

***WEEKLY
MEDITATIONS***

VOLUME 1

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Introduction

Week 1

Meditation

God's Word is absolutely clear that prosperity and success are a direct result of meditating in the Word of God. **Joshua 1:8** says, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." In most cases, we emphasize the daily reading of God's Word. Certainly, a daily devotional time of reading God's Word and prayer is important, but is it enough? Meditation conveys the idea of chewing on something for a while, mulling it over in your mind, and digging deeper into its meaning. Meditation is not easy and requires time and discipline.

In our daily devotions, we often read a passage or devotional thought and then put it aside without any further thought. Each day we move on to something new. These meditations have been written and are designed to be read every day for a week. During that time, the reader is encouraged to think upon what is written and to consider other passages of scripture related to the topic. These meditations are not to replace daily devotions but are intended to be a supplement to daily devotions to assist in the process of learning to meditate.

In addition to meditating upon a thought for an entire week, it is also encouraged that the passage of scripture be memorized as part of the time of meditation. **Psalm 119:11** says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Hiding God's Word in the heart involves more than rote memorization. It includes meditating upon that which is being memorized. Take time this week to read **Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 119:15, 48, 78, 97, 99, & 148** and may the Lord bless you as you spend time meditating upon His Word.

Unit I

Titus 2:11-12

Week 2

Worldliness

Worldliness can be defined as living for the physical, the present, and the temporal. Worldliness is not an action, but an attitude. While some activities are worldly in nature because of their strong appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, **I John 2:16-17**, other activities become worldly when my attitude towards them places them above God. There is nothing wrong with playing games on a computer, playing sports, having a hobby, or working overtime, etc., but once my attitude towards such activity results in decisions that place the activity ahead of God or spiritual things, then the activity has become worldly.

Titus 2:11-12 reminds us, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” You cannot live godly in this present world unless you are willing to deny worldly lusts. Too many Christians are trying to live with one foot in the world and one foot in the church. As a result, they are double minded and unstable in all their ways. Read **James 1:8**.

In addition to living for the world, worldliness involves loving the world, **I John 2:15**. To the degree we love the world, we are a friend of the world. What does **James 4:4** say about those who are a friend of the world? **I Corinthians 11:23** warns us that if we live and love the world, we will also be condemned with the world. Oftentimes, God uses spiritual chastening to keep us from worldliness. What does **Hebrews 12:5-11** teach us about chastening? Discipline is never enjoyable, but it is always profitable, if we are willing to learn from it.

Haggai says, “Consider your ways.” Think about your favorite hobby or activity. How much time do you spend on it each week and how does that compare with the time you spend reading, studying, or memorizing the Word of God? What do your decisions say about your attitude? Are you guilty of being worldly?

Week 3

Denying Worldliness

In last week’s meditation, we learned that some activities become worldly when our attitude towards that activity results in decisions that

place the activity ahead of God. **Titus 2:11-12** says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” If we are to live godly in this present world, we must learn to deny ungodly and worldly lusts.

Ungodliness speaks of wickedness. Worldly refers to the things of this world and our desires for them as defined in **I John 2:15-17**. We are to deny any wicked thing that appeals to the lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes, or the pride of life. The key, however, is in the word denying. What does it mean to deny worldliness? The Greek word for deny means to disavow, reject, abnegate, or refuse. Webster in his 1828 dictionary defines deny as “not to afford or yield... to decline the gratification of appetites or desires; to refrain from; to abstain.” Saying no to the flesh is not easy. It requires a great deal of spiritual discernment, discipline, and strength which can only come from God. Perhaps the best way to help us understand what it means to deny worldliness is to consider two historical examples.

In 1923, Eric Liddell, a Scotsman, won the 100, the 220, and 440-yard races all in the same day to qualify for the 1924 Olympics in Paris as part of Great Britain’s Olympic team. The 100-meter race was one of the most important track events of the Olympics and Eric was one of the favorites to win. Eric bore the hopes, not only of Scotland, but of all Great Britain. When the Olympic schedule was released in January 1924, it was discovered that the heat races for the 100 would be held on Sunday, July 6. Despite great public pressure, Eric refused to race on the Lord’s Day, choosing instead to focus on the 200 and the 400-meter races. As a sprinter, Eric was considered one of the favorites in the 200, but not the longer 400. On Wednesday, July 9, Eric won the gold in the 200. On Friday, July 11, Eric was back on the track where he won the 400 as well. Almost a year later, June 27, 1925, Eric won the 100, the 220, and the 440-yard races at the Scottish AAA Championship, considered a showcase for the 1928 Olympic games. But to the great disappointment of Scotland and all of Great Britain, Eric would not be participating in the 1928 Olympics. A week after his final race, Eric was on his way to China to serve the Lord as a missionary.

In 1883, at the young age of 20, Billy Sunday became a member of the famed Chicago White Sox baseball team. He was one of the speediest

base runners and the most daring base stealer in all of baseball. Four years later, in 1887, Billy came to know Christ as his personal savior. While he continued to play professional baseball, he refused to play on Sunday. Four years later, in March 1891, Billy Sunday left professional baseball to become a full-time evangelist for his Lord.

Both men were gifted, successful and loved their sport. They were well known and well respected. Both faced extreme pressure and opposition for refusing to participate in sports on the Lord's Day, choosing instead to honor the Lord. As a result, they became choice vessels in the work of the Lord and impacted thousands for Christ.

Are you willing to deny worldly pleasures to serve God even in the midst of pressure from family and friends?

Week 4

Living Soberly

Titus 2:11-12 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Last week we looked at what it means to deny worldliness. This week we will shift our attention to how we should live in this present world. Titus begins by saying that we should live soberly.

The word sober means to be serious minded, grave, or solemn. It speaks of one's mental faculties and is often used in contrast to one who is under the influence of strong drink. Strong drink affects the mind and inhibits one's ability to think right. As Christians, we are to guard our thought life. **Romans 12:13** says that we are to “think soberly.” **Titus 2:6** admonishes the young men to be “sober minded.” In **I Peter 1:13** we are to “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober.”

The Bible has much to say about our thought life. **II Corinthians 10:4-5** reminds us that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Everything we say or do begins with a thought. If we think right, we will speak right and do right.

How then do we control our thought life and bring it into the obedience of Christ? Often our thought life is affected by the things we see and hear. To begin with, we must guard what we watch and listen to, making sure

they are things that are right and pleasing to God. As Christians, we need to be more selective in our viewing and listening habits, lest we fill our minds with ungodly thoughts. Then, we must focus our minds on the things of God by reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating upon the Word of God. **Joshua 1:8** “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” See also **Psalms 1:1-3**.

Many young people today are focused on having fun. They are living for the present without giving a lot of consideration to where today’s decisions will lead them. To be successful and prosperous, we must discipline our thought life, learning to think soberly in this present world. In what way might you need to change your manner of thought?

Week 5

Living Righteously

As we continue in our study of **Titus 2:11-12**, we move from living soberly to living righteously. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”

To be righteous is to be just or equitable in accordance with divine law. It has the idea of being in line with or straight on with the law, to be impartial, not leaning to one side or the other. By implication, if there is a right way to live, there must also be a wrong way to live. But how does one determine what is right or wrong?

We live in a world that hates absolutes. The world is constantly preaching that everything is relative. As believers we must remember that God’s Word is absolute. It is the inerrant, inspired Word of God which is to govern our lives. Righteous living is living in obedience to God’s Word.

Take a moment to read **Psalms 19:7-14**. Verse 11 reveals that God’s Word serves as a warning, and when obeyed, leads to great reward. How many times have you found yourself in a difficult situation, because you failed to listen to or heed a warning? **Psalms 119:105** “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Why do we need a lamp or a light? Because we are walking in darkness. Without the light of God’s Word, it is impossible to see clearly and thus live righteously. In every

decision we make, in every step we take, we need the wisdom and counsel of God's Word. Take a few moments to make a list of decisions you need to make and then, in addition to praying about those decisions, take some time to look for Biblical principles will guide your decision-making process.

Week 6

Living Godly

There have been many occasions when I have heard an adult comment about an individual or group of young people as being "such good kids." While I understand what they are saying, the truth is, it is an inaccurate assessment. **Romans 3:10,12,23** says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:... there is none that doeth good, no, not one... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." No matter how "good" a person may be, without Christ they have absolutely no goodness in them. They are totally depraved, totally corrupt. Our goal as church leaders, youth workers, and parents is not to raise "good kids," but to raise "godly kids."

Titus 2:11-12 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It is not enough to be a good person. God expects us to be godly, even in the midst of this present world. Regardless of the present state of affairs, as believers we are to live godly. In other words, godliness has nothing to do with our environment or circumstances. Godliness is not the outward appearance of a man, but the hidden man of the heart. If we are godly in the inner man, the outer man will manifest godliness, but without God in the inner man, the outer goodness of man is nothing more than a mask.

Godliness is living a life that is God-like. A life that reflects the character of God. It begins with having a heart for God that then manifests itself by walking in obedience to God's laws, commands, and precepts. Of course, we cannot be God-like unless we know what God is like. How do we get to know God? By spending time with God in His Word and in Prayer. Spend some time this week getting to know God. As you read, keep a journal of the characteristics of God that you find.

Unit II

Colossians 1:23

Week 7

Continuing

Colossians 1:23 says, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...” The word ‘continue,’ and its variations are found 195 times in scripture. The word continue itself is found 38 times. In **II Timothy 3:14-15** Paul said to Timothy, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The word continue has two distinct meanings. First it means to abide or remain in place for an indefinite period of time, to be steadfast, or constant. Second it means to protract or extend, to draw out, or persevere. In the context of Colossians 1:23, which definition do you believe God intended? The wording, “grounded and settled, and not moved away” indicates steadfastness.

Notice that we are to continue in the faith. **I Peter 5:9** says we are to resist the devil by being “stedfast in the faith.” Continuance or steadfastness is important, but it is essential that we continue in the right thing. Sometimes I meet people who are continuing or abiding in the wrong things. They are determined not to be moved, in spite of the fact they are being disobedient to God or not growing spiritually. What does Paul mean by the word faith? What was it that he preached and was a minister of? The answer is the gospel of Christ. Turn back and read **Galatians 1:6-7**. Paul was concerned that the believers would depart from the gospel that was preached unto them. In what ways might people today be guilty of not continuing in the faith or gospel of Christ?

May the Lord help us to live out **I Corinthians 15:58**, “...be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foreasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” What encouragement does this verse provide for steadfastness? In what areas have you been tempted to waver? What can you do to be steadfast?

Week 8

Grounded

Last week we began looking at **Colossians 1:23**, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...” We said that the word continue means to be steadfast and unmovable, abiding in place for an indefinite period of time. This week I would like to consider the word grounded. If we are to continue in the faith, we must be grounded. The Greek word translated grounded means to lay a basis for. It speaks of a foundation. Anything that is of lasting value must be built on a solid foundation.

Take a moment to read **Matthew 7:24-27**. This is a well-known children’s story and song. What was the difference between the two houses? What happened to the house that had a poor foundation? The house that stood in the midst of the storm had a solid foundation.

Paul also emphasizes this in **Ephesians 3:17-19**, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” In this passage Paul links being grounded with knowledge. What keeps us steadfast during the storms of life? Being grounded in the knowledge of God and His Word. It is our knowledge of the promises, principles, and precepts of God that provide a sure foundation during the storms of life, and this knowledge only comes through the study of God’s Word. If you want to be grounded in your Christian life, you must learn to be a faithful student of the Word of God.

Week 9

Settled

We live in unsettling times. Life is full of uncertainties which can at times create fear and panic. As believers, we are to be grounded in the Word of God and settled. The Greek word for settled in **Colossians 1:23** means to be immovable. A person who has a solid foundation cannot be easily moved.

In **I Peter 5:10**, Peter uses similar language when speaking of our response to trials. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” The word Peter used, translated

settle, means to lay a basis for, as in a foundation, to ground. If we continue in the Word, being grounded in the Word, we will not be easily shaken or moved by the unsettling trials and difficulties of life.

In **Psalm 56:3**, David says, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.” Notice verses 1 and 2. David was involved in warfare. As Christians, we must also recognize that we are daily involved in spiritual conflict and warfare. Then in verse 11, David says, “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid...” Notice the change in order. In verse 3, fear led to trust. In verse 11, trust prevented fear. What made the difference. Read verse 9. David said, “...this I know...God is for me.” What you know about God can make all the difference in the world. Where does this knowledge come from? The Word of God. When the circumstance of life seem overwhelming, when fear begins to grip your heart, when life becomes unsettling, remember the promises of God. He will not forsake those who trust in Him.

What are some things in your life that are unsettling, that bring you fear? Can you think of some verse of Scripture that can help settle your fear? Take time to meditate upon and memorize such verses. Use these weapons verses as part of your arsenal to overcome such unsettling times.

Unit III

The Ten Commandments

Week 10

Commandment #1

April 1st, also known as April Fool's Day, is a day when people, in a spirit of fun, play pranks on one another in an attempt to "fool" them. The term fool is used, because it is hoped that the person being fooled, lacks the wisdom and discernment to recognize they are being deceived. The Bible has much to say about the fool, especially in Proverbs, and gives many warnings against being a fool.

The greatest fool is found in **Psalm 14:1** "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." and again in **Psalm 53:1** "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good." The greatest fool is the one who denies the existence of God. God has revealed Himself to all men through creation, through His Word and through His Son, so that all men are without excuse.

Notice that the fool denies God in His heart. It is not an outward denial, but an inward denial. Is it possible to be religious outwardly, while denying the true God inwardly? In II Timothy 3 Paul warns Timothy about the false teachers of the last days. He gives a list of characteristics of men in the last days. Read **II Timothy 3:1-7**. Notice especially verse 5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." Verse 7 says these individuals are "Ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

In **Exodus 20:1-17** and again in **Deuteronomy 5:6-21** we have recorded the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses and the children of Israel. The first commandment is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There is only one true and living God, the God of the Bible. All other "gods" are only gods because we give them an exalted position in our lives. Anything that we place above the true God is a false god in our lives. False gods not only include man made idols and statues, but also money, business, and pleasure. When we place other things ahead of God, we are guilty of idolatry and spiritual adultery. In essence, we are playing the part of the fool. Take time this week to do a spiritual inventory. What things in your life are or have the potential to be more important to you

than God Himself? If you have played the part of the fool, take time to confess your sin and ask God to help you live the first commandment in your life.

Week 11

Commandment #2

The first two commandments go hand in hand. Read **Exodus 20:3-6**. Now turn to and read **Deuteronomy 5:7-10**. The first commandment emphasizes the preeminence of God. In **Matthew 22:36**, Jesus said the first and great commandment is “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” And again, in **Mark 12:30** “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” God demands exclusive affection. He even tells us that He is a jealous God, not willing to share His glory. The first priority is to love God with ALL your heart. A heart that is not wholly set on loving God, is a divided heart and one that will soon turn to idols.

In the Old Testament, these idols were images that represented and replaced the one true and living God. **Psalms 115:3-8** says, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” Idolatry rejects the invisible for the visible. Faith requires us to trust in things not seen. Why do men turn from God to idols? Because of a lack of faith. The root sin is unbelief.

Many Americans consider themselves refined to worship idols, but in **Ezekiel 14:3-8** God condemned the men of Israel for setting up idols in their heart. Herein lies the greatest danger. Anything that we put ahead of God is essentially an idol of the heart. Why is the sin of idolatry so dangerous? Because the consequences can affect a family for four generations. The consequences of setting up idols in your heart, will be reaped not only in your life, but in the lives of your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

I enjoy family history. In my own family I am aware of siblings, who grew up under the same teaching, some followed God, some did not. It is amazing to see the difference in their families when you come to the third

and fourth generations. **Galatians 6:7** is true, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” What idols do you need to tear down in your life?

Week 12

Commandment #3

The third commandment also comes with a strong warning. Read **Exodus 20:7** and **Deuteronomy 5:11**. Taking God’s name in vain is “to use God’s name in a light or careless way.” I like to think of it as using God’s name in a thoughtless way. Many people use God’s name flippantly without giving it any thought. A popular example of this today is OMG, Oh My God. When we use this expression, we are invoking the name of God, usually without any thought about God. It is just an expression, but God condemns all those who misuse His name as guilty.

Often, when we think of taking God’s name in vain, we think of swearing, cursing and profanity. Certainly, these are all forms of taking God’s name in vain. Most believers would never think to use God’s name in a profane way, yet they will frequently use expressions that sound less offensive as a substitute. These are called Euphemisms. While they may not sound as harsh or profane, they mean the same thing. Here are some examples: darn for dam, which is an abbreviation for damnation, gosh darn for God followed by the word dam, and gees or gee wiz for Jesus.

Unfortunately, the use of profanity and cursing is often interpreted by young people as a symbol of strength or a rite of passage. We even refer to it as “adult language.” The reality, however, is that the use of such language is a sign of weakness and immaturity. Here again we see the lies and deception of Satan. Beware, lest you fall prey to this subtle, but dangerous trap. **Psalms 130:20b** says those who take God’s name in vain are the enemies of God. **Matthew 12:36** warns that we will give an account for every idle word that we speak, but there is a greater danger.

Matthew 12:34 “...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” The greater danger is, that the words you speak reveal what is in your heart. Taking God’s name in vain reveals a heart that is abundantly out of sync with God. What do your words say about the condition of your heart and your relationship with the Lord?

Week 13

Commandment #4

The fourth commandment is the last of the ten commandments that deals with our relationship with God. The last six commandments deal with our relationship with other people. Read **Exodus 20:8-11** and **Deuteronomy 5:4-15**. The sabbath day was the seventh day of the week. It was a day sanctified or set aside for rest and worship. It was to be hallowed or held in reverence. No work was to be done on the sabbath. Obviously, there were some deeds that had to be done every day, such as feeding the animals or milking the cows and goats, but things that were not necessary, were not to be done on the sabbath.

The foundation for the principle behind the sabbath day is found in the creation account, found in Genesis 1 & 2. God did not rest on the seventh day because He was tired, but to establish a principle for men to follow. In the New Testament, worship was moved from the seventh day to the first day of the week in recognition of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week. We now refer to it as the Lord's day. While the day of the week has changed, the principle remains the same. There are six days in which we are to work and one day set aside for rest and worship.

Unfortunately, Christianity as a whole has abandoned this principle and thus rebelled against the commandment of God. For many years, America operated under what were known as the blue laws. These laws restricted non-essential businesses from being open on Sunday. Since the world sees no need for a day of worship, man invented the weekend as a time of recreation. Many sporting events were scheduled on the weekend when people were free from work to attend or watch such activities. As mobility increased, people used the weekends as an opportunity to travel and "get away." Businesses soon realized that a greater profit could be made if they were open seven days a week. All of this led to an easing of the blue law restrictions to the point that most, if not all, have been abolished. The most recent push has been to open Sundays for hunting.

I Samuel 2:30 "...them that honour me I will honour..." As a boy growing up on a farm, there were certain tasks that had to be done every day. These included hunting the eggs, milking the cows, and feeding the animals. But there were many tasks that were not necessary. We owned and operated a road-side vegetable business and helped put hay in the barn for a number of dairy farmers. Much of farming is dictated by the weather, but we purposed that regardless of the favorability of the weather or the

work that needed to be done, we would not pick any vegetables or help make hay on Sunday. Sunday was set aside for rest and worship. For this, we were blessed and honored by God.

The misuse and abuse of the Lord's Day has reached magnanimous proportions. I personally believe that many difficulties we face today are in part, judgments of God against man for not keeping the Lord's Day. Even many Christians have no difficulty enjoying a variety of forms of entertainment and recreation on the Lord's Day. As a result, we have witnessed the power of the hand of God as He has brought the sports world, the business world, the entertainment world, the educational world, and the financial world almost to a complete stop via the coronavirus pandemic. Even the religious world has been crippled by the coronavirus. I wonder how many believers truly miss not being able to gather for corporate worship? As you study the scriptures you will find that the solution to any pestilence was repentance, a turning from the world to God. What changes do you think need to happen in America and more specifically in your life concerning the Lord's Day?

Week 14

Commandment #4, Part II

Before moving on to the fifth commandment, I would like to continue our thoughts on the fourth commandment. The fourth commandment deals with keeping the Sabbath or honoring the Lord's Day. As I was meditating upon this commandment last week, this question came to mind, "Why do most people go to church?" I believe there are two main reasons why we go to church, one is social and the other is spiritual. At this point I am not counting those who go because their parents make them, because those individuals usually quit as soon as they can, or they continue based on one of the two former reasons. By the way, the same two reasons are at the root of the decision-making process when choosing a church.

Experience has taught me that many people, when looking for a church, often base their decision upon the social aspect of the ministry, more than the spiritual aspect. People generally look for a church where there are others their age or in their social group. They may not agree with everything the church believes or stands for, but they are willing to conform as long as their social need is met. Unfortunately, the social aspect of the church, while important, is not the primary factor in selecting or attending a church.

When one's primary reasons for going to church are social based, when the gathering together is taken away, church itself, ceases to be significant. If, however, one's primary reasons for going to church are spiritual, then even when we are unable to meet together, they will still pursue spiritual things, taking advantage of whatever spiritual resources are made available to them. Take a moment to read **Hebrews 10:22-29**. Verse 25 admonishes us to gather together as a church body, but you need to read the entire passage to understand the context and significance of the verse.

Verse 22 begins with the admonition to draw near to God. Verses 22-23 both deal with the matter of our faith. Our faith is the basis for our gathering together in verses 24-25. Verses 26-29 deal with the consequences for despising the principles of verses 24-25. Verse 26 teaches that when we forsake the church, we are sinning willfully, and we can expect a certain fearful judgment.

We have been unable to gather together now for six weeks, and yet I still have people asking me how to find the webcast services, which tells me they haven't "been to church" in the past six weeks. If we are truly motivated by the spiritual aspect of church, we will make every effort to "attend," even if it is only via an on-line webcast. I realize that "attending" on-line is not the same as physically attending church, but there are some things you can do to make it spiritually profitable.

1. Treat it like a real service. Plan a specific time to watch the webcast as a family. Make sure everyone is up and "dressed" for church. Keep in mind that you are worshipping the same God. If attending church requires a degree of respect, the same applies at home, even if there is no one else present. We are still entering into worship and we should do so with an attitude of reverence and respect.
2. Remove all distractions. Turn off any electronic devices you do not need for the service. Put away all food, drink, toys, etc. If you would not have it at church, put it away before church begins at home.
3. Have your Bible, writing utensil, and notebook ready when the service begins. Take notes just like you would in church.
4. Participate in the service. Pray along with the Pastor and sing along with the hymns. If a copy of the music is available, have it ready before the service begins. What you get out of the service, depends entirely upon what you are willing to put into it.

Week 15

Commandment #5

With the fifth commandment, we transition from the commandments dealing with our relationship to God, to the commandments dealing with our relationship to one another. The first of these later six commandments begins in the home, for it is here that we learn the lessons of obedience and submission to authority, which ultimately determine our ability to get along with one another and function in society.

The fifth commandment is found in **Exodus 20:12** and **Deuteronomy 5:16**. It deals with the matter of respect and obedience toward parental authority. It is also found in **Ephesians 6:1-3**. Take time to read all three passages before continuing. Then notice with me three truths concerning this commandment.

1. It is a Command. This may seem obvious, yet how often do children, or young people seek to justify themselves in the face of disobedience to their parents? It is easy to reason why we don't have to obey, but to do so is to fall prey to Satan's lies and deceptions. It may be easy to justify, but it is never right. Disobedience is always sin.
2. It is a Forever Command. At no point in scripture, does God ever lift this command. Sometimes people believe that when they become an adult, they no longer have to listen to their parents. While our relationship with our parents changes as we mature and move out on our own, we never outgrow our responsibility to honor them. In our lesson material, the author says, "This commandment has a time limitation. The day comes to most people when father and mother die." While I understand what the author is saying, I strongly disagree. I believe we have a responsibility to honor our parents, even after they have passed. Paul makes it clear, that when we are living at home, under our parent's roof, we honor them through our obedience, but there are many ways in which we show honor and respect. What are some ways that an adult child can still show honor and respect to their parents? How can they show disrespect?
3. It is a Command with a Promise. God promises blessing and long life to those who honor and obey their parents. Why do you think God would attach a promise to this commandment? God instituted the home and He has ordained the order in the home. Read **Ephesians 5:21-33**. Consider how many verses are given for instruction to parents and how they are to work together in comparison to how many

verses are directed toward children. Why does God deal with husbands and wives before addressing the children?

The matter of obedience in the home is very important. Unfortunately, we are living in a day when many parents are at a loss for how to discipline when it comes to teaching respect and obedience. In II Timothy 3, Paul addresses the last days, giving us a description of these perilous times. How does verse 2 relate to the fifth commandment? Take time today to let your parents know how much you appreciate them and remember that Mother's Day and Father's Day are just around the corner.

Week 16

Commandment #6

The sixth commandment you might think is obvious, "Thou shalt not kill." Furthermore, it is probably a command you think you have never broken and probably never will. But before you write this commandment off as a no-brainer, let's consider a few thoughts from scripture.

In our study of "Sin, Its Paralyzing Venom," we have been studying the works of the flesh, listed in Galatians 5:19-21. These works of the flesh represent four areas of sin, moral sins, religious sins, relational sins, and social sins. Murder is listed as the first of three representing the social sins of the flesh.

When we think of murder, we most often think of the taking of a life, physical murder, but in lesson 23 of our study, we learned that man is a triune being, body, soul, and spirit. As such, there are three ways to kill a person, body (physical murder), soul and spirit. Let's look at these three more closely.

First, there is physical murder. This is the taking of a human life. Physical murder permeates our society, from domestic violence to mass shootings to the abortion of millions of babies. It should be noted, however, that the taking of a life, while always a serious matter, is not always a form of murder. The Bible clearly teaches that there are occasions when the penalty for a crime against society is to be punished by death. We refer to this as capital punishment or the death penalty. Likewise, the taking of a life in warfare is not murder. Warfare is cruel and leads to many deaths, but a life taken in battle is not the same as murder. Taking a life in the defense of one's own life (self-defense) is not murder. Every life is precious because every life represents a living eternal soul and the taking of a life is serious, even when justified.

Second, there is soul murder. The soul speaks of one's mental and emotional being. I John 3:15 "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer..." We can murder someone without taking their physical life when we murder their soul through our tongues, our attitudes, and our actions. We have the power to say and do things that can destroy the emotional and mental well-being of others. Such action is just as cruel and deadly as physical murder.

Third, there is spiritual murder. Spiritual murder is committed when we say or do something that hinders another from coming to Christ. Cults and false teachers deceive many into believing lies that ultimately condemn their followers to hell. As Christians, we can lose our testimony with behavior that causes people to stumble spiritually and perish in their sin. Simply failing to warn others about the penalty of sin and the necessity of salvation can result in spiritual death. **Matthew 23:13,15** – Jesus gave strong warning to those who hinder others from entering into the kingdom of God.

Which of the three forms of murder do you think is the most serious and why? In what ways are you guilty of murder? What steps can you take today to restore a person you may have harmed?

Week 17

Commandment #7

The seventh commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14 & Deuteronomy 5:18). Adultery is an intimate physical relationship between a man and a woman outside the bounds of marriage or between two individuals other than a husband and wife. Another term found in scripture is fornication. Both adultery and fornication refer to immoral sin.

To understand the seriousness of this sin, we must understand it in the context of marriage. Marriage is the union of one man and one woman in holy matrimony as husband and wife. Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Marriage is a union whereby two become one. Read **Matthew 19:5-6** and **Mark 10:7-9**. When two individuals are married, who joins them together? Man is not to undo, what God has done. Another key passage is **Ephesians 5:22-33**. In this passage, Paul is dealing with the marital relationship. Notice verse 31. Does it look familiar?

Now look closely at verse 32. What is marriage a picture of? It is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. When a person is saved, they are married to Christ, they become part of the bride of Christ. When we turn from God to pursue the things of the world, we are guilty of spiritual adultery, James 4:4. Just as we are to remain true to Christ, so to, a husband and wife are to remain true to one another.

Turn to **I Corinthians 6:15-20**. As believer's our body is the temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Our body is no longer ours, to do with as we please. We belong to God, being purchased with His blood. When we partake of immoral sin, we are using that which belongs to God to satisfy our own sinful desires. Verse 18 makes it clear, not only are we sinning against God, but we are also sinning against our own body.

One last passage, **Matthew 5:27-28**. In this passage, Jesus deals with the root of the sin, the heart. We can be guilty of adultery long before the actual physical sin takes place. Remember, our actions are born out of our heart. Proverbs 4:23 "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." How do such immoral thoughts enter the heart? Through the things we see. We must guard our eyes. Job 31:3 "I made a covenant with mine eyes: why then should I think upon a maid?" Pornography and other forms of suggestive material allow wicked thoughts to enter the heart and mind. This can then lead us into the depths of sin. Are there viewing habits in your life that need to change? What about your relationships? Are you maintaining pure thoughts and actions? What steps can you take now, to prevent you from yielding to immoral temptations?

Week 18

Commandment #8

The eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal." (Exodus 20:15 & Deuteronomy 5:19). What does it mean to steal? Stealing is taking that which does not belong to you. We most often think of stealing in terms of material things, but we can also steal a person's joy or happiness and even rob them of their peace of mind through our words, attitudes, or actions. In addition to taking that which does not belong to us, stealing can also speak of not giving that which rightfully belongs to another. If you borrow something and do not return it, you are guilty of stealing. If you waste time at work, you are guilty of stealing from your employer because you are not doing what you are being paid to do. In Malachi 3:8, God

condemned the children of Israel for robbing God when they failed to give their tithes and offerings to the Lord.

Do you remember the story of Robin Hood? He supposedly stole from the rich to give to the poor. Is it okay to steal from those who have more than enough, especially if you are in need? Stealing is stealing, regardless of the motive. What about cheating on a test (stealing answers) or not paying your taxes? When we fail to pay our debts, we are guilty of stealing. Let us consider three passages of scripture.

First, **Leviticus 9:11-13**. How many of the ten commandments do you see in this passage? Note the sins identified with stealing. How many can you find? I see at least five, dealing falsely, lying, defrauding, robbing, and withholding wages.

Second, **Romans 13:8-9**. In this passage, Paul is summarizing the purpose of the law. Notice the last phrase in verse 9. The last six commandments deal with our relationship to others. When we break any one of these commandments, we are not fulfilling the law or loving others as we ought.

Third, **Ephesians 4:28**. In this passage, Paul admonishes us to put off the old man and the corrupt deeds of the flesh. From verses 25-31 Paul lists five sins that we are to put off. Can you find them? According to verse 28, instead of using our hands to steal, what are we to do with our hands? Working is the opposite of stealing. When we fail to do an honest day's work, we are guilty of stealing.

In what ways are you guilty of stealing, from your parents, at school, or from God? Do you give your parents the honor and respect they deserve? Do you do your best at school? Do you listen to your teachers? Do you spend time with God in prayer and studying your Bible? When you go to church, do you listen, pay attention, and participate? Are you guilty of robbing God of thanksgiving and praise? The sin of stealing is born out of selfishness. Anytime you are being selfish, you are guilty of stealing.

Week 19

Commandment #9

Exodus 20:16 & Deuteronomy 5:20, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." To bear false witness is to lie. Lying is the opposite of telling the truth. Lying can be disguised under a number of other sins including slander, gossip, deceit, or falsehood, but lying is still lying and

it is a sin. Sometimes we try and differentiate between small lies and big lies. Other times we try and justify our reason for having to lie or we try and justify our lie by mixing it with truth, but no matter what our reason or how it is presented, lying is still lying and it is a sin.

Where does lying originate? **John 8:44** – Satan is the father of all lies. Satan is behind every lie. He cannot tell the truth because there is no truth in him. In Genesis 3, Satan deceived Eve by lying to her. Is it no wonder that God hates lying? **Proverbs 6:16-19** – The second thing on the list of what God hates is a lying tongue. The sixth thing on the list is a false witness that speaketh lies. **Revelation 21:8, 27** – What does God say will happen to all liars? Where will they spend eternity?

In contrast to Satan, we have God. If Satan is a liar and there is no truth in Him, God would be the exact opposite. **Titus 1:2** and **Hebrews 6:18** reveal that God cannot lie. It is an impossibility. In Psalm 31:5 He is called the Lord God of truth. Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Truthfulness is part of God’s character. If God could lie, He would not be God.

What application can we make to our own lives? In Psalm 119:30 David said, “I have chosen the way of truth.” The fact is, when we lie, we do so by choice. Every lie is the result of a conscious decision. No one can make you lie, not even Satan. When you lie, you do so by your own personal choice. In what ways are you guilty of lying? Who have you lied to recently? What should you do to make it right with God and man? Ask God to help you be truthful and when you do lie, be quick to confess it and make it right.

Week 20

Commandment #10

Exodus 20:17 and **Deuteronomy 5:21** bring us to the tenth and final commandment in this list, known as the Ten Commandments. The abbreviated version of this commandment is, “Thou shalt not covet...” Exodus lists 6 things that we are not to covet. Deuteronomy lists 7 things. What is missing from the list in Exodus? Of course, both verses end with the admonition not to covet “any thing that is thy neighbour’s.” The word covet means to desire earnestly to obtain. It is an inordinate desire to have or to possess. In the materialistic world in which we live, it is very easy to want what others have. It might be a nice house, a new car, or the latest

technology. For young people it can be as simple as wanting a toy or game that your friends have. In Luke 12:15, Jesus said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

The sin of covetousness can lead a person to make unwise decisions. In today’s society, where credit is easily obtainable, covetousness leads many to overextend themselves financially, thus incurring unnecessary debt. Covetousness is akin to the sin of pride. As such they are root sins that lead to other sins. What sins might covetousness lead to? How about stealing or dishonesty?

The opposite of covetousness is contentment. Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have...” When a person covets what they do not have, it is because they are not content with what they do have. Are you content with what you have? Are you content with the clothes you have and the food your family provides? If you are constantly complaining that you have nothing to wear or there is nothing to eat, you are guilty of covetousness. Read what Paul told Timothy in **I Timothy 6:6-10**. Contentment leads to godliness, while covetousness leads to many sorrows.

Perhaps you feel that your covetousness is justified. Perhaps you feel that you need or deserve certain things that you do not have. Notice Paul’s attitude in Philippians 4:11, “...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” The heart of man is naturally covetous, but contentment is something that we must learn. In what ways might God be teaching you contentment? How is learning to be content able to give us victory over covetousness?

Unit IV

Psalm 37:1-9

Week 21

Fret Not

This is the first of a series of meditations on Psalm 37. Take a moment to read **Psalm 37:1-9**. This is a rich passage with lots of spiritual nuggets to meditate upon. We will begin with the first two words, Fret not. How many times does this phrase appear in this passage?

The Hebrew word for fret means to grow warm, to increase in intensity. We often think of it in terms of needless worry or to be anxious. Philippians 4:6 says, “Be careful [or anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” What things cause you to be anxious or to worry? How often are these circumstances beyond your control? Do the things you worry about actually come to pass?

In this passage, all three instances of the phrase, fret not, relate to evil doers or wicked men. In essence we are not to worry or become anxious about the ways or prosperity of the wicked. In II Corinthians 10:12, Paul warns us not to fall into the snare of comparing ourselves to others. “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Why are we not to worry or become angry with the wicked?

Read verses 1-2 again. We are not to fret because of evil doers, because they shall be cut down like the grass. Their end shall come suddenly upon them. Proverbs 6:15, speaking of the wicked, says, “Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.” Read verses 8-9. The warning here is slightly different. We are not to be influenced by wicked men to do evil. We must be careful not to yield to peer pressure. Don’t worry about what others think. Again, we see that evil doers shall be cut off.

Now go back and read verse 7. Sometimes it appears that the wicked are prosperous. This can lead to envy in the heart of the believer. Turn and read **Psalm 73:2-22**. In verses 2-16 David was struggling with the prosperity of the wicked. It can be hard for the believer who is struggling, to trust God, when the ungodly seem to be dwelling in prosperity, but verses 17-22 put it into a proper perspective. The key verse is verse 17.

While the wicked may prosper in this life, their eternal destiny is one of pain, suffering and torment. As believers, we may not have a lot in this life, but we will enjoy the riches of heaven for all eternity. In verse 21, David confesses that he was grieved and pricked or convicted for the loss. As a believer, what should our attitude be toward wicked, ungodly men?

Week 22

Trust in the Lord

We come to the second command in Psalm 37, **Psalm 37:3**. Trust in the Lord and do good. The Hebrew word for trust means to be confident in or to be sure as in a refuge. Psalm 46:1, God is a refuge for us. Psalm 91:4, “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust...” To be confident means to trust or rely in. It speaks of a firm belief in the integrity, stability, or veracity (truthfulness) of another. Is Jesus Christ your refuge? Do you have complete confidence in the integrity or trustworthiness of God’s Word? Do you consider God’s Word to be absolute truth and if so, how does it make a difference in the way you live and the decisions you make? It is not enough to profess faith in Christ, to trust in the Lord is to place oneself completely in His hands, depending entirely upon Him for direction and sustenance.

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” In this passage, trusting in the Lord is contrasted with leaning upon one’s own understanding. Do you make decisions based upon your understanding or upon the Word of God? How do you determine what you watch and the places you go? How do you decide how to dress or who to spend time with? Too often we go through life making decisions without any thoughtful consideration of what would please God. We fail to acknowledge Him and thus we wander without any clear direction in life.

The psalmist goes on to say that we are to do good. The Bible is clear, however, that any perceived goodness apart from Christ is vanity. Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:10-12 teach that there is none that doeth good, no not one. That is, apart from Christ, all our goodness is as filthy rags. True goodness can only flow from a heart that is wholly trusting in the Lord.

Some might argue that to trust in the Lord, denying self, causes one to miss out on the pleasures of life. This is a lie of Satan. In Psalm 37:3, we see that trusting in the Lord leads to true blessing. Dwelling and living off

the land speaks of God's blessing and provision that leads to contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment. The pleasures of life are temporary at best. The blessings of God are eternal. Don't settle for Satan's cheap imitations. Seek the true blessings of God by trusting in the Lord and obeying His Word. What are some of the blessings that come from living wholly for God?

Week 23

Delight in the Lord

Psalm 37:4 is a verse that is often misunderstood. Many Christians believe this verse teaches that if we delight in the Lord, He will give us what we want. That is not what this verse is teaching. The key to understanding this verse is to recognize that when a person delights in the Lord, the Lord becomes the desire of their heart. In other words, when we delight in the Lord, the Lord gives Himself to us. It is in fact a description of the life of a true believer.

C. H. Spurgeon, when commenting on this verse, said, "Ungodly persons and mere professors never look on faith as a joyful thing; to them it is service, duty, or necessity, but never pleasure or delight. If they attend to religion at all, it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men that no two words in their language stand farther apart than holiness and delight." What about you? Does this describe your attitude toward church, God, or religion? Do you see it merely as a duty or an obligation? God wants our faith to be a source of joy. Not just in our gathering together, but in our worship of Him. Do you take joy or delight in spending time with the Lord in your personal devotional life or in corporate worship?

Psalm 1:2 says of the blessed man, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." The blessed man is the happy man. Psalm 40:8 "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." As you consider the future direction of your life, to what degree do you consider the will of God? Seeking to do the will of God ought to be our highest priority, our single goal. Yet many people plan their days and their life without any consideration for the will of God.

Seven times in Psalm 119, the psalmist mentions delighting in God's Word (Read Psalm 119 and see if you can find them all.). To delight in the Lord is to delight in His Word and in doing His Will. Only then will

our heart be in tune with God and only then will we find true joy and satisfaction. Don't settle for the Satan's and the world's cheap imitations. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Learn to delight in the Lord.

Week 24

Commit Thy Way

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you didn't know what to do or which way to go? I'm sure we have all been there at one point or another. When we come to a point of indecision, the psalmist gives us an answer. Read **Psalm 37:5**. The word commit means to roll onto another. When you don't know what to do, roll your burden onto the Lord, take your hands off, and leave it there. Trust the Lord to work it out and He will. The Hebrew word translated commit, is the same word found in **Proverbs 16:3**. What are we to commit to the Lord in this verse?

Why should we commit our ways and our works unto the Lord? It is human tendency to want to be in control, to be independent of the help of others. We want to be able to work things out and do it ourselves, but God wants us to learn to depend on Him. If you are a child of God, you can rest assured that God will put you in difficult situations in order to teach you to trust Him. God is continually working to develop and grow your faith in Him.

To bring it to pass means to accomplish, perform, fulfill, etc. When we try and do things on our own, independent of God, God will frustrate our path. But when we turn it over to Him, He will work to accomplish that which we cannot, for His glory and our good. The catch is, God doesn't work according to man's ways. God may not do it the way you think it should be done. He may not arrive at the end goal you had in mind, but don't worry. God's way is always best. Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." When you allow God to dictate the way, the end result is always better. Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." God always works in accordance with His purpose, for our good. Proverbs 3:5-7 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise

in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.”

What areas of your life are you trying to control or manipulate? Instead of trying to get what you want, take it to the Lord in prayer. Be patient and wait on the Lord. Trust Him to give you an answer that is best.

Week 25

Rest in the Lord

Read **Psalm 37:7**. The command here is to rest in the Lord. The Hebrew word for rest means to stop, to cease, to be quiet, to be still, or to wait. The same Hebrew word is found in **Psalm 4:4** and is translated, be still. We live in a very fast paced society where everyone is always busy. Long gone are the days when family and friends would gather in the parlor or on the front porch, just to sit and visit. Consider with me two applications of this verse.

First, there is the need to rest from our labor. In Genesis 1 and 2, we read the account of creation. In Genesis 2:2 it says, “And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.” In so doing, God established the principle that one day out of the week is to be set aside for rest and worship. In the law God established the seventh day as the Sabbath. Take a moment to read the following verses, **Exodus 31:15**, **Exodus 35:2**, **Leviticus 23:3**, and **Leviticus 23:32**. These are just a few of the verses that deal with the Sabbath as a day of rest. In the old testament, the Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. Following the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week, Sunday became the Lord’s Day, replacing the Saturday Sabbath, but the principle remained the same. For many years, our country followed this principle, which was generally enforced by what were known as the blue laws. Non-essential businesses were closed on the Lord’s day, allowing people to rest and worship. As believers, we would do well to practice this principle even though the world has cast it aside. In what ways do you honor or dishonor the Lord’s Day?

Second, there is the need to rest or wait upon the Lord. There is a great danger in running ahead of God. This principle is found in **Psalm 46:10**. This verse literally means to take your hands off. We discussed the matter of taking your hands off in last week’s meditation on committing it to the Lord. It is easy to become impatient and to take matters into our own hands, especially when it seems like the Lord isn’t

doing anything to answer our prayers. God does not work according to man's timetable. We must learn to be still, to rest in the Lord, to wait patiently for Him. In what areas of your life do you need to learn to exercise patience? Are you truly resting in the Lord and waiting for Him? Are you trusting God to work, or have you become impatient and taken matters into your own hands? Read the second the second half of **Psalm 37:9**. Good things come to those who wait upon the Lord.

Week 26

Cease from Anger

This week we come to the sixth and final command that we are going to meditate upon in Psalm 37. Verse 8 begins with three simple words, "Cease from anger." It sounds simple enough, but the temper and its corresponding emotions can be very difficult to control. Turn in your Bible to **Ephesians 4:22-24**. In his epistle to the church at Ephesus, the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to write about the new life in Christ. The word conversation in verse 22 speaks of our manner of living. It includes but goes far beyond the words we speak. The old life, the life of sin, the life prior to Christ, is totally corrupt, because it is lived according to the lusts of the flesh. These lusts are deceitful as men seek to find joy, happiness, and satisfaction in the things of the world. As believers, verse 23 tells us that we need to think differently. There has to be a change in our mind concerning how we live and what we consider to be important. Whereas the old life is characterized by corruption and deceit, the new life in Christ is characterized by righteousness and true holiness. Righteousness speaks of the outer life, the life that man sees. Holiness speaks of the inner life, the life that God sees.

In this renewal process by which we put off the old man and put on the new man, we come to our topic in **verses 26 and 31**. At first glance, the first three words of verse 26 seem to contradict to our text in Psalm 37:8, but verse 31 clearly states that anger is to be put away from us. Notice, however, the context of verse 26. Paul understands that from time to time we all experience anger. We were created by God with the ability to be angry. Anger is a part of the nature or character of God. There are many references in the Bible to the anger of the Lord or the wrath of God, so the emotion of anger is not sin itself. We sin when we yield to or allow our anger to control us. We sin when we don't deal with our anger, choosing instead to brew over it, allowing it to stew. Not dealing with

anger, gives the Devil a foothold in our life. Anger can lead to other sins as it takes control in our life. Anger can lead to bitterness, wrath, and malice. Anger can lead a person to say cruel and mean things.

How then, do we cease from anger? How do we overcome anger? Paul says we are not to let the sun go down upon our wrath, but how is that accomplished? Read **verse 32**. Instead of being angry, we are to practice forgiveness. Forgiving can be hard to do, but forgiveness is not based on the nature of character of the one we are forgiving, but rather on the truth that we have been forgiven by God. We don't deserve God's forgiveness, but He forgives us just the same. Is there someone in your life you need to forgive? Has anger led to a root of bitterness in your life? Do you have trouble controlling your temper? Anger is typical of a hard heart. We need to demonstrate kindness out of a tender heart. Ask God to help you learn to cease from anger.

Unit V

Romans 12:1-2

Week 27

Beseeching the Brethren

For the next few weeks, we will be meditating upon a familiar passage of scripture, **Romans 12:1-2**. The word beseech is a word that is little used in today's vocabulary. The Greek word for beseech means to call, to invite, or to invoke. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines beseech as to entreat, to implore, or to pray with urgency. Paul is not simply asking a question or making a suggestion, he is pleading. There is an urgency in his words that correlates with and communicates the importance of the message to follow. The word beseech is found 63 times in scripture. It would be a profitable study to look up each of these references to discover the message that follows. Very often, it is a message of great importance.

Notice also to whom Paul is speaking. He is speaking to brethren. Those who have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ. These are believers and thus brethren in the Lord. The message that is to follow is not for the lost. It is not for those who know not Christ. It is for those who possess Christ as one of His children.

Thirdly, notice the word, therefore. The word, therefore, takes us back to what Paul said previously. Notice that Romans 11 ends with an Amen. It is likely that the, therefore, applies to the first eleven chapters in which he deals largely with the matter of salvation and justification by faith in contrast to the law. How does being saved by faith impact the way we live? Take a moment just to read the last part of **Romans 11, verses 33-36**.

Paul concludes this portion of his letter with the preeminence of Christ. No man can ever mine all the riches, wisdom, and knowledge of God. No man will ever discover all the judgments and ways of the Lord. God is so much greater than man. Everything in this life exists by and depends upon God. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things..." Nothing exists or happens apart from the knowledge and providence of God. The glory, the preeminence, the greatness, the awesomeness of God, serves as the basis for Paul's pleading. The magnitude of God may mean nothing to the lost, but it should be everything to the believer. To what degree do you exalt God in your life? How does who God is effect how you think and what you do? The motive

behind every aspect of the Christian life is God Himself. Take time this week to meditate upon who God is and what it means to you.

Week 28

The Mercies of God

Romans 12:1-2 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...” In our last meditation, we focused on Paul’s beseeching or imploring of the brethren. This week we will consider the foundation for his plea, the mercies of God.

Mercy can be defined as God withholding what we justly deserve in terms of judgment for sin. Read **Lamentations 3:21-23**. When Jeremiah remembered the mercy of God, it gave him hope. If God judged us according to our sin, we would be consumed. Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” Anything less is the pure mercy of God. Verse 23 reminds us that God’s mercies are new every day. Consider **Deuteronomy 7:9**. A generation is approximately 25 years. A thousand generations would then be 25,000 years. Christ was crucified a little over 2,000 years ago. That is a little over 80 generations ago. The phrase, a thousand generations, was not meant to set a definite time, but to teach the limitlessness of God’s faithfulness and mercy. Paul is not pleading on the basis of his own merit, but on the infiniteness of God’s mercy. The fact that we, as believers, will spend eternity in heaven instead of hell, is the ultimate example of God’s infinite mercy. Whatever instruction is about to follow, whatever Paul is going to ask us to do, we are only to do it after giving serious consideration to the mercy of God.

Turn to **Deuteronomy 5**. If you have been faithfully reading the weekly meditations, you will recognize this chapter as the second listing of the Ten Commandments. Read **verse 10**. What commandment is this verse associated with? God promises to visit or judge the iniquity of idolatry to the third and fourth generation. Four generations would be 100 years. But to those who repent and obey God’s Word, He promises to show mercy, even if they are guilty.

In what way has God extended mercy to you? If it were not but for the mercy of God, how might your life be different today? Be specific in your answers. If you cannot see the mercy of God in your own life, it is unlikely that you will take seriously the admonition to follow. In fact, if it were not for the mercy of God, we would not be able to do what Paul is going to ask us to do. Read **Psalms 103:8-18** and then take a few moments

to thank God for His mercy in your life.

Week 29

Present Your Bodies

Take a moment to reread **Romans 12:1-2**. If needed, review the previous two meditations as they form the foundation for the instruction to follow. I would further encourage you to commit these two verses to memory as you meditate upon them.

Paul is pleading with the brethren, on the basis of God's mercy, to do something. What is it that Paul wants them or us to do? We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. We will break this into two parts. First, we will consider the presentation of our bodies and then next week we will consider the living sacrifice that is acceptable unto God.

The Greek word translated present means to stand beside, to exhibit. It pictures a person standing before another to make a presentation. When I was a boy, I dreaded speech class or any type of oral presentation. Ask me to sing or play my trumpet and I was fine, but ask me to speak and fear immediately took over. The result was a presentation that was presented with such rapidity, that no one could remember what I said, only the fact that I said it so quickly. As far as presentations go, I guess you could say they were memorable, but not for the right reasons. In marketing a product, advertisers are keenly aware, that the presentation of the product is just as important as the quality of the product itself. When ordering dinner at a restaurant, one may ask, "What looks good?" We often make decisions based on the appearance or presentation with an expectation that the quality of the product will agree with the quality of the presentation. We are less likely to buy something that doesn't look good or is presented poorly.

In this passage Paul tells us to present our bodies. Our physical body is the vehicle through which we live and interact with the world around us. It is through our physical body that we live out the Christian life. Furthermore, it is through this physical life that others form an opinion about us and the God we claim to serve. If your life was the only Bible that someone ever read, what would your life teach them about your God? To what degree are you living out the Christian life in your body? In what areas might you need to make some changes? Now read **Matthew 6:25**. What do you think Jesus meant by the last phrase, "Is not... the body more

than raiment?” What aspects of your life, other than appearance, might cause others to form a right or wrong opinion regarding your God? We will dig a little deeper next week.

Week 30

A Living Sacrifice

Last week we began looking at the matter of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice. Our bodies serve as the physical vehicle through which we live and interact with our physical environment. The physical body is also the vehicle through which we live our Christian life. While the flesh, our sin nature, still exists in our body, as a believer, our body is also the temple of the Holy Spirit who indwells us – **I Corinthians 3:16-17**. Not only does God indwell the body through the Holy Spirit, but He has also purchased or redeemed our body through the blood of Christ, so that the body of the believer actually belongs to God – **I Corinthians 6:19-20**. Because our body is God’s temple, He has full claim to it, nevertheless, He desires that we present it to Him as a living sacrifice.

For the Jew, animal sacrifice was part of their worship. In offering an animal sacrifice, the life of the animal was taken, and its blood was shed as an offering to God. In offering our bodies as a sacrifice, God does not intend for us to harm or mutilate the body. It is to be a living sacrifice. The life that is to be taken, is not the physical life, but the self-life. I recall a conversation that took place in the early years of my ministry. During the service, the pastor made an announcement regarding the choir and their part in the upcoming special meetings. After the service, one of the members of the choir approached me and was upset that she would be expected to be present for all the meetings. Her statement to me was, “I have a life you know.” What she meant was, I have a life outside of church that I am not willing to give up or sacrifice for the Lord. The sad end of the story is that individual and her family soon quit going to church in order to pursue their other life.

In our text, **Romans 12:1**, this living sacrifice is to be holy and acceptable to God. I Corinthians 3:16-17 warns against defiling the body, God’s temple. I Corinthians 6:16-20 says we are to glorify God with our body. What are some ways that we can defile our body? Read **I Kings 18:25-28**. Cutting the body has always been a part of Satanic worship. While there are still those today who try and harm themselves through cutting, our “refined” society has turned to tattooing and piercing as an

acceptable form of defiling or cutting the body. Excessive body piercing and body art is a form of defiling the body. Another way to defile the body is to present it in an immodest manner. Proper modest dress is part of our presentation to God and the world.

The determining factor is not what we want, but what is acceptable to God. Ephesians 5:10 “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” The burden of proof does not fall on God, but on us. The question is not, “What’s wrong with it?” The question is, “Does it please God.” Let’s conclude this week’s meditation with a familiar story. Read **Genesis 4:3-13**. Cain and Abel both brought an offering to God. One was acceptable and one was not. Cain became angry because God did not accept his offering. According to verse 7, what was the problem? When we begin to argue about what is acceptable to God, it is a sin problem. A humble spirit is willing to do whatever God asks. In what ways have you been unwilling to die to self or sacrifice the self-life? Is your stubbornness pleasing to God? What should you do about it?

Week 31

Your Reasonable Service

Read again, **Romans 12:1-2**. I trust that you are committing these two verses to memory as you meditate upon them. Thus far we have learned that God wants us, as believers, to present our bodies to Him, even though He already has full claim to our body because He has purchased it with Christ’s blood and because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit that indwells us. Our body is to be presented as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. This requires us to die to self by denying the desires of our sinful flesh. This week we want to focus on the last phrase of verse 1. Paul says that such sacrifice is our reasonable service. Let’s begin by looking at the first word.

What Paul is asking and what God accepts is not unreasonable. The word translated reasonable means logical and has to do with the mind. Humanly speaking, when you consider all that God has done for us, it is only logical that we should serve Him in return. There are two thoughts that encourage us regarding the reasonableness of such a request. First, God will never ask more of us than what He has done for us. God the Father gave His only Begotten Son to die on Calvary’s Cross for our sin. He who knew no sin, became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him – II Corinthians 5:21. Christ gave His life

for us. It is only reasonable to expect that we should give our life back to Him.

Second, God will never ask us to do, what He will not enable us or equip us to do. With God's help, nothing shall be impossible. Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The truth is, God often asks us to do what we think is beyond our ability. If we have confidence in ourselves, then we will not be dependent upon God, but when we have no confidence in self, we must rely wholly upon God. Only when we rely wholly on God is God able to demonstrate His power through us. II Chronicles 16:9a "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

The second word we want to consider is the word service. The Greek word translated service speaks specifically of our ministry to God and is derived from a root word implying worship. From this definition we learn two very important truths regarding our service to God. First, it is WORK. Christian service is ministry and ministry is work. Ephesians 4:12 specifically refers to the "work of the ministry." Work involves energy, effort, time, and sacrifice. Just because it is reasonable doesn't mean it will be easy.

Second, it is WORSHIP. Many people fail to consider their service or ministry as part of their worship, but it is. As such, it must not be taken lightly. We should hold our ministry in highest regard and give it our highest priority. We should put forth our best effort when it comes to planning and preparing for our ministry. We must be careful not to take a hap hazard approach to our ministry. We must guard against anything that would interfere or keep us from fulfilling the ministry that God has called us to do. In the end, reasonable service speaks of our attitude. What is your attitude toward serving God? Are you in need of an attitude adjustment?

Week 32

Be Not Conformed

As we begin **Romans 12:2**, Paul beseeches us not to be conformed to this world. The word conformed means to be pressed into a mold. Many people today would like to think they are not being pressed into any mold, that they are free to think and do as they please. This is part of Satan's deception. In reality, we are all being conformed either into the image of

Christ or into the world. The world would have us believe there is no God and if there is, we don't need Him. The belief that we can live as we please, demonstrates that a person is already being influenced by the world's thinking. God would have us be humble in spirit, submitting one to another. The world says no one can tell you what to do. In essence, you are your own god.

How does the world conform us into its mold? The battle takes place in the mind. The world is seeking to change and control the way you think. That's why Paul goes on to say that we need to be renewed in our mind. How does the world influence the way we think? The world is constantly bombarding our mind through the five senses, sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Take five days this week and each day choose one of the five senses and make a list of ways the world seeks to influence the mind through that human sense. To help you get started, think of sight in terms of Hollywood and TV, hearing in terms of news and entertainment media, taste and smell in terms of dining and strong drink, and touch in terms of dating and immorality.

If the world is constantly trying to influence our mind in an effort to change or control our thinking in order to conform us into its mold, what ought we to do as believers? How can we guard against or combat the influence of the world? Look up the following verses and note which sense they apply to. **Job 31:1, Proverbs 2:1-2,16, Proverbs 5:3-4, Proverbs 23:29-33, II Corinthians 6:17, II Corinthians 10:4-5, and Philippians 4:8.** Can you think of any other verses that you can use as weapons against the influence of the world?

Ultimately, our way of thinking affects our heart. Proverbs 4:23-27 "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." Note the references to the different senses. As we conclude this week's meditation, to what degree have you been influenced or conformed to the world's mold? What steps can you take to counter this worldly influence?

Week 33

Be Ye Transformed

The world is constantly trying to influence our thoughts, attitudes, and actions to conform us to the world's way of thinking. This year in our Bible study, we will be looking at five battlefields or areas in our life in which Satan seeks to conform us to the world. The battlefields we will be studying are, entertainment, appearance, stimulants, the occult, and self-image. This spiritual warfare takes place in the mind. Paul continues in Romans 12:2, "...but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." The word transformed means to change and comes from the same root word as the word metamorphosis. If we are going to please God, a change must take place from thinking like to world to thinking according to God's Word. This transformation is not a once and done, but an ongoing process. The word renewing means renovation. Anyone who have ever gone through a renovation at home or at work knows that it is a process.

To understand the mental process, consider the process in terms of a home renovation. If you wanted to renovate or remodel your home, what would you need to do? First, you would have to remove everything out of the rooms you are planning to renovate. If we are to renew the mind, we must get rid of our old way of thinking. Sometimes the renovation requires one to tear out walls, plumbing, wiring, etc. Essentially, we must tear down the foundations that support our worldly mindset. This is not an easy process. Old habits of thinking are hard to break.

Second, you have to plan what you want each room to look like at the end of the process. You have to select the style of flooring, color of paint, layout of the room, type of plumbing and electrical fixtures, etc. This requires a great deal of time looking through samples, getting suggestions, and asking questions. If you want to think like God, you must discern how God thinks. This requires time studying and meditating upon the Word of God.

Third, you have to build the new walls, apply the new paint, install the new flooring, etc. Once we tear down the world's way of thinking and study God's Word to discern how we ought to think, we must then apply what we have learned to our own heart and mind. This is where most Christians fail in their transformation. They don't want to think like the world. They want to please God and even enjoy the preaching of God's Word, but liking what they hear doesn't mean it will change the way they think or live. Take a few moments to read the parallel passages of

Ephesians 4:20-32 and **Colossians 3:1-10**. Renewing involves putting off and putting on. What are some worldly ideas that you need to put off? Now contrast these thoughts with God's thoughts. For example, the world says to be great, we must exalt ourselves. God says, we must humble ourselves and he will exalt us in due time. Read **Romans 1:20-32** and consider how God's thoughts are not the world's thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Week 34

That Ye May Prove

When was the last time you had to take a test? If you are a student, it probably wasn't that long ago. But even if you are no longer in school, it probably is more recent than you think. Most of the time we think of tests in terms of academics. Tests that require us to demonstrate our mastery of a particular subject. But there are many other types of tests. Another word for test would be exam. Most of us have taken some type of physical exam. Perhaps it was an eye exam or a hearing test or a complete physical for work or other activity. Just as academic exams test our growth in knowledge, physical exams test our physical growth to identify any potential problems. We can also be tested in terms of maturity. A person can be given an assignment or task to demonstrate or prove their ability to handle responsibility. There are also spiritual tests that God brings into our lives to test our faithfulness and steadfastness.

The word prove in Romans 12:2 means to discern, to ascertain by experiment, test, or standard. I Thessalonians 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." In life, we must test everything we see, everything we hear, and everything we desire, to determine what is good and what is evil. Once we are able to discern what is good, we are to hold on to it and discard that which is evil. Sometimes when a person is confronted with a decision, they ask, "Why can't I?", "What's wrong with it?" These questions reveal a wrong attitude and an unbiblical perspective. The question ought to be, "What is right about it?" and "Does this please God?" Ephesians 5:10 "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." God never has to prove something to be wrong. The burden of prove does not rest with God, it rests with us. We must prove it to be right.

Akin to the word prove is the word proof. Proof is the evidence we

use to prove something true or false. To prove something to be right and acceptable to God, I must have proof or evidence to support my conclusion. In proving what is acceptable to God, where does the proof come from? Is it the opinion of men? No! It is the Word of God. If you cannot find anything in God's Word to support your position or decision, then you have no proof that it is acceptable or pleasing to God. You have no ground to stand upon and your position is undefendable.

In our current Bible Study, "The Holy War," we will be searching the scriptures for Biblical principles that we can use to support or prove what is acceptable and pleasing to God on a number of different battlefields. Take a few moments to write out some principles from God's Word that you are already using in your life. How do these principles help you in making decisions? What are some areas in your life that lack Biblical support? Are there some areas of your life that you are concerned might not pass the test? As believers, what are we to do with things that fail to pass the test of being acceptable to God?

Week 35

The Will of God

As we come to the last meditation on Romans 12:1-2, take a moment to look back over the previous meditations to review the things we have learned. Everything that we have studied so far, leads up to this last phrase, "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. The first thing we need to understand is the will of God is not something mysterious or hard to understand. The will of God is often very plain and easily discerned. The problem is our flesh does not want to see it or more importantly, obey it. Many Christians are afraid of the will of God. They are afraid it will cost them their friendship with the world, and they would be correct. James 4:4 "...whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." To stand in the center of God's will, will place you at enmity with the world. Unfortunately, Satan has deceived many into believing that the world is better than the will of God. This is a lie. There is nothing on earth that can compare to the joy and blessing of being in the center of God's will for your life.

First, God's will is good. The word good means beneficial. Psalm 68:19 "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits..." Psalm 103:2 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." The psalmist then goes on to list some of the many benefits or the goodness of

God toward us. Read **II Thessalonians 1:11-12**. God can only fulfill His goodness toward you when you are in the center of His will. Romans 2:4 warns us not to despise the riches of His goodness. Take a moment to make a list of some of the benefits that God has bestowed upon you. Then take time to thank Him for His goodness.

Second, God's will is acceptable. The word acceptable means well-pleasing. The will of God is pleasing to the soul, it is a pleasant place to be. Job 36:11 "If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures." Psalm 16:11 "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." In the presence of God, in the center of God's will, we find fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Now take a moment to make a second list. What things bring you joy and pleasure? Now go back and highlight those that are spiritual in nature. If you didn't find that many, you are living for the wrong pleasures and missing out of the greater joys of life.

Third, God's will is perfect. The word perfect means complete. God created you for a purpose. If you are saved, God saved you for a purpose. Which means you will never be complete apart from the will of God for your life. Hebrews 13:20-21 "Now the God of peace... Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." God is working to complete you according to His will and purpose for your life. Have you surrendered to the will of God for your life or are you fighting against God's will for your life?

I would like to close with **Ezekiel 22:30**. God is looking for individuals who are willing to stand in the gap, the good, acceptable, perfect will of God. In Ezekiel's day, God found none. What about today? God is still looking. Are you willing to be one who would stand in the gap for the Lord?

Unit VI

II Timothy 2:19-23

Week 36

Nevertheless

For the next few weeks, we will be meditating upon **II Timothy 2:19-23**. This passage begins with the transitional word, nevertheless. The word nevertheless means notwithstanding or to proceed without regarding or being prevented. Whatever Paul is about to tell us, we are to proceed without regard to what he has just told us. Therefore, if we are to understand this passage in context, we must consider what Paul said previously in this chapter.

Take a moment to read **II Timothy 2:1-18**. Paul begins in verses 1-14 with our spiritual warfare and the necessity of enduring hardness. There are times in the Christian life when things will be difficult. Suffering is a part of life and as believers, we are not exempt from such suffering. Then in verses 15-18 Paul addresses the necessity of studying God's Word lest we be deceived by false teachers. Notice verse 16. Profane and vain babblings will increase unto more ungodliness. With the rise of the internet and social media, we have definitely seen an increase in profane and vain babblings. The end result is more ungodliness. While the internet and social media can be used for good, much of it is worldly, deceptive, profane, and divisive. As believers we must be very careful about the things we see, read, and share on social media. Turn over to Paul's epistle to Titus and read **Titus 3:8-11**. Paul warns us to avoid foolish questions, contentions, and strivings. How much of the current news deals with foolishness and contention?

Now come back to II Timothy 2:17. The word canker means to grow corruptly and speaks of a cancer. We hear a lot about false news and false advertising. The media has a way of presenting the facts to fit their narrative or tell their story. Such reporting is not unbiased. Political advertisements use false or deceptive claims to attack opponents. Eventually the public becomes so confused, they don't know who or what to believe. As a result, they are susceptible to believing anything.

As you listen to news reports or peruse social media, what things cause you to be discouraged? Take time this week to keep a list of things you see that trouble you. Then during your daily personal time with God, pray about each item on your list. Ask God to overrule and help you overcome

your anxiety. If your list seems to be lengthy, consider how much time you spend in God's Word in comparison to listening to the world? If you find this week's meditation to be discouraging, keep enduring, because next week we will look at the first phrase in verse 19, "the foundation of God standeth sure..."

Week 37

The Foundation of God

Read again **II Timothy 2:19-23**. No matter what difficulties you face in life, no matter how discouraging circumstances may be, the foundation of God standeth sure. Matthew Henry, in his commentary on this passage says, "the unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of no effect... All the attacks which the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ cannot shake it; it stands firm..." The quality and thus value of any house is determined by the sureness of the foundation. Read **Matthew 7:24-27** and **Luke 6:47-49**. What was the difference between the two houses? What happened to the house with a poor foundation?

Your life is the house. Your family is the house. If your life or your family are to withstand the storms of life, it must be built on a sure foundation. **I Corinthians 3:9-11** – As believers, we are God's building. The foundation of the Christian life is faith in Jesus Christ. Any life, no matter how moral or upstanding, that is not built upon faith in Christ, will fall. Apart from the saving grace of God, every person will be destroyed, every person will perish. If your life is to withstand the storms of life and the judgment of God, it must be built on the foundation of Christ.

How sure is the foundation of Christ? How safe or secure am I in Christ? Paul goes on to say that the Lord knoweth them that are His and hath put his seal upon them. A seal was a mark of ownership or security that dare not be broken. John 10:27-29 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John 6:37 "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." A life that is in Christ is a life that can never be lost. The foundation is sure. No one can ever lose their salvation. If they could, God would be a liar and God cannot lie. Hebrews 5:9 says, speaking of Christ, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them

that obey him.” Salvation is forever.

Unfortunately, it is possible to profess Christ as Savior without possessing Christ as Savior. In **Matthew 7:21-23**, just prior to the passage we read earlier, Jesus said many will profess Him as Lord, only to be cast out because Christ never knew them. They had done many wonderful works in the name of the Lord, but they never laid the foundation through faith in Christ. As a result, all was lost. How do you know if your life is being built on the foundation of Christ? **Matthew 7:20** says “By their fruits ye shall know them.” When the storms of life come, a sure foundation will lead to the right type of fruit. What type of fruit would you expect to see from a life founded on Jesus Christ? Does your life bear fruit of faith in Christ? On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand.

Week 38

The Lord Knoweth Them

Read again **II Timothy 2:19-23**. In the middle of verse 19 we read this phrase, “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” This is the seal that we have from God. Compare this verse with **Matthew 7:23** where Jesus says, “...I never knew you: depart from me...” The primary question is not, “Do you know the Lord?” The primary question is, “Does the Lord know you?” If the Lord doesn’t know you, you are not one of His, you do not belong to Him as one born into His family. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, “Ye must be born again.” If you have never called upon the Lord for salvation, in repentance turning from sin to God, then you do not belong to God and He does not know you as His child. In what ways do we belong to God?

First, we are God’s through creation. God created us and therefore we belong to Him as one of His creation. The world despises the doctrine of creation, because if I acknowledge I am created, I must also acknowledge that I am responsible or accountable to the creator. In this respect all men belong to God, for all have been created by Him - **Psalms 139:14-16**.

Second, as believers we are God’s through salvation. **I Corinthians 6:19-20, I Peter 1:18-19** – To redeem means to buy back. Through creation, we belong to God, but sin separated us from God our creator; therefore, God had to redeem us or buy us back from the folds of sin. This was accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ, sacrificed for our sin on Calvary’s cross. In shedding His blood at Calvary, Jesus Christ gave

His life that we might live in Him. It was the ultimate price, the ultimate sacrifice.

As a result, God has a third claim on the life of every believer, we are to be His through consecration. Consecration means to be set apart or dedicated to the Lord's service. God has saved us for the purpose of serving Him. Unfortunately, many professing Christians never fully surrender or consecrate themselves to God. They don't want to die and go to hell, but neither are they dedicated to Him.

We need to understand that God knows everything about us. He knows our down-sitting and our uprising. He is omniscient. He knows our every thought, motive, and desire. There is nothing about us that is hidden from God. When Paul tells Timothy that the Lord knoweth them that are His, he's not talking about simple knowledge. He's talking about a personal relationship. There are many people in this life that I know, but there are only a few that I know personally as members of my family. God knows you as an individual, but does He know you personally as a member of His family? If not, then you are in great danger, for those whom God does not know, are cast out of the light of His presence into everlasting darkness where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

If God does not know you, take time this morning to seek God through salvation. If you are saved, have you consecrated your life to God? Have you given Him first claim to every aspect of your life? After all, every aspect of your life is rightfully His. A person who fails to give God what is His, is a thief and a robber.

Week 39

Depart from Iniquity

Last week's meditation focused on those who are His. Jesus Christ has a three-fold claim on the life of every believer. We belong to Him through creation, salvation, and consecration. Paul goes on in **II Timothy 2:19** to specifically address those who are called by the name of Christ or who claim to be Christians. The verse ends with a command to all who claim to belong to Christ, "Depart from iniquity." Iniquity is one of three words used to describe sin.

First is the word sin. The word sin means to miss the mark, to fall short of God's perfect moral character or standard. Every one of us is a condemned guilty sinner. God requires absolute holiness. No person on earth has absolute holiness, therefore, we all miss the mark.

Second is the word iniquity. Iniquity means crooked or twisted. It speaks of perverting the Word of God to fit a crooked lifestyle. Perversion of the Word of God can be a result of questioning what God says or means, contradicting or taking God's Word out of context, reading into God's Word something other than is plainly stated, or simply ignoring the Word of God altogether.

Third is the word transgress. The word transgress means to trespass or cross a line. We often think of trespassing in terms of stepping across a property line onto someone else's property. It can also be pictured by a football lineman who crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the snap of the ball. When a person transgresses, they find themselves on the wrong side of the line. Any time a person crosses the line of God's law, they are guilty of transgression or trespass.

Even though these words have slightly different meanings, they all speak of the same thing and therefore may be used interchangeably. As believers in Christ, we are to depart from sin, iniquity, and trespass. The word depart means to remove, desert, or withdraw. Notice that we are not commanded to remove sin from our lives, for only Christ can remove sin, but rather to remove ourselves from the presence of sin. Each of us must make a conscious effort to avoid or turn away from the presence of sin. What does **Proverbs 4:14-15** teach us about the path of sin?

What are some specific things you can do to avoid sin in your life? Perhaps it would be helpful to first understand how we fall into sin.

James 1:14-15 – According to this passage, what leads to sin? How can I keep from being drawn away by my own lust? **Romans 13:14** – We avoid making provision when we purpose to avoid or depart from situations where temptation may occur. Now ask yourself the same question, what are some specific things you can do to avoid sin in your life? Identify the sources of temptation and then consider how to avoid these sources. Avoiding temptation is never easy, but it is always possible – **I Corinthians 10:13**.

Week 40

Vessels of Honor

We live in a materialistic society. Over the years, most of us have accumulated a vast amount of stuff. Some of our stuff has material value, some has emotional value, and some has no value, we keep it just because it is ours. People even rent storage units to store their stuff. Have you

ever been to an estate auction or perhaps helped clean out a home following the passing of a senior member of the family? It is amazing some of the treasures you find and how much worthless stuff was accumulated over the years. Of course, the larger the house, the more room there is to accumulate stuff. In **II Timothy 2:20**, Paul says that a great house, be it great in size or great because the owner is a person of position and power, has vessels or stuff of value and vessels of little or no value. Consider your own home. What are some things that you possess that are of value to you? What is it about them that gives them value to you? Perhaps it was a special gift or a family heirloom. Perhaps it is an antique or simply an expensive item. What type of things should we value?

First, we should value the things of God. Your Bible should be of value to you. Your lesson or study materials should be of value to you. Anything that helps you in your spiritual walk with God should be of value to you. This includes things that might remind you of a special spiritual time in your life, such as salvation, baptism, a camp experience, or a special message, etc.

Second, we should value family. Family is a gift from God. Children are to obey and honor their parents. This is a command that you never outgrow. We are to honor our parents when we are young as well as when they are old. Even after they pass, we should still honor their memory. Husbands and wives are to honor one another. Submitting one to another in the fear of the Lord. There is no place for domestic violence or abuse in the Christian home. We need to value our family.

Third, we should value time. Time is so short. It passes so quickly. Time passed can never be obtained again. Ephesians 5:16 “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” How much time do you waste in any given day?

I’m sure you can think of other things you value but let us close with a few thoughts about how we treat that which we consider to be of value. If something has value, what do you do with it? Perhaps you place it in a prominent place. Certainly, you should treat it with care. I know men who treat and care for their cars and guns better than they do their wife. It says a lot about what they value. How much do you value your time in the house of God? Do you despise it or consider it precious? Do you guard it with a godly jealousy, not allowing anything to keep you from the

appointed time? Take time this week to think about the things you value and the place they have in your heart. If spiritual things are missing, what can you do to make some changes in your life?

Week 41

Vessels of Honor, Part 2

Today is Veteran's Day, a day set aside to honor those who have served in our country's military. These brave men and women have made sacrifices in accordance with the call of duty to secure and protect the liberties we enjoy today. We honor them because they are worthy of honor. Romans 13:7 "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

In **II Timothy 2:20**, Paul teaches that in a great house there are vessels of honor or value and vessels of dishonor or vanity. What we honor reflects what we value. In this verse, Paul identifies the vessels of honor as vessels of gold and silver in contrast to the vessels of dishonor which are of wood and earth. Why is this significant? Read **I Corinthians 3:9-15**. The foundation of every life is Jesus Christ, for there is no other foundation. An unbeliever's life is unstable because they have no foundation. A wise person will take heed to build their life on Jesus Christ, following the principles of God's Word. In verse 12, Paul identifies six building materials. Three of these materials will not burn, gold, silver, and precious stones. The other three will not be able to survive the fire but will be consumed and thus lost. Vessels of honor are those that can withstand the fire.

Fire speaks of the judgment of God. Hebrews 9:27 "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Every person will one day bow before the Lord to give an account of themselves to God, **Romans 14:12**. The things we do in the power and energy of the flesh will be consumed as worthless under the judgment of the fiery eyes of God. Only that which is done in the spirit will be counted worthy of honor. As believers, what should we do? Turn back to **II Timothy 2:21**. The word purge means to cleanse or to put out of one's life. What are we to purge ourselves from? "These" refers to the vessels of dishonor. It is important to point out that these things may not be sinful, they simply have no eternal value. If we are to be vessels of honor, we must purge out of our life those things which have no eternal value, choosing instead to invest our time

and energy on that which is eternal. Many born again believers miss out on the privilege and blessing of serving God, being set aside by God as unusable, because their life is cluttered and built around the temporal things of this life. To what degree have you purged your life of earthly pleasures? In what ways are you building a life that will abide the fire of God's judgment? How embarrassing will it be for those who enter heaven with nothing to show for their time on earth? Even though they are saved, they shall still suffer loss. Are you fit for the Master's use?

Week 42

Meet for the Master's Use

As we continue in our study of **II Timothy 2:19-23**, we come to the second half of verse 21. The past two weeks we have been meditating upon vessels of honor. If we are to be a vessel of honor, we must purge ourselves or separate from the things which defile or render us unfit for service. There are three key words to consider in verse 21, sanctified, meet, and prepared.

The word sanctified means to be purified, to be holy, or to be consecrated. We often define it as being set apart for the Lord's service. As we purge ourselves from sin, worldliness, and selfishness, God cleanses us and purifies us, setting us apart for His service. Notice that we are set apart for special service, not set aside. The vessels of dishonor are set aside as unusable, but vessels of honor are set apart for something special. God has a specific plan and purpose for every born-again child of God.

The word meet means easily used or profitable. Over the years there have been many inventions designed to make life easier. Some of these have worked well, while others have been a disappointment. In our technological age, the focus in development has shifted from mechanical to technological, but the principle is the same. In describing computer software, we look for a product that is not only functional, but also user friendly. Some software is very powerful but difficult to learn or master. As a result, it is often set aside for something that is easier to use and thus more profitable.

The word prepared means to make ready. When I want to bake or cook something, the first thing I do, after finding the recipe, is to set out all the ingredients to make sure I have everything I need. It is very frustrating to get halfway through and find you are missing a key

ingredient. In essence, I get everything ready before I begin. God never uses a person to their fullest potential until they are prepared. Joseph was enslaved and imprisoned before God exalted him to a position of leadership. Moses was exiled in the desert where God prepared him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. David, a faithful shepherd boy who was anointed king, fled from Saul, dwelling in caves in the wilderness until the time appointed of God. Don't think, however, that God cannot use you right now. Part of our preparation and training for future service is learning to serve God now to whatever degree we are able.

In what way is God currently preparing you for future service? What are some key ingredients in your life that are necessary for God to use you? What are some things that are hindering your spiritual preparation and progress? Next week we will consider how God prepares a person for future service.

Week 43

Meet for the Master's Use, Part II

Read again, **II Timothy 2:19-23**. Last week we considered three words in verse 21, sanctified, meet, and prepared. Sanctified means to be purified or holy, meet means to be profitable or easily used, and prepared means to make ready. This week let us consider how God is preparing us for present and future service.

First is the matter of knowledge. II Peter 3:18 says we are to "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Every child of God ought to be a student of the Word of God. A student is defined as one who is engaged in study, devoted to learning. Look back at **II Timothy 2:15**. Paul refers to a student as a workman. Studying is hard work and requires great mental effort and discipline. It's not easy. The truths of God's Word are often hidden within the pages of scripture and must be mined or dug out through diligent study. Mining and digging are hard work. I believe the church is weak today because it is largely ignorant of the principles, promises, and truths of God's Word. We are generally too lazy to put forth the effort to study the Bible. We would rather spend our time being entertained. In what ways are you a student of the Word of God? Do you take time to memorize scripture? Do you look up cross-references, take time to do word studies, or read what other authors have written about a particular passage? Learning to be a student of the Word often requires the right motivation. Having to prepare a

lesson, message, or devotional is great motivation to study the Word. If we are to be prepared for the Master's use, we must become students of the Word.

Second is the matter of experience. In Ecclesiastes 1:16, Solomon said, "...my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." In Romans 5:3-5 Paul says, "...we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Every experience in life, good or bad, is designed by God as part of our training or preparation for future usefulness. Joseph, David, Daniel, and many others experienced the heights of great mountain tops as well as the depths of deep valleys. All these experiences helped to shape, mold, and develop their character. I greatly enjoy reading biographies. I also enjoy researching those God has used in the past. I love to read about their experiences and to visit the places where they lived, ministered, and died. Select one Bible character or historical individual and study their life. Catalogue some of their experiences and then consider how each experience helped prepare them for God's service.

Third is the matter of faithfulness. I Corinthians 4:2 "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." At the judgment bar of God, we will be judged, not for what we have or don't have, but whether or not we have been faithful with that which has been entrusted to us. Read the parable of the talents in **Matthew 25:14-30** and **Luke 19:12-27**. We often think of faithfulness in terms of church attendance, but faithfulness involves so much more. We need to be faithful in studying the Word, in witnessing, and in supporting the work of the Lord. To be faithful means to be dependable. Can God depend on you to obey Him, regardless of what He may ask? Consider the men and women of faith in Hebrews 11. An excellent book to read is Warren Wiersbe's "Run with the Winners." It is an exposition on Hebrews 11 and 12:1-13. May the Lord help us all to be faithful.

Week 44

Flee Also

The last several weeks we have been meditating upon the type of vessel God uses as found in **II Timothy 2:19-21**. As we come to **II Timothy 2:22-23**, we once again see two key contrasting words, flee and

follow. If we are to be vessels of honor, fit for the Master's use, there are some things that we must flee and some things that we must follow after. Let us begin with the things we are to flee.

First, we are to flee youthful lusts. The word "lusts" refers to the desires of our sinful flesh nature. James 1:14-15 says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Our flesh nature has a strong appetite for sin. Some of these appetites or lusts are especially strong during one's youth. These may include 1) a desire to acquire wealth, I Timothy 6:9 "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.", 2) a desire for the things of the world, Titus 2:12 "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" and Mark 4:19 "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.", and 3) an unrighteous desire for the opposite sex, Matthew 5:28 "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Many a young person has suffered hardship, wreck, and ruin as a result of failing to flee certain youthful lusts.

These lusts are described as deceitful (**Ephesians 4:22**), foolish and hurtful (**I Timothy 6:9**), worldly (**Titus 2:12**), and fleshly (**I Peter 2:11**). The bottom line is, you cannot trust the desires of the fallen, sinful, flesh nature. So, what are we to do?

To flee means to run from or escape. A person who fails to flee from their lusts, will be ensnared, entangled, and entrapped by them. I Peter 2:11 says we are to abstain from them, understanding that they war against the soul, the spiritual part of man. Paul uses even stronger language in Galatians 5:24 where we are told to crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts." How do we put the flesh to death? By starving it. Romans 13:14 "...make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Second, we are to avoid foolish and unlearned questions. These are questions that are not relevant to the discussion at hand and are often interjected for the purpose of distraction in an effort to derail the purpose of God. How can we recognize such questions? They gender, birth, or lead to strife, argument, or controversy. Asking such questions generally

demonstrates a lack of maturity and understanding, while manifesting one's ignorance. Paul continues the thought in **II Timothy 2:24**. If we are to be used as servants of the Lord, we must guard against involvement in any form of strife or controversy, especially within the ministry of the local church. Read also **Romans 13:13, I Corinthians 3:3, Philippians 2:3**, and **James 3:16**.

As we conclude, what are some things you need to flee from or avoid in your life that might hinder or disqualify you from serving the Lord? What are some specific steps you can take to have victory over the lusts of the flesh?

Week 45

Follow After

The Bible is a book of contrasts, light and darkness, right and wrong, good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, etc. It is also a book of contrasting directions. We are to turn to God, from idols. We are to put off the old man and put on the new man. We are to flee also and avoid while at the same time follow after. Last week we looked at what we are to flee. This week we will consider what we are to follow after. As this will be our last meditation on this passage, read again the entire passage, **II Timothy 2:19-23**. Verse 22 identifies four things we are to follow or pursue after, righteousness, faith, charity, and peace. According to the following passages, what other things can we add to this list? **Romans 14:19, Colossians 3:12**, and **I Timothy 6:11**.

Righteousness in its simplest definition is doing that which is right. It speaks of purity of heart and conformity to the Word of God and is nearly equivalent to holiness. If we are to be vessels of honor, meet for the Master's use, we must do that which is right according to God's Word. Read **II Timothy 3:16-17**. God's Word is profitable for doctrine, what is right, reproof, what is wrong, correction, how to get right, and instruction, how to stay right. Only then are we made perfect or complete and equipped for God's service.

Faith speaks of persuasion or conviction especially in terms of reliance on God and is often expressed in terms of belief. According to Galatians 5:22, it is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Faith is not something I conjure up on my own, it is a work of the Holy Spirit. The disciples asked the Lord to increase their faith. There are two main tools the Holy Spirit uses to grow our faith. First is the Word of God. Romans 10:17 "So then faith

cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This is primarily speaking of saving faith. No one is saved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word are our two spiritual birth parents. Second are the trials of life, **James 1:3** and **II Peter 1:5-7**. As God brings us through difficulties, it increases our confidence in Him.

Charity is another word for love. Today it is often used to speak of benevolence, but in the New Testament it is always the Greek Word agape. There are three Greek words that can be translated love. Phileo speaks of a brotherly love, eros is an erotic, lustful love, and agape which is an unconditional love. God’s love is always agape love. Read **I Corinthians 13:1-13**. Take time to meditate upon the importance of charity, verses 1-3, the character of charity, verses 4-8, and the eternity of charity, verses 9-13.

Peace speaks of quietness and rest. It is the opposite of strife and contention. Peace, like faith and charity, is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. There is no peace apart from the finished work of Christ on Calvary’s cross. **Isaiah 48:22; 57:21**, there is no peace for the wicked. As Christians, we are always to pursue or seek after peace, in our homes, in the church, in the community, and in our personal lives. Consider **Psalms 34:14, I Peter 3:11**, and **Hebrews 12:14**.

In what ways are you following after these four things? Take time to make a list of specific things you are doing to pursue these things. What are some additional things you can do to develop these characteristics in your life?

Unit VII

Ephesians 5:15-21

Week 46

Walk Circumspectly

Over the course of the next several weeks we will be meditating upon **Ephesians 5:15-21**. Before reading any farther, take time to read the passage in its entirety. If you have time, read the previous part of the chapter as well, because verse 15 begins with “See then...” which takes us back to what came before.

Chapter 5 begins with an admonition to follow God as a child follows his father. It is the picture of a son walking hand in hand with his father, following his lead. This walk is described as a walk in love, verse 2, and a walk in light, verse 8. As we come to verse 15, we are told to walk circumspectly. The word circumspectly is no longer a commonly used word, but it means to walk carefully, watching all around, paying attention to guard against any surprise or danger. The root word circumspect literally means to look on all sides, thus the idea of careful, determined watchfulness. There are at least three things involved in walking circumspectly.

First, it means to watch your every step. Be aware of what is right in front of you, being careful where you place your next foot or step. When we are not paying attention to our step, it is easy to trip and fall. You are not going to trip over something twenty feet away from you. You trip over what is right in front of you. In I Samuel 20:3, David said, “...there is but a step between me and death.” What does **Psalms 37:23-24** teach us about our steps? What do we learn from **Psalms 37:31**? Consider David’s prayer in **Psalms 119:133**. Every time we fall into sin, it begins with a single misstep.

Second, it means to watch where you are going. You need to pay attention, not only to what is right in front of you, but also to what lies ahead. Each step must be taken with the ultimate goal or objective in view. If I don’t know where I’m going, how will I know where to place my next step?

Third, it means to look around you, watching for any danger. We need to learn to be aware of our circumstances. Why is this important? I Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” To be sober

means to be alert. Vigilance speaks of watchfulness. We have an adversary, Satan, who is walking and roaming about, looking for an opportunity to attack anyone who is not paying attention and thus unsuspecting of the danger.

Coming back to Ephesians 5, what does the Bible call a person who does not walk circumspectly? A fool runs ahead without any consideration of where he is going or what dangers may befall. A wise person will take time to pray and seek the Lord's guidance through His Word. Only by walking in accordance with and in obedience to God's Word and Bible principles can we safely navigate the ungodly world in which we live. What are some areas of your life that might require a more attentive approach? What changes might you need to consider to keep from being tripped by Satan? It might be the things you watch, the things you do, the things you listen to, the places you go, or the friends you hang out with? Don't be a fool, learn to walk circumspectly.

Week 47

Redeeming the Time

The second admonition in this passage, **Ephesians 5:15-21**, is found in verse 16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." We often think of redeeming as buying back, but how can we buy back time once it has passed? The answer is, we cannot. But redeeming also means to rescue from loss. The idea is to use our time wisely as opposed to wasting it. What are some ways we can be guilty of wasting time?

There are several ideas that immediately come to mind. First is laziness or slothfulness. Simply not putting forth any effort to accomplish or do anything. Second, is spending time doing that which is unprofitable or has no lasting value. This speaks directly to our priorities. Third, is allowing opportunities to pass by. When we have an opportunity to do something and we fail to act, that opportunity may never present itself again. It is a lost opportunity. What are some specific ways in which you are guilty of wasting time? Sometimes you hear people say, "I don't have time." The reality is, time is not the problem, the lack of priorities and discipline is the problem. When something is important, we must make time for it. That means we might have to cut out something of lesser value or that which wastes time.

Why are we to redeem the time? Because the days are evil. The word evil does not speak of character as in a person who is evil, but rather it

means to be hurtful in effect or influence. We live in a day and age when the world around us can be very harmful in terms of its influence. In what ways can the world have a negative effect upon a person? How does this relate to how a person spends their time? For example, one of the great wasters of time is the television. It is easy to sit down to watch a single program only to find yourself spending more time watching TV than intended. At the same time, I am being influenced by what I see and hear. Knowing that the majority of TV programming is worldly, what effect can my viewing habits have on the use of my time? What are some ways I can more effectively use my time?

Consider this. How much time each day do you spend in spiritual pursuits such as reading and studying your Bible, praying, memorizing scripture, reading spiritual books, witnessing, etc.? If we are to redeem the time in these evil days, it is imperative that we learn to make time and take time for spiritual things. Keep in mind that this follows the admonition to walk circumspectly. How we spend our time is a reflection upon our walk. Turn back to **Ephesians 4:1**. In this passage, vocation refers to being a Christian. If you call yourself a Christian, then your walk should reflect Christ. If your walk reflects the world, then you are a worldling. What does your walk say about your vocation? What needs to change in how you spend or use your time, if your walk is to be more Christ-like?

Week 48

Be Not Drunk

As you read **Ephesians 5:15-21**, you will notice that I have chosen to skip verse 17. We will come back to that verse, but verse 18 continues with the line of thought presented in verses 15-16. In verse 15 we are told to walk circumspectly, carefully, and watchfully. Then in verse 16 we are to guard against wasting time in the pursuit of worldly things. Instead, we are to invest our time in spiritual things.

Verse 18 begins with a command to “be not drunk with wine.” Often people will justify social drinking by claiming the Bible never forbids strong drink, it only condemns getting drunk. Drunkenness begins with a single drink. A person who never takes their first drink, will never get drunk. But allow us to consider for a moment the matter of strong drink. Turn to and read **Leviticus 10:9-10**. Is strong drink holy or unholy? Is strong drink clean or unclean? This command was given to the priests,

but does it have application to us today? Turn to **II Corinthians 6:17**. Who are we to come out from or separate from? The unbelievers. If God is to receive us, what are we not to touch? Read **I Peter 1:15-16**. Your conversation in verse 15 speaks of your manner of life. Your walk. Our walk is to be characterized by holiness. How can a person be holy if they partake of that which is unholy? They cannot.

Why does Paul use the illustration of drunkenness? A person who is drunk or intoxicated, is under the influence or control of the strong drink. A person who is under the influence of strong drink, cannot think clearly. They cannot walk a straight line, but often stagger. Their speech is often slurred, and they can become agitated. Is it possible to walk circumspectly while under the influence of strong drink? How does a person who is intoxicated spend their time? Would it be time well spent or time wasted? Sometimes people cannot even remember what they did while in the drunken state. Take a moment to consider **Proverbs 23:29-32**. It is impossible to please God in our walk while under the control of strong drink. The same principle would apply to drugs.

Instead of being controlled by a foreign substance such as drugs or strong drink, as believers, we are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. A believer who does not understand this is unwise and fails to comprehend the will of the Lord, verse 14. Have you ever been tempted to try strong drink? The nature and character of God clearly demand total abstinence. Don't be a fool. Abstain from all strong drink. What are some other effects and/or consequences of strong drink? If you know someone who is given to strong drink, pray for them. Only God can give victory over strong drink.

Week 49

The Will of the Lord

Let us step back this week to **Ephesians 5:17**. Why should walking circumspectly, redeeming the time, being filled with the Spirit, and not being under the influence of strong drink be important to me as a believer? Because they are all part of the will of the Lord for my life. Sometimes people struggle with the will of God, but right here is one of several passages of Scripture that clearly tell us the will of God. Unfortunately, many people reject the will of God, not because they don't know it, but because they don't want to obey it.

There are two key words in verse 17. The first is presented in the

negative and the second in the positive. They are essentially opposites. The first is the matter of wisdom. Paul tells us not to be unwise. In other words, we need to be wise. The word unwise means to be mindless, stupid, rash, or unbelieving. It is certainly not a positive characteristic. The unwise person of verse 17 is the fool of verse 15.

The second word is the word understanding. It means to put together mentally, to comprehend. Clearly it is a word that pertains to the mind and implies our ability to use our mind to make right and informed decisions. A fool lacks understanding. He is unable to make right decisions or form correct conclusions in spite the evidence or facts presented. Wisdom and understanding go hand in hand. A quick search reveals fifty-seven verses where these two words are found together. Let's consider a few of these this week.

Deuteronomy 31:3; 35:31 and 36:1 – What third characteristic is listed with these two words? What was God's purpose in giving wisdom and understanding? **Proverbs 1:2; 2:2 and 2:6** – Where does wisdom and understanding come from? With what two parts of the body do we receive wisdom and understanding? **Proverbs 3:13; 4:5-7 and 19:8** – How does God describe the person who gets wisdom and understanding? **Colossians 1:9** – What two things are necessary if we are to be filled with the knowledge of God's will?

Now come back to **Ephesians 5:18**. Ultimately it is God's will that we be filled with the Spirit, speaking of the Holy Spirit. Keep in mind that being filled with the Spirit means to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. As a believer, you are either under the control of the Spirit or under the control of your flesh. By the way, the flesh loves strong drink. Turn to **Galatians 5:16-17**. The flesh lusteth or wars against the Spirit. There is literally a war taking place within the life of every believer (see **Romans 7:14-25**). The flesh keeps us from yielding to the Spirit and the Spirit keeps us from fulfilling the lust of the flesh. Which one is stronger in your life? The one you feed the most. If you feed on the things of this world, the flesh will be stronger, but if you feed on the Word of God, the Spirit will be stronger. Who's winning the war in your life? Which one do you feed the most? May **Galatians 5:25** be our motto and prayer. Next week we will consider the first of three evidences of a person who is filled with the Spirit.

Week 50

A Singing Spirit

This week we will consider the first of three evidences of being filled with or under the control of the Spirit of God. We read in **Ephesians 5:19**, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Singing is as natural to the spiritual life as eating and drinking is to the physical life. Unfortunately, Satan has perpetrated a lie that singing is unmasculine, leading many so called, “spiritual leaders” to refrain from singing or to claim that they cannot sing. A statement that is clearly inconsistent with scripture. Read **Psalms 40:1-3**. Not a single believer is exempted from this truth. If you are a born-again child of God, God has put within your mouth a new song. No exceptions! A person who claims they cannot sing is like Moses making excuse before God in **Exodus 4:10-11**. God told Moses to go and lead the Israelites out of Egypt. In verse 10 Moses claims to be unable to do as God says, because he is “slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” To which God replies in verse 11, “Who made man’s mouth? ...have not I the Lord?” God would not require of us a song if He had not created every one of us with the ability to sing. While some are better at it than others, everyone can sing, and anyone can be trained to sing better.

The new song, however, involves more than just the physical ability to sing. The world can sing, but it cannot sing the new song. Only believers can sing the new song because it is a song that comes from the heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. A worldly person can sing the world’s song from the heart, but only a believer can sing the Lord’s song from the heart, because the believer alone has Christ in his heart.

Notice also that the believer’s new song is melodic in nature. There are three elements to music, melody, harmony, and rhythm. All three are necessary but must be kept in proper order and balance. Music that praises and pleases the Lord is predominantly melodic with the rhythmic element subdued and controlled. The world’s music places great emphasis on the rhythm often covering and at times eliminating the melody. For more details on godly music, listen to my three messages on “The Biblical Principles of Music.”

Paul mentions three specific types of music that are of the Holy Spirit, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Psalms refer to the inspired book of Psalms in the old testament. The book of Psalms is the prayer book and hymn book of the Bible. The earliest hymnals were called psalters because

they were a collection of the psalms set to music. Hymns are songs that teach a Biblical truth. Hymns were often written in poetical form and during the gospel song era, a chorus was often added at the end of each verse or stanza. Spiritual songs are those that set scripture to music. All three are to be part of our musical repertoire.

A believer who refuses to sing in not yielded fully to the Holy Spirit. A spirit-filled Christian will sing because the Spirit of God within them is a singing spirit. Do you enjoy music and participate in the singing of praises to God? If not, the root of the problem is not physical or mental, it's spiritual. What is needed is a spirit-filled adjustment.

Week 51

A Thankful Spirit

Read again **Ephesians 5:15-21**. In verses 19-21 the scriptures provide three evidences of a spirit-filled, spirit-controlled life. The first was a singing spirit. God created music and God loves to hear the praises of His people. A child of God who is filled with the Spirit of God will enjoy singing praises to God. The second evidence of a spirit-filled, spirit-controlled life is found in verse 20, a thankful spirit. Notice three simple truths in this verse.

First, when are we to give thanks? The answer is simple, always. There is never a time when it is acceptable for a child of God to demonstrate or manifest an unthankful spirit. Why? Because God has sovereign control over every event and aspect of my life and is constantly working on my behalf for my good and His glory. According to **Philippians 1:6**, what are we to be confident of? If you are saved, God has begun a good work in you. God never abandons his work but “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” **Ephesians 1:11**. Consider **James 1:17**. What in our lives comes from God? Is there anything in our life that is not good? Certainly, sin can lead to unpleasant and difficult circumstances. Read the previous verses, **James 1:12-15**. We also know that Satan can bring calamities and evil into our lives as seen in the book of Job, but even these things can be used of God for our good.

That brings us to the second truth, what we are to give thanks for. According to Ephesians 5:20, what are we to give thanks for? Does this include the good and the bad? Read **Romans 8:28**. The first part of this verse is the promise, the second part is the condition. If we, being called of God, love God, we can have confidence that all things work together

for good. Even when we cannot see or understand what God is doing, by faith, we can trust that God will use it for our good and His glory. What are some things in your life that you consider to be unpleasant or unwanted? How might God use these for good in your life? What things might God be teaching you? How can you demonstrate a spirit of thankfulness for these things?

Third, we see to whom we are to give thanks. Our thankfulness should always be directed to God. He is the one who provides for our needs according to His riches in glory, **Philippians 4:19**. He is the one who gives us strength and grace for each day, **Philippians 4:13, II Corinthians 12:9-10**. The key is getting our focus off the things of this life and looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, **Hebrews 12:2**. Demonstrating a continual thankful spirit towards God will keep God in the forefront of our thoughts and thus our lives. A person who forgets God has long since stopped being thankful to God. How do we demonstrate our thankfulness to God? What can you do to manifest a continual thankful spirit to God?

In closing, read **II Timothy 3:1-5**. Notice what things are associated with an unthankful spirit. We are living in perilous times and these characteristics are evident all around us. May we as children of God, not be guilty of possessing the spirit of worldliness as described in this passage. Learn to be thankful.

Week 52

A Submissive Spirit

Today we come to the third evidence of being spirit-filled, a submissive spirit. Being submissive is key to being spirit-filled, because to be spirit-filled means to be yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit. In order to yield control, a person must be submissive to the one in control. Read again **Ephesians 5:15-21**.

Beginning in verse 22, Paul is going to enter into a discussion regarding the relationship of the husband and wife as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. Great emphasis is often placed upon the wife's submission to her husband in verse 22, but it should be noted that verse 22, which is addressed to the wives, follows verse 21, which is addressed to everyone. Furthermore, as the wife or bride of Christ, we as believers are to be submissive to Christ. While it is true that the wife is to be submissive to the husband, nowhere does it say that the

husband is to lord over his wife. Rather, he is to love her as Christ loved the church, willing to give his life for her. I believe this goes beyond a willingness to place oneself in harms way in order to protect his family. It includes a willingness to surrender his own desires, his own “life,” in order to nurture and please his wife. Too many men are unwilling to give up their “life” for the betterment of their home, marriage, and family.

It is important to understand that submission is not weakness, nor is it inferiority. Submission is yieldedness, a willingness to place oneself under the authority of another. While the husband is the head of the home, there may be occasions when it is profitable for him to listen to the instructions of his wife, especially if it is in an area where she may be more knowledgeable or better equipped to offer insight. Most people who struggle with the idea of submission, do so because they fail to read the end of verse 21. Our submission is rooted in our fear of God. A person who is un-submissive does not have a proper fear or respect of God. Consider **Ephesians 6:9**. No matter how great your position or authority on earth, we are all under the authority of a heavenly Master.

According to **James 4:6-7**, what does God give us to enable us to be humble? What does God do to the person who in a proud spirit refuses to humble themselves? Ultimately, who are we to yield to? It is interesting that the command to submit to God is right before the command to resist the devil. One can only resist the devil when they have a spirit that is submissive to God.

Being submissive to God involves at least two things. First, it involves submission to the Word of God. Most of the time, when a Christian struggles, it is not a lack of knowledge of the Word of God, but an unwillingness to obey the Word of God. Any child of God who resists or fights against the Word of God will struggle in their spiritual walk.

Second, it involves submission to the Will of God. Again, many times the struggle is not in knowing the will of God, but in doing the will of God. In many of the daily tasks of life, we know what God wants us to do, but often we are not willing to obey, choosing rather to resist and fight against the will of God. A spirit-filled Christian will demonstrate a submissive spirit to the Word and will of God. In your life, do you demonstrate a singing spirit, a thankful spirit, and a submissive spirit? Can it be said of you by others, that you are a spirit-filled Christian?