see the invisible and imperishable. With his human eyes, he could see reproach and poverty as a result, but through faith he saw beyond to the “recompence of the reward.”

The other individuals listed as great models of faith also saw past the visible elements of this earthly life. Rahab believed the God of Israel and chose to serve Him even at the sacrifice of her own city. Although she was a heathen harlot, she was saved through faith, and later became an ancestor of Christ.

Gideon was a simple farmer, initially frightened at the Lord’s call, but through faith he obtained one of the most memorable victories in the Bible. Barak obeyed the direction of the prophetess Deborah, and led Israel to victory. Samson was willing to give his life to defeat the enemy. Samuel and David both brought Israel closer to God and both withstood persecution for it.

There are many more stories of faith where miraculous victories were won. There were also those followers of God who were not delivered on earth. Even though they suffered torture and death, their accounts are as victorious as those of deliverance because they received a good report through faith. The writer of Hebrews declares the world was not worthy of these people.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. The application: the life we should live because of His life and work
 - B. Exhortation to endurance in faith
 - 2. The efficacy of faith
 - c. In the exodus and conquest (11:23-31)
 - d. In numerous trials (11:32-38)
 - e. The victory of faith (11:39-40)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What are some of the results of faith listed in verses 33-37?

[illegible][illegible]

There is an old hymn that says, “Faith is the victory.” If we see the invisible things of God through eyes of faith, we will have victory whether we experience affliction or deliverance. Let us pray that God will open our eyes and increase our faith!

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

A few years ago, I found myself packing around several extra pounds that I had accumulated over the years. I began to suffer some of the side effects of being overweight, like frequent heartburn, high blood pressure, and a lack of energy, so I decided it was time to do something about it.

I tried several fad diets, only to find out they didn’t work very well over the long term. I finally came to the conclusion that I needed to do some research to come up with an eating plan I could live with that would help me accomplish my goal. With God’s help, a lot of self-discipline, patience, and daily exercise, I now enjoy the benefits of a healthy weight. However, I still have to be on guard continually so the pounds stay off. It is much easier to take off one or two pounds instead of waiting for ten or fifteen pounds to accumulate before doing something about it. Since accomplishing my goal required diligence and sacrifice on my part, some may ask, “Was it worth the effort?” The answer is a resounding, “Yes!”

We can use the same strategy in our spiritual lives. When we recognize a problem area, we need to determine that the problem must be solved. Then we need to take it to the Lord in prayer, and look in His Word for the answer. As we discipline ourselves to seek God’s will and apply His Word to our lives, we will accomplish our spiritual goals and we will enjoy the benefits of a closer walk with God. It is much better to deal with the “weights” in our lives when they are small, before they become so big they overwhelm us and cause us to fall.

A minister of the Gospel, Charles Rodman, said this about the challenge expressed in our focus verse, “Are we going to go through, whatever betides? That is the question. Are we going to continue upon the racecourse? Are we going to continue with that perseverance and endurance and intrepid spirit that will stick to the thing in spite of men and devils? One may fall; he may make mistakes; he may go under through some of his weaknesses, but victory is for the man who will stick to his purpose that he is going to see the end of the race. God will eventually lead that man to where men or devils, or powers in earth, or power

in hell, will never overthrow him. He will have the things that will stand.”

Each one of us can run with patience to the end. Let us ask God to help us do it!

BACKGROUND

The “great cloud of witnesses” referred to all the people listed in Hebrews 11. The writer reminded the Hebrew Christians that they were not the only people who faced problems and struggles in their lives. Others had gone before them who had run the race with patience and won. Participants in the race could look to those who had triumphed and could find encouragement in thinking of their victories, of the way they ran, of the goal they won, and how they came through every step of the way by faith.

The readers were exhorted to lay aside every weight that would hinder them in their walk with the Lord. The words “so easily beset us” mean, “stationed round about us.” Though Christians are delivered from the power of sin, they are not delivered from the sin in the world around them nor from the temptation of it. They do not reach that stage in this world. Being a Christian requires one to cultivate his relationship with God with the help of the Holy Spirit, and to keep his eyes on Jesus, not on circumstances.

Being chastened by God is never a pleasant experience, but it shows His love for His followers. Just as a father, out of love, disciplines his children to teach them what is right, God chastens and coaches His children to instruct them. As they are disciplined and learn, their faith will be strengthened, and they will be an encouragement to others.

The readers understood the ritual of cleansing themselves and preparing for sacrifice in the Temple. No one could enter into the presence of the Lord without going through the ceremonial cleansing process to “sanctify” themselves. The writer instructed them that they still needed to be holy and at peace with their fellow man in order to enter into God’s presence. The experience of sanctification brings holiness into the life of a justified person, cleansing the heart instead of the body.

The readers were warned to be diligent and not let any seed of bitterness spring up in their hearts. In verse 16, Esau was an example of one who did not value his inheritance. He sold his birthright in a moment of weakness, and even though he realized his mistake, it was too late to recover what he had lost.

When the Children of Israel left Egypt and came to the foot of Mount Sinai, God tried to communicate

There will be no escape for those who refuse Jesus and His teachings. There will come a day when this world will completely crumble and only God's Kingdom and those who follow Jesus will remain. Knowing this should cause people to serve God with "reverence and godly fear."

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- ## A CLOSER LOOK

- 2.** What is the difference between the experience of the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai, and our experience as Christians at Mount Zion?

- ## NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5)

A popular children’s video tells the story of a lady who had all the necessities of life and more. As she looked about her and saw the many beautiful things others had gathered around them, she became very blue. Soon, she had the opportunity to accumulate even more “stuff” and she went on a buying frenzy. As fast as she could, she surrounded herself with all manner of worldly goods. Finally, she had so much, her new belongings actually tipped her house over and destroyed all of her treasures. By the end of the story she realized it was not “things” that made her happy.

It can be easy to think that material gain will bring happiness. Many people max out their credit cards just to keep up with their neighbors. However, the more they buy, the more they want. Statistics show that a high percentage of people in the United States are consumed with debt.

God’s Word tells us to be content with what we have. Contentment is a state of mind that has little to do with how much or how little we have. Rather, it is the hallmark of one who has peace and a quiet spirit that ultimately only comes from God. As we focus on the Lord and His spiritual blessings, we will find that the part of our nature that is searching for fulfillment will be satisfied.

Lack of contentment can relate to things other than commodities. We can feel dissatisfied with our job, our family, our school, or our station in life. It may be fine to make changes that will make our circumstances more to our liking, but when we are following God, we can be content in each place we find ourselves.

When we have Jesus, we really need nothing else, for He has promised to supply all our needs, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. We can be happy and content because He has promised to never leave us or forsake us.

BACKGROUND

In this final chapter of the Book of Hebrews, the writer exhorted the saints to extend love to one another, as they were brothers and sisters in the Gospel. He encouraged them to show hospitality and to remember those who were imprisoned because of the Gospel.

Stressing the importance of fidelity in marriage, he admonished them to be content in any circumstance. He reminded the saints that God would never leave them or forsake them, and they did not need to fear the cruelty of man. More than once in this chapter, the Hebrew Christians were encouraged to honor and obey those in authority in the Gospel, and were warned to beware of false doctrines.

The writer stated that Jesus will never change and that Jesus’ death on the Cross provided sanctification for His people. He brought out that believers were pilgrims on the earth and that Heaven would be their real Home.

The people were encouraged to offer the sacrifice of praise to God and to remember the poor and needy with good works. The Book of Hebrews draws to a close with a plea for prayer and an invocation for the people to be made perfect through Jesus Christ.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. The application: the life we should live because of His life and work
 - C. Exhortation to walk honorably (13:1-19)
 - 1. In love of the brethren (13:1-3)
 - 2. In purity (13:4)
 - 3. In contentment (13:5-6)
 - 4. In imitation (13:7-8)
 - 5. In right doctrine (13:9-14)
 - 6. In praise and thanksgiving (13:15)
 - 7. In good works (13:16)
 - 8. In obedience to authority (13:17)
 - 9. In prayer (13:18-19)
- IV. Conclusion (13:20-25)
 - A. Closing prayer (13:20-21)
 - B. Closing exhortation (13:22)
 - C. Closing greetings (13:23-24)
 - D. Closing benediction (13:25)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. How might one entertain angels unawares?

[illegible]

There are many priceless jewels of wisdom in the last chapter of Hebrews. If we remember to love, serve, praise, and obey, the treasure shall be ours.

[illegible]



Overview for Ephesians

Purpose: This epistle was written to explain the nature and purpose of the Church. Paul used three analogies to portray the different attributes of the Church, namely: the body (of which Christ is the head); the building (of which He is the Chief Cornerstone); and the bride (of whom Christ is the Bridegroom). It displays God's eternal plan for all Jews and Gentiles alike.

Author: The Apostle Paul

To Whom Written: To the believers in Ephesus, and passed on to all Christians everywhere.

Date Written: Approximately A.D. 60, about the same time as Colossians.

Setting: This letter, along with three other letters, was written while Paul was in a Roman prison awaiting trial. Ephesus was a major city in Asia, situated on the Cayster River about three miles from the Aegean Sea. At the end of Paul's second missionary journey, he visited Ephesus briefly. He left Priscilla and Aquila there in his absence, promising to return (Acts 18: 19-21). On his third missionary trip, Paul spent about three years in Ephesus, preaching in the city and surrounding regions.

Key People: Paul, Tychicus, and believers in the Ephesian church.

Summary: Thought by some scholars to be a circular letter, this epistle to the Ephesians speaks in very personal and practical terms to Christians everywhere

and in all ages. Many scholars believe that Colossians and Ephesians were composed together. Upon completing the letter to the Colossians, Paul was inspired to send a letter to Ephesus for all the churches in western Asia.

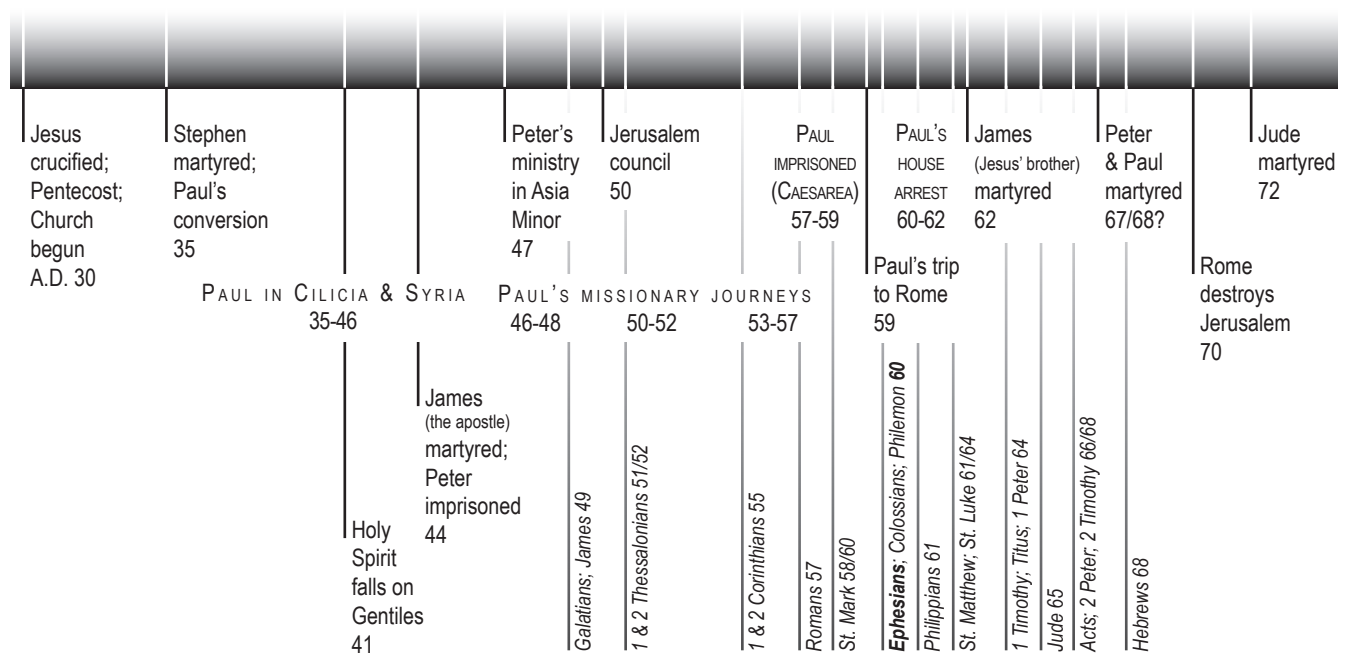
After a warm greeting, Paul discoursed in the first two chapters about the nature of the Church, expounding upon the blessings and kindness of God to all believers. In chapter 3, he discussed the need for unity with God. Mankind's connection with God had been broken and justification by faith needed to have freedom to work in order to restore that unity.

Beginning in the fourth chapter, Paul directed his attention to the implications of being in the body of Christ, the Church. Believers should have the highest moral standards, which meant rejecting sinful and pagan practices. In the family, this meant mutual submission and love. In chapter 6, Paul went on to tell the believers of the constant battle with sinful forces of darkness and of their need to possess and use every spiritual weapon at their disposal. The strong warning is to put on all the armor that God has provided for the Christian. It is interesting to note that while Paul was writing this letter, he likely saw soldiers, dressed in full armor, and standing guard. This may have been the inspiration to use military armor as the example of what God has for every Christian to wear in order to fight the fight of faith.

Paul concluded his epistle by asking for their prayers, commissioning Tychicus, and offering a benediction.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - A. The author and recipients (1:1)
 - B. The salutation (1:2)
- II. The calling of the church (1:3—3:21)
 - A. The foundation of the church (1:3-23)
 - B. The foundation of the church (2:1—3:21)
- III. The conduct of the church (4:1—6:20)
 - A. Conduct in unity (4:1-16)
 - B. Conduct in holiness (4:17—5:2)
 - C. Conduct in light (5:3-14)
 - D. Conduct in wisdom (5:15-21)
 - E. Conduct in the home (5:22—6:9)
 - F. Conduct in conflict (6:10-20)
- IV. Conclusion (6:21-24)
 - A. The sending of Tychicus (6:21-22)
 - B. The salutation (6:23)
 - C. The benediction (6:24)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

All blessings come from God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To me, one of the greatest blessings as a Christian is to be able to pray and have God answer. At times, I don’t even know how to pray about a certain situation, but God’s Spirit leads me.

Some time back, the hospital where I am currently employed needed to make budget cuts. Although the team I work with provides a service that our physicians and nurses deem useful and needed, administration decided that our team was on the front line to be reduced.

I did what I knew was best: prayed, asking for the Lord’s will in this situation. The Holy Spirit showed me that He had everything under control, and that the changes would not be what the administration had planned. I shared my answer to prayer with my colleagues. For the next nine months, they would say, “We know you have prayed about it; would you pray once more?” Each time I brought it before the Lord, the answer always came back the same.

When the new budget year arrived, you can imagine the results. Not only was our team retained in full force, but I received four raises during the following twelve months! While the raises were nice, the most marvelous blessing was the evidence that God certainly answers prayer.

In our key verse, Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus that we are blessed “with all spiritual blessings.” At times, these may be temporal benefits: some are favored with health, financial comfort, adequate food, and shelter. At other times, the benefits may be less tangible: comfort in adversity, strength for our day, or divine protection. Think about the joy of salvation, the gifts of the Spirit, power to do God’s will, the hope of spending eternity in Heaven with Christ himself. Don’t forget the blessing of answered prayers. Clearly, the list could go on and on, yet, these are only part of the spiritual blessings that God bestows upon our lives, and for which we are to thank Him.

Count your blessings! It is a wonderful way to get your day started right.

BACKGROUND

The times in which Paul wrote were difficult for new Christians; there was much to oppose them.

Ephesus itself was a city steeped in heathen traditions and idolatry. This letter was written while Paul was imprisoned; it probably was penned during his first Roman imprisonment, A.D. 60-62.

The Apostle began his epistle with thanksgiving and praise, and went on to describe, with considerable fluency, the great and precious benefits that believers enjoy through Jesus Christ. He wrote that believers are chosen to be holy and blameless. In His infinite love, God adopted us to be His children when He forgave our sins, and He gave us spiritual authority over evil.

This portion of the first chapter of Ephesians describes the foundation of the Church, and is a doxology composed of three stanzas describing the work of the Trinity. Paul writes of the office of the Father (election—verses 3-6), the office of the Son (intercession—verses 7-12), and the office of the Spirit (application—verses 13-14). Each stanza closes with a similar refrain praising His glory (see verses 6, 12, and 14).

The word *chosen* in verse 4 comes from the Greek word *eklegomai*, which means, “to pick out.” God’s plan of salvation was provided “before the foundation of the world.” This statement does not mean that God arbitrarily assigned some to Heaven and consigned all others to Hell. Rather, God offers the opportunity of salvation to all (see Romans 10:13) and man either receives or rejects His provisions in Christ. Every man not only has the opportunity to receive Christ, but is invited and urged to do so.

The meaning of the word *predestinated* in verse 5 is, “marked out beforehand.” It alludes to God’s purposes rather than a selection of souls to be saved, as all men everywhere are included in God’s invitation (see John 3:16). When God saves a soul, it is clear that He always intended to do so. He has no new plan. It is not an afterthought. It is not the work of chance. God has predestined our adoption (Ephesians 1:5), our conformity to Christ (Romans 8:29-30), and our future spiritual inheritance (Ephesians 1:11). Anything that God has done, we can be certain that He always meant to do, and this is all that is intended by the words *election* or *predestination*.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - A. The author and recipients (1:1)
 - B. The salutation (1:2)
- II. The calling of the church
 - A. The foundation of the church

1. The foundation revealed: the work of the Trinity (1:3-14)
 - a. The Father's work: election (1:3-6)
 - (1) Blessed by God (1:3)
 - (2) Chosen by God (1:4)
 - (3) Predestined to sonship (1:5)
 - (4) Accepted in the beloved (1:6)
 - b. The Son's work: mediation (1:7-12)
 - (1) Redemption from sins (1:7-8)
 - (2) Revealed His will (1:9-10)
 - (3) Provided an inheritance (1:11-12)
 - c. The Spirit's work: application (1:13-14)
 - (1) Sealed us (1:13)
 - (2) Pledge of our inheritance (1:14)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. According to verse four, why did God choose us?

2. What special blessings, enumerated in the text, are available to us as Christians?

3. Paul said that he "blesses God." How do we bless God? What are the benefits of doing this?

CONCLUSION

One theme of Ephesians is that of praising God. In his opening comments, Paul affirmed the glorious fact that believers in Christ have been showered with God's kindnesses. When we review these, how can we help but praise Him?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“[I] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” (Ephesians 1:16)

I love to meet with God’s people! I enjoy going to services at my home church, combined meetings, special meetings, and camp meetings. It is a great encouragement to know that I am not alone in serving the Lord. It is thrilling to see evidence of answered prayer when I see the object of my prayers standing to witness to the power of God!

A few weeks ago, on a Saturday morning I woke up at 4:15 (which is significant since it’s the only morning of the week that my alarm does not go off at 5 a.m.) with a couple of dear friends on my heart. I was awake enough (also significant, since I don’t wake up easily) to know that for some reason I needed to pray for them, so I did. These friends live about 1100 miles and two time zones away, but we have contact via occasional long-distance telephone calls and email messages. We may see each other face-to-face every year or two, but definitely not on a regular basis. As I prayed for them, I thanked the Lord for their faithfulness to me in times of great emotional and spiritual need. I thanked the Lord for their testimony of the saving and keeping power of Jesus. Because I knew of some of the trials they were experiencing at the moment, I started rehearsing those things before the Lord. I asked for His intervention on their behalf in each situation. Eventually the burden lifted and I was able to fall back to sleep.

It was no surprise to have the phone ring a couple of hours later and hear the voice of my friend on the other end, telling me of how the Lord had answered her prayer; it was one I had been interceding for. It wasn’t answered the way either of us thought it would be, but because we agree that God’s way is best, we took the answer as it was given. Our understanding was enlightened (verse 18) as to how the Lord had been working behind the scenes and was indeed showing His exceeding greatness (verse 19) in the whole situation.

This is not the first time that has happened to me, and I hope it won’t be the last! Often when people I haven’t seen for a long time come to mind, I breathe a prayer for them, only to learn the next time we see each other how the Lord worked out a particular problem or situation. At the same time, friends will ask me about my unsaved family members and share with me that the Lord reminded them lately to pray for them!

Just as Paul prayed for the Ephesian church, as well as many others, so we must pray for our brothers and sisters. When we earnestly pray for others, we can be assured that God hears us and will answer.

BACKGROUND

Many scholars believe that Paul intended the letter he wrote to the Ephesians to circulate among the churches in several Asian cities. There are two prayers in the Book of Ephesians. The first is found in verses 15-23 in the first chapter; the other in chapter 3 verses 14-21. Prayer is a natural activity of the regenerated heart, and Paul made specific requests in his prayer for the group at Ephesus. His prayer could well serve as a model for believers today in praying for others.

Paul may not have known all of his readers personally, but he had heard of their faith and love. He prayed for them continuously and with intensity, all the while giving thanks to God.

In verse 1:22, Paul used the word *church* for the first time in his letter to the Ephesians. He wanted the people to understand that Christ was to be the Head and they were to be the body of His church. The image of the body portrayed the church’s unity.

In the first section of chapter 2, Paul described the work of Christ in the lives of God’s people. Verses 1-10 in the original Greek text were one long sentence that assembled all of Paul’s teachings about grace, faith, and the Christian life. The word *grace* appears twelve times in Ephesians, and it meant “pleasantness, favor, or gratitude” to the people of Paul’s day. However, early Christians used the word in a different way that described the utter generosity that God gives to undeserving sinners.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. The calling of the church
 - A. The foundation of the church
 - 2. The foundation realized: the prayer of Paul (1:15-23)
 - a. The reason for his prayer (1:15)
 - b. The attitude of his prayer (1:16)
 - c. The content of his prayer (1:17-23)
 - (1) The request for wisdom and revelation (1:17)
 - (2) The reason for wisdom and revelation (1:18-23)
 - (a) To know the hope of his calling and the wealth of the glory of His inheritance (1:18)

- (b) To know the greatness of His power to us (1:19-23)
- B. The foundation of the church
 - 1. The new position individually: the saints (2:1-10)
 - a. Our past condition: dead in sins (2:1-3)
 - b. Our new position: alive with Christ (2:4-7)
 - c. Our present situation: walking with God (2:8-10)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What are the four things in 1:17-19 that Paul prayed the Ephesians would come to know even more deeply?

2. Paul says that God's power in us is the power that raised Jesus from death. What is most significant to you personally about this? What steps can you take to grasp and benefit from this truth in a greater way?

3. Explain the relationship between grace and faith expressed in 2:8. Who demonstrates grace? Who demonstrates faith? What part does each of these qualities play in salvation?

CONCLUSION

When we continually pray to God for others, we will reap God's blessing in our own lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” (Ephesians 2:14)

The poem in a baby book for an adopted child registered instantly: “Not flesh of my flesh nor bone of my bone, but still, miraculously, my own. Never forget for even a minute, you weren’t born under my heart but *in it*.” Someone else had captured in words what we *knew* to be true—your kids are your kids, whether they arrive by birth or by adoption. They are your kids even if their hair is blond and yours is black, their eyes are slanted but yours are not, or their skin is a few shades darker than your fair complexion. How quickly those surface details cease to matter!

One time my mom was trying to describe our adopted daughter to a school secretary. “She’s about this tall,” Mom said, holding her hand about waist level. “She has dark hair. She would be wearing a red coat . . .” Mom completely forgot to mention that our daughter was Korean by birth and was just beginning to learn English! Those details simply hadn’t registered as being particularly significant. She was part of our family!

When we are adopted into God’s family, we become one of His children. Our brothers and sisters may not look like us. (Our adopted daughter doesn’t look like her siblings, either, though she told her second grade teacher that her new baby sister—our birth daughter—had “her” chin!) Appearances don’t matter. We may speak different languages, come from a different socio-economic class, or have different backgrounds. Yet, we are family!

Paul understood that. In our focus verse, he emphasized to the Ephesians that we can come into real unity with people who are not like us. By Christ’s death, the differences between Jews and Gentiles could be obliterated. The differences between believers throughout the ages and from every land and culture are unimportant when we consider the one important factor: we are all children of the Heavenly Father! Christ has removed all the barriers and has unified us.

As you read this beautiful chapter describing the oneness of the church, thank God for the diversity and unity in His family. Pray for your brothers and sisters around the world, and rejoice in the great Father of all who has brought us together in Him.

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, Paul reminded the Ephesians that they had been freed from sin’s curse and bondage, and brought near to God. As part of God’s house, they stood united with the prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself. Paul told them that the middle wall of partition had been broken down. He was referring to the ceremonial law and the middle wall in the Temple. When Christ died, the Temple veil was split from top to bottom, symbolizing that Christ’s death made a way for all to come directly to God through Christ.

It was difficult for the Jewish Christians to accept Gentiles as believers. The Jews felt they were the only people favored by God as His children. They ostracized the Gentiles because they were not circumcised. (Circumcision was a physical sign of interest in a covenant with God. It was a symbol to the Jews that they belonged, and had been adopted into the family. All Jewish males were circumcised on the eighth day after their birth.) Paul was striving to teach the believing Jews that the Gentiles could also be a part of God’s family if they had put away their sins and received atonement. Christ died to fulfill the whole system of Jewish law and traditions. Then He took the two groups that had been opposed to one another and united them in Himself.

The Jews were “nigh” unto God (verse 17) because they knew of Him through the prophets and the Scriptures, and worshiped Him in their religious ceremonies. The Gentiles were considered “afar off” because they knew little or nothing about the true God. However, neither group could be saved through religious practices. Both needed to hear and experience salvation through Jesus Christ.

In verse 20, Paul indicated that the believers were “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” He meant that Christ’s true Church was founded upon the principles and spiritual heritage handed down to them by those men of God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The calling of the church
 - B. The foundation of the church
 - 2. The new position corporately: the household of God
 - a. The position stated (2:11-22)
 - (1) Our past separation (2:11-12)
 - (2) Our present union (2:13-18)
 - (3) Our privileges in union (2:19-22)

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[illegible]

NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” (Ephesians 3:20)

I remember when we purchased our first computer. We had high expectations because of the capabilities it was said to possess. We smile about it now, but for some reason we thought that by simply plugging it in, we would be able to perform a variety of functions such as graphics design, word processing, spreadsheets, games, and other computer-related activities. Obviously, we were very disappointed. We quickly realized how computer inept we were and came to the conclusion that the computer was not as “user friendly” as we had thought it would be. We ended up using it very little, and eventually we disposed of it.

That wasn’t, however, the end of our interaction with the world of computers! Many years and several computers later, we recently bought a new system that has decidedly exceeded our expectations. Certainly, computers have come a long way in the past twenty years. In addition, we have learned that the usability of a system is directly related to our knowledge of how to use it. Still, this system is amazing! Its speed, memory, and capabilities make our first computer laughable by comparison.

The Apostle Paul found the love of Christ and His Gospel to be something that exceeded the highest of expectations. God’s love for us is beyond our comprehension. Its breadth covers the width of our personal experience, and reaches out to the entire world and every person in it. The length of God’s love spans our lives and reaches into all eternity. The depth of His love goes deeper than the most severe discouragement, despair, and even death. Its height reaches above our celebration and elation to heavenly happiness and eternal joy.

If we are “rooted and grounded in love” (verse 17) by Christ dwelling in our hearts, we can have confidence that His love and grace will be more than enough to help in our time of need. It is common to hear from a child of God that the Lord answered prayer “exceeding abundantly above” (verse 20) what was thought possible.

Have you learned the potential that is available through Christ Jesus? Have you accessed His limitless power? Have you observed firsthand His boundless abilities? You can!

BACKGROUND

Paul opened the third chapter of Ephesians by referring to himself as a “prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.” He maintained that the Gentile converts had the same privileges in the Gospel as the Jews, and could enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant without obligation to circumcision and bondage to the Law of Moses. Because of this, he was persecuted and eventually imprisoned. While on trial in Caesarea, he was compelled to appeal to the Roman emperor, as was his right as a Roman citizen, and was sent to Rome as a prisoner.

This is the first of Paul’s references to his imprisonment: he was under house arrest in Rome when he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. Although his allusion to his bonds in other places may have been in a metaphorical sense, they were most likely literal as well. Imprisoned, possibly bound by chains, Paul bowed his “knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (verses 14-15). The Greek word for *family* in this text is *patria*. A *patria* is “a great kin, clan, or race, descended genetically from one primitive progenitor.” The father of every *patria* is called a patriarch. Paul’s thought then was that God is the Universal Patriarch.

The closing verse of chapter 3 is a *doxology*—a hymn of praise to God—and it ended the first part of Ephesians, in which Paul described the timeless role of the church. In the second part, (chapters 4-6), he explained how members of the church should live in order to bring about and maintain the unity that God desires.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. The calling of the church
 - B. The foundation of the church
 - 2. The new position corporately:
the household of God
 - b. The position explained (3:1-13)
 - (1) The mystery (3:1-6)
 - (a) The statement of the mystery (3:1-3)
 - (b) The elaboration of the mystery (3:4-6)
 - (2) The ministry (3:7-13)
 - (a) The source of the ministry (3:7)
 - (b) The function of the ministry (3:8-9)

- (c) The purpose of the ministry (3:10-11)
- (d) The life of the ministry (3:12-13)

[illegible]

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

As we settled into our seats, the lights in the auditorium dimmed. Soon the musicians began to take their places on the stage. Each one had prepared for this day, when their months of hard work would be subjected to the scrutiny of a panel of judges. Music had been checked and re-checked, and instruments had been polished and carefully inspected to make sure they were in perfect working order. This was an important performance, because one group would be awarded the title of State Champion at the end of the contest.

As the conductor prepared for the downbeat, every eye was turned toward him. The musicians showed by their posture that they were focused and ready. The conductor gave the cue, and the music began. Each entrance was perfectly timed, the crescendos soared with authority, and the diminuendos whispered the message of the music. As the piece concluded, the audience sat in silent awe before the thunderous applause began. The performance had been perfect, and the students knew that their efforts as a group had resulted in something wonderful. Later that evening, this group would receive the award of State Champion from the judges.

As Christians, we are preparing also. However, our prize will be much greater than that experienced by these musicians. While only one group could win the state championship, all of us can win the prize God promises His people. Each one of us should want to be united in our focus on the work at hand so that we can obtain the reward.

Paul began Ephesians 4 by challenging the Christians at Ephesus to walk worthy of the incredible calling they had received from God. He wanted to remind them to keep their sense of purpose, and to have a compelling goal. What they had been called by God to do could only be accomplished if they were unified as a body of believers.

Just as an orchestra, band, or choir is made up of various members coming together to create something wonderful musically, each of us has been given

a place where we can serve God: in school, at work, at home, or at church. Our strength comes when each of us fills the place God created for us, working together to further the Gospel of Christ.

BACKGROUND

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul emphasized the riches of Christ that are available to those who believe. He closed Ephesians 3 with a prayer for the believers. Chapter 4 begins with the word “therefore,” which indicates that he intended to expand on the advice he had given in the preceding chapters. By his use of the word “beseech,” he conveyed his love and earnest hopes for these people. He was not demanding or threatening, but earnestly urging them in love to live a life that was worthy of the calling they had received from God. This same message also appeared in the Epistle to the Colossians, but here Paul expanded on the theme and gave much greater detail in his exhortation.

In order to be in unity, Paul instructed the believers to exercise the following Christian virtues:

- **Lowliness (humility):** Early Christians used this word to signify that in their own power they were nothing, but that by allowing God to work through them, great things could be accomplished.
- **Meekness:** *Gentleness* is another word for *meekness*, which sets it apart from *weakness*. This referred to the controlled, yet awesome strength and power of God working through His people.
- **Longsuffering:** Also called *fortitude*, this represented the Christian’s desire to endure discomfort without fighting back. This trait may need to be demonstrated toward our fellowman, or in holding onto God’s Word during a test or trial.
- **Love:** Only through a genuine love—the kind that God alone can give—is anyone able to adequately demonstrate the other three virtues.

Paul further expanded on these attributes by listing seven unifying factors in verses 4-6. He sought to remind the Christians in Ephesus that only by being in agreement on the foundational traits of the faith would they be truly united in their purpose to serve God.

At the conclusion of this text, Paul focused on the definite God-given differences within the body of Christ. The purpose of these differences was to give strength to the body.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. The conduct of the church

- A. Conduct in unity (4:1-16)
 - 1. The basis for unity (4:1-6)
 - a. Call to unity (4:1-3)
 - b. Necessity of unity (4:4-6)
 - 2. The means of unity (4:7-16)
 - a. Distribution of gifts (4:7-11)
 - b. Purpose of gifts (4:12-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What are the seven unifying factors mentioned in verses 4-6?

2. What are some actions and attitudes that will be part of a “worthy walk” for Christians?

3. What specific steps can you take to maintain spiritual unity with others?

CONCLUSION

God did not create us all with exactly the same talents and abilities. No matter how insignificant you may think you are, God has given you a spiritual gift that He wants you to use for His glory. Prayerfully ask for His help in knowing where you fit in His plan so that you may work in unity with other believers, and walk worthy of your calling.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”
(Ephesians 4:23)**

The next time you sing the old Gospel hymn, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” think of the composer, a gentleman by the name of Robert Robinson (1735-1790). Robinson was saved under the ministry of George Whitefield and even entered the Christian ministry. However, neglect of spiritual things led him astray and he drifted far from God. In an attempt to satisfy the void in his heart, he began to travel.

One day, while he was riding in a stagecoach, a female passenger was grieved by his levity and determined to share her faith with him. She handed him a hymnbook, pointing to the words of a particular song, and said, “These words might help you as they have helped me.” It was his hymn!

He tried to avoid conversing with her, but he could not disguise his emotion, for the Lord was speaking to him. At last he broke down and confessed, “Madam, I am the poor, unhappy man who composed that hymn many years ago. I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then.” The woman assured him, “But these ‘streams of mercy’ are still flowing!” Through her encouragement, Robinson reestablished his relationship with the Lord.

On that memorable day, Robert Robinson experienced the renewal alluded to in our focus verse, and from that day on, Robinson was a new man. Prior to this he was in a backslidden condition, but the old nature that was “prone to wander” had been rescued by an application of the precious Blood of Jesus.

The importance of renewal was the point that Paul was trying to make to the believers at Ephesus. In effect, he was telling them in this chapter, “You no longer belong to the old corruption of sin. You are now a new creation in Christ, so act like it!” For Paul, for Robert Robinson, and for believers of our day, conversion is a crisis experience that starts an ongoing process. That is why it is important that we spend time in daily meditation on the Word of God and in prayer—so our daily lives will align with our testimony of new life in Christ.

Review your life from the moment of your conversion until now. Do you have the joy and victory that comes with living as a new person in Christ? You should!

BACKGROUND

In this portion of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he exhorted them to live and walk in godliness and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. Note the frequent mention of the words “therefore” and “wherefore” in the second half of Ephesians. In essence, Paul was saying, “Christ has revealed His grace and imparted new life to you. In light of that, here is what you should be doing for Christ.”

The Apostle mentioned several characteristics in Ephesians 4 concerning godly character, admonishing the believers to walk not as the Gentiles in the “vanity of their mind.” The designation *Gentile*, while meaning those who were non-Jewish, also carries the implication of “pagan” or “heathen.” Paul was saying that the sin-clouded intellect and emotions of these people had been blinded so they were without discernment and unable to distinguish right from wrong. His point was that the believer could not pattern himself after the unbeliever, because the believer has experienced a miracle of being raised from the dead.

The word translated *conversation* in verse 22 means “behavior.” The Ephesians were exhorted to put off definitely, deliberately, quickly, and permanently the behavior that was corrupt (spoiled, ruined, or defiled) because of sin, and to put on behavior that was befitting of one who had been granted new life in Christ. These two acts were inseparable.

Paul did not merely explain this principle, but he applied it to different areas of life. He named specific sins that were to be avoided: lying (verse 25), anger (verses 26,31), stealing (verse 28), corrupt speech (verses 29,31), grieving the Spirit (verse 30), bitterness and malice (verse 31). In contrast to these sins, he exhorted the Ephesians to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, and to walk in love toward each other.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. The conduct of the church

B. Conduct in holiness (4:17—5:2)

1. Put off the old man (4:17-22)

- His nature (4:17-18)
- His practices (4:19)
- The source (4:20)
- The necessity (4:21-22)

2. Put on the new man (4:23-5:2)

- The command to put on the new man (4:23-24)
- The practices of the new man (4:25—5:2)

-
-
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-
-

1. Why did Paul try to get the Ephesians to understand the necessity of putting off the old man?

[illegible]

The letter to the Ephesians was not just for believers in Paul's day, but it is for us today. In order to live a victorious, holy life, we too must put off the old man of sin, and put on the new man, which is "created in righteousness and true holiness" (verse 24).

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”
(Ephesians 5:8)**

The children of Light make a difference! Many years ago, a young woman named Bertha came into contact with that Light, and what a transformation it made in her life. Bertha had been raised to confess her sins to the priest, but she remained a sinner, and as a young woman, she suffered terrible condemnation in her heart. One day her husband and his father went to a service at the Apostolic Faith Church. She told about what happened when they returned home: “When they came in, their faces were shining. They told us of the wonderful testimonies they had heard, of what the Lord had done for others, and also what He had done for them. At the close of the meeting they had gone to the altar where they prayed, repenting of their sins, and God had saved them.” A short time later, Bertha accompanied her husband to a service. “People from all walks of life told the same story—victory over sin. Something whispered in my heart, ‘Can you say that?’ I couldn’t.”

When the altar call was given, Bertha went forward to the altar, but there was no priest there, and she told the people who gathered around that she could not pray with them because she had to confess to the priest. Still, she recognized love and peace in those people and she longed to have it in her own life. That night she told her husband, “If I can get what these people have, I will leave my church!” After four more days of conviction, she returned to church and once again went to the altar. “I was hungry for God,” she said, “so I just looked up to Him like a little child and asked Him to have mercy on me and to give me what these people had.” Of course, God did not turn her away. That very moment, the precious Blood of Jesus washed her sins away and the praises of God flowed from her heart.

The Light that came into Bertha’s soul that day continued to spread. Her newly converted husband began straightening up his past. Her father-in-law had smoked a pipe for sixty years, but after his conversion, that desire was gone. Eventually, the conversion of this family stirred the whole neighborhood!

Bertha’s testimony makes a clear point: When Christians walk as “children of light,” it makes an impact on those around them. Is your light shining brightly today?

BACKGROUND

This chapter of the Apostle Paul’s epistle is a classic example of his ministerial anointing. In it, he gave the Christians at Ephesus a blueprint of what a Christian life is like. By employing a series of powerful imageries whose meanings are unmistakable, he reminded the Christians at Ephesus of the progression of the Christian walk.

To walk with the Lord successfully, the Ephesians needed to recognize that their past life was not only characterized by darkness, but was darkness itself. It was a life in which sin reigned. Paul pointed out that a Christian would easily identify and shun blatant sins that resulted from such darkness—sins such as fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness. He underlined for the Ephesians that other, less blatant, sins would also cast a lethal, dark shadow of death on their spiritual lives. This included sins of the tongue such as filthy or obscene talk and unwholesome jesting. He made clear that none of these types of darkness-oriented behaviors befitted a Christian.

A Christian is a child of the Light; so the Apostle admonished the believers at Ephesus to live and deport themselves in a manner consistent with this fact. They had been united with the One who is the Light of the world, and they were to behave as people who were possessed by that Light and radiate it through every aspect of their existence. Light has many beautiful characteristics that make it both unique and indispensable. Light exhibits purity and grace; it exposes and eradicates darkness; it brings recognition; and it brings healing, growth, and life. Walking “in the light” was the description of a Christian’s life, and Paul cautioned these believers that they should value this great privilege in every way.

Paul pointed out that the Christian, having passed from darkness into Light, was not to be complacent that his spiritual future was secure. He must continue to walk in the Light. This is what the Apostle called “walking in wisdom.” He enumerated specific behaviors of the Christian walk that would constitute walking in wisdom. These behaviors included:

- Walking carefully: being extremely cautious not to fall into the trap of the enemy.
- Redeeming the time: seizing opportunity to do one’s best for the cause of the Lord.
- Understanding God’s will: being divinely enlightened by prayer and study of God’s Word.
- Being filled with the Spirit: receiving the fullness of the Holy Ghost.

- Giving thanks: worshipping and praising the Lord at all times.
- Submitting to one another: voluntarily subjecting ourselves to others.

The Apostle established through this exhortation that there is no eternal security outside of walking in the Light of the Word of God, and by staying away from sin and continuing to walk in the path of holiness.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. The conduct of the church

C. Conduct in light (5:3-14)

1. The walk away from darkness (5:3-7)
2. The walk in light (5:8-14)

D. Conduct in wisdom (5:15-21)

1. Be wise with time (5:15-17)
2. Be filled with the Spirit (5:18-20)
3. Be subject one to another (5:21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What will be the outcome of works of darkness?

2. How does the Christian life typify light?

[illegible]

3. Give some examples of how we can “redeem,” or be wise, with our time.

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

God wants us to be His lights in a darkened world. We can only be those lights if we are united with His great Light and follow Him all the way.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” (Ephesians 6:7)

A few months ago, my husband and I visited the Tillamook Cheese Factory, at the Oregon Coast, and found it fascinating to watch the cheese-making process. A specific procedure was accomplished at each station along the way. When the cheese was cut into blocks, a conveyor belt carried it through the final steps. However, we saw that one machine was not working properly. Wrappers scattered on the floor, and blocks of cheese backed up on the conveyor belt. Employees at various stations had to stop their tasks and wait for the machine to be fixed. As we watched, workers adjusted and repaired the equipment. When it started working again, everyone was able to go back to doing their regular jobs. Then the same machine jammed yet again, the cheese blocks backed up, and the whole repair process began once more. The system was suffering because one part was not working properly.

Relationships can be quite a bit like a factory conveyor system. A marriage runs smoothly if the wife fulfills God’s directions and is subject to her husband, and if the husband loves his wife as himself. A family runs smoothly if the children honor and obey, and the parents do not provoke the children to wrath but teach them about God. The workplace runs smoothly if the employees do good work and follow instructions, and the employers treat the employees well. However, if someone does not follow the Biblical instructions, the whole “machine” is impeded or stopped.

The key is in realizing that we need to fulfill our places in life, whatever those places may be, “as to the Lord.” This means we need to act as if we were in that relationship directly with God. You probably don’t look at your boss and think of him as God; nor do you regard your spouse or children or parents in that way. Yet if we would look at them as to the Lord, no doubt we would find it easier to behave in a godly manner.

Let’s be sure that we are not jamming up the conveyors of our lives!

BACKGROUND

The Ephesians were familiar with the Roman social order of their day, in which the husband had full authority over the wife and the children, and owned the slaves. Slaves were ruled until they were freed (if that ever happened). Male children were under their

father’s authority until they became adults. Women and female children were under the men’s authority all their lives. Paul did not try to change this social order, but he addressed the proper attitudes for living within it. While the social order today may be structured differently, the principles still apply.

Paul gave two reasons for wives to submit to their husbands: Jesus is the Head of the Church, and the husband, as the head of the home, is the head of the wife. The Apostle’s instructions to the husbands were twice as long as those to the wives, and the central theme was love. This perspective presented a sharp contrast to Roman society where a wife was considered the husband’s property! A husband was directed to demonstrate his love for his wife by loving her sacrificially “as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Jesus gave His all. The well-being of the wife was to be of primary importance, just as Jesus suffered to provide the needs of the church. The man was to care for his wife as he did his own body, “even as the Lord the church.”

What an elevated view of marriage Paul presented! And he went on to state that this relationship is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. What a responsibility that places on a Christian couple!

Some seem to assume that these Biblical instructions to husbands and wives entitle the man to be domineering and require the woman to be subservient. Such assumptions could hardly be further from God’s intent, for He values each soul equally. Submission is a choice—the decision to yield one’s will to another.

If a husband and wife will both submit to Christ, study the Bible each day, and seek to follow God’s instructions and do His will, their marriage is sure to succeed. Obviously, if one partner is not a Christian, this unity of purpose is not possible. Thus, a Christian should marry a Christian. However, if one of the two is not a Christian and the saved companion purposes to follow God’s instructions, the marriage can only be improved. “Obedience to God always brings blessing” are familiar words from some marriage ceremonies. A failed marriage is an indication that someone is out of God’s will.

Next, Paul moved on to instructions for parents and children. Children were told to obey because that was God’s command. They were also directed to honor their parents. Honor goes beyond obedience because it shows love and respect.

Parents were told not to exasperate their children, but to teach them how to love and serve God. This

3. Of the attitudes in today's text, which do you personally find most difficult? What could you do to improve?

[illegible]

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CONCLUSION

- God's directions for His followers' attitudes are direct opposites of natural human inclinations. A change of heart is essential to truly follow His commands, and then His power and grace are necessary to apply His instructions to daily living.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

(Ephesians 6:11)

Perhaps you have seen the brand of potted ham that has a wrapper with a stylized image of the devil; depicting him as a rather cute little man in red, complete with pitchfork, horns, and a tail. Reality could not be further from this characterization. The devil is evil personified—a diabolical being responsible for hate, wars, murder, and ultimately, for souls being lost for all eternity in Hell. He is referred to in Scripture as “the father of lies,” “the evil one,” and “the accuser of the brethren,” and he continually employs various stratagems to drag souls down to perdition.

Sometimes people who are newly saved underestimate how intent the devil is upon destroying their new relationship with God. A dry period comes along, or perhaps a testing time. Satan whispers in their ears that they must have lost it all—and they give up without even a fight. However, God’s plan is for us to “stand” against the wiles of the devil, not to cave in! One of our ministers tells about the step he took following his conversion as a teenager. He knew that God expected him to live victoriously, but he did not know if he would be able to do so. Every day when he got home from school, he marked a big “X” on the calendar, denoting another day of victory. After two weeks, he realized that if God could keep him for two weeks, He could keep him for the rest of his life. Notice, though, that this young man was aware he was in a battle and was serious about overcoming the attempts of the devil to defeat him.

A different spiritual danger can confront those who have been saved many years—that of complacency. It doesn’t pay to become careless! As a teenager, I played baseball. I remember one game where I had made it to second base and was standing near it with a short lead when the second baseman snuck up behind me and tagged me out. You should have heard my teammates jeer at me for my lack of attention!

We must guard against allowing Satan to sneak up behind us and catch us unaware. After having been a Christian for many years, it might be easy to become less watchful for his attempts. That’s dangerous! We must be ever aware of the devil’s wiles, and rely upon the Lord to keep us victorious each day.

Our focus verse points out how to withstand Satan. Since Paul was writing to believers, we can

conclude that putting on the armor of God is not a one-time event. Rather, every day we must fasten on our armor before we set out to do battle with the enemy. As we do so, we can be assured of victory!

BACKGROUND

Christians can stand against the wiles of the devil and live in this present world without sinning. This is a bold claim, and one that is contested by many religious organizations, but it is amply backed up by Scripture and vindicated by the daily experience of countless victorious Christians.

In this passage, Paul instructed the believers at Ephesus regarding how to be victorious against the stratagems of their spiritual enemy. The Apostle acknowledged that the believers were not engaged in a human, physical warfare. Rather, they were grappling “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world”—the demonic influence of Satan and his army of invisible wicked spirits. For this reason, the Ephesians were to avail themselves of what God had provided for their protection: the whole armor of God. They dared not omit any part, for Satan always looks for an unguarded area where he can attack.

Verses 14 through 17 describe the various pieces of the armor.

The girdle of truth: Satan is a liar but the believer who relies upon truth will defeat him. The girdle bound the other parts of the armor together, and truth is the integrating force in the life of a Christian.

The breastplate of righteousness: The breastplate protected vital parts of the body. Righteousness of heart is as necessary to defend Christians from the assaults of Satan as the coat of mail was to preserve the physical heart from the arrows of an enemy.

The shoes of the Gospel: Roman soldiers wore sandals that had hobnails in the soles in order to give them a secure footing. God’s “footwear” provides us with what we need for a firm footing, for sure steps, and for protection. The word *preparation* indicates readiness—believers were to be prepared to see their duty, prepared to do God’s will, and prepared to proclaim the Gospel of peace.

The shield of faith: The shield in Paul’s day was large, usually about two feet by four feet, and was made of wood covered with tough leather. It was designed to interlock with the shields of adjacent warriors, so an entire line of soldiers could march toward the enemy like a solid wall—a picture of the fact that Christians are not in the battle alone. Though Satan

The helmet of salvation: Satan wants to attack the mind and cause doubts regarding God, influence the believer toward evil, or harass with fears and questions. Salvation protects the head and mind from false teachings and gives confidence and boldness in the conflict.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

NOTES

[illegible]



Overview for Philippians

Purpose: To express Paul's appreciation for the gift the Philippian believers had sent to him, and to strengthen these fellow Christians by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone and is not dependent upon circumstances.

Author: Paul the Apostle

Date Written: About 61 A.D.

Setting: The letter was written from Rome during Paul's imprisonment. The city of Philippi was originally known as Krenides ("The Little Fountains") because of the many natural springs nearby. Philippi ("city of Philip") received its name from Phillip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great). Attracted by the nearby gold mines, Philip conquered the region sometime during the fourth century B.C. and in the second century B.C. the city became a part of Rome's Macedonian province. The church there was founded during Paul's second missionary journey.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodias, and Syntyche

Summary: Paul's letter to the church at Philippi was one of four (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were the other three) written during his first imprisonment at Rome. During his time of incarceration, he no doubt thought often of the churches he had established

during his missionary journeys and felt a natural desire to send instruction and encouragement to those he had helped bring into the Kingdom. This letter is unique among the epistles, for at least two reasons: it is not disciplinary in tone, as it dealt with no specific problems; and it is filled with joy, even though Paul was chained in prison at the time he penned it.

The Philippian church was especially dear to Paul, as it was born as the result of intense persecution that had led to cruel punishment and his eventual imprisonment (Acts 16). God's miraculous deliverance of Paul and Silas also resulted in the miraculous birth of this church, the first Paul established in Europe.

In addressing these saints, Paul described them as citizens of Heaven, a particularly appropriate reference, since the people of Philippi were citizens of Rome. As he penned this primarily practical letter, he gives them instructions that were usable for daily challenges of life and the ever-present onslaught of the enemy. So timeless are his instructions that saints through the ages have often used them to challenge each other to spiritual excellence.

Paul's love for these saints is clearly evident as he wrote to them of victory and joy in Christ their Savior. The concept of *rejoicing* or *joy* appears sixteen times, and his message radiates with this positive message, culminating in his exhortation to "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50		PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?		Jude martyred 72			
	PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46			PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48			50-52			53-57			Paul's trip to Rome 59		
				James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44											

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - A. The servants and the saints (1:1)
 - B. The salutation (1:2)
- II. Joy in the furtherance of the Gospel (1:3-30)
 - A. Paul's praise and prayer for the believers (1:3-11)
 - B. Paul's attitude toward afflictions (1:12-26)
 - C. Paul's exhortations to the afflicted (1:27-30)
- III. Joy through submission in suffering (2:1-30)
 - A. The exhortation to submission (2:1-4)
 - B. The divine example of submission (2:5-16)
 - C. The human examples of submission (2:17-30)
- IV. Joy in the person of Christ (3:1—4:3)
 - A. The appeal (3:1)
 - B. The warning against false circumcision and confidence in the flesh (3:2-6)
 - C. The testimony (3:7-14)
 - D. The exhortations (3:15—4:3)
- V. Joy in the provisions of Christ (4:4-19)
 - A. Peace (4:4-9)
 - B. Contentment (4:10-13)
 - C. Material needs (4:14-19)
- VI. Conclusion (4:20-23)
 - A. Praise (4:20)
 - B. Greetings (4:21-22)
 - C. Benediction (4:23)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

Did you ever start a project that you had a hard time completing? Perhaps, after investing many hours in it, you got discouraged with your progress and laid it aside. A number of years ago, I decided to quilt a bedspread for our daughter. Not a twin spread either—it was a double-bed size. I had finished about eight inches of meticulous half-circles when I knew for sure that I never wanted to see another pink scallop again! It took every bit of my willpower to keep on stitching, and my endurance was mainly motivated by the number of hours I had already invested. I did not want them to be wasted!

When it comes to our spiritual lives, the good news is, we are God’s project and He never quits. The word *perform* in our focus verse simply means, “to fulfill completely; accomplish; perfect.” We can have confidence that if we keep our hands in God’s, He is going to complete the work He has started in our lives. What God begins, He finishes!

While I had to mentally prod myself along to continue working on my daughter’s quilt, God needs no prompting. He has a master plan, and our part is to willingly yield to that plan. Lack of submission on our part will hinder God’s work on us. How much better to rest in Him, knowing that in His faithfulness, He will work on us and perfect us until we can be presented faultless before His throne.

When we feel deficient or distressed by our lack of spiritual maturity, let us remember God’s assurance and provision. He may not be done with us yet, but He has not quit!

BACKGROUND

Paul’s salutation in the opening verses of Philippians included the comment that he thanked God “upon every remembrance” of the believers in Philippi. Acts 16 documents what had happened to Paul at Philippi—events which could have produced sorrow. He was arrested, beaten, and placed in the stocks for preaching the Gospel. Yet, through those circumstances the Philippian jailer found Christ.

This letter from Paul to the Philippians is a personal communication thanking them for helping him when he had a need. He also wanted to tell them why he could be so full of joy while being in a Roman

prison awaiting trial. The Philippians had supported Paul a number of times during his missionary journeys, and by helping him, they were also helping the cause of Christ. Because of this, the Philippian believers were a source of joy for Paul when he prayed, and he expressed this several times throughout his letter.

Philippi was a Roman colony named after the father of Alexander the Great, who founded it in 368 B.C. The city was located in Macedonia, in the northern part of what is now Greece, and was situated at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. The church at Philippi consisted mostly of Gentile believers because the city was primarily a military outpost.

Around A.D. 50, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke crossed the Aegean Sea from Asia Minor and arrived in Philippi. At the time of Paul’s arrival, the Emperor had declared Judaism a superstition and expelled all Jews from Rome. So, the few Jews and “God-fearing” Gentiles in Philippi met to pray at the riverside outside the city gate. When Paul and his friends arrived, those people warmly received the Gospel.

Because the churches founded by Paul were distant from each other, Paul primarily corresponded with the congregations by writing letters, which were delivered by Mark, Timothy, or Epaphras. Usually, the men would then remain with the people for a period of time to teach and encourage them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - A. The servants and the saints (1:1)
 - B. The salutation (1:2)
- II. Joy in the furtherance of the Gospel
 - A. Paul’s praise and prayer for the believers (1:3-11)
 1. His praise (1:3-8)
 - a. For their participation in the Gospel (1:3-5)
 - b. For the confidence of a completed salvation (1:6)
 - c. For his affection (1:7-8)
 2. His prayer (1:9-11)
 - a. For abounding love (1:9)
 - b. For approving the excellent and for blamelessness (1:10)
 - c. For fruit (1:11)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Paul thank God for in 1:3-5?

2. What does Paul mean when he says that the work, which God began in them, will be carried on “until the day of Jesus Christ”?

[illegible]

3. According to verse 11, what was the ultimate purpose in the Philippians' spiritual growth?

4. How can praying for and with other Christians improve our fellowship with them?

CONCLUSION

Who knows what progress God may make today on His project in your life? Take heart and have hope and joy in the knowledge that He will keep working until He brings you to completion!

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
(Philippians 1:21)**

Joe was known to me from previous admissions to the hospital. He had a progressive life threatening illness: Pulmonary Cystic Fibrosis. Often our discussions ended with Joe talking about his childhood faith. He would say, “When I get stronger, I am going back to church to get saved.” I would gently remind him that he didn’t have to wait to go back to church to get saved but could pray and be saved while he was still in the hospital.

One night he had called for the on-duty priest and chaplains three times during my eight-hour shift. He was extremely short of breath and his anxiety level was high. Finally, he requested that a counselor be called in to talk with him.

As I walked in the room, I said, “Joe, you can talk to all the counselors in the world but that won’t save you. What you need to do is ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, and then ask Him into your heart.” I asked him if he believed that Jesus would save him. He said “yes;” then suddenly he sat up and swung his feet over the side of the bed. He was excited and said, “I’ve got it! Jesus just saved me!”

Joe’s parents were at his bedside with tears flowing down their cheeks. I quietly left the room. Thirty minutes later the nurse called me to tell me that Joe had passed away. She said, “The last thirty minutes of his life Joe was the most peaceful I have ever seen him.”

What joy it brought to my heart to hear Joe had claimed salvation! Death had brought Joe gain, because he stepped into the presence of his Savior. In those last moments of his life, salvation made all the difference. He found the joy that comes from knowing Christ personally, and Heaven was his final destination.

Like Paul, believers can have contentment, serenity, and peace, no matter what happens. When our peace is made with God, we can say with him, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

BACKGROUND

While Paul was visiting Jerusalem, some Jews had him arrested for preaching the Gospel. Soldiers escorted him to Rome, where he was placed under house arrest while awaiting trial. At that time, the Roman authorities did not consider “proclaiming the

Good News” to be a serious charge, thus the house arrest rather than a jail confinement.

Paul did not complain about his circumstances but rejoiced because his imprisonment helped him to win the souls of people in Rome. When he wrote from prison to the Philippians, his theme to them was predominantly of joy, which derived from his relationship with Christ.

Paul’s faith was unconquerable! He was certain of his deliverance because the Philippians prayed and because of the presence of God’s Spirit with him. Even if he was executed, his mission would be completed and Christ would be magnified! Paul’s surrender to the purpose of God was complete—life or death did not make a difference in his attitude.

Paul, though a prisoner, was exultantly happy, and he called upon his readers to always rejoice in Christ. Paul also appealed for steadfastness among them. For Paul, true joy was present despite the circumstances he found himself in. Christian joy is independent of outward conditions. It is possible to experience joy even in the midst of adverse circumstances, such as suffering and persecution.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- II. Joy in the furtherance of the Gospel
 - B. Paul’s attitude toward afflictions (1:12-26)
 - 1. Afflictions promote the Gospel (1:12-18)
 - a. Provides new opportunities for ministry (1:12-13)
 - b. Causes the weak to witness (1:14)
 - c. Causes many to preach (1:15-18)
 - 2. Afflictions promote the exaltation of Christ (1:19-26)
 - a. His resolution (1:19-21)
 - b. His resignation (1:22-26)
 - (1) The desire (1:22-23)
 - (2) The decision (1:24-26)
 - C. Paul’s exhortations to the afflicted (1:27-30)
 - 1. To steadfastness (1:27)
 - 2. To courage (1:28-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Paul’s attitude about his imprisonment? In what ways did his imprisonment contribute to the advancement of the Gospel?

2. According to verse 18, what caused Paul to rejoice?

3. Following the example of Paul, while facing a trial in your own life, what are three ways you can express your God-given joy?

CONCLUSION

Nothing can steal our joy if we possess the mind-set, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” This letter reveals the timeless message that true joy is to be found only in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and in the assurance that God is able to turn adverse circumstances to good for His glory. Joy ultimately arises from the fellowship with the risen glorified Christ.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” (Philippians 2:15)

Have you ever been caught in a blackout where it was so dark you could not see your hand in front of your face? I was at work one night when the maintenance personnel did their test of the emergency generator. I was assured the generator would work, the lights would come right back on, and the computers would restart. The moment of testing arrived and all the lights went out.

The problem was, they did not come back on. I stumbled out of my office cubicle, and headed for the corridor where the emergency lighting was supposed to be operating on battery power. I thought I knew the general direction of the doorway, but I became disoriented in the darkness as I groped along other cubicles until I found the door. There, to my dismay, I found the battery-operated lights in the corridor did not work! I stood there for what seemed like an eternity until the lights came back on. Maintenance then wanted to check them again! This time I grabbed a flashlight. When the lights did not come on for the second time, I turned the flashlight on. The small amount of light it put out seemed to light up the whole office!

When the office was well lit, the light was taken for granted. Yet, when darkness came, the light was necessary and much appreciated. Paul told the Philippians to shine as lights, piercing the darkness of their world with the Light of the Gospel. They were to live their lives without reproach, pure and holy before their fellow men.

We are to do the same today, in the wicked and perverse world in which we live. If our lives are holy and acceptable before God, the world will see our lights shining in the darkness. They will be attracted toward the light, and we will have the opportunity to witness to the lost, and prayerfully win them for Christ.

BACKGROUND

In this portion of chapter 2, Paul spent time exhorting the Philippian church to love, unity, humility, and submission to one another: all traits which Christ exemplified as He walked on earth. He was the ultimate example! These qualities were missing in their

society where hatred, cheating, and carnality were commonplace. Paul wrote that if the Philippians demonstrated these Christ-like qualities, they would be different and would “shine as lights in the world.”

This passage contains a most beautiful and exalted description of Christ’s nature. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, equal with God, existing from eternity and to eternity, became flesh. He took on the human form and was born to a woman in a lowly stable. He submitted Himself to God the Father, and died an excruciating death on the Cross, bearing the sins of all mankind.

Paul instructed the Philippian believers to “work out your own salvation.” They could not work themselves into salvation, for that experience is a gift of God’s grace and forgiveness. Paul wanted them to work at being more Christ-like and to work together for unity.

The Apostle said, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings.” This shows that he expected Christians to be people of action. They were not to stir up or look for controversy, but they were to stand for the truth. The more vile and sinful the surroundings, the more dire was the need for God’s truth and light. By obeying Paul’s injunctions, the Philippian Christians would be lights that penetrated the darkness around them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. Joy through submission in suffering

- A. The exhortation to submission (2:1-4)
 - 1. The basis of the exhortation (2:1)
 - 2. The content of the exhortation (2:2-4)
 - a. Unity (2:2)
 - b. Humility (2:3)
 - c. Other awareness (2:4)
- B. The divine example of submission (2:5-16)
 - 1. The explanation of the submission (2:5-8)
 - a. The appeal (2:5)
 - b. The pre-incarnate position (2:6)
 - c. The self-emptying (2:7)
 - d. The death (2:8)
 - 2. The result of the submission (2:9-11)
 - a. The exaltation (2:9)
 - b. The adoration (2:10-11)
 - 3. The application to the believers (2:12-16)
 - a. The appeal (2:12-13)
 - b. The content (2:14)
 - c. The purpose (2:15-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Paul instruct the Philippians to do, so that they would become blameless and harmless?

2. List ways in which our world is “crooked and perverse.”

[illegible]

3. How can you “shine as a light” to those you come in contact with?

CONCLUSION

Just as the Philippians did, we live in cultures full of unbelief and sin. Are we following the instructions from this chapter so that our lights will shine brightly?

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” (Philippians 2:17)

In 1956, five young missionary couples traveled to the jungles of Ecuador to give the Gospel to the Auca Indians who had never heard the Good News. One tragic day, after landing in a remote area to make their first personal contact, the five young husbands were slaughtered by the natives.

Though the wives of these martyrs grieved, their love for these Indians was still strong. One of the wives, and the sister of another, continued as missionaries and were instrumental in helping the Auca Indians hear the Gospel. Because of this sacrificial love, many of the Aucas received Christ's love. One of the Indians responsible for killing the missionaries actually became a Christian minister. What consolation this brought to the families who gave up their loved ones!

Persecution and suffering will often accompany one who has a passion for souls, but the vision to see souls saved will overcome hindrances and heartaches. To be a winner of souls, we must have a sacrificial love such as Paul had. While we may never face a band of heathen natives, we may be called to deny ourselves by giving of our time, our energy, or our resources. We may have to stand alone and may face ridicule; we will not always fit in with the world. We may even suffer varied degrees of persecution.

Any price we might pay as we labor for the Lord will be worth it. What joy, what comfort, and what rejoicing there is in seeing a soul pray through to a real experience of salvation! What a boost to our faith to watch them grow in the Lord. For every sacrifice we make for the benefit of God's kingdom, we will always receive one hundred fold of blessings in this world, and precious sheaves to lay at the Master's feet in the next. It will be worth it all!

BACKGROUND

The letter to the Philippians was written from prison. As Paul was awaiting either trial or his sentence, his emphasis on joy speaks of his investment in heavenly values rather than earthly ones. In this setting, how meaningful it must have been for Paul to declare that he would joyfully be sacrificed for the good of the saints in Philippi. How deeply his love shone out to his children in the Lord!

Paul expressed how difficult it was for him to find dedicated workers to tend to the flock of God, but that Timothy was such a truehearted laborer. Paul hoped to send Timothy with news of Paul's sentence and to encourage them. Timothy had a pastor's heart and would truly care about them and their spiritual walk. Paul also stated the desire that he himself might possibly be able to visit the Philippians before long.

Epaphroditus, another loyal disciple, arrived in Rome with gifts and messages for Paul from the church in Philippi. While in Rome, Epaphroditus became gravely ill, and this caused the Philippians concern. He had used his life for the Gospel and for Paul, and in mercy God had spared him. Once Epaphroditus regained strength, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter to express his thanks and to encourage the saints. He wanted them to be relieved of their concerns regarding Epaphroditus' welfare. Paul urged them to honor Epaphroditus and to receive him with joy.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. Joy through submission in suffering
 - C. The human examples of submission (2:17-30)
 - 1. The example of Paul (2:17-18)
 - 2. The example of Timothy (2:19-24)
 - a. His concern (2:19-21)
 - b. His service (2:22-24)
 - 3. The example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
 - a. His concern (2:25-29)
 - b. His service (2:30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the unfaithful laborers seek for instead of the things of Christ? How might one today seek for his own things?

[illegible][illegible]

As we seek eternal blessings rather than earthly ones, we will possess a joy within that will supersede any outward difficulty.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14)

When our daughter first learned to walk, she soon had a desire to climb up onto the couch. I watched her one day as she spent the better part of the hour attempting to do this. First, she tried swinging up one leg—but her legs were too short. Then, she tried reaching as far as she could with her arms, hoping to be able to pull herself up. When that was also unsuccessful, she went into the bathroom and retrieved the small stool that my brother-in-law had made so that the children could reach the sink to brush their teeth. She placed this in front of the couch, and stepped up on it. Now she was making progress! The only problem was that the stool wasn't very well balanced, and each time she stepped up onto the front edge of the stool, it would tip towards her, and she would slip off. Finally, she managed to get her foot squarely in the center of the stool, and was able to swing one short leg onto the cushions of the couch. Imagine her delight as she quickly scrambled the rest of the way up and snuggled down among the cushions. Our family photo album includes a picture of her shortly after she had reached this goal. Her expression of delight in this accomplishment is very evident.

Just as my daughter continued to pursue her goal that day, Paul's words remind us that we, as Christians, must persevere in our pursuit of Heaven. Paul's goal was to know Christ, to be like Christ, and to be all that Christ had in mind for him. This goal was the focus of his life.

What an example for us! We should not let anything take our eyes off our spiritual goal. With the single-mindedness of an athlete in training, we must lay aside every distraction and concentrate every effort on reaching our goal.

Let us purpose to say, like Paul, “I reach, I strive, I press on, I keep trying!”

BACKGROUND

The believers at Philippi held a very special place in Paul's heart. They were the first converts in Europe, and had been a source of joy and comfort to him by their Christian witness and financial support. Even though he was imprisoned at the time he wrote this letter, Paul was filled with the joy of knowing Christ, and he communicated that joy to these fellow Christians.

Chapter 3 begins the conclusion of his letter. In no uncertain terms, Paul reminded them that they should strive to be like Christ and to stay focused on the heavenly goal. He warned them to be wary of those who would try to separate them from the pure Gospel—legalistic Jews who were zealous of the Law, but had nothing in their hearts. He expressed his deep concern that the Philippians would not burden themselves with an attitude of legalism, but would experience the full joy of the knowledge of Christ.

Paul used his pedigree as an object lesson to show that human achievements and position can never earn a person a place in Heaven. He was a member of the tribe of Benjamin, which produced Israel's first king, Saul, and was also a member of the Sanhedrin, thus a Pharisee. By purposely mentioning these facts, and then emphatically stating that these were all worthless when compared to knowing Christ, Paul was sure to gain the attention of his audience.

Paul encouraged the believers to follow the example of experienced Christians, letting them know that no matter how far they had come, they still needed to be careful and to stay close to Christ. He also encouraged them to be supportive of each other so none would be tempted to falter in their walk.

At the beginning of chapter 4, Paul expressed his concern that the believers would be unwavering in their faith, and would not allow differences between individuals to hamper their work. He reminded them that they should be united in conquering the same enemy, not fighting amongst themselves.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- IV. Joy in the person of Christ (3:1 — 4:3)
 - A. The appeal (3:1)
 - B. The warning against false circumcision and confidence in the flesh (3:2-6)
 - C. The testimony (3:7-14)
 - 1. The evaluation of his past experience (3:7-9)
 - 2. The statement of his present ambition (3:10-11)
 - 3. The goal of his present strivings (3:12-14)
 - D. The exhortations (3:15 — 4:3)
 - 1. To proper attitudes (3:15-16)
 - 2. To imitation (3:17-21)
 - a. The commands: follow and observe (3:17)
 - b. The reasons (3:18-21)
 - (1) Godless examples (3:18-19)

- (2) Heavenly citizenship
(3:20-21)
- 3. To steadfastness (4:1)
- 4. To unity (4:2-3)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. List some of Paul's accomplishments. How could these have caused him to trust in himself rather than in God?

2. What was the most important thing in Paul's life, and why?

3. In what ways will our lives show that we have determined to count all things as loss for Christ?

CONCLUSION

A Christian's ultimate goal should be to know Christ. Have you allowed anything to get in the way of your relationship with Him?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

As I clicked the remote to the education channel, I immediately became interested in the program that appeared on the screen. It was a concert of folk music by musicians who were popular during my high school years. I loved the music they were playing, and every song was familiar to me. However, when I turned the program off, the words kept going through my mind. The tunes were so catchy! Even when I got down to pray and do my devotions, the songs kept coming to my mind, interfering with my prayer and study.

I think of Philippians 4:8 as God’s filter for my mind to guard holiness. By thinking on godly things, I learn of those things that are pure, honest, and just. Contaminates from the world around me are kept away. What my mind thinks about impacts my emotions, as well as my actions.

Our society has many convenient means to communicate information. Through the newspaper, radio, internet, and television, we hear news and also strong opinions about almost every topic. The problem is that so often the statements *are not* true, and the values presented are not godly.

The Lord wants His children to be holy, and that includes thinking holy thoughts. Does that mean we should avoid knowing what is going on in the world? No, but it could serve us well to ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” Would He listen to what we listen to? Would He go where we go? Would He watch what we watch? Would He read what we read? As we choose what to put into our minds, we need to evaluate how our choices might impact us.

If we regularly apply today’s focus verse to our thoughts, we will find that it makes a difference in every avenue of our lives, including our prayer lives.

How is your thinking today?

BACKGROUND

Paul’s letter to the Philippians was one of joy in spite of the fact that he was a prisoner when he wrote it. His heart was full of happiness no matter what circumstances he faced: prison or palace, adversity or prosperity, sickness or health.

In this chapter, Paul warned the Philippian church about Judaizers (Jews who wrongly believed that it was essential for Gentiles to follow all the Old Testament Jewish laws, including circumcision, in order to receive salvation). He condemned these teachings, pointing out to the Philippians that what a person did could not make him a believer; rather, salvation was the free gift of grace given by Christ.

The phrase, “Be careful for nothing,” means not to be anxious or worried. The key to not worrying is found in the latter part of the verse; rather than worry, the believer is instructed to pray. One writer says, “We should be anxious for nothing, prayerful for everything, and thankful for anything.” Paul knew that trustfully bringing one’s requests to the Lord in a spirit of prayerful thanksgiving was indicative of true worship and devotion.

True peace is not related to circumstances. It is based upon faith and the knowledge that God will guide His children and will only allow what is best for them. The peace of God surpasses all power of human reason or comprehension. Contentment also is related to focus and perspective. A firm belief that God will supply all our needs will certainly promote contentment.

Paul’s closing remarks to the church at Philippi again reflect the Gospel, which runs throughout the Book of Philippians. To Paul, the Gospel was the message of Christ, the content of the Christian faith, the whole of Christian service, and the main thrust of his entire career after he was converted. Paul challenged these people to program their minds with thoughts that were true, honest, pure, lovely, of a good report, virtuous and praiseworthy, and his life was an illustration of this high and holy thinking. He lived what he preached, and the Philippians could safely follow both his example and his preaching.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- V. Joy in the provisions of Christ (4:4-19)
 - A. Peace (4:4-9)
 - 1. Through prayer (4:4-7)
 - 2. Through proper thinking (4:8-9)
 - B. Contentment (4:10-13)
 - C. Material needs (4:14-19)
 - 1. The Philippians’ gifts (4:14-18)
 - 2. The promise for their needs (4:19)
- VI. Conclusion (4:20-23)
 - A. Praise (4:20)
 - B. Greetings (4:21-22)
 - C. Benediction (4:23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How are we to make our requests known unto God?

2. In what ways do you think that daily, private Bible study and prayer help us to fulfill the directive Paul gave to the Philippian believers regarding their thoughts?

[illegible]

3. Using Philippians 4:8 as “God’s filter,” list several ways you could gain and keep control of your thoughts.

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

You can determine your own thought life. What you watch, read, and listen to will impact your thinking and your actions.

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.



Overview for Colossians

Purpose: To warn the believers at Colosse about false doctrines that were impacting them, and to show the believers that they had everything they needed in Christ.

Author: Paul

Date Written: About A.D. 60-62, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome

Setting: Colosse was a city of Phrygia that was situated between Laodicea and Hierapolis, about one hundred miles east of Ephesus, in a region that is now modern Turkey. Colosse has been extinct for well over eighteen hundred years; it is believed that an earthquake destroyed Colosse, and also Laodicea and Hierapolis. The city that was raised in the place of Colosse was called Konos, a name it bears today.

The church at Colosse was probably started during Paul's third missionary journey. It is not known whether or not Paul ever personally visited the church. He spent about three years teaching the Word of God in Ephesus, so the Christians from Colosse may have visited the church in Ephesus during Paul's stay.

Summary: While imprisoned in Rome, Paul heard that false doctrines were being introduced in the Colossian church. There was confusion among the believers, so Paul wrote this letter of authoritative instruction to refute the errors being brought to these first century Christians, and to establish them in the faith. Interestingly, he instructed the saints there to exchange letters (Colossians 4:16) with the church in Laodicea (the document now lost), each after having read it to their respective congregations.

The problem Paul was combating in the Colossian church was the early stages of Gnosticism, a heresy

that attacked Christianity in several basic ways.

Gnostics taught that:

- Christ was a created being, greater than man but less than God, thus stripping Him of His deity, which negated His propitiatory work at Calvary;
- Salvation was obtained through knowledge; and
- The body was evil.

In response to these heresies, Paul opens the epistle with the thought of establishing in the minds of the Colossians that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. With the deity of Christ firmly established, he attacks false philosophies that would threaten to undermine his opening theme. He speaks to them as if they were his children, reminding them to be "steadfast" and to take care "lest any man spoil [ruin] you," the words of a caring father figure.

The Book of Colossians concludes with practical instructions on how people in various stages of their lives should behave toward another. Nearly everyone can find themselves in one of the groups of people mentioned in chapters 3 and 4.

Because the Book of Ephesians was written about the same time as Colossians, there are parallels between the two epistles. However, the emphasis in Ephesians is the Body (the Church) while the emphasis in Colossians is the Head of the Body (Jesus Christ). Ephesians focuses on the Church's oneness with Christ; Colossians considers the Church's completeness in Christ.

The message in the Book of Colossians was then, and still remains, one of the most loved among individuals and groups who desire to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50		PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?		Jude martyred 72
PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46				PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48	50-52	53-57	Paul's trip to Rome 59				Rome destroys Jerusalem 70	
		Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41	James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44		Galatians; James 49	1 & 2 Thessalonians 51/52	1 & 2 Corinthians 55	Romans 57 St. Mark 58/60	Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60 Philippians 61 St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64	1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64 Jude 65 Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68	Hebrews 68	

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - C. Supplication (1:9-14)
- II. Doctrinal: the doctrine of those in Christ (1:15—2:3)
 - A. The person of Christ (1:15-18)
 - B. The work of Christ (1:19-2:3)
- III. Polemical: the defense of those in Christ (2:4—3:4)
 - A. Admonition of the believers (2:4-8)
 - B. Instruction for the believers (2:9-15)
 - C. Exhortation of the believers (2:16—3:4)
- IV. Ethical: the duties of those in Christ (3:5—4:6)
 - A. In the personal life (3:5-17)
 - B. In family life (3:18—4:1)
 - C. In prayer life (4:2-4)
 - D. In public life (4:5-6)
- V. Conclusion (4:7-18)
 - A. The commendation of Tychicus (4:7-9)
 - B. The greetings of friends (4:10-14)
 - C. The instructions of Paul (4:15-18)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”
(Colossians 1:10)**

Growing up in a rural area, roaming the ridge was natural. My brothers and sisters and I, along with some neighborhood kids who lived less than a mile away, would bicycle or walk all over the area looking for some adventure. We waded in streams, explored hills and valleys, checked out our great-uncle’s pond, and generally had wonderful times during our wanderings. Sometimes we picked mushrooms, berries, or cherries, and later in the summer we visited the apple and nut trees that grew in the woods or along the fields.

There were apple trees that had “slightly” wormy apples, but we understood that no one had taken care of them. There were hickory nuts trees and trees that produced very tough black walnuts. One particular tree stands out in my mind because it was such a disappointment. It was located just over the top of the hill at the side of the hay field, not more than a quarter-mile from home. The leaves were shaped like those of a hazelnut tree, and when the nuts formed, they looked like hazelnuts. The disenchantment came when we cracked them open. Nothing was in them; they were just empty shells!

I often wondered about that tree. Did it have some sort of virus that caused it to be fruitless? Was the soil lacking an essential mineral? Whatever the cause, I gave up trying to get nuts from it.

As Christians, we are the plants in God’s kingdom and our purpose here is to bring forth fruit. God has no ornamental shrubs in His orchards! He directs us to bear fruit as a sign to those around us that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. It does not matter what our gifts or qualifications may be, how beautiful or plain we may be, or how varied or limited our talents; we are to live a life “worthy” of being called a Christian. Our choices, our conduct, and our character must bring honor to His name and be pleasing to Him. To be viewed as “pleasing” to the Lord is to be “fruitful” in every aspect of life.

Let us do our part to assimilate the proper nutrients we need as Christians in order to ward off damaging viruses and bring forth good fruit. Reading the Word of God and praying without ceasing will help

us maintain spiritual health, that we may yield a good harvest.

BACKGROUND

The cosmopolitan city of Colosse had once been a thriving metropolis, but by the time Paul wrote this letter to the believers there, it had diminished to a much smaller city. The predominantly Gentile group of believers at Colosse had never seen Paul, but probably had heard positive news of him from their leader, Epaphras.

However, spiritual problems in the church arose due to the influence of various religions the people were exposed to. The “Gnostics,” or “knowing ones,” were philosophers whose beliefs were borrowed and combined from Plato, Judaism, oriental ideas, and Christianity. Their complicated teachings made it difficult for most people to attain salvation, with the consequence that the philosophers thought themselves superior to others. The knowledge Paul refers to in verse 9, in contrast to that of the Gnostics, is not theoretical, but experiential, and implies full discernment.

“Greetings and salutations” is a concise way to describe this portion of Scripture. However, there was much more to it than mere salutations. In these eloquent verses, Paul sets the tone of the epistle, showing his love for these believers and his hope for their future spiritual growth. In expressing his thanks to God for them and in relating his prayers for their spiritual growth, a bond was established with the congregation, making them more receptive to the instructions that followed.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - 1. The author (1:1)
 - 2. The recipients and blessing (1:2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - 1. The reason (1:3-5)
 - 2. The source (1:6-8)
 - C. Supplication (1:9-14)
 - 1. For proper knowledge (1:9)
 - 2. For proper conduct (1:10-14)
 - a. Fruitfulness and knowledge (1:10)
 - b. Strength (1:11)
 - c. Giving thanks (1:12-14)
 - (1) Inheritance (1:12)
 - (2) Deliverance and transference (1:13-14)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. List three virtues Paul desired from God for the Colossians.

2. Why did Paul make a commitment to prayer for the congregation in Colosse? What can we learn from his example?

3. What do you find appealing about the way Paul opened his letter to the Colossians?

CONCLUSION

Paul's loving approach to the spiritual well-being of the group at Colosse could only increase their respect for him and the true Gospel he embraced. Others around us will read our lives, as the Colossians read this epistle. How evident is the love of Jesus in us?

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” (Colossians 1:16-17)

The nucleus of an atom consists of positively charged and neutral particles, called protons and neutrons respectively. That nucleus is surrounded by a cloud of negatively charged particles, called electrons. When the atomic nucleus is split, a violent explosive power is suddenly released. This power can be used to perpetrate massive destruction or provide tremendous amounts of energy. Scientists tell us that if we were to split the atoms in one softball, we would unlock enough energy to burn up several square miles of earth. However, there is an unknown aspect of the physical properties of the atomic nucleus. What holds protons, neutrons, and electrons together?

Science does not know the answer, but the Bible reveals it to us. We read that by Jesus Christ “all things consist.” Just as sides of an hourglass restrict the sand inside it to a certain space, the Lord Jesus holds all life and substance in His hands to order as He wills. If Jesus did not hold every atom together with His omnipotent power, the universe would be obliterated.

When we ponder the power that exists in our universe, we begin to realize the power our Creator possesses. It was God’s design that all this fullness of power and glory would dwell in Jesus (see Colossians 1:19). The humanistic trend in the world today is to reduce Jesus to just a man who appeared briefly on the pages of history. Articles, scientific reports, song lyrics, and films attempt to sway people from the truth of His mighty power as described in God’s Word. However, in Colossians 1, Paul emphatically explains Christ’s place as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. He establishes that both the spiritual and physical worlds were created by and are under the authority of Christ.

As you read Colossians, notice how Jesus is lifted up, then placed where He can touch us. Knowing that Jesus created us for a purpose, that He holds our lives together, and suffered in our place to give us eternal life, is a great assurance and comfort. If He holds the universe together, we can be sure that He can sustain us, no matter what comes our way!

BACKGROUND

Paul opened his epistle to the Colossians with a greeting, a note of thanksgiving, and a prayer for these brothers and sisters in the Lord (verses 1-12). In this section of Colossians, Paul focused on the work and person of Christ. His purpose in this doctrinal discussion was to clear up several misconceptions about Christ that were rooted in Gnosticism (a belief system which stripped Christ of His deity and emphasized special knowledge). The specific false beliefs that he repudiated were:

- Christ did not come to earth in human form.
- God did not create the world because He would not create evil.
- Christ was not the unique Son of God, but one of many intermediaries between God and man.
- People could find God through special and secret knowledge, rather than through Christ.

Verses 15 and 16 contain one of the strongest statements about the divine nature of Christ found in Scripture. Paul explained that Christ created both the spiritual and physical worlds and they are under His authority; they are *in* Him (the sovereign source), *by* Him (the divine agent), and *unto* Him (for His use and glory.)

The false teachers in the Colossian church thought that spiritual perfection was a secret and hidden plan that only a few privileged people would discover. In contradiction, Paul said that the “mystery” (the great doctrine that salvation was for all mankind), had been concealed for many generations, and therefore was called a mystery, or a hidden truth. Now, however, it was available for all mankind, not just a select few.

Laodicea, referred to by Paul at the beginning of chapter 2, was located a few miles northwest of Colosse. Since Paul instructed that his letter be passed on to the believers of Laodicea, likely the false teachings that were troubling the Colossian church had also spread there.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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II. Doctrinal: the doctrine of those in Christ (1:15—2:3)

- A. The person of Christ (1:15-18)
 - 1. In relation to God: the image and the firstborn (1:15)
 - 2. In relation to creation (1:16-17)
 - a. The creator (1:16)
 - b. The preexistent one and the sustainer (1:17)

3. In relation to the church (1:18)
- B. The work of Christ (1:19-2:3)
 1. The nature (1:19-20)
 - a. In relation to the Father (1:19)
 - b. In relation to the creation (1:20)
 2. The goal (1:21-23)
 - a. Past alienation (1:21)
 - b. Present reconciliation and future presentation (1:22-23)
 3. The proclamation (1:24-2:3)
 - a. Suffering for it (1:24-25)
 - b. Content of it (1:26-27)
 - c. Purpose of it (1:28-29)
 - d. Struggle for it (2:1-3)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What titles and descriptions are given to Jesus in this lesson?

2. Why does it matter what we believe about the beginning of life and Jesus' position in creation?

3. What proof have you seen in your own life of God's creative power? His sustaining power? His redeeming power?

CONCLUSION

When we consider the divine nature of our Savior and the power that is His, what a marvelous privilege we have to be "in Christ"!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 2:6-7)

The park was filled with dozens of huge old oak trees. According to the sign, the majestic trees had survived windstorms, floods, droughts, and all sorts of natural disasters through the years, yet now they were at risk. A small parasite had infested them, reducing nourishment to the root system, and they were dying. Not far away, in the mountains above the park where the oaks were located, were some huge sequoia trees, some of the oldest and largest living things on our planet. Several of them were in danger of falling, not because of the storms and weather, but because constant visitors to the area had exposed their root systems. This made them vulnerable to disease and left them unstable with shallow roots.

The oak and sequoia trees are among the most majestic of God’s plant kingdom. They grow tall and strong, yet their height and majesty is totally dependent upon their roots. The Apostle Paul reminded a church in the ancient city of Colosse that they should continue to grow in Christ just as they did after they were “planted” in Him. Their visible growth as individuals, as well as a church, was totally dependent upon their roots. Their roots were being assaulted by the philosophy of intellectuals, the tradition of Judaism, and the belief in a type of astrology in which angelic beings ruled stars and planets as well as influenced affairs on earth. They were reminded that their lives and experience were rooted in Christ and must continue in Him.

Our world today offers many philosophies, religious systems, and traditions which can undermine the roots of Christian faith. Today, it is fashionable to acknowledge Christ as one of many options or alternatives. Some people even want to include Christ as part of a “larger, more inclusive” religious plan. Our faith and Christian experience must be rooted and built upon Christ alone. No more. No less. Christ alone. Anything else puts our lives and eternal destiny at risk for a great fall.

BACKGROUND

The church in Colosse was apparently founded by two laymen, Philemon and Epaphras, who were

influenced by Paul’s ministry in the neighboring city of Ephesus. His letter, written to the church about A.D. 60, addresses a crisis confronting the church. This crisis came from heresies combining Eastern philosophy, Jewish legalism, and a type of spiritual aristocracy called Gnosticism, which threatened the stability and purity of the Colossian church. One heresy held that spiritual fullness could only be obtained by those properly endowed with special wisdom. Another held that a holy God would not come near to an evil creation and would only speak to humanity through powerful spirits, which was an ancient form of astrology. Finally, the large Jewish community in Colosse had influenced some to a form of legalism, which mistakenly believed that rigid discipline and simplicity alone would draw them close to God.

It was these heresies that the Apostle addressed in this letter. He stressed that fullness was to be found in Christ alone and that in Him dwelt all deity. In Jesus’ work on the Cross, He settled the question of sin and made possible God’s desire to be near humanity. He also defeated all Satanic forces and fulfilled the legal demands of Jewish law. He alone is preeminent! No mixture or dilution of the foundational doctrines and experiences of Christianity would stand the test of time. Only in Christ was life to be found and lived in complete fullness.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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- III. Polemical: the defense of those in Christ
 - A. Admonition of the believers (2:4-8)
 - 1. The attack of false teachers (2:4)
 - 2. The progressive walk of believers (2:5-7)
 - 3. The strategy of false teachers (2:8)
 - B. Instruction for the believers (2:9-15)
 - 1. The position of the believer (2:9-10)
 - 2. The circumcision of the believer (2:11)
 - 3. The baptism of the believer (2:12)
 - 4. The resurrection of the believer (2:13-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What things does Paul say can beguile or spoil our faith in Christ?

[illegible][illegible]

Hymn writer C.P. Jones wrote the following words. “Jesus Christ is made to me, all I need, all I need, He alone is all my plea, He is all I need. Wisdom, righteousness and power, holiness forevermore, my redemption full and sure, He is all I need.” Jesus is all you need today! Make sure you are rooted and established in Him.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?” (Colossians 2:20-22)

As a child, my favorite game was Chinese checkers. I spent many happy hours across the board from my uncle, a patient man who lined up his red marbles opposite my blue ones and played game after game with me. Not only did he let me win often enough to keep me interested, he also taught me his best strategies, so one day, I actually beat him fair and square!

One thing my uncle didn’t do was add new rules. He taught me how to play the game by the traditional instructions, and that was how we played. Imagine how frustrated I would have been if he had told me on Monday that only green marbles could “jump” another marble, on Wednesday that he was starting out with only four marbles in his corner, and on Friday that he only had to get one marble across the board to be the winner. If he had done so, I am sure I would have given up in despair!

The Pharisees of Paul’s day were continuously making up new religious rules for the Jewish people to follow. Paul, in combating the false teachings that had infiltrated the Colossian church, cautioned the believers not to think they could make themselves more spiritual by observing the rules established by the Pharisees. He was not counseling the Colossians to become rebels. Rather, he was reminding them that true righteousness could not be achieved through bodily disciplines. Sinful practices were no longer part of a Christian’s life, but this was a natural result of their new life in Christ, not the cause of it.

True Christianity centers on Christ’s provision made on Calvary. His teachings do not change; His commandments do not need to be revised. Only by having a relationship with Christ through faith can we live in a manner pleasing to Him.

Let your study of Paul’s exhortation to the embattled Colossians give you a new appreciation for Christ as the fullness of God and our only source for living a victorious Christian life!

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, Paul continued his “Beware” message which began at Colossians 2:8. He ends chapter 2

with a negative approach (a warning against legalism) and begins chapter 3 with a positive approach (an exhortation to apply the principles he had taught). Both approaches are necessary.

The emphasis of this section is the futility of ascetic (severe) rules. The Pharisees attempted to sanctify the soul by disciplining the body, and this was the heresy that Paul attacked. Obedience to rules may produce a sense of self-satisfaction because it is what others see and it can be measured, but observance to rules alone will not bring salvation. Paul admonished the Colossians to focus on the new life in Christ and to put away disputes about meats, drink, holy days, sabbath days, etc. The observation of diets and days could not change the condition of the heart.

A rule-based religion, such as the Pharisees insisted upon, had a number of flaws:

- New laws continually needed to be invented for new situations.
- Accountability to men replaced accountability to God.
- It reduced a person’s personal ability to discern right from wrong.
- It created a judgmental spirit and a sense of superiority.
- It confused personal preferences with divine law.
- It created a false standard of righteousness.
- It was strictly external, rather than dealing with the heart.
- It was rejected by Christ, who alone is the believers’ righteousness.

Paul warned the Colossians not to let any man beguile them, meaning that they were to guard against being led astray by deception. The Colossians had found new life in Christ, but the Pharisees, pretending great humility and sanctity, endeavored to turn them aside from the Gospel and to induce them to rely upon the flesh even though they had begun to serve God in the Spirit. These false teachers were proud of their humility, but it brought attention and praise to themselves rather than to God.

Apparently, the Colossians had been taught that God was remote and could only be approached through angels. Mysticism, a belief that man can have an immediate experience with the spiritual world apart from the Word of God or the Holy Spirit, is clearly spoken against in the Word of God. Any encounter with the spirit world brought by the fleshly mind is not of God.

By contrast, Paul taught them that believers are free from ceremonial laws and ordinances, “Touch not;

taste not; handle not; which are all to perish with the using.” Christians are freed by the Blood of Christ, and by imposing these laws, the Pharisees were contesting the authority of Christ. Putting on the yoke of the Old Testament ordinances could not make people more godly or save their souls.

Paul concluded this portion of text on a positive note, encouraging the Colossians to go forward by seeking things above rather than focusing on the “things of earth” (material possessions, worldly fame, and sinful pleasures). He encouraged them to be dead to these things—unaffected by them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- III. Polemical: the defense of those in Christ
 - C. Exhortation of the believers (2:16—3:4)
 - 1. Negatively (2:16-23)
 - a. Avoid legalism (2:16-17)
 - b. Avoid mysticism (2:18-19)
 - c. Avoid asceticism (2:20-23)
 - 2. Positively (3:1-4)
 - a. Seek the things above (3:1)
 - b. Set your mind on things above (3:2-4)
 - (1) The command (3:2)
 - (2) The cause (3:3-4)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In what areas of life were the Colossians being “judged” by the false teachers?

2. What does it mean to be “risen with Christ?”

3. Give examples of what it means to “set your affections on things above.” How can this be accomplished in one’s life?

CONCLUSION

Our salvation does not rest on our own personal discipline, but rather on the power of Christ’s death and resurrection.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” (Colossians 3:12-13)

I was unaware of my unforgiving spirit after my husband of seventeen years left me, when our sons were thirteen and fifteen years old. One day while praying, I asked the Lord if there was anything in my life that blocked communication between Him and me. To my surprise, He told me, “You need to forgive your husband.”

My immediate reaction was, “Look what he did! I deserve to own these feelings!” As I attempted to continue praying, though, I found I could not get a prayer through. I finally said, “Lord, please help me to forgive him.” He did not disappoint me! When I surrendered my will to God, the peace that came into my heart was a real surprise to me. I felt I was released from bondage. I had been unaware of the bitterness and the unforgiving spirit that I held toward my husband, but when it was removed, I felt so much better!

To forgive, is to grant pardon for an offense and to give up resentment toward the offender. It is letting go of our right for retribution or “payment.” Sometimes we can be mistreated or betrayed and hardly notice it at all, but there are times when the offense hurts deeply. There is real injury. In such cases, it is human nature to want recompense of some sort, even if it is only making sure that the offender is aware of having hurt us! However, God points us in a different direction. He instructs us to forgive!

How can we come to the Throne of Grace if we are refusing to forgive people who have injured us? How can we approach a God of mercy if we ourselves have failed to grant mercy? We must take care of relationship problems—make up with a spouse, get along with fellow church members, love our neighbors—and then we will be fully united in prayer with the Father.

When we came to Christ for forgiveness and His salvation, we were forgiven. Our sins were covered. That is a glorious fact of our lives. We want to rejoice in that forgiveness and be sure that we extend it to others!

BACKGROUND

In this section of Colossians, Paul gave some principles for the inner life of a Christian. In verses 5-11, he listed several things that were to have no place in a Christian life:

- Fornication (a sexual relationship between unmarried people)
- Uncleaness (indecent or impurity in thought and speech)
- Inordinate affection (depraved passion or evil desires)
- Evil concupiscence (wicked craving and sensuality)
- Covetousness (greedy desire for more)
- Idolatry (putting something else ahead of Christ)

In verses 12-17, Paul went on to instruct regarding virtues that were to become part of the Christian life. He exhorted the Colossians to “put on” the following:

- Bowels of mercies (a heart of compassion and sympathy toward those less fortunate)
- Kindness (thoughtfulness toward others, unselfishness)
- Humbleness of mind (modesty, which places self last)
- Meekness (lowliness, the absence of arrogance and self-assertion)
- Long-suffering (patient in spite of provocation, bears injury without retaliation)
- Forbearance (putting up with unpleasantness)
- Charity (sacrificial agape love that is the basis for all Christian graces)

The word *quarrel*, as used in verse 13, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, “find fault, blame, or censure,” and indicates an occasion of complaint. Paul pointed out that if someone gave a just reason for complaint, the Christian was not only to forgive him, but also to be as ready to do him good as if the offense had never occurred.

Paul concluded this section by exhorting the believers to live as Jesus Christ’s representatives in all relations of life—obeying His Word, trusting in His power, devoted to His service, and living Christ-centered lives.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
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- IV. Ethical: the duties of those in Christ
- A. In the personal life (3:5-17)

1. Negatively (3:5-11)
 - a. Consider yourself as dead to sin (3:5-7)
 - b. Put off the actions of the old man (3:8)
 - c. The reason (3:9-11)
 - (1) Such actions have already been laid aside (3:9)
 - (2) The new man has already been put on (3:10-11)
2. Positively (3:12-17)
 - a. Put on the character of the new man (3:12)
 - b. Put on the actions of the new man (3:13-17)
 - (1) In relation to others (3:13-14)
 - (a) Forbearing and forgiving (3:13)
 - (b) Loving (3:14)
 - (2) In relation to self (3:15-17)
 - (a) The peace of Christ: ruling (3:15)
 - (b) The word of Christ: dwelling (3:16)
 - (c) The name of Christ: doing (3:17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What does the word “elect” mean in the focus verse?

2. Why is there a correlation between God’s forgiveness and our forgiveness of others?

3. What evidences will there be in our lives if we have truly forgiven someone who has sinned against us?

CONCLUSION

The key to forgiving others is remembering how much God has forgiven us. Is it difficult for us to forgive someone who has wronged us so little when God has forgiven us so much? To forgive and to ask forgiveness is a decision—our decision. Forgiveness frees us from bondage and brings healing to our spirits.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” (Colossians 3:23-24)

Don was always busy in the work of the Lord. Were there dishes to be washed after a meal at the campground restaurant? seafaring men to be picked up at the docks for a church service? wiring assistance needed on a church project? a ditch that needed digging? a church lawn that needed mowing? Don was your man. He uncomplainingly filled in wherever there was a task he could do. He treated every service for the Lord as a great privilege, and however menial or demanding the task, he did it with a smile. Don's wife had the same heart. Together, they served the Lord in many capacities—right up until the day they stepped into Glory and received their eternal rewards.

Their example as dedicated servants of God made a lifelong impression. They made it a priority to have their children develop their God-given talents and take an active part in the church's youth activities. Don even worked a second job as a school bus driver so his children could take music lessons, in order to participate in the music outreach of the church.

It probably will not come as a surprise to know that, looking further back, Don's parents were also faithful Christians. When Don was just a young boy, his mother and father sold their farm and moved their family into the city of Port Angeles, Washington, for one reason: so they could worship with people who preached that God gives victory over sin. From that point on, Don began to learn the joy of enthusiastic service for God, and he passed the heritage along to his children. He clearly knew the value of wholehearted effort in “whatsoever” he did.

That understanding is a legacy that can be passed from one generation to the next. Are you a father? a mother? a son? a daughter? a grandparent? an employer? an employee? Today's Scripture passage addresses all people. God has something for each of us to do. We want to do it “heartily, as to the Lord.” God will notice, and we will “receive the reward of the inheritance.”

BACKGROUND

In this section of Colossians, Paul began by singling out some of the relationships where the principles of Christian living are applied—husband and

wife, parent and child, master and slave.

Many cultures at that time considered wives as property, and to show love was not thought necessary. In the Gospel, all people are valued. Therefore, when women of that time became Christians, they found a new level of freedom and respect. Even though they were in this new position, the Apostle wanted them to understand their responsibilities as wives. “Submit” was translated from a word with a military sense that meant to line up or arrange in a special order, such as by rank. The word did not denote inferiority but rather responsibility; the wife had a responsibility to allow the husband the authority of leadership.

The husband was to lead with love, not as a dictator. He needed to treat his wife as a partner and be gentle, not harsh or bitter. The Apostle instructed that a husband should have *agape* love for his wife, loving as God would. Such a love was far deeper than romantic love, and was unselfish.

Paul's instructions to the children were short, but very broad; “Obey your parents in all things.” That little three-letter word *all* is defined as “every individual component of.” No option was given to pick and choose what would be obeyed. In addition, Paul said that obedience is pleasing to God. What a great incentive for obeying parents!

Fathers were instructed to avoid saying or doing anything that would discourage or exasperate (provoke) their children. Correction and discipline, when necessary, were not to be a source of provocation.

Guidance was given to masters and servants. Slavery was common in Paul's time. Today, his instructions would apply to employers and employees, or labor and management. Paul did not address the issue of slavery, but rather the actions of the Christians, whatever their roles. He knew that if all work was done as “unto the Lord, and not with eye service as men pleasers,” conflict management would be greatly reduced. He challenged people to work as if they were laboring for God.

Paul knew that much prayer would be needed for these believers to succeed in following his instructions, so he concluded this section with several thoughts on prayer and thanksgiving, including prayer for the ministry.

Finally he challenged them to be examples before a needy world. The Apostle knew that the people around them would be watching their actions as well as listening to their words. He wanted what they said and did to help further the cause of the Gospel and to inspire their associates to become Christians also.

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B. In family life (3:18—4:1)

- C. In prayer life (4:2-4)

- D. In public life (4:5-6)

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.” (Colossians 4:17)

When I was a little boy, my mother used to bake apple dumplings, and oh, how I loved them! My mother passed away when I was six years old, and the apple dumplings were gone as well, but I never forgot how delicious they were. When I was sixteen, I decided to see if I could recreate the taste that I remembered. My aunt had my mom’s original recipe, so I obtained a copy and went to work. I wanted the same results as my mother, so I followed her recipe very carefully. I used the same ingredients, the same procedure, and the same oven temperature. When they were finally finished, I tasted them with great anticipation. Yes! They had the same delicious flavor that I remembered from my childhood.

The ministry that we have “received in the Lord” must be handled in the same way. We must carefully follow every guideline, doctrine, and positive example that has been given to us. In 1906, God placed His stamp of approval on saved and sanctified individuals who were gathered in Los Angeles, seeking the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In response to earnest prayer, God’s Spirit was poured out on prepared hearts. Today, if we want the power and anointing that those believers received, we must be willing to use the same ingredients. We must be willing to follow the example set by godly men and women who had a desire to see this pure Gospel carried on. We know how God blessed their lives, and we want nothing else but what was received on the Day of Pentecost, at Azusa Street, and what God pours out in every age when His people follow His Word.

It is wonderful to learn from the Bible of the great things God has done, to read books of how God worked in other countries, and to hear testimonies from other faithful Christians. God has placed a wonderful Gospel in our hands. As a mother carefully and tenderly carries her newborn child, we must carry forward the heritage we have received in the Lord. As a father lays his life on the line to protect his children, we must sacrifice our lives for the Gospel.

Let us carefully, prayerfully, enthusiastically, and faithfully “take heed to the ministry” that has been handed down to us. As we do, our spiritual heritage will be preserved, and our lives will impact those around us.

BACKGROUND

As Paul sent final greetings to the believers at Colosse, various relationships between Paul and others in the church were mentioned. He referred to his co-workers as beloved brothers, ministers, fellow-servants, fellow-prisoners, fellow-workers, beloved physician, and brethren.

Tychicus shared Paul’s Roman imprisonment and no doubt they encouraged one another while they were side by side in the same circumstances (Acts 20:4). Onesimus was a runaway slave who belonged to Philemon and was saved through Paul’s ministry in Rome (Philemon 10-13). Aristarchus was a fellow-prisoner and traveling companion of Paul who had experienced shipwreck and chose to suffer with him (Acts 19:29). John Mark (Marcus) went with Paul and Barnabas as their assistant (Acts 12:25). Jesus Justus, a Jew, carried a popular name among the Jews of whom we know very little, yet he carried the title of fellow-worker and comforted Paul (Colossians 4:11).

Epaphras, who founded the church in Colosse (Colossians 1:7-8), was led to Christ through Paul’s ministry, and then returned home with the Gospel to become a home missionary. He also labored fervently in prayer, a fact that Paul possibly observed while sharing a room with him. Luke, the beloved physician, joined Paul at Troas and remained with him to the end (2 Timothy 4:11). Demas has no description attached to his name; he is one who later strayed from the Gospel (2 Timothy 4:10).

Paul closed his epistle with greetings to the churches and sent encouragement to Archippus, exhorting him to stay with what he received of the Lord. The Bible tells us little about Archippus. He was also mentioned in Paul’s letter to Philemon (Philemon 1:2) and we know that Paul regarded him as a fellow soldier in God’s service. There is no indication that he was a minister, so his ministry—the service for God that he was to “take heed to”—is lost in the pages of Biblical history. However, Paul’s admonition to him remains a challenge to believers of every age.

Archippus’ ministry was received “in the Lord.” God has placed each believer in a specific environment and set of circumstances. He has given each person a unique combination of abilities and assets that are to be used to serve and honor Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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V. Conclusion (4:7-18)

A. The commendation of Tychicus (4:7-9)

1. His character and mission (4:7-8)
2. His companion (4:9)
- B. The greetings of friends (4:10-14)
 1. Aristarchus and Marcus (4:10)
 2. Justus (4:11)
 3. Epaphras (4:12-13)
 4. Luke and Demas (4:14)
- C. The instructions of Paul (4:15-18)
 1. Greetings (4:15)
 2. Instructions (4:16-17)
 - a. Read this epistle (4:16)
 - b. Exhort Archippus (4:17)
 3. Benediction (4:18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What reasons did Paul give for sending Tychicus to the believers at Colosse?

2. Paul states that Epaphras had “a great zeal” for the Colossian brethren. How do you think this zeal was manifested?

3. Choose a trait portrayed in the lives of those listed in this text, and describe how you can portray this in your life today.

CONCLUSION

Somewhere in our daily schedule, in the places where we spend our waking hours, among the people we meet and associate with, there is a ministry for us. Remember, God has given each person a unique combination of abilities and assets. Let us purpose to use them to serve and honor Him.

NOTES



Overview for 1 Thessalonians

Purpose: To commend the Thessalonians for withstanding Satan, encourage them to live holy lives, and to reveal information to them about the coming of Christ for His Church.

Author: Paul

Date Written: About A.D. 51

Setting: Written from Corinth to a young church at Thessalonica, which had been established roughly two to three years earlier when Paul preached in that city for a period of about a month.

Key People: Paul, Silas, Timothy, saints of the church at Thessalonica

Summary: Paul, Silas, and Timothy sent this letter to the church of the Thessalonians although Paul wrote the letter in his own handwriting. Most Biblical historians believe this was likely the first epistle that Paul wrote, and possibly the first New Testament writing.

Paul was personally acquainted with the city of Thessalonica, having visited it on his second missionary journey. Luke recorded in the Book of Acts that Paul had preached the Gospel for at least three successive sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue at Thessalonica (see Acts 17:2). While some Jews responded to his teaching, 1 Thessalonians 1:9 seems to indicate that the majority were Gentiles. Paul started the church in Thessalonica while working night and day to support himself as a tent maker (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

This city was the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia, an area in what is now

northern Greece. It was ruled by a mercenary and wicked ruler, and while an important city, it was also a very wicked city. Many of the new Christians had worshipped idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9), but now they were faithful to the Lord. Their enthusiastic faith resulted in the Gospel message spreading everywhere in that region (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

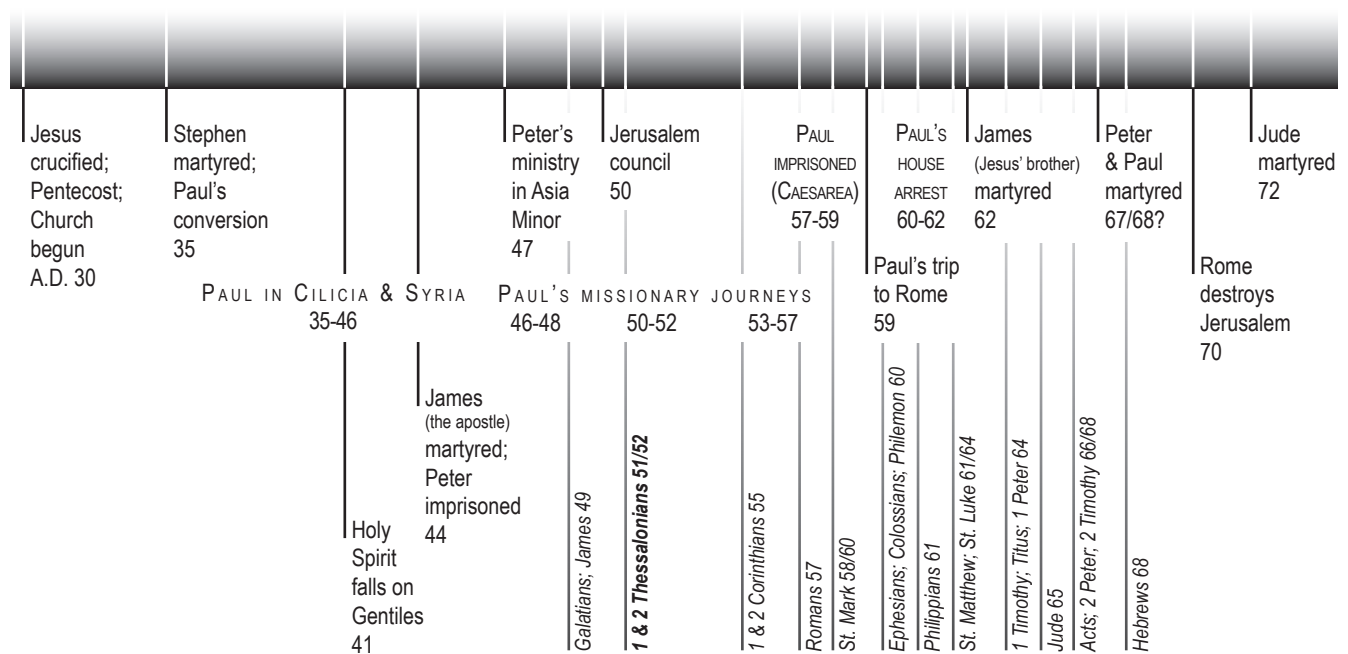
Since Paul's initial visit had been somewhat brief, the Christians in Thessalonica needed to become mature in the knowledge of God's doctrine and plan. Information had come to Paul that some opposed him and were bringing confusion with false teachings and ideas. This caused much concern to Paul, so he had sent Timothy to find out the state of the Christians there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5). Timothy's good report of their faith and love brought great joy to Paul (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10).

Paul began his letter by affirming and encouraging the Thessalonians in their faith, and exhorting them to live a holy life. He instructed them about the second coming of the Lord. There were concerns among the people because the Lord had not yet returned, and some Christians had already died. Paul's letter corrected any erroneous ideas about the relation between the resurrection of the dead and the coming of Christ.

He concluded his epistle with practical advice for Christian living, giving the Thessalonians a series of reminders on how to prepare themselves for the second coming of Christ, and then ended his letter with two benedictions and a request for prayer.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Salutation: the writer and his companions, the recipients and their position, the double greeting (1:1)
- II. Paul's interest in the Thessalonians (1:2—3:13)
 - A. Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians (1:2-10)
 - B. Paul's conduct before the Thessalonians (2:1-12)
 - C. Paul's concern for the Thessalonians (2:13—3:13)
- III. Paul's instruction for the Thessalonians (4:1—5:22)
 - A. Concerning Christian maturity (4:1-12)
 - B. Concerning the dead (4:13-18)
 - C. Concerning the Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
 - D. Concerning Christian duties (5:12-22)
- IV. Conclusion (5:23-28)
 - A. The prayer (5:23-24)
 - B. The request (5:25)
 - C. The instruction (5:26)
 - D. The charge (5:27)
 - E. The benediction (5:28)



1 Thessalonians 1:1 through 2:12

DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

My friend Loretta was a true mentor. She would take a new convert under her wing and befriend and nurture her with all of her heart. Although Loretta was a busy person, she took time to go shopping, visit doll shows, make crafts, or talk on the phone with a new Christian friend in order to encourage her. There were times when a person Loretta was mentoring would stumble or turn away and then came the tears and heartache. But what joy she felt to see one of her friends begin to prosper in the Lord! Loretta’s efforts were a labor of love, and truly, an example of the ministry of encouragement.

This is a wonderful ministry open to all Christians. As we look around us, we are certain to see someone who is a new convert and is weak in the faith or who is hurting in some way. There is so much we can do to encourage others! On a smaller scale, we can smile, take a few moments to chat and show interest, or maybe send an uplifting note.

Sometimes, though, we need to do more. As we pray and ask the Lord to show us whom to mentor, we can invite that one over, get to know him or her better, spend time in prayer for that one’s needs, and check on them from time to time to make sure they are okay and help in any way we can.

It may take much prayer and service to see a soul saved. When that happens, the battle has only begun because Satan desires the souls of men and women for himself. God has promised victory, but He also expects the family of God to befriend and mentor. What a wonderful service it is to the Lord to be an encourager of souls! Let us take time from our busy schedules to do so, for there will truly be eternal value attached to such labors of love.

BACKGROUND

After receiving a good report from Timothy who had visited Thessalonica, Paul wrote this letter to the infant church there. It was with joy that Paul greeted the saints and assured them of his love and prayers for them.

Paul rejoiced that, although the little church faced much persecution, the believers there lived exemplary lives and endeavored to spread the Gospel to others.

He then reminded them of the hope of Christ’s second coming.

Paul recalled the time when he and his companions were with the Thessalonians, and though they received opposition by some, they were faithful to preach the pure truth for the glory of God. Paul reminded them of the love he and his helpers had for the saints. Many hours were spent in gently guiding these new believers, and Paul and his assistants had been careful to be good examples of holiness. He compared their love for these new believers to that of a father for his children (1 Thessalonians 2:11).

Paul rejoiced that though this little body of believers faced suffering and persecution, they had received the truth and followed after it. Paul had a great desire to see the saints again but Satan was hindering. Paul knew they were in a spiritual warfare, but he felt joy at the expectation of final victory when he would see the saints as they were caught up together to meet the Lord in the air!

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- I. Salutation: the writer and his companions, the recipients and their position, the double greeting (1:1)
- II. Paul’s interest in the Thessalonians
 - A. Paul’s commendation of the Thessalonians (1:2-10)
 1. The content of his commendation (1:2-8)
 - a. Summary prayer (1:2-3)
 - b. In detail (1:4-8)
 - (1) Their work of faith (1:4-5)
 - (2) Their steadfastness of hope (1:6-7)
 - (3) Their labor of love (1:8)
 2. The cause for his commendation (1:9-10)
 - a. Their faith and love (1:9)
 - b. Their hope: its character and content (1:10)
 - B. Paul’s conduct before the Thessalonians (2:1-12)
 1. Conduct in purity of motive (2:1-4)
 - a. In opposition (2:1-2)
 - b. In truth (2:3-4)
 2. Conduct in purposeful labor (2:5-9)
 - a. In selflessness (2:5-6)
 - b. In gentleness (2:7)
 - c. In affection (2:8-9)
 3. Conduct in purity of life (2:10-12)

- a. In behavior (2:10)
- b. In exhortation (2:11)
- c. In result (2:12)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What accompanied the Word of the Gospel when it was presented to the Thessalonians?

2. Why was Satan able to hinder a spiritual man like Paul?

3. Paul stressed the importance of being an example of holiness to the new church. In what ways are you an example to others? Are there some ways you can improve?

4. Even though you may have to step out of your “comfort zone,” what are ways you can be an encouragement to those around you?

CONCLUSION

We are called to be examples of holiness and reach out to encourage those around us.

NOTES



1 Thessalonians 2:13 through 3:13

DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.” (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

During the Revolutionary War, Peter Miller, a pastor in the town of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, enjoyed a friendship with George Washington. In the same town lived a man named Michael Wittman. He was a mean-tempered fellow, who disliked the pastor and took every opportunity to oppose and humiliate him.

One day, Michael Wittman was arrested as a turncoat collaborator. At his trial, it was proven that he had given the British assistance on numerous occasions. He was found guilty of spying and sentenced to death. On the eve of the execution, Peter Miller traveled seventy miles on foot to see President Washington to plead for the life of Wittman. However, Washington turned him down, saying, “No, Peter, in these times we cannot be lenient with traitors. For that reason, I cannot pardon your friend.”

“Friend?” replied Miller. “He’s not a friend of mine. He is my bitterest enemy. He has persecuted me for years. He has even beaten me and spit in my face, knowing full well that I would not strike back. Michael Wittman is no friend of mine!” Washington was puzzled. “And you still wish me to pardon him?” “I do. I ask it of you as a great personal favor.” “Why?” “I ask it because Jesus did as much for me.”

Washington turned and walked into the next room. Soon, he returned with a paper on which was written the pardon of Michael Wittman. That day, the old pastor took Wittman back home to Ephrata—no longer an enemy, but a friend.

What an example of the spirit described in our key verse! Paul’s admonition to the Thessalonians was that they increase and abound in love toward “all men.” The same principle applies to us, and “all men” would include even those who treat us unkindly or persecute us. It is not enough to merely tolerate others or treat them with courtesy; we must look for ways to actively demonstrate our love to our fellowmen. Our love should be continually growing and becoming more evident in our lives.

Today, take time to pray specifically for those who ignore, mistreat, or reject you. Ask God to help your love for them to expand. Who knows! Your example of love and Christian charity may make them your friend.

BACKGROUND

Paul expressed his love and affection for the saints at Thessalonica and noted that the basis of their relationship was rooted in the Word of God. He looked at them with joy and gratitude as Christians who were worthy of the Name of Christ. He complimented them for receiving the Word when they came into contact with it, and for following in the things that he had taught them. This caused great persecutions, but they suffered for Christ and thus were an example to the others.

These believers were encouraged to continue to be faithful stewards of the treasure that God entrusted them with. Paul had been concerned because he had been separated from them so abruptly and though he desired greatly to return unto them, his return was hindered. However, when Timothy was sent to them, he came back with a glowing report. The Thessalonians were not only steadfast in the faith, but they appreciated the Word of God, appropriated it, and applied it in their own lives.

Paul expressed his joy over the Thessalonians by making mention of the glorious reunion that they would have at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Though he desired to see them, at that time he was not able to. Yet he knew they would see each other again when Jesus returned for His Church. Paul ended this portion of the letter by encouraging the Thessalonians not to be shaken by their afflictions, because he had also suffered many afflictions. He understood their tribulations and the powers that they were fighting against. Their suffering was his suffering and their joy was his joy.

The Thessalonians were also encouraged to increase in their love toward each other and to “all men.” Paul pointed out that God was able to keep them and present them faultless before the Father. He reminded them that Heaven is the goal, and it is made possible only through Jesus Christ.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- II. Paul’s interest in the Thessalonians
 - C. Paul’s concern for the Thessalonians (2:13—3:13)
 - 1. Concern for their suffering (2:13—3:5)
 - a. The cause of their suffering (2:13-16)
 - b. The concern for their suffering (2:17-20)

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NOTES

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DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

When I was a young child, the neighborhood kids and I spent many happy summer evenings playing “Hide-n-Go-Seek.” The one who was “it” would cover his eyes while counting to some predetermined number, giving the other players time to hide. When he had finished counting, the grace period was up, and the search was on. To signal this fact, the one who was “it” would shout, “Ready or not, here I come!”

In today’s focus verse, we are alerted to an event of great importance: the coming of the Lord. We have been given ample time to prepare for this momentous occurrence. We know His return will be very soon—the countdown, as recorded in God’s Word, indicates that it could happen at any moment. And it will happen, whether we are ready or not!

If we are prepared for Christ’s return, this is not a frightening thought. Rather, it is a source of great comfort in this time of world unrest and upheaval. However, to the person who knows about the Lord’s return but has delayed making preparation, the thought of this event brings no comfort. That one wishes Christ would not return for a long, long time.

What does it take to be ready for the coming of the Lord? This could be the subject of myriad Bible teachings and sermons. Some good clues are found in chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians, where Paul challenged the Thessalonians to please God in their daily living by avoiding all sexual sin, to love one another, and to live as good citizens in a sinful world.

It is interesting to note that Paul exhorted these believers to “abound more and more” (verse 1) and to “increase more and more” (verse 10). The Christian way is a living, vital way. If we are truly connected to the Lord and are flourishing spiritually, we will be ready when He returns to this earth. As we continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, we will continue to be ready.

BACKGROUND

Verses 1-12 of chapter 4 include practical instruction on daily living, and are a key part of this book.

The Apostle Paul was careful to label them as “commandments,” which showed their importance.

The social environment in the Roman Empire was characterized by immorality, rather than morality, and the Thessalonians’ culture was corrupt. Yet, Paul let the Thessalonian believers know that even in such a society, they needed to live holy lives.

God’s will on the subject of sexual purity is clear. Sexual desires and temptations have always been strong (and perhaps even more so in immoral cultures such as that of Thessalonica at that time), but they must deliberately be put under God’s control.

Paul instructed the people to show responsibility in every area of their lives. Paul wanted them to work and to do their best to live quietly. While being Christians might have made them part of civil disturbances at times (Paul experienced that often), he did not want them involved because of failure to live responsibly. Respectability was and is a necessary element for an effective Christian testimony.

Verses 13-18 contain great hope for the Christian. Paul made it clear that those who die in the faith will be raptured. He comforted the Thessalonians so that they would not grieve as those who had no hope. The basis for their hope was the resurrection of Jesus.

Our term *rapture* comes from the words *caught up*. In the original language, this word meant “to snatch” or “to seize.” It indicated a sudden, violent taking away. This event will have a three-part announcement: a shout, the voice of the archangel, and a blast of God’s trumpet.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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III. Paul’s instruction for the Thessalonians

- A. Concerning Christian maturity (4:1-12)
 - 1. Concerning moral looseness (4:1-8)
 - 2. Concerning love for the brethren (4:9-12)
- B. Concerning the dead (4:13-18)
 - 1. The problem of dead believers (4:13)
 - 2. The promise for dead believers (4:14)
 - 3. The privilege of dead believers (4:15)
 - 4. The program for dead believers (4:16)
 - 5. The program for living believers (4:17)
 - 6. The instruction (4:18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In what ways might the Thessalonians have demonstrated brotherly love? How might we do the same?

[illegible]

2. According to the text, who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air?

3. What do we need to do to be ready for the Rapture?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

As we walk in the light of God's love, abounding more and more, we find that the Christian way is a great way to live, and we are comforted by the hope that the Lord will soon return to take us to Heaven.

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:5)**

For a moment the sanctuary was absolutely black. The electricity had gone out during the church service, but then the emergency lights came on around the room, showing us the way out. In that total darkness, the small “Exit” signs shone brightly—there would have been no reason why each person could not have exited from the building, if it had been necessary. Although the wattage of these lights was low, no one could miss their crucial message in the total darkness.

Our lives as Christians are “emergency lights” pointing people to Jesus in this world of darkness. Even though we may feel insignificant—not at all like a floodlight—the glimmer of each little lamp can direct others to Jesus, the One who can forever dispel their darkness.

Many people around us are in spiritual “night,” groping around for the right way through life. Perhaps they have not come into contact with any source of God’s light, and are unable to locate the door. Some have gone down countless “dead-end” corridors, looking for truth or happiness. They may have met some who professed to be Christians, but who produced no visible light to guide others.

Our lamps must be unhampered by shades or coverings. When a weary wayfarer comes our way, we are challenged to be sure we have power, and to let nothing obscure our light. An unpleasant attitude might cloud the illumination. Behavior that is not consistent with a follower of Jesus could disguise or destroy our radiance, extinguishing any possibility of helping the poor traveler. Neglecting to communicate with God and read His Word regularly will run our batteries down. It is needful to check our spiritual lives and be sure we illuminate the pathway for those around us.

The light shines forth as we practice Paul’s admonition to edify one another; support the weak, be patient toward all men, rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, hold fast that which is good, abstain from all appearance of evil, etc. This chapter is full of fatherly counsel for the Christian life.

We know the way out of this dark world. We have found the True Light, and our desire is to let Christ shine through us to others.

BACKGROUND

Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, a city of commerce conveniently located at the northwestern extreme of the Aegean Sea. The city was originally named Therma after the many hot springs in the area. In 315 B.C. one of Alexander the Great’s generals, Cassander, laid the foundation for this new city near the original city of Therma. He named it Thessalonica after his wife, who was Alexander’s half-sister.

In A.D.49, fourteen years after his conversion, Paul set off on the second of three great missionary journeys. This tour took him to several cities including Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Philippi: in essence through Asia Minor, and then around the Aegean Sea. You may read the account of this trip in Acts 15:40—18:22.

It was after Paul had been forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach in Asia that he went to Troas on the east side of the Aegean Sea. While there, a vision appeared to Paul entreating him to “come over into Macedonia and help us.” The next day he sailed to Macedonia, and spent time in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, all cities of Macedonia.

After preaching in the synagogue in Thessalonica for three sabbaths and witnessing the Lord’s power at work, unbelieving Jews were sent against the missionaries, so they left the city at night, traveling to nearby Berea. When the Thessalonian rabble-rousers heard that Paul was in Berea, they followed him there, so he went on to Athens alone. His helpers, Silas and Timothy, came to Paul at Athens, and then Timothy journeyed back to Thessalonica to encourage the believers. When Timothy brought back a report to Paul at Corinth, Paul wrote these two letters to strengthen the fledgling group.

Paul was greatly encouraged by the growth this new church had shown since their introduction to Christ. He was anxious to help them continue in their Christian walk. This book refers to the Lord’s Second Coming often, each chapter closing with mention of that great event.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- III. Paul’s instruction for the Thessalonians
 - C. Concerning the Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
 - 1. The suddenness of it (5:1-2)
 - 2. The time and certainty of it (5:3)
 - 3. The knowledge of it (5:4-5)
 - 4. The exhortation from it (5:6-11)
 - D. Concerning Christian duties (5:12-22)

1. In relation to teachers (5:12-13)
2. In relation to others (5:14-15)
3. In relation to self (5:16-22)
 - a. Be happy (5:16)
 - b. Be prayerful (5:17)
 - c. Be thankful (5:18)
 - d. Be discerning (5:19-21)
 - e. Be separate (5:22)

IV. Conclusion (5:23-28)

- A. The prayer (5:23-24)
- B. The request (5:25)
- C. The instruction (5:26)
- D. The charge (5:27)
- E. The benediction (5:28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How does Paul say we are to treat those who are over us in the Lord?

2. Why are Christians referred to as being “of the day,” and not “of the night”?

3. In what way can you better put into practice Paul’s exhortations in this chapter in your own life?

CONCLUSION

Paul was exhorting the believers at Thessalonica to be lights to the world, and to be prepared for the return of the Lord. Each of us can take this advice to heart, putting Paul’s counsel into practice and thereby living ready for Christ’s imminent return.

NOTES



Overview for 2 Thessalonians

Purpose: The Thessalonians needed further instruction concerning the return of Christ. The believers had misconstrued Paul's first letter, interpreting it to mean that the coming of Christ was imminently upon them. Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to clear up this confusion and correct the errors in their thinking. He instructed the church in greater detail about the events leading up to the Rapture, and the work of Satan following that event.

Author: Paul

Date Written: About A.D. 51 or 52, probably within months of his first epistle.

Setting: This letter was the second of two missives written from Corinth to a church at Thessalonica, which had been established about two or three years earlier when Paul preached in that city for a period of about a month.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Silas, saints of the church at Thessalonica, and to Christians everywhere

Summary: A general of Alexander the Great founded Thessalonica about 315 B.C. It was located on the Gulf of Salonika in northern Greece, and had an excellent harbor. This city was considered one of the most important commercial centers in the world. Luke

mentions in Acts 17 that Paul went into the synagogue in this city and taught for at least three consecutive Sabbaths, which resulted in the beginning of the church there.

Paul's first epistle to the young church (the Book of 1 Thessalonians) dealt largely with the return of Christ and the importance of remaining steadfast and holy. After the first letter, Paul received word that the church was growing and remaining faithful to Christ even though they were being tried and persecuted. However, many had misunderstood what he had written in the first letter. Some had concluded that the Lord's coming might take place at any moment so they stopped working and waited (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Others thought that since they were experiencing trials and persecutions, they had already entered the Great Tribulation.

Paul, having been informed of these misunderstandings, explained in this second letter the sequence of events that must precede Christ's return. In the meantime, he warned them against listening to rumors and reports that the day of the Lord had already begun, and challenged them to remain steadfast in their faith. Paul then warned against laziness, and told the church to guard against anyone who did not obey what he had written in this letter. He ended his letter with personal greetings and a benediction.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50		PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?		Jude martyred 72				
	PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46			PAUL'S 46-48	MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 50-52		53-57	Paul's trip to Rome 59				Rome destroys Jerusalem 70				
			James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44													
			Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41		Galatians; James 49	1 & 2 Thessalonians 51/52	1 & 2 Corinthians 55	Romans 57	St. Mark 58/60	Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60	Philippians 61	St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64	1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64	Jude 65	Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68	Hebrews 68

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-12)
 - A. The salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. The thanksgiving (1:3-10)
 - C. The prayer (1:11-12)
- II. Instructions concerning the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)
 - A. The Day of the Lord: the present error (2:1-2)
 - B. The Day of the Lord: the preceding events (2:3-12)
 - C. The Day of the Lord: not our portion (2:13-17)
- III. Instructions concerning the believer's walk (3:1-15)
 - A. Call to prayer (3:1-5)
 - B. Call to discipline (3:6-15)
- IV. Conclusion (3:16-18)
 - A. The concluding prayer (3:16)
 - B. The answer to forgers (3:17)
 - C. The benediction (3:18)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.” (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

One of my favorite songs includes a repeated phrase, “Someone is praying for you.” That thought touches my heart because I know from experience that it is a real blessing when people of God uphold me in prayer.

After being single for over thirty years, while I was praying one day, God impressed on my mind who He wanted me to marry. For several days as I prayed, I kept getting the same answer. At that stage of life, I knew that remaining single was not the worst thing that could happen to me—but marrying the wrong person might be! As a result, I wanted to be absolutely sure it was really God speaking to me and not just my own feelings. I decided to involve some close spiritual friends to help me ascertain God’s will.

I wrote to four people of God who had prayed for me regarding the issue of marriage, knowing that if they knew what was going on, they would support me even more with their prayers. My letters said that I thought I had found the person God wanted me to marry, but he had not yet proposed. I asked that they pray fervently that if this man were not the one God wanted me to marry, God would stop him from proposing marriage to me. I wanted to be sure that I married within God’s will, and I knew these people would help me pray it through.

They prayed, and six months later this man proposed marriage to me. By the time he did so, there was no doubt in my mind that God was answering all the stored up prayers that many had prayed on my behalf. My husband and I will be celebrating our fourteenth wedding anniversary this year, and I can say with all my heart that God gave me not only a husband, but also a true friend and a companion in the Lord. I could never have asked for a better husband than the one God gave me. How I appreciate those people of God who prayed for me!

The Thessalonians benefited greatly from the regular prayers of people like Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. What better way could there be to support people? We may not have the resources to help financially. We may not have the skills or the time to help with physical needs. But we can all determine to pray for a person or a group of believers on a regular basis.

Let us make it a point to pray for all the people whose lives touch ours. What a blessing that will be, both to them and to us!

BACKGROUND

Paul’s first letter to the church at Thessalonica was written as an encouragement, but the purpose of this second epistle was to correct misunderstandings and false teaching about Christ’s Second Coming. Still, Paul began the letter—as he did most of his epistles—with affirming and encouraging words, commending the Thessalonian believers concerning their faith. Since the Apostle had already visited this church, he was in a good position to evaluate its progress. How great an encouragement it must have been for these believers to read that Paul perceived that their faith had grown tremendously and the true love of God was evident in the life of each member. No doubt they yearned to be faithful witnesses and, by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit, Paul told them that anyone could see God’s love in their lives, especially in the way they treated one another.

Paul’s other main message of encouragement was related to the perseverance of the church. He commented that other churches were aware of their trials, so they did not need to feel isolated or forgotten. He encouraged them to continue to persevere by reminding them about the judgment of the wicked, especially those who were opposing their work for the Gospel.

Verse 8 is one of many Biblical passages that explicitly describe the punishment of sinners as happening by fire, and verse 9 tells us the punishment will be eternal. By contrast, *rest* is the reward of the faithful saints (specifically the Thessalonian church in this passage). Paul reminded the Thessalonians that it was their faith that would allow them to be included in this final victory.

He concluded by assuring the church that he and others in the churches were always praying for them, that this would not be just a hope, but a reality. He reminded them that the purpose of it all—the persecution, the judgment, Christ’s return, the church’s spiritual success—was not for their own sakes, but for the glory of God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

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- I. Introduction (1:1-12)
 - A. The salutation (1:1-2)
 - 1. The writer and his companions; the recipients and their state (1:1)
 - 2. The twofold blessing (1:2)

- B. The thanksgiving (1:3-10)
 - 1. For their growth in faith and love (1:3)
 - 2. For their patience in affliction (1:4-10)
 - a. Patience recognized (1:4-5)
 - b. Punishment coming (1:6-10)
 - (1) The principle and the time (1:6-7)
 - (2) The recipients (1:8)
 - (3) The punishment (1:9-10)
- C. The prayer (1:11-12)
 - 1. The petitions (1:11)
 - 2. The goal (1:12)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Paul give thanks to God for the saints at Thessalonica?

2. Why do you think Paul began this letter with encouragement before he wrote anything else?

3. How can you encourage someone who needs encouragement?

CONCLUSION

When we go through hard times, we are not alone in our suffering. Not only does God see it, but very likely others are praying for us as well! Our faithful response to trials will bring joy and encouragement to the hearts of others and ensure a spiritual reward for us in eternity.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

We have a tradition in our family of making sure all the children wait upstairs early on holiday mornings, like Christmas and Easter. They must wait until all of them are awake, which is usually hastened by the older ones yelling out, “Is it time yet?” or “Can we come down now?” These moments of waiting add to their excitement and anticipation, while also allowing us parents to have a few sips of coffee, get the cameras ready, and make sure everything is just as we want it before the impending stampede. We always snap the first pictures as they are bounding down the stairs, which has preserved for us a chronology of photos of little eager faces first sitting on the stairs, then peeking through the slats, and later peering over the handrail.

Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica, instructing them to stand firm and hold the traditions they had been taught. He was not speaking about personal family traditions, but about maintaining the whole of the teachings and doctrines which he had earnestly been trying to teach these early believers.

The word *tradition* means “precepts” or “ordinances” that have been handed down from one person to another. The Apostles heard the Gospel from Jesus Christ himself. They told the news to others, and it was handed down. The Apostle Paul personally received a revelation of the Gospel. He preached and taught it to the people in Thessalonica, handing it down. He was reminding these people to hold to what they had been taught, whether by preaching or by written documents.

How important it is today to take note of his message. We are poised right at the brink of the Day of the Lord. In these last days, it is imperative that we not be swayed by some other kind of doctrine. Various doctrines and religious persuasions abound. We must keep a firm grip on the essentials of the Gospel: salvation from sin, living a holy and pure life, and being filled with the Spirit. Let us hold fast to the traditions which we have been taught.

BACKGROUND

The believers in Thessalonica had begun to listen to other doctrines, and were becoming confused. Paul wrote this second epistle to help them understand and hold to the truths of the Gospel that he had taught

them. In their quandary, they had begun to believe that they had missed the Day of the Lord. (The “Day of the Lord” refers to the Second Coming of Jesus. It encompasses two separate events: the Rapture of the Church, and the Revelation of Christ, when He returns with His saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly and to set up His millennial kingdom on earth.)

Paul emphatically informed the Thessalonians that they had not missed the Day of the Lord, but that it was in the future. He reiterated that that Day (speaking of the Revelation of Christ) cannot come until a number of signs occur: there will be a falling away (believers will doubt and turn away from being Christians), the man of sin (the Antichrist) will be revealed as he sits in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, and the restraining work of the Holy Spirit and effectual prayers of the saints will be removed. Since none of these events had occurred, he told them the Day of the Lord had not yet come and they had not missed the Lord’s return. He encouraged these believers to keep steadfast, even though they were suffering persecution, and assured them that God would comfort and console them in their trials.

After speaking about future events, in verses 13 and 14, Paul reminded these people that God had chosen them. Salvation originated with and comes from God. The believers in Thessalonica had chosen to answer God’s call, but they only had that opportunity because God chose first to call them to salvation. “From the beginning” indicates that these people were among the first converts. Paul referenced this to show a connection between those God chose as His people in the Old Testament (Israel) and those who were His in the New Testament dispensation (believers in Christ).

By his exhortation in verse 15 to “stand fast” and “hold,” Paul showed his awareness that the believers would need to make serious effort to guard the truths God had given them. He knew they would encounter false doctrine and persecution. He wanted them to be established “in every good word and work” (verse 17), consistently doing God’s will and living His truths. Paul knew that such daily application of the Gospel would strengthen and establish these people.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. Instructions concerning the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)
 - A. The Day of the Lord: the present error (2:1-2)
 - B. The Day of the Lord: the preceding events (2:3-12)

1. The apostasy (2:3)
2. The revelation of the man of sin (2:4-12)
 - a. His character (2:4-5)
 - b. His restraint (2:6-7)
 - c. His doom (2:8)
 - d. His power and followers (2:9-12)
- C. The Day of the Lord: not our portion (2:13-17)
 1. The reason for assurance (2:13-14)
 - a. God's selection (2:13)
 - b. God's calling (2:14)
 2. The enjoyment of assurance (2:15)
 3. The prayer for assurance (2:16-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Paul say would happen before the “Day of the Lord” comes?

2. Why did Paul challenge these believers to hold fast to what they had been taught?

3. What Gospel traditions have you been taught that you should hold on to? How can you do that?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Be ready for the Day of the Lord by living a holy and godly life each day. Let us ask God to help us treasure and keep an unwavering faith in the Gospel truths that we have been taught.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.”
(2 Thessalonians 3:8-9)

When General George C. Marshall took command of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, he found the post in a generally run-down condition. Rather than issue orders for specific improvements, he simply got out his own paintbrushes, lawn equipment, etc., and went to work on his personal quarters. The other officers and men noticed. First on his block, and then throughout the post, they did the same thing, and Fort Benning was brightened up.

Paul understood and taught the believers at Thessalonica that being in a position of leadership entails responsibility, and that includes being a good example. In the home, in the educational system, in the workplace, in the religious world, in the governmental system, those in authority lead best by setting a good example. Sadly, because of the sinfulness of the world, it doesn’t always happen that way. Many times, those in authority tend to associate their positions with privilege, and take advantage of their position without regard for the example they are setting to those under their jurisdiction.

Whatever the trends of the world may be, in the Gospel authority does not mean privilege, but responsibility and accountability. We must learn how to be a follower before we can effectively lead others.

Where do you lead today? Most of us have someone who looks to us as an example. Whether it be at home, at school, on the job, or in the church, we need to be ready to deny ourselves privileges if that will make us better examples of the Gospel.

BACKGROUND

In the previous chapters of this book, Paul had written to the church in Thessalonica, continuing the subject of 1 Thessalonians, the Second Coming of the Lord. He had addressed their misunderstanding concerning the timing of the end time events. In chapter 3, he concluded the epistle by expressing his desire for the Gospel to have “free course,” that is, to have maximum effect without any obstructions.

The idea of removing all obstructions underlies everything in this chapter. This discourse has two

main sections: prayer and application. Paul started each part referring to himself and then moved to the Thessalonians. He first asked for prayer for himself, and then prayed for the church, expressing his confidence in their spiritual faithfulness. Likewise, when he addressed the practical aspects, he started by giving his own example, and then instructions about how the Thessalonians could be examples. Specifically, he warned them against laziness, manipulating others, and gossiping.

One of the key lessons in this passage is the importance of leading by example. Paul knew that he could not pray for the church to draw close to God if he himself did not have that resolve. Even though Paul could have justly asked to be supported by the church for his work among them, he chose to take on employment to teach by example the importance of working for one’s own living.

The thread running through these admonitions is a warning against “disorderliness.” The word “disorderly” is used three times in these few verses. The point is that socially disgraceful conduct will bring shame on the Gospel and hinder God’s truth from spreading. This matter was so serious that the Thessalonians were commanded twice to stay away from anyone who walked disorderly.

Paul’s words of instruction concluded with a note of gentleness in the handling of discipline. This, too, is practical: just as the Gospel will have freer course in the church and in society if believers behave in an orderly manner, so the Gospel will have freer course to the backslider if correction is done in a loving, respectful way. Once again, God used Paul to show that a high, holy, strict standard of conduct for the church does not contradict compassion and mercy.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
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III. Instructions concerning the believer’s walk (3:1-15)

- A. Call to prayer (3:1-5)
 - 1. Prayer for Paul (3:1-2)
 - 2. Paul’s prayer for them (3:3-5)
- B. Call to discipline (3:6-15)
 - 1. The problem (3:6)
 - 2. The example (3:7-9)
 - 3. The precepts (3:10-13)
 - 4. The discipline (3:14-15)

IV. Conclusion (3:16-18)

- A. The concluding prayer (3:16)
- B. The answer to forgers (3:17)
- C. The benediction (3:18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What does it mean to give the Gospel “free course”?

2. What kinds of disorderly conduct had been going on in the Thessalonian church?

3. Since there had been disorderly behavior in the Thessalonian church, why was Paul still confident that they would do what they were commanded?

4. In what areas can we teach others by being positive role models?

CONCLUSION

As we grow in our walk with Christ, we have to remember that we do not live to ourselves. We need to live lives above reproach so that there will be no road blocks to the Gospel spreading and deepening, both in the church and in the world.

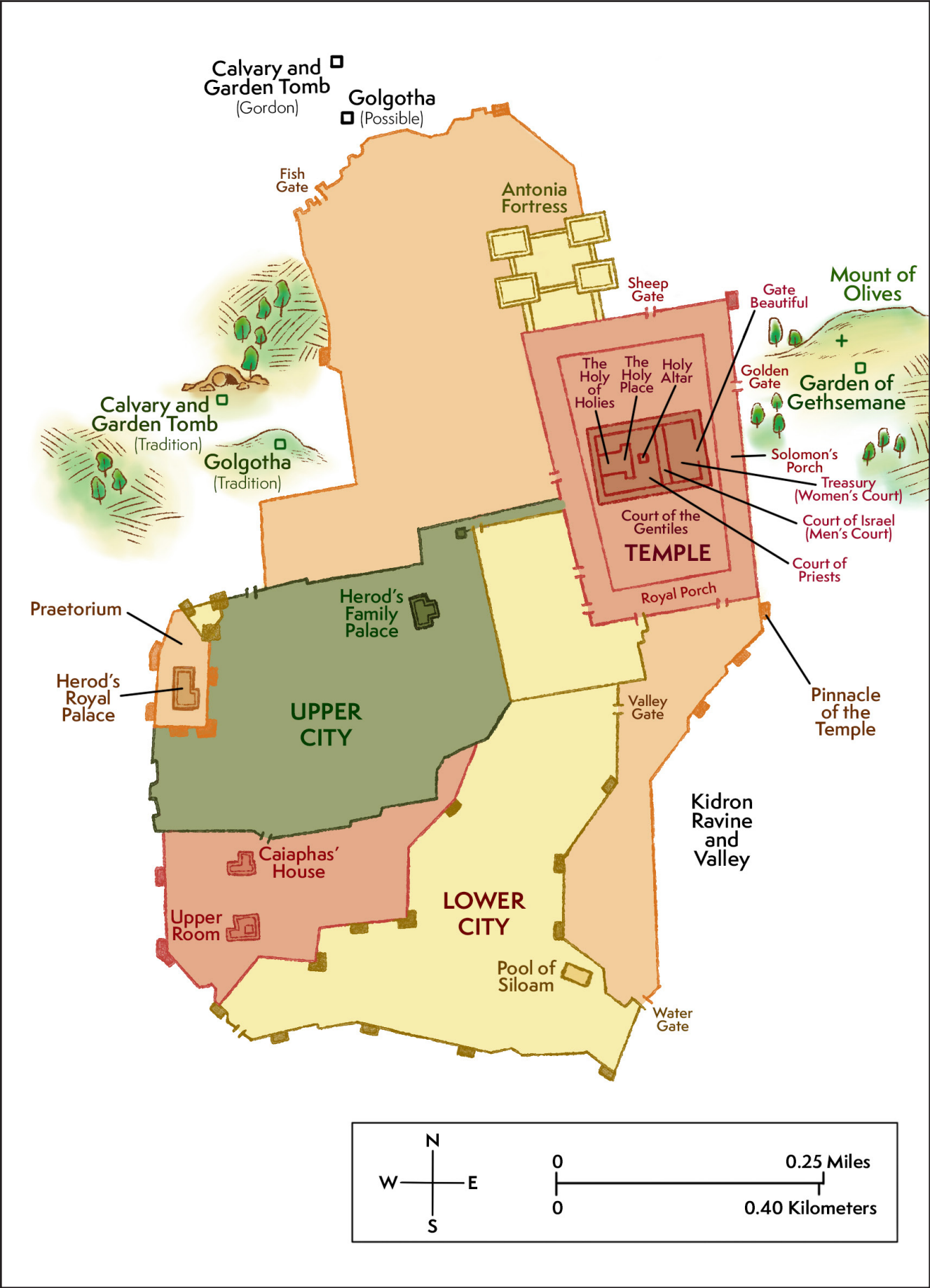
NOTES

Key Locations in Matthew



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New Testament Jerusalem



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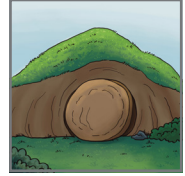
A Traditional View of Passion Week



PALM SUNDAY

Jesus makes His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd waves branches, shouts “Hosanna,” and puts garments and branches in the road. (Matthew 21:1-11)

- There is darkness from noon to 3:00 p.m. (Matthew 27:45)
- The veil in the Temple is torn from top to bottom. (Matthew 27:51)
- Jesus’ body is buried in a borrowed tomb. (Matthew 27:57-60)

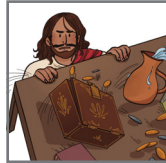


SATURDAY

Jesus’ body remains in the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-66)

MONDAY

Jesus cleanses the Temple, overturning the money changers’ tables and declaring, “My house shall be called the house of prayer.” (Matthew 21:13)



TUESDAY

Jesus teaches the disciples and Jewish leaders with parables. (Matthew 21:23)



WEDNESDAY

Judas plots to betray Jesus to the priests for thirty pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:14-16)



THURSDAY

- Jesus celebrates the Passover Feast and institutes the Lord’s Supper and Foot Washing ordinances. (Matthew 26:26-28 • John 13:1-17)
- Jesus prays in Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-46)
- Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. (Matthew 26:47-50)
- Jesus is arrested and taken to Caiaphas. (Matthew 26:57)



FRIDAY

- Early in the morning, Jesus endures a Jewish trial. (Matthew 26:59-68)
- Before daybreak, Peter denies Jesus three times. (Matthew 26:58, 69-75)



- Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, is sent to Herod, and is sent back to Pilate. (Matthew 27:1-2 • Luke 23:6-11)
- Soldiers crown Jesus with thorns and mock Him. (Matthew 27:29-31)
- Jesus is crucified at 9:00 a.m. (Mark 15:25)

EASTER SUNDAY¹

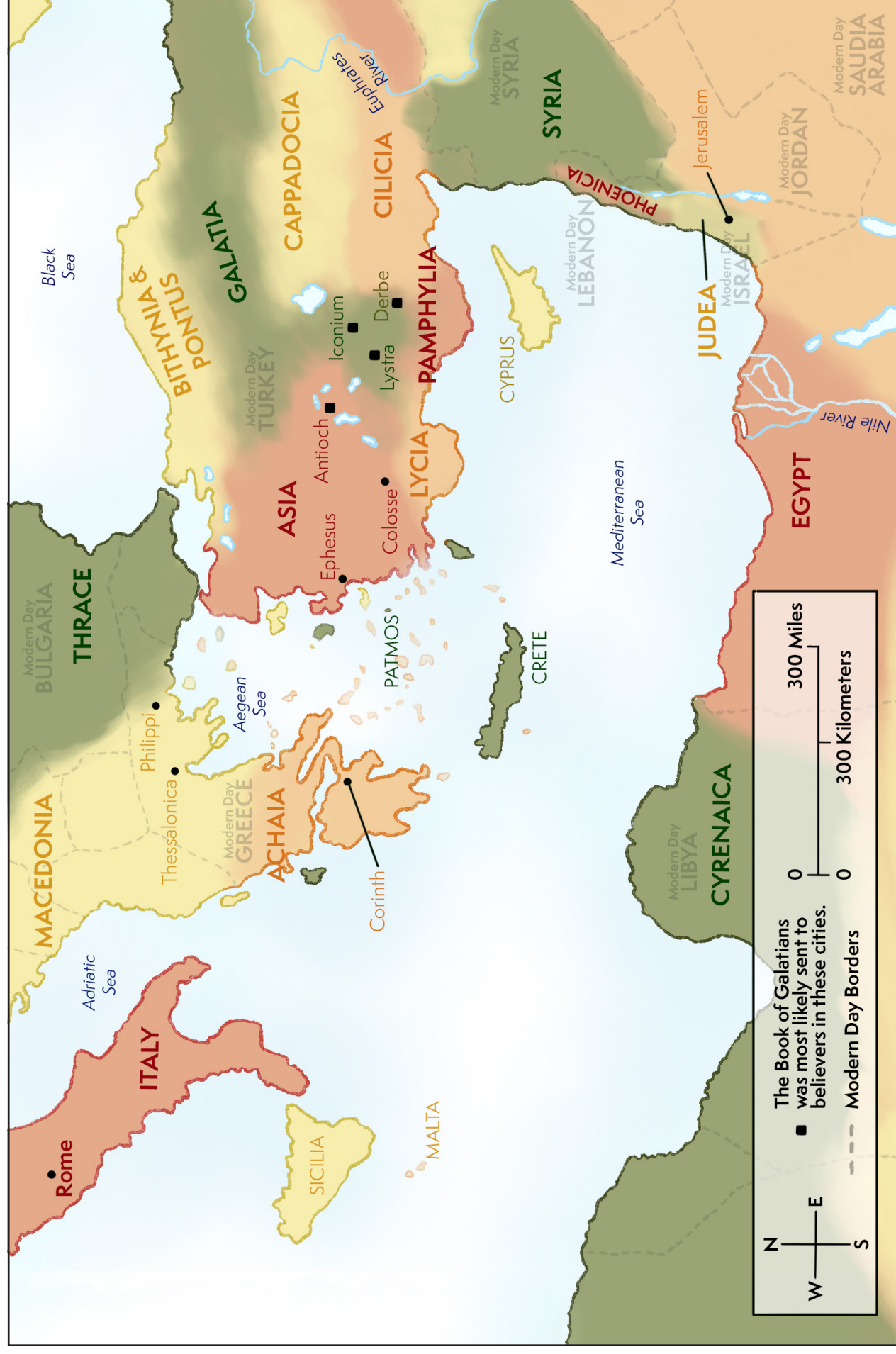
- Soldiers guarding the tomb become as dead men because of an earthquake and an angel who rolls away the tombstone. (Matthew 28:2-4)
- The women in a group (Mary Magdalene in advance of the others) approach the sepulchre. (Matthew 28:1 • Mark 16:1 • Luke 23:55-24:1 • John 20:1)
- Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone removed and hastily concluding that the body has been removed, runs for Peter and John, thus separating herself from the rest of the women. (John 20:2)
- The other women arrive at the sepulchre and see two angels. They depart to tell the disciples. (Matthew 28:5, 8 • Mark 16:5 • Luke 24:4, 9)
- While the women are gone, Peter and John run to the sepulchre, find it empty, and leave. (Luke 24:12 • John 20:2-10)
- Mary Magdalene, having followed Peter and John to the sepulchre, stands outside weeping. After they depart, she sees two angels and then Jesus. According to His command, she departs to carry His message to the disciples. (Mark 16:9-10 • John 20:11-18)
- The women on their way — before their arrival at the abode of the disciples, but after the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene — see Jesus. (Matthew 28:9)
- All the women, including Mary Magdalene, unite in relating their story to the incredulous disciples. (Matthew 28:9 • Luke 24:10)
- Jesus appears to the disciples: to Peter, to Cleopas and another follower on the road to Emmaus, and then to a group of disciples in Jerusalem. (Luke 24:12-36)



1. D.D. Whedon, *Commentary on The Gospels: Luke-John*, p. 408

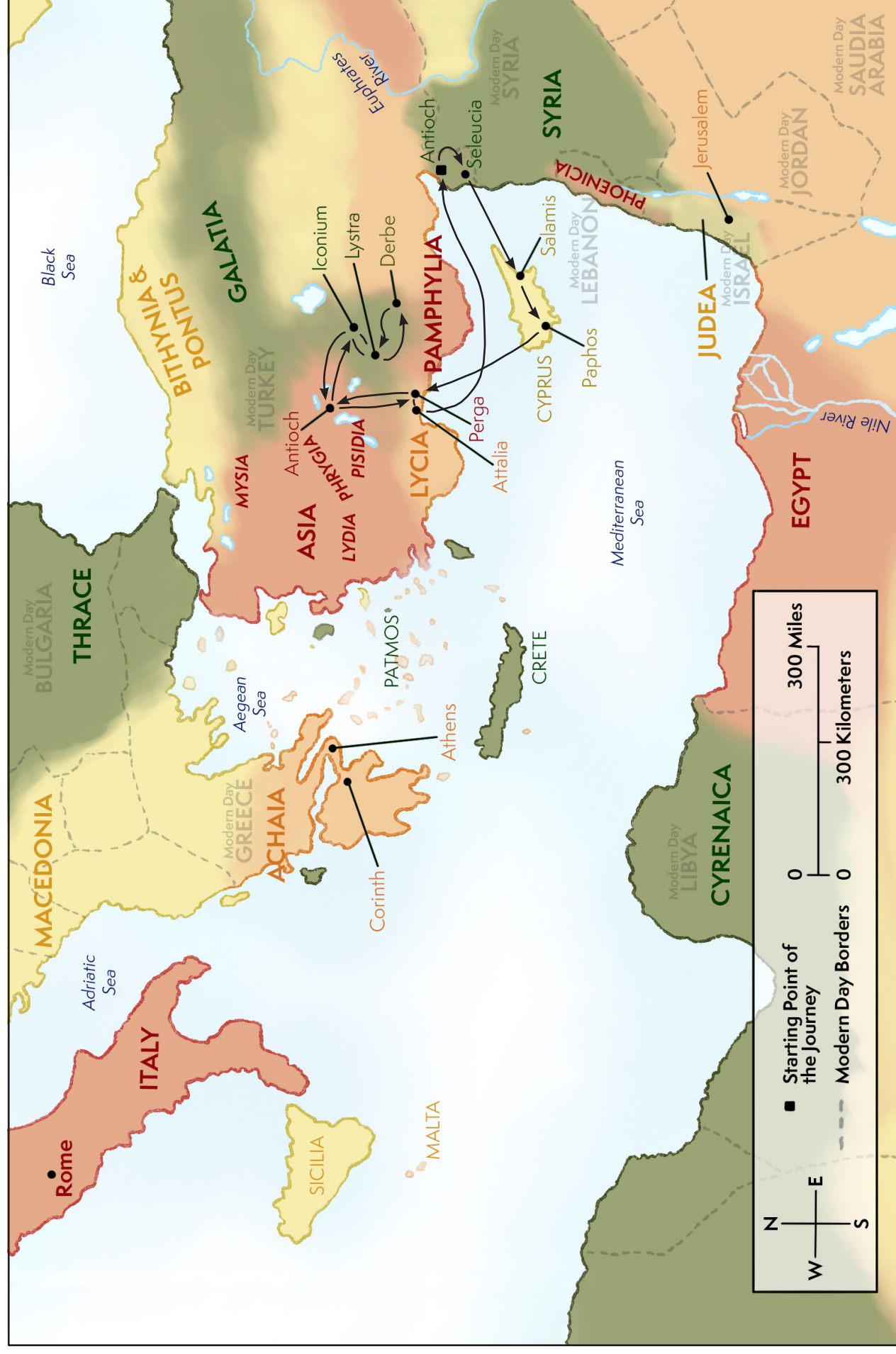
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Recipient Churches of Paul's Letters

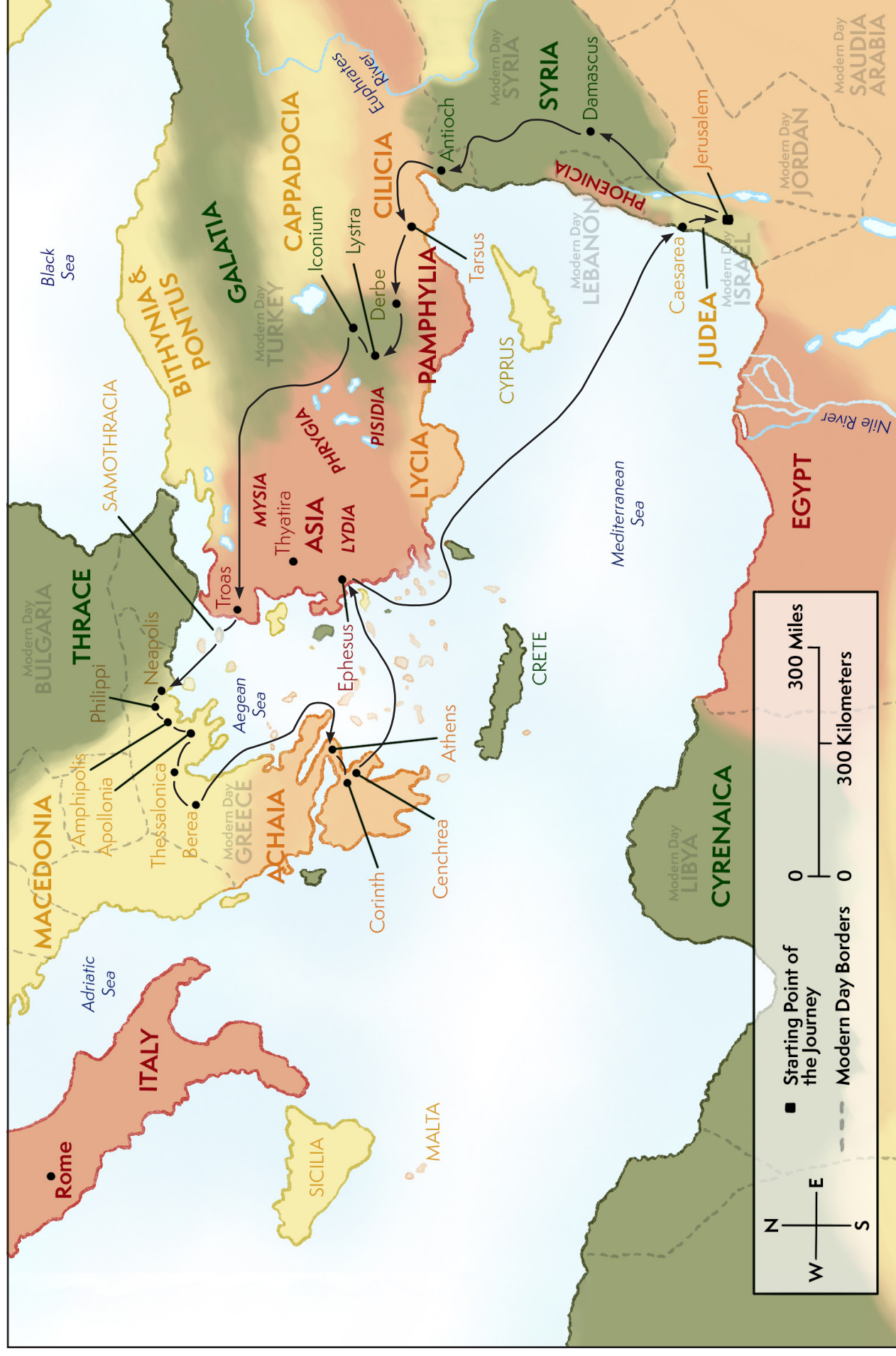


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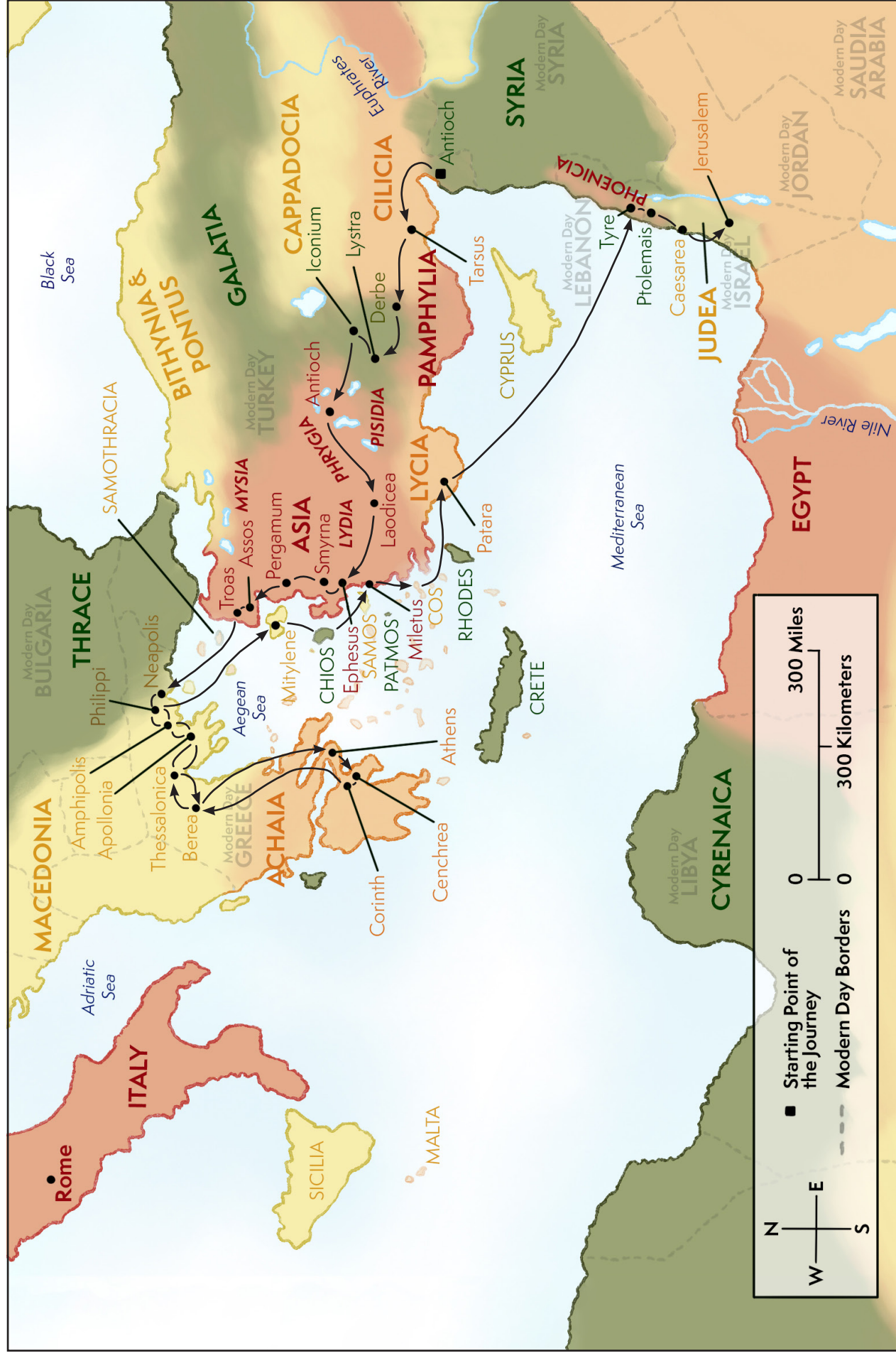
Paul's First Missionary Journey



Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Paul's Journey to Rome

