

***WEEKLY  
MEDITATIONS***

***VOLUME 2***

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***2021***

# Table of Contents

Page

<b>Unit I</b>	<b>Romans 13:1-5</b>	
Week 1	Ordained of God .....	4
Week 2	Resist Not.....	5
Week 3	Resist Not, Part II.....	6
Week 4	Submitting.....	8
Week 5	Worthy of Honor.....	9
Week 6	Characteristics of Leadership.....	10
<b>Unit II</b>	<b>I Corinthians 15:12-20</b>	
Week 7	The Resurrection and the Gospel.....	12
Week 8	Effects of False Teaching.....	13
Week 9	Effects of False Teaching, Part II .....	14
Week 10	Two Resurrections .....	16
Week 11	Our Responsibility .....	17
<b>Unit III</b>	<b>Psalms 23:1-6</b>	
Week 12	The Lord My Shepherd Is .....	19
Week 13	What the Shepherd Does.....	20
Week 14	The Shadow of Death.....	21
Week 15	Walking Through the Valley .....	24
Week 16	I Will Not Fear .....	25
Week 17	God's Blessings .....	26
Week 18	Surely Goodness and Mercy .....	28
Week 19	The House of the Lord .....	29
<b>Unit IV</b>	<b>Malachi 3:13-18</b>	
Week 20	Stout Against God.....	31
Week 21	Israel's Complaint.....	32
Week 22	National Sins, Part I.....	33
Week 23	National Sins, Part II.....	35
Week 24	Edifying Speech.....	37
Week 25	God is Listening.....	38
Week 26	God is Writing .....	40
Week 27	God is Separating.....	41
<b>Unit V</b>	<b>Josiah: II Chronicles 34-35</b>	
Week 28	Josiah's Heritage.....	43
Week 29	Josiah's Reign.....	44
Week 30	Josiah's Reforms.....	46

Week 31	Josiah's Repairs .....	48
Week 32	Josiah's Repentance .....	49
Week 33	Josiah's Response .....	51
Week 34	Josiah's Passover .....	53
Week 35	Josiah's Pride .....	55

**Unit VI                   Romans 10:1-10**

Week 36	Man's Need of Salvation .....	57
Week 37	Man's Need of Salvation, Part II .....	58
Week 38	Sincerity Cannot Save.....	60
Week 39	Righteousness Cannot Save .....	62
Week 40	Righteousness Cannot Save, Part II .....	63
Week 41	The Law Cannot Save.....	65
Week 42	Only Christ Can Save.....	67
Week 43	Salvation is by Believing .....	69
Week 44	Salvation is by Believing, Part II .....	71
Week 45	Evidence of Salvation .....	73

**Unit VII                   Psalm 1:1-6**

Week 46	The Blessed Man .....	76
Week 47	What He Does Not Do .....	77
Week 48	What He Delights In .....	80
Week 49	His Fruitfulness.....	81
Week 50	The Way of the Ungodly.....	83
Week 51	The Way of the Righteous .....	85

**Conclusion**

Week 52	The Importance of Writing .....	87
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## Unit I

### Romans 13:1-5

#### Week 1

#### Ordained of God

Living in a democratic society, we are accustomed to electing our public officials. Every year elections are held whereby we, the people, cast votes, thereby determining who will serve as leaders in our civil government. As a result, we tend to perceive or be of the persuasion that we as men are the ones who place people in positions of leadership. While there is an element of truth in terms of the majority vote, there is a greater principle of which we cannot lose sight. Regardless of man's role in determining civil leadership, all civil authority is ultimately chosen by God. For the next several weeks we will be meditating upon **Romans 13:1-5**. As you read this passage, notice carefully the phrase, "of God." It is found five times in these five verses.

Verse 1 clearly states that all powers or civil authorities are ordained of God. In fact, this verse clearly states that there is no power but of God. Even the most wicked and ungodly ruler owes his position to God. Why would God allow wicked men to rule? Let us begin by considering what it means to be ordained of God. The word translated ordained in this verse means to assign, to dispose to a certain position, or to appoint. It carries with it the idea of arranging in an orderly manner. We know that God is sovereign. God in heaven rules over the affairs of men. This includes civil government. Regardless of how it happens, no one comes to a position of leadership apart from the sovereignty of God.

Turn to **Psalms 75:6-7**. Promotion, be it in business or in government, comes from God. Can you think of some Bible characters who were promoted to positions of leadership by God? A full list would be too lengthy to name, but it would include men like Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Saul, David, and Daniel. All the judges, all the kings (including the ungodly kings), all the prophets, and all the disciples were chosen by God and given leadership positions and responsibilities. Even Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ, was ordained by God to be a disciple.

As you read through your Bible, especially in the chronicles of the kings, pay special attention to the men God placed on the thrones of Israel and Judah. How did they come to power? Were they good kings or bad kings? What happened as a result of their rule? How did God remove

them?

Unfortunately, man's sinful nature is often given to pride, especially when placed in a position of authority. Read **Daniel 5:18-20**. What king was Daniel talking about? According to verse 18, who gave him his kingdom? Who is Daniel talking to? Read **verses 22-30** to find out what happened to him.

While the presence of an ungodly ruler can lead to suffering for the people of God, it is not without its purposes. When we find ourselves under leadership that we don't agree with, it is important to remember that God placed them in that position for a purpose. In the coming weeks, we will consider what our attitude and response should be to those in authority over us.

## **Week 2**

## **Resist Not**

As we continue in our meditation on **Romans 13:1-5**, we come to verse 2. In your own words, what is the main theme of this verse? A form of the word resist is found three times in this verse, but surprisingly, they are not all from the same Greek word. The first "resisteth" and the word "resist" both come from the same word meaning to stand against, to oppose. The second "resisteth" is from a different word meaning to withstand, or opposite, and is used in composition to denote contrast. In other words, standing against the powers or authorities ordained of God is opposite or in stark contrast to the ordinance of God.

We often think of an ordinance as a law. Townships pass ordinances to govern what individuals can and cannot do within the bounds of the township, but in this case, the word ordinance is translated from a Greek word meaning institution. The ordinance of God is not a law, it is an institution. What institution is Paul referring to? It would be whatever institution is represented by the power or authority. If the higher power is a parent, the institution is the home. If the higher power is a teacher, principal, or superintendent, the institution is a school. If the higher power is a pastor, the institution is a church. If the higher power is a boss or employer, the institution is a business. If the higher power is a policeman or judge, the institution is a civil government. When we resist or stand against an individual who is the ordained authority, we are standing in opposition to the institution they represent.

Sometimes you might hear someone say, I love my church, but I don't

like the pastor. Or a person might say, I love my country, but I don't like the president. When a person shows disrespect to the appointed leader, they are showing disdain for the institution the leader represents. A child who demonstrates an argumentative, rebellious, or disrespectful spirit in the home, is essentially demonstrating a lack of appreciation and thankfulness for the home that God has provided. You cannot separate the individual from the institution they represent.

The scriptures reveal that God has ordained three institutions, the home, the church, and civil government. He has ordained or set in order, the husband as the head of the home, the pastor as the head of the church, and the "king" as the head of the government. To resist the power is to resist the institution. To resist the institution is to resist God who ordained the institution. What are the consequences of resisting God? The consequence is damnation or judgment.

Is there ever a time when it would be appropriate to withstand authority? The answer is yes, but it must be done in a right manner. Can you think of anyone in the scripture who justly resisted the authority in their life? Joseph resisted Potiphar's wife. Daniel and the three Hebrew children resisted Nebuchadnezzar. Many of the prophets resisted their king. The apostles resisted the Jewish leaders, proclaiming, "We ought to obey God rather than man." Next week we will look at why God warns us not to resist the powers that are ordained of God, but for now, let us conclude with some personal reflection. What is your attitude towards the authorities God has placed in your life? Do your actions or attitude demonstrate resistance? What can you do differently to show respect, appreciation, and thankfulness for those God has placed in your life?

### Week 3

### Resist Not, Part II

Last week we focused on Romans 13:2 where Paul teaches that we are not to resist the powers that be or the institutions they represent. This week we want to focus on verse 3 and 4 as we consider why we are not to resist. Let's begin once again by reading **Romans 13:1-5**. In verse 4, what phrase is used to describe the authority? The word minister does not necessarily mean a preacher, although a preacher certainly would fall under the definition. The word minister means to run an errand, an attendant. In context, the ministers are the attendants of God, sent by Him on an errand. They have a God ordained position to fill and task to complete.

Paul's reasoning for not resisting the authority is two-fold, the first is positive, the second is negative. Read the passage again and underline each occurrence of the word "good" and "evil." The word good speaks of benefit. The word evil means worthless, depraved, or injurious. Does the person who does good need to fear the authority? Why or why not? If you are driving down the road, obeying all the traffic laws, is there any reason to fear being pulled over? Not really. But when you break the law, by speeding, running a red light or stop sign, driving without a license or insurance, driving a vehicle that is not registered or inspected, etc. you run the risk of being pulled over, questioned, and even fined for not obeying the rules. Note that it does not matter if you agree with the rules. You are still subject to them and if a policeman attempts to pull you over, you had better obey!

How would you feel if you suffered injuriously at the hands of another? What if you were robbed, assaulted, threatened, or injured either intentionally or accidentally? Would you expect the offender to be punished? According to **Romans 12:19**, how are we to respond when we are wronged? Read also, **Psalms 94:1-2** and **Hebrews 12:30-31**. Rather than taking vengeance upon the person who wronged us, we are to commit them into the hands of God and the authorities that He has ordained. Keep in mind that no one ever gets away with evil in the eyes of God. God sees and knows everything. It is a fearful thing to have to give account to God, not only for doing evil, but also for taking it upon ourselves to avenge the evil that has been done. We must all give account of ourselves to God for our actions and attitudes, **Romans 14:10-12** and **I Peter 4:4-5**.

What if the authority fails to do his job or is the one who is corrupt? Am I then free to take matters into my own hand? Read **Psalms 75:6-7**. Just as God is able to put a person into a position of authority, God is also able to remove them. Consider David's attitude toward King Saul. Saul, the authority, was trying to kill David, not because David had done evil, but because Saul was jealous of him. When Saul disobeyed, God rejected him as king and had Samuel anoint David to be king in Saul's stead. Read **I Samuel 18:5-15, 29-30**. Was Saul's anger toward David justified? On two occasions, David had opportunity to kill Saul, but refused. Notice his attitude in **I Samuel 26:8-11**. While most of our authorities are not anointed of God, they are all ordained of God. Like David, we need to resist the temptation to take things into our own hands, committing them

instead to the hand and judgment of Almighty God. Let us reflect again upon our attitude towards the authority in our life.

## Week 4

## Submitting

If we are not to resist the powers or authority in our lives, what should our attitude be towards those in authority or leadership positions? As you read **Romans 13:1-5** again, what word is found in verse 1 and in verse 5? The word subject means to subdue or put under. Today we might use the word submit. Turn to **I Peter 2:13-15**. Peter begins this passage with the word submit. It is the same exact Greek word translated subject in Romans 13.

The word ordinance is translated from a Greek word meaning to build or create. In context it is speaking of the laws created by man. As believers we are to place ourselves under the laws of man, first to avoid punishment as evildoers and second to receive the praise of men for being civil. In our society we have seen rioting by those on the far left as well as those on the far right. The prevalent thinking is that if one feels they have been wronged by the authorities, they are justified in rebelling against those authorities, rioting and looting, and creating chaos and anarchy. Such thinking is ungodly and cannot be supported by Scripture and such behavior is wicked, evil, and criminal. Consider Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael. In Daniel 1, they sought to keep themselves pure from the king's meat and wine. They sought relief through their authority, the prince of the eunuchs. Read **Daniel 1:8-14**. What was Daniel's approach and how did the prince of the eunuchs respond? Turn over to **Daniel 3:12-19**. Nebuchadnezzar had made a decree which Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, were unwilling to obey. How would you describe their attitude toward the king? What was the king's response? Did the king's response change the behavior or attitude of Hananiah, Azariah, or Mishael?

The key to submitting is found in I Peter 2:13. Our submitting is for the Lord's sake, not for man's sake. Turn to **Ephesians 6:5-8**. To be subject or submissive is to be obedient. Masters according to the flesh are the authorities or powers ordained of God in our lives. According to verse 7, when we are submissive, who are we serving? Because of whom we serve, what is our obedience not to be (verse 6)? Our submission is to come from the heart, knowing that our obedience will be rewarded by God.

Verse 8 reminds us of the golden rule. We should treat others the way we want to be treated, because we will reap what we have sown.

Not only are we to submit to authority, but we are also to pray for those in authority or positions of power and leadership. **I Timothy 2:1-4** – Why is praying for those in authority important? Who benefits if God works in their heart? Who is pleased when we pray for them? What should be the ultimate goal of praying for those in authority? Consider **Proverbs 21:1**. The heart of the king is in the Lord's hand, and the Lord's hand is directed by the prayers of His people. The next time you are angry or upset with an authority in your life, such as your parents, teachers, or employer, instead of fighting against them in word or spirit, pray for them, that God would give them wisdom to make right decisions and then submit to them, trusting that God is directing them for your own good and His glory.

## Week 5

## Worthy of Honor

Thus far we have meditated on three principles from **Romans 13:1-5**. Do you remember what they are? First, all authority is ordained by God. Second, because the authority is the minister of God, we are not to resist or stand against them. And third, we are to submit to the authorities in our life as unto the Lord. In the context of this passage, Paul is speaking of civil authority, but the principles apply to all authority including authority in the home, authority at work, authority at school, and authority in the church. It is this spiritual authority that we want to consider this week.

Let's begin with **Hebrews 13:17**. The opening statement makes it clear that we are to submit in obedience to those who have the rule over us. This agrees with Romans 13:1-5. The next phrase, however, reveals that Paul is talking about spiritual leaders, not civil leaders. Pastors and teachers, those who handle the Word of God, have a spiritual responsibility to watch over and care for the souls in their flock. As under-shepherds of the chief shepherd, they are entrusted with the care of the flock, a responsibility for which they must give account to the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ. Do you realize that your pastor and teachers must give account of your attitude and actions towards spiritual leadership? If the report is not good, it is unprofitable, not for them, but for you. The average Christian never considers or takes into account the impact of their actions on the shepherd and the account he must give to the Lord. It is a grief of

mind to the spiritual leader to have to report that one of their sheep has gone astray, wandering in rebellion from the fold and flock of God.

By the way, the same is true of the parent in the home. Parents have a spiritual responsibility to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A child who is rebellious against that authority, fails to understand the responsibility and accountability of the parent to the Lord. A young person who rebels against their parents is ultimately rebelling against God. While the rebellion is manifested in the earthly relationship, the root of the problem is in their heavenly relationship or the lack thereof.

Notice what Paul has to say about elders in **I Timothy 5:17-18**. The term elder is one of three words used to describe the office of pastor. The first term, pastor, speaks of his responsibility to shepherd and feed the flock. The second term, bishop, speaks of his responsibility to oversee or superintend the work. The third term, elder, speaks of spiritual maturity and leadership. Three terms, one office, the office of pastor. The pastor is to be counted worthy of double honor. Why is that? Because of their spiritual responsibility to watch over the souls of the flock and to feed them the Word of God.

What does double honor mean and how is it manifested in the church? The word honor means to value. To whatever degree we value others in our life, such as family or friends, we are to value the pastor to a greater degree. This is manifested in our attitude towards them, the gifts we give them, how we financially provide for them, how much we pray for the, how we encourage them, etc. Take some time this week to think about ways you can show your pastor you value him.

## **Week 6**

## **Characteristics of Leadership**

Last week we looked at the importance of respecting and honoring spiritual leadership. This week I want to take a closer look at the characteristics of leadership. These characteristics are not only requirements for spiritual leaders but are essential for all those in leadership positions. Let's begin in **Exodus 18:21**. Moses was judging the children of Israel. It was a task and responsibility that was too much for one man. Read **verses 13-18**. How much time each day did Moses spend judging the people? What was Jethro's counsel to Moses to lighten the burden? In verse 21, Jethro identifies four characteristics of leadership.

1. They were to be able men. 2. They were to fear God. 3. They were to be men of truth. 4. They were to hate covetousness.

Ableness simply speaks of one's ability to do a task. Not everyone is gifted or equipped to be a leader. Fearing God speaks of their spirituality. It also means that they understand their responsibility before and accountability to God. A leader who fears God understands that he must give account for his leadership to a higher authority and therefore he does not act as though he is above the law. Truthfulness and a hater of covetousness speak of his desire to make right decisions based on Biblical principles and is not easily influenced by bribes or promises of promotion, position, or prosperity. How many politicians and judges could pass all four of these tests? What about employers at work or parents in the home?

Now turn to **Acts 6:3**. In this passage the apostles have instructed the church to appoint deacons for the purposes of assisting with the widows of the church. This verse identifies three characteristics of leadership. 1. They were to be men of honest report. 2. They were to be full of the Holy Ghost. 3. They were to be full of wisdom.

Of honest report speaks of one's truthfulness or trustworthiness. Full of the Holy Ghost speaks of their spirituality, not only in terms of their responsibility and accountability to God, but also in terms of their Christian walk, being led of the Spirit. Men of wisdom speaks of one's ability to make right decisions based on the principles of God. Essentially the two lists are the same. Certainly, there are many additional characteristics of leadership that can be found throughout scripture, especially in the book of Proverbs. Take a moment to make a list of the characteristics you expect in your leaders.

There are two additional passages of scripture worthy of our study. In **I Timothy 3:1-13** and in **Titus 1:5-11**, Paul gives additional qualifications for the office of pastor (bishop or elder) and deacon. Using these two passages, make a list of qualifications and then compare it to the previous list you made. How are the lists the same and how are they different? Perhaps the greatest need in America today, in our homes, in our churches, in our schools, in our places of employment, in our courtrooms, and in our government is godly leadership. How is God preparing you to be a leader? What characteristics do you need to work on the most?

## Unit II

### I Corinthians 15:12-20

#### Week 7

#### The Resurrection and the Gospel

Once every year the church sets aside a day to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This day has become known as Easter Sunday. Many believers choose to refer to it as Resurrection Sunday as the world associates Easter with the Easter bunny and egg hunts, but Easter is mentioned in the Bible. In Acts 12:4 Herod had arrested and executed James and had arrested Peter with the intention of executing him as well. The scripture says, “And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.” While it is good and right to set aside a special day to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, the truth is, as believers, the resurrection should be forefront in our thoughts every day.

In 1932, Alfred Ackley met and witnessed to a Jewish man. The man resisted Alfred’s witness for Christ saying, “Why should I worship a dead Jew?” That Easter Sunday, as Alfred rose early to prepare for the day, he heard a famous liberal preacher on the radio say, “...it doesn’t really matter to me if Christ is risen or not.” Alfred became very upset and preached that morning and evening with great vigor on the reality of Christ’s resurrection. Later that night, still in an agitated state, his wife suggested he write a hymn about it. Thus, came into being, the great Easter hymn, “He Lives!”

The question before us today is, “Is Christ’s resurrection important?” Does it really matter? Turn and read **I Corinthians 15:12-20**. In verse 12, Paul begins with a statement clearly indicating that he preached the resurrection of Christ. Paul was a preacher of the gospel and the resurrection is part of the gospel. In **I Corinthians 15:1-5**, Paul outlines the gospel by which men are saved. In verses 3-5 Paul lists 4 truths of the gospel. First, Christ died for our sins. Second, Christ was buried. Third, Christ rose from the dead. Fourth, Christ was seen of many witnesses. Many people, when talking about the gospel, remember how Christ died for their sins on Calvary’s cross. Certainly, this is the main thrust of the gospel, but the fact that he was buried, rose again, and was seen of witnesses, is as much a part of the gospel as Christ’s death. Without a

burial, there can be no resurrection and without the resurrection, there can be no victory over the grave. Therefore, the resurrection is essential to the gospel. Without the resurrection, the gospel is powerless to save. While Christ's death paid for our sins, it is the resurrection that gives us hope of eternal life.

Read **Acts 2:29-31**. In the context of this passage, who is preaching and what is the occasion? Which patriarch prophesied of the resurrection of Christ? The prophecy mentioned in verse 31 is a quotation from **Psalm 16:9-11**. In Psalm 16, David is speaking of himself, testifying of his faith in God regarding himself. But the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2, makes it clear that it also has a prophetic message, speaking of Christ. Many Old Testament prophecies had both a present and future application. Where did David say he would spend eternity? This could only be possible if there was a resurrection. What does Christ's resurrection mean to you today and what hope does it give you for tomorrow?

## Week 8

## Effects of False Teaching

Last week we considered the importance of the resurrection of Christ. In I Corinthians 15:1-4 we saw that the resurrection is one of the pillars of the gospel. If any one of the pillars of the gospel are removed, the entire doctrine of the gospel collapses, making the gospel of none effect. This week we want to begin looking at the effects of the false teaching that says there is no resurrection. Read again **I Corinthians 15:12-20**. Paul preached the resurrection of Christ, but there were false teachers who began to teach that there was no resurrection. Paul then outlines six consequences of a resurrectionless gospel. We will consider the first three this week.

First, Paul says in verse 13, if there is no resurrection, "then is Christ not risen." If Christ is not risen, then He is still dead. If Christ is dead, then He has no ongoing ministry. What are some of the things Christ is doing right now, that He could not do if He were dead?

The book of Hebrews pictures Christ as our Great High Priest. As our High Priest, He continues to minister on our behalf. In **Hebrews 2:18**, Christ is our succourer. That is, He comes to the aid of those in need of help. In **Hebrews 6:18-20**, Christ is our refuge, our anchor, and our forerunner. He is our hope, both sure and steadfast. In **Hebrews 7:22**, Christ is our surety. He is the down payment on the promise that we will

one day be with Him in glory. In **Hebrews 7:25**, Christ is our intercessor. As our High Priest, He is praying for us. If Christ is not risen, then He has no continuing ministry and none of these truths are real.

Not only is Christ our Great High Priest, but His is also our Sovereign King. Psalm 103:19 “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.” In **Psalm 24:7-10**, five times the Lord is called the King of Glory. What title is given to the Lord in **I Timothy 6:14-15**? Read also **Revelation 17:14** and **Revelation 19:16**.

Second, Paul goes on to say in I Corinthians 15:14, that if Christ is not risen, “then is our preaching vain.” The word vain means empty or worthless. The gospel is the foundation of our preaching. If there is no gospel, then our preaching is nothing more than idle talk. In **I Timothy 4:2-4**, Paul tells Timothy to “Preach the word... for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... and they shall turn... from the truth... unto fables.” A Christless message is a powerless message. Read **I Corinthians 1:17-21**. Who chose preaching as the means whereby the Word of God was to be proclaimed? How does God describe the wrong kind of preaching in verses 17, 19, 20, and 21? Consider also, **I Corinthians 2:4**. The power of preaching is not found in the wisdom of the words, but in the manifestation of the Spirit.

Third, Paul finishes verse 14 by saying, if our preaching is vain, “your faith is also vain.” This conclusion is repeated in verse 17. If Christ is not risen, then your faith is misplaced and thus empty and worthless. How does **Hebrews 11:1** describe faith? I have never seen the resurrected Christ, but I believe He has risen from the dead and therefore I have hope. If you had no faith in Christ, how would your life be different today? How should the resurrection of Christ affect your faith for today and the future? May the Lord give us faith that is steadfast and unmoveable.

## **Week 9**

## **Effects of False Teaching, Part II**

In **I Corinthians 15:12**, Paul identifies the false teaching when he says, “how say some among you that there is no resurrection from the dead?” There are at least six effects of such false teaching. We considered the first three last week. If there is no resurrection, then first, Christ is not risen, second, our preaching is in vain, and third, our faith is in vain. This week we will consider the next three effects recorded in **I Corinthians 15:15-19**.

Fourth, if there is no resurrection, “we are found false witnesses of God.” The Greek word for witnesses means a spurious witness or bearer of untrue testimony. The word spurious means not genuine, not proceeding from a true source, counterfeit. Our witness is our testimony or attestation of a fact. If Christ is not risen from the dead, yet we preach Christ’s resurrection, then our testimony is false, and we are liars. The greater implication is not only are we liars, but if Christ is not risen, God is also a liar, for our witness and our testimony is of God. Conversely, if God cannot lie, **Hebrews 6:18**, then the resurrection of Christ must be true, and our witness is true as well.

Fifth, if Christ is not risen, “ye are yet in your sins.” Without the resurrection, there can be no forgiveness of sin. It is true that Christ died for our sins and shed His blood to cleanse us from our sin, but without the resurrection, we are not saved from the penalty of our sin. What is the penalty for sin? Death is eternal separation from God. What is the opposite of death? Eternal life implies victory over death. If Christ was not victorious over death, we could not be victorious over death. What benefit would we receive if Christ died for our sin, but failed to provide eternal life? We would still be subject to eternal death in hell and the lake of fire. Read **I Peter 1:3-4** – What is our lively or living hope? Eternal life in heaven, an inheritance that is incorruptible. According to verse 3, by what do we have this hope?

Sixth, if Christ is not risen, those who have “fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” Sleep speaks of death. If Christ is not risen, those who have died in Christ, were not saved, but have perished in hell along with those outside of Christ. In **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**, Paul gives a detailed account of the rapture. This passage is a parallel passage to **I Corinthians 15:51-54**. The sorrow of those without Christ is great because they have no hope. But for those who are in Christ our sorrow, although real, is different, because we have the hope of a resurrection, wherefore, we have comfort in our time of sorrow. Have you ever witnessed the difference between a funeral or memorial service for a saved person in comparison to a service for an unsaved person? How were they different? Paul then concludes in **I Corinthians 15:19**, if our hope in Christ does not go beyond the grave, then “we are of all men most miserable.” What does hopelessness in this life lead to? Do you know people who are miserable because they have no hope? How can you be an effective witness to share

with them the hope that is available through Christ?

## Week 10

## Two Resurrections

Having considered the effects of the resurrection, Paul concludes in **I Corinthians 15:19**, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” While our hope in Christ has application to this present life, it is predominantly future in scope. Read **I Corinthians 15:20-22**. By one man, Adam, death came into the world. By one man, Christ, life is given to overcome death. By one man, Christ, shall all experience a resurrection. Turn to **Romans 5** and read **verses 12, 15, 17, 19, and 21**. What does this have to do with the resurrection? In John 11:25 Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” The doctrine of eternal life implies a resurrection. It is more than just a spiritual life, it is a life lived in a glorified body. The same applies to eternal death. Hell is more than just a spiritual state, it is a place of eternal physical suffering in a body that will never be consumed and will never die.

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation for the resurrection of all men. Read **John 5:25-29**. Jesus was absolutely clear that there are two resurrections. The first, the resurrection of life takes place at the rapture. The second, the resurrection of damnation takes place at the great white throne judgment. In verses 25, 28-29, who will come forth? What will they hear? All that are in the grave shall be resurrected by the spoken words of Christ. Just as Lazarus was resurrected in **John 11:43**. It has been said, if Jesus did not call Lazarus by name, all that are in the graves would have come forth in response to Christ’s command.

The resurrection of life is described in **I Corinthians 15:51-53** and **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**. At the rapture, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with the soul and spirits of the saints, those who have died in Christ. Their earthly bodies will be reconstructed and resurrected as a glorified body. Those who are saved and alive on the earth will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. Their earthly bodies will also be transformed into a glorified body. Following the rapture, the earth will enter seven years of great tribulation. During that time, the saved are in heaven with the Lord, participating in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

At the end of the tribulation, the nations of the earth, under the leadership of the antichrist, will come against Jerusalem to fight the battle

of Armageddon. Christ will return to the earth again with the saints to fight for Israel and will stand upon the Mount of Olives. Satan will be defeated and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. Christ will then establish His earthly millennial kingdom where His saints will rule with Him. After the millennial kingdom, Satan will be loosed for a little season, before He is finally cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity.

At this point, those who have died without Christ will face the resurrection of damnation and the great white throne judgment. Read **Revelation 20:11-15**. The word death in verses 13 and 14 refer to the physical body, while the word hell refers to the soul and spirit. When a person dies without Christ, their soul and spirit are cast into hell awaiting the day of judgment. At the great white throne judgment, their bodies will be reconstructed and resurrected as incorruptible to be united with the soul and spirit to be cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity. This is the second death. Eternal separation from God. The determining factor in which resurrection a person will be part of is whether or not their name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Salvation is the determining factor. A person who has never been born again, who has never trusted Christ, will face the second resurrection. Blessed are those who are part of the first resurrection. If you are saved, thank the Lord for your salvation and the hope of a resurrection unto life. If you are not saved, asked the Lord to save you today, lest you perish for all eternity.

## Week 11

## Our Responsibility

We have been meditating upon the importance of the resurrection from I Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter. Our focus has been on verses 12-20. The doctrine of the resurrection is essential to our faith. If there was no resurrection, then is Christ not risen and we are yet under the condemnation of our sin. If Christ is not risen, then the gospel is false, and we have no hope. But Christ is risen and therefore we too shall have a resurrection. That raises another question, what is our responsibility in light of the resurrection? The answer is found in **I Corinthians 15:34, 58**.

Paul begins verse 34 with an imperative, a command to awake! The word translated awake, means to arouse oneself out of a stupor. The command itself infers that one has fallen asleep or at the least is not paying attention. Some might say that rest, and thus sleep, is necessary, and while that may be true physically, spiritually our rest is future. For the believer,

the present is a time to work and labor for the Lord. Our future rest is in heaven. As believers we need to wake up and get to work, for the hour is quickly coming when our labor will be over.

What is the work that God has for us to do? People all around us are lost and on their way to a Christless eternity in hell. They are without God and without hope in this world. We have a responsibility to share with them the gospel of Christ that Paul declared in **I Corinthians 15:1-5**. Read **John 4:34-38**, **Matthew 9:36-38**, and **Luke 10:2**. We know that Christ came to die for our sins, but how did He spend His time on earth, especially during His earthly ministry? His concern was for people. That they might come to know Him. He labored tirelessly through the day and prayed fervently through the night. He sent forth His disciples to carry on the work and He has extended the commission to us as well, **Matthew 28:18-20**. Shame on us if we fail to carry on the Master's work.

In verse 58 we are always to abound in the work of the Lord. The word abound means to excel or exceed, to increase. We should never be satisfied in the work of the Lord, but always looking to do more to win people to Christ. Jesus spoke of our work in terms of a harvest. Read **Galatians 6:7-9**. It is easy to grow weary in the work of the Lord, but God promises a season of reaping if we faint not in our responsibility to sow the gospel. Back in I Corinthians 15:58, we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. The song writer said, "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus."

Are there people you know who are lost without Christ? Perhaps an acquaintance, a friend, or a family member. What are you doing to bring them to Christ? When was the last time you shared your faith with them and testified to the work of God in your own life? Have you been steadfast in the work of the Lord or have you grown weary and faint, resting instead of working? Wake up and get to work! **II Corinthians 6:1-2**, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" Pray and ask God to give your boldness and courage to witness for Him to those who are lost. Make a conscious effort this week to speak to someone about the Lord or to give someone a gospel tract.

## Unit III

### Psalm 23:1-6

#### Week 12

#### The Lord My Shepherd Is

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is one of the best known and most beloved Psalms in the Bible. While it is frequently used at funerals, it certainly has many applications for everyday life. Much has been written concerning this Psalm providing a vast amount of supplemental material for the student of the Word of God. Hopefully, these meditations will serve as a launching point for further study.

The Psalmist begins with the main character, the Lord. It is the Hebrew name, Jehovah, which means the self-existent or eternal one. The confidence of the Psalmist is not in the Scriptures alone or in the circumstances of life. His confidence is in the Lord, the eternal God. Notice **Psalm 118:5-9**. Why did David say that our confidence should be in the Lord? In the past, how has the Lord shown Himself strong on your behalf? How does this affect your confidence in the Lord for the present and future? Consider also **Proverbs 3:25-26** and **Proverbs 14:26**.

Secondly, we notice that the verb in the opening phrase is present tense. Psalms 22, 23, and 24 are a trilogy. Psalm 22 is called the Savior's Cross and it teaches what Christ has done for us in the past. Psalm 23 is the Shepherd's Crook and it teaches what Christ is doing for us in the present. Psalm 24 is the Sovereign's Crown and teaches what Christ is going to do for us in the future. In Psalm 22, Christ died for us. In Psalm 23, Christ lives for us. In Psalm 24, Christ is coming again for us.

Thirdly, the Psalmist identifies the eternal one as his personal shepherd. How is Christ identified in **John 10:11-15**? As the good shepherd, what does Christ do for us? How is Christ identified in **Hebrews 13:20**? What is the difference between a good shepherd and a great shepherd? How is Christ identified in **I Peter 5:4**? As the chief shepherd, what will Christ do? Coming back to our trilogy, Psalm 22, Christ the Good Shepherd died for me, Psalm 23, Christ the Great Shepherd lives for me, and Psalm 24, Christ the Chief Shepherd is coming for me.

The Hebrew word translated shepherd means to tend a flock. If Christ is the shepherd, what are we as believers? Read **Psalm 79:13**, **Psalm 95:7**,

and **Psalm 100:3**. If you are a child of God, you are one of His sheep. If you have never been born again, then you cannot claim Christ as your shepherd, nor can you claim any of the promises of this Psalm. Before going any further, the question must be asked, Is Christ your shepherd? If you have never trusted Christ, that is the first step. If you have trusted Christ, what is Christ the shepherd, doing for you right now? How is He providing for your needs?

Verse 1 ends with the statement, “I shall not want.” To want means to lack or to be in need. The Lord’s provision is always sufficient for the need. Philippians 4:19 says, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The Lord’s ability to supply my need is dependent upon the riches of Christ in glory. Is there any danger of depleting Christ’s resources? Consider and meditate on **Matthew 6:25-34**. Is there any need to fear for lack of provision? If not, how does that build our confidence in the Lord? Without doing harm to scripture, we could then read Psalm 23:1 as follows, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want for anything.

## Week 13

## What the Shepherd Does

Read again **Psalm 23:1-6**. Verses 2 and 3 list three things the shepherd does. First, He makes me to lie down in green pastures. This is a picture of rest. As believers, we know that our eternal rest is future. Our time on earth is primarily given to labor, but if we are to be effective in our labor, it will be necessary that we take time to rest. In **Mark 6:7-13**, Jesus commissioned His disciples and sent them out in pairs to preach and to minister. In **Mark 6:30-32** they returned and reported to Jesus all they had done and taught. Jesus then instructed them to come apart and rest. It has been said that if we do not come apart, we will come apart. Everyone needs time to rest both physically and spiritually. This principle is seen in God’s command to set apart one day for rest and worship. We refer to it as the Lord’s day. There are six days in which men ought to work, but the Lord’s day is a day of rest. Not only has the Lord given us a day of rest, but He has also given us a place of rest. God’s house is a sanctuary from the world, a place of quiet refuge. Respecting and honoring the Lord’s day and the Lord’s house is essential to the spiritual well-being of every Christian. We need the encouragement and refreshment they provide.

Second, He leads me beside still waters. This is a picture of provision. The Bible uses thirst to picture the need of the soul. In **John 7:37** Jesus said, “If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.” In **John 6:35** Jesus said, “he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.” Consider also, **Psalm 42:1-2; 63:1-2; 143:6**, and **Isaiah 55:1**. Now read Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar in **John 4:5-26**. What water did Jesus offer the woman? This water would quench her spiritual thirst and spring up into everlasting life. The answer is given in **Ephesians 5:26**, The water is the Word of God. In **John 3:1-8** Jesus told Nicodemus, to go to heaven, one must be born again by the water and the Spirit. The water is not referring to the water of baptism, but rather the water of God’s Word. Every birth requires two parents. Physically every birth requires a father (man) and a mother (woman). Likewise, every new birth as two spiritual parents, the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring a person to the point of salvation. No one is born again apart from the Spirit and Word of God. It is also important to note that these waters are calm waters. Troubled waters speak of the storms of life. Calm or still waters speak of the provision of God through His Word.

Third, He restores my soul. This is a picture of hope. The Hebrew word for restore means to turn back. How often are we wearied by sin and the circumstances of life? Sometimes to a point of despair and hopelessness, but God is able to bring us back to a place of strength and usefulness. He leads us in a right path. There are two paths in life, the path of the righteous and the path of the wicked. There are two ways in life, the narrow way that leads to life eternal and the broad way that leads to destruction. Read **Proverbs 4:10-19** and note the different “paths” and “ways” mentioned. Now read **Matthew 7:13-14**. What path are you on? Where does it lead to? If you are on the wrong path, you will never reach heaven. Make sure you are on the right path today.

## **Week 14**

## **The Shadow of Death**

As we continue in our study of **Psalm 23:1-6**, we come to verse 4. So far, we have seen God’s protection, God’s provision, and God’s restoration. This week we come to God’s comfort. The phrase “shadow of death” is found twenty times in Scripture, ten times in the book of Job.

Satan's attacks led to great physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual suffering in the life of Job. He was in a very dark place. Read **Job 10:20-22**. Take time this week to do a search and read each of the twenty references that include the "shadow of death." You will find that many of these verses include references to light and darkness.

Death is a topic that many people are afraid to discuss or think about, yet the Bible teaches that death is as much a part of life as birth itself. Every person who is born will one day die. Hebrews 9:27 says "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Apart from the return of Jesus Christ and the rapture of the church, we must all face an appointed hour of death. Death creates fear in the heart of many because they are uncertain about what happens after death. This is a result of a lack of understanding about what the Bible teaches about death. Death is not an ending, but simply a separation.

There are three deaths mentioned in the Bible. The first, is physical death. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and spirit. When a person dies physically, the soul and spirit enter eternity either in heaven with the Lord or in hell and the body is laid to rest awaiting the day of resurrection. In **John 5:24-29**, Jesus spoke of two resurrections, the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation. The first resurrection, the resurrection of life, takes place at the rapture as recorded in **I Corinthians 15:51-54** and **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**. At the rapture, Jesus Christ will return in the clouds. The bodies of those who have died as believers in Christ, will be resurrected and transformed into a glorified body to be reunited with the soul and spirit that will return with Christ. Believers in Christ who are living will be caught up into the air with them, being immediately transformed into a glorious body, and all will spend eternity with Christ in heaven.

The second resurrection, the resurrection of damnation, takes place at the great white throne judgment recorded in **Revelation 20:11-15**. At the great white throne judgment, the bodies of those who have died without Christ will be resurrected from death and reunited with the soul and spirit from hell (verse 14), to be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. The damned are condemned because their names are not written in the book of life. They were never born again into God's family (Read **John 3**). In **Revelation 21:27** we read that those who enter heaven are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The determining factor

concerning one's eternal destination is whether or not their name is written in the book of life. Is your name written in the book of life? If you are saved and have been born again by faith in Jesus Christ, then your name is written in the book of life. If you have never asked Jesus Christ to save you, then your name is not written in the book of life and you are in danger of eternal damnation. Read **Romans 10:9-10,13** to see how one is saved.

The second death is spiritual death. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul and spirit from God. In **Genesis 2:17**, God warned Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Disobedience would result in death. Of course, Adam and Eve sinned and ate of the forbidden fruit, thereby ushering death into the world, **Romans 5:12** and **Romans 6:23**. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, physical death did not happen immediately. The process of death began to work, which eventually led to physical death, but spiritual death was immediate. When God came walking in the garden, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Sin had broken their fellowship with God, creating a separation from God. Every human being born since Adam, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, has been born with a sin nature, inherited from their father. Jesus Christ did not have a sin nature, because He did not have an earthly father. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Apart from the rapture, physical death is inevitable. We will all die, but spiritual death can be overcome through faith in Jesus Christ. When a person is born again in Christ, they are given the gift of eternal life and are passed from death into life. At that moment, their name is written in the book of life and they are assured a home in heaven.

The third death is eternal death. It is the separation of the body, soul, and spirit from God in the lake of fire for all eternity. We read about it in Revelation 20:14 where it is called "the second death." If a person dies physically, while still dead spiritually, they will face eternal death. Eternal death is permanent. The only way to avoid eternal death is to be saved while still alive physically.

Knowing that death is not an ending, but only a separation, and knowing that there is hope in Christ beyond the grave, as believers we have a sure hope and therefore can be comforted, even in the face of a certain physical death. Before we go any further, take some time this week to meditate upon your own eternal soul. Have you been born again by

faith in Christ? Consider **Matthew 16:26** and **Mark 8:36-37** and make sure your salvation. There is no hope and therefore no comfort to those who die without Christ. It is the most important decision you will ever make.

## **Week 15**

## **Walking Through the Valley**

Last week we defined and considered the three types of death, physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Knowing that death is not an ending, but only a separation, we now want to consider the valley of death through which all men must pass. Read again **Psalms 23:1-6**, paying particular attention to verse 4. The valley of death may be defined as the time leading up to the moment of separation of the soul and spirit from the body. Notice three words in the opening phrase of verse 4.

The first word is the word walk. Walking speaks of continuous forward motion. Sometimes we think of death as a stopping or ending point, but to come to a stop would indicate one is no longer walking. Not only does walking speak of a continuous forward motion, but it also implies a steady consistent pace. For the believer who has a proper understanding of death and the promise of the presence of God, there is no hesitancy or agitation in their step. They approach death with a steadiness and confidence that only comes from a personal walk with God. In effect, walking through the valley is nothing more than a continuation of the believer's daily walk with God. Consider Enoch who walked with God and was not, or Moses who went up into the mountain to view the promised land, knowing he was not coming back down. Can you think of others in the Bible who walked with God and what was their attitude as they came to the end of their physical life? Consider the walk of Jesus as He approached the cross of Calvary. Was there any hesitation in His step? A person who does not walk with God in life often lacks the experience and thus the assurance that is needed to walk through the valley of death.

The second word is the word through. Through speaks of a passing from one point to another as in entering a valley or trial with confidence of coming out on the other side. Failure to pass through would imply getting stuck somewhere in the middle. While walking indicates a continuous motion, through indicates that we will arrive at our destination as opposed to simply walking in circles or getting lost somewhere within the valley.

The third word is the word valley. A valley speaks of the low land between two higher points of terrain. It literally means a gorge with lofty sides, but not a gully. As we enter the valley of death, we descend into a low point in the physical life, but as we exit the valley of death, we ascend to a greater eternal life. If it were a gully, the sides might be too steep to traverse, but because it is a valley, we can have confidence that the Lord will bring us out to the mountain top on the other side.

There are many valley experiences in life. Read **Psalm 84:6**. Baca means tears. We do not dwell in the valley. We pass through the valley. What are some valley experiences other than the valley of death that a person may have to pass through? Have you ever had to go through a valley experience? What encouraged or helped you the most? Do you know someone who is going through a valley experience? What can you do to encourage and help them? What scriptures or promises of God might you be able to share?

## **Week 16**

## **I Will Not Fear**

The phrase “fear not” is found eighty-three times in scripture. The phrase “Be not afraid” is found an additional twenty-eight times in scripture. At least one hundred eleven times God encourages us against the matter of fear. To fear or to be afraid is natural to the human heart. Instead of being afraid, God commands us to be strong and of a good courage. Look up the following passages and note who is speaking to whom; **Deuteronomy 31:6-7,23, Joshua 1:6,9,18; 10:25, I Chronicles 22:13; 28:20, and Psalm 27:14; 31:24**.

As we continue in **Psalm 23:4**, we are told to fear no evil. The word evil means affliction, adversity, or calamity. No matter the circumstance of life, we are not to fear or be afraid. What promises does God give us to encourage our fearful hearts?

First is the promise of God’s presence, see again **Deuteronomy 31:6** and **Joshua 1:9**, as well as **Hebrews 13:5-6**. One of the divine characteristics of God is His omnipresence, which means that God is always present everywhere. You can never escape or be separated from the presence of God. His presence has a two-fold purpose. First, it encourages and strengthens us in fearful times. As a father’s presence calms and reassures the heart of a child, so too, God’s presence brings a

calmness during times of adversity and affliction. Second, it serves as a restraint to sin in times of temptation. Just as children tend to behave when their parents are present, God's presence should cause us to behave in a godly manner. Think about it, not only does God see and know everything we do, think, or say, but He is always there with us.

Second is the promise of God's comfort. Read **II Corinthians 1:3-4**. God is the God of all comfort. Human comfort is limited at best, but God is able to comfort the heart in any situation with a comfort that passes human understanding. What did Job say of his friends who came to comfort him in **Job 16:2**? Our ability to comfort one another is totally dependent upon the Lord. On our own, we are miserable comforters.

The Psalmist goes on to identify two tools God uses to comfort us, the rod and the staff. The rod speaks of correction. When we disobey, God brings discipline into our lives to correct us. How does discipline provide comfort? The world says discipline is not loving, but God says discipline is evidence of love. Read **Proverbs 3:11-12; 13:24** and **Hebrews 12:5-11**. It is comforting to know God loves us too much to allow us to live an undisciplined life.

The second tool is the staff. The staff speaks of support, as in a walking stick. God supports us and lifts us up during times of weakness. As we walk through the Christian life, it is easy to trip and stumble over things along the way. God's staff supports us and helps us maintain our spiritual balance to keep us from falling.

Psalm 112:1 says, "...Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord..." Verse 7 says, "He," the man that feareth the Lord, "shall not be afraid of evil tidings..." Read **Psalm 112:7-8**. Why is the man that feareth the Lord, not afraid? The word fixed means to be set upon. What things cause you to be afraid? Is your heart fixed on the Lord? How can you set your heart upon the Lord?

## Week 17

## God's Blessings

As we move from **Psalm 23:4** to **Psalm 23:5**, we move from God's comfort and encouragement to God's blessings. Verse 5 outlines three of God's blessings. First, He prepareth, second, He anointeth, and third, He filleth.

The first phrase, "Thou preparast a table before me in the presence of

mine enemies” speaks of God’s provision. The believer has three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Satan uses the world to entice the flesh to sin against God. These enemies seek to rob the child of God of the joy of the Christian life. The table speaks of the basic provisions of life, our daily bread, and has both physical and spiritual applications. In all of the difficulties, adversities, and trials of life, God has promised to provide for the needs of His children. **Philippians 4:19** says, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” God is able to supply our every need and the enemies of the soul are powerless to stop Him or to hold back His provision. While the three enemies of the believer are contrary to the Christian life, God is greater and able to provide and care for His children regardless of the obstacles or circumstances. Therefore, we are able to rejoice or be joyful in all things, **Philippians 4:4**.

The second phrase, “...thou anointest my head with oil...” refers to the eastern custom of anointing the head of a distinguished guest as a means of providing comfort and refreshment much as a bath is used today to cleanse and refresh the body. Spiritually the anointing oil represents the Holy Spirit who is our spiritual guide and comforter. No doubt David was remembering his experience as recorded in **I Samuel 16:13**. God not only provides for our basic needs, but He provides additional blessings or luxuries. What are some blessings that God provides that might not be considered necessities? In **Acts 2:1-4**, on the day of Pentecost, the apostles were filled or anointed with the Holy Spirit. As believers, we receive the presence of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, but His power is only manifested as we are filled with the Spirit or yielded to His control, **Ephesians 5:17-21**.

Anointing oil was also used to cleanse and heal wounds. A shepherd would use oil to treat the wounds of the sheep. In Luke 10:30-37, who cared for whom? The oil served as a cleansing agent, as a healing balm thereby aiding with one’s comfort and well-being. From what do we need cleansing? Read **John 16:7-8**. Who is the Comforter? According to verse 8, what three things will He do?

The third phrase, “...my cup runneth over,” speaks of God’s abundant blessings. God does much more than simply supply my needs and provide simple luxuries. He blesses far above what we could ask or think, **Ephesians 3:20**. He not only fills our cup, but He fills it to overflowing.

According to **Psalm 107:8-9**, what does God's goodness do for the soul? Hunger and thirst are both physical and spiritual in nature. God's provision satisfied the needs of both the body and spirit. In what ways has God blessed you above and beyond what you might reasonably expect? Consider both physical and spiritual blessings.

## Week 18

## Surely Goodness and Mercy

As we come to the final verse in this Psalm, take a moment to read **Psalm 23:1-6** in its entirety, reflecting upon the principles we have already considered. Verse 6 begins with the word surely, which means of a certainty. Faith is based upon things we know to be true. Because the Lord is our shepherd, there are certain things we can count on. These truths, however, do not apply to everyone. They are only for those who can claim the Lord as their shepherd, as one being born into God's family by faith in Christ and Christ alone. What are some Bible truths that serve as a foundation for your faith? If we are to be steadfast and unmovable, we must be grounded in spiritual truth. If the foundation isn't sure, the house will fall.

What encouragement does the Lord give us for daily living? He promises two things, goodness and mercy. Goodness is a very broad term with multiple definitions and applications. The Bible teaches that goodness is a character trait or quality of God. It is also listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22**. Certainly it includes the undeserved and unmerited blessings of God toward us. Consider **Psalm 27:13-14**. David said he would have fainted or given up if it were not for his belief in the goodness of the Lord. Verse 14 reminds us there are times we must wait for God's goodness. Many people fail to see the goodness of God in this life, because they lack faith or patience. The farmer sows and waters the seed, then he must patiently wait for the seed to grow before he can reap the goodness of the harvest. What are some good things you have to wait for? Read **Psalm 31:19**. Who does God reserve His goodness for? Four times in Psalm 107 we read, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" According to **Romans 2:4**, what does God's goodness lead us to? No one is ever saved apart from the goodness of God.

The second thing God promises us is mercy. Mercy speaks of God's kindness toward us in not judging us according to what we deserve. Again,

God's goodness and grace speak of God's undeserved blessing whereas God's mercy speaks of God's undeserved withholding of punishment and judgment. Grace and mercy always go hand in hand. According to **Lamentations 3:21-25**, what gave Jeremiah hope? Why do we need the mercy of God? How often do we need the mercy of God? If it were not for God's faithfulness in demonstrating compassion and mercy toward us, we would be cut off for our sin. We are alive today solely by the mercy of God. Like goodness, mercy is also a character trait of God and part of the fruit of the Spirit.

There are some character traits of God that are unique to His deity. They are His omniscience, His omnipresence, His omnipotence, His immutability, and His eternity. There are other character traits of God that we are to emulate in our own lives. God is love, we are to love. God is holy, we are to be holy. God is merciful, we are to be merciful. God is good, we are to be good, God is truth, we are to be truthful, etc. As we are transformed into the image of Christ, we are to display the characteristics of God. In what ways are you manifesting a Christlike spirit?

## **Week 19**

## **The House of the Lord**

Last week we considered God's two encouragements for this life, goodness and mercy. As a child of God, we can have confidence in God's goodness and mercy toward us. The psalmist then ends the Psalm with the greatest hope of the believer, "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Once again it is worth noting that this promise is only for those who belong to the shepherd. There are many who think or hope they are going to heaven who will be greatly distressed to find themselves cast out into the Lake of Fire. Consider **Matthew 7:21-23**. Why were these cast out and forbidden the promise of heaven? Go back and read **Matthew 7:13-14**. Which path are the majority of people on? Does it matter which path you take and if so, why? If you want to arrive at a certain destination, it is imperative that you follow the directions or path that leads to the destination. Good intentions will not help you if you are lost. In **John 14:6** Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." In identifying Himself as the way to heaven, Jesus ruled out all other ways. There is only one way to heaven and that is through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

In **Psalm 23:6**, what did David call heaven? Read **John 14:1-3**. What did Jesus call heaven? Whenever I return to the farm where I was raised, I always refer to it as “going home.” My father’s house is my home because I am his child. The same applies in the spiritual realm. Heaven is God’s house, and because I am God’s child, His house is my home. Is heaven your home? Is the Lord your shepherd? Are you on the right path, the way that leads to heaven? If you are not on the right path, how do you get on the right path?

In John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” According to **Romans 10:9-10**, what two things are necessary to be saved? Belief is inward faith. Confession is the outward expression of faith. In confessing, we are agreeing with God that first, we are condemned as sinners, second, Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sin. He died in our place, shedding His blood for our sin, and third, only by calling on Christ can we be saved, **Romans 10:13**. When we call upon Christ for salvation, agreeing with God about our sin and His Son, Jesus Christ, our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Your name is either written in the Book of Life or it is not. According to **Revelation 20:15**, if it is not, what will happen? Speaking of heaven, who does **Revelation 21:27** say will enter into heaven? If your name is not written in the Book of Life before you appear before the judgment bar of God, it will be too late.

How long will the believers dwell in heaven? As mentioned previously, heaven is the believer’s hope. When we think of hope, we often include an element of doubt, but the Bible word for hope means a surety. There is no doubt in Biblical hope. I use the following acrostic to define hope, Heaven Our Promised Eternity. Heaven is an eternal abode. According to **Revelation 22:5**, how long will the believers reign with the Lord? If you want to know what heaven is like, take some time to read **Revelation 21 and 22**. Write down all the descriptive characteristics you can find about heaven. If you have not already, make sure of heaven today. Call upon the Lord and trust Him as your personal Lord and Savior. Purpose to live your life for Him no matter the cost, knowing it will be worth it all, when we see Christ.

## Unit IV

### Malachi 3:13-18

#### Week 20

#### The Lord My Shepherd Is

This is the first in a series of meditations on **Malachi 3:13-18**. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. It is the final message to God's people before the four hundred silent years leading up to the birth of Christ. About one hundred years prior to the prophecy of Malachi, a remnant of Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel the master builder and Ezra the priest. Haggai and Zechariah the prophets encouraged the people in the work until the temple was completed. Later Nehemiah oversaw the rebuilding of the city walls and a subsequent spiritual reviving. The book of Malachi reveals the conditions in the nation of Israel to be essentially the same as they were in the days of Nehemiah whose work concluded about ten years earlier. At this time, the nation of Israel consisted of a remnant of all twelve tribes and is treated as a single nation, unlike the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah prior to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Following the rebuilding of the temple, Israel had returned to an outward form of worship, but inwardly they were still in spiritual darkness.

Beginning in verse 13, the Lord confronts the nation with their rebellious spirit and speech. He says, "Your words have been stout against me." The word stout means to fasten, seize, or be strong, to withstand. Keep in mind that words are a window to the heart. Matthew 12:34 says, "...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Our words are simply the outward expression of the heart. As men, we cannot see or know another man's heart, but we can hear their words and thus discern the condition of the heart. The nation denied the Lord's accusation, declaring "What have we spoken so much against thee?" How foolish to deny our sin when standing before the judge who knows our deepest thoughts, motives, and actions. Nothing is hidden from God. While we may try and hide or excuse our sin, God will reveal it for what it is, rebellion against God.

Consider our own nation today. In what ways is the message of our

nation, stout against God? What are some common themes or messages being proclaimed in America today and what do these themes reveal about the spiritual condition of our nation? According to **Psalm 9:17**, what will happen to any nation that turns its back on God? According to **Isaiah 17:9-10**, why was Israel a desolation? Consider the following passages of Scripture, noting the consequences of forgetting God, **Jeremiah 2:32-37; 3:21-22; 13:24-26; 18:15-17** and **Ezekiel 22:12-13; 23:35**. The consequences for forgetting God or turning from God are very grave, not only for a nation, but also for the individual. In what ways are we as a nation guilty of forgetting God? In what ways have you as an individual forgotten God?

## **Week 21**

## **Israel's Complaint**

In Malachi 3:13, we saw that Israel's words were stout against God. Do you remember what the word stout means? In verse 14, we see three things that Israel was guilty of saying. Read **Malachi 3:13-15**. The Lord was reminding Israel of what they had said. Whether they spoke outwardly or in their heart only is of no importance. God knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. He knows when we murmur and complain inwardly as well as outwardly. What are some complaints you have thought this week at home, at work, or at school, but may not have expressed outwardly? Do you think God was pleased?

Israel's first complaint was, "It is vain to serve God." The word vain means empty or worthless. They considered their service to God to be a waste of time, money, resources, and effort. They failed to see any way in which they profited from serving God. What fallacies do you see in their thinking? We do not serve God out of duty or for a reward. Our service is to be an outward expression of our love for God. God is omnipotent. Job 21:15 says, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" God does not need us to accomplish His purpose. It is a blessing that God has chosen to allow us to serve Him especially when we consider our own unworthiness as sinners to serve a holy God. If our service is not for our profit, why should we serve God? What is the point? According to **Malachi 1:6**, what had Israel failed to do? What were Israel's faults in **Malachi 2:17** and **Malachi 3:8**? In what ways are we as a nation guilty

of the same faults?

Israel's second complaint was, "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?" An ordinance is a rule of law. In what way is it possible to obey a law without truly being obedient? Israel was following the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law. As a result, God withheld His blessing. Sometimes when people go through a difficult trial, they will turn to God in hopes of gaining His favor, but when the trial is past or they don't get what they want, they return to their old ways. How did Paul deal with this attitude in the churches of Galatia, **Galatians 7-10**? God promises we will reap what we sow, but the seed sown takes time to mature into fruit to be harvested. When a person turns from a life of sin and worldliness to serve the Lord, it takes time before they begin to reap the blessing of spiritual fruit. Unfortunately, some turn away from God before reaping the benefits of serving God.

Israel's third complaint was, "What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" The heart of the problem is one of impure motives. Outward repentance, mourning, or fasting means nothing if the heart is not sincere. God is not impressed with outward religion. According to **Psalm 34:18** and **Psalm 51:16-17**, what is God looking for? If a person's heart is right, what will their attitude be toward the Lord, **Malachi 3:16; 4:2**? Take time this week to meditate upon the fear of the Lord from these verses: **Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7,29; 2:1-5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16,33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; and 23:17**. Make a list of all the principles found in these verses that relate to fearing the Lord.

## Week 22

## National Sins, Part I

As you read **Malachi 3:13-15**, notice again the Lord reminding Israel of their stout complaints against Him in verse 14. In verse 15 we return to the words of Malachi. The words "And now we" refer to Israel as a nation. Even though Malachi was a prophet of God, he had to include himself in the "we" of verse 15 when referring to the nation. As a man of God, he may not have been guilty of the specific sins that characterized the nation, but he acknowledged that as a people they were all responsible and therefore accountable. When God judges a nation, He does not separate the believers from the unbelievers. In the Old Testament, when God

judged Israel, the prophets of God suffered right along with the people who were guilty of sin. Consider the prayer of Nehemiah in **Nehemiah 1:4-11**. Notice how Nehemiah includes himself and his father's house when confessing the sins of the nation in verse 6. During the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah suffered greatly. After the fall of the city, Nebuchadnezzar allowed Jeremiah to remain in Jerusalem, but Johanan rejected the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah and took the remnant of Judah, including Jeremiah, into Egypt, **Jeremiah 42-43**.

As children of God, we live in the midst of a rebellious people. Jesus said in His high priestly prayer of **John 17:14-16**, we are in the world, but not of the world. We are to live godly in an ungodly world that we might be a light in the darkness. Nevertheless, when God sends judicial judgment upon a nation, His children will suffer with the nation as a whole. In what ways must we as believers suffer in this present world? What godly judgments affect us all?

Malachi goes on to identify three specific national sins. First, they "call the proud happy." In our current society, pride is associated with the national sin of Sodomy, so named because it was the dominant sin of the city of Sodom in **Genesis 19**. Sodomy refers to any intimate physical relationship involving a man with a man or a woman with a woman. Recently the sodomite community has come to refer to themselves as the LGBTQ community which stands for lesbian (two women), gay (two men), bisexual, transgender and queer, and includes or represents all forms of immorality. The word queer itself speaks of someone who is odd, weird, or outside what is considered normal behavior. The month of June is recognized as pride month and there are pride parades and marches in many cities and communities throughout our country. They even have their own flag, which unfortunately uses the colors of the rainbow, thus taking the symbol of God's promise not to destroy the earth with a flood and using it to represent that which is an abomination to God.

A flag is an ensign or colors used to identify a group of people. It is a symbol. The word flag means to hang loose without stiffness, to droop. In the midst of pride month is a day that has been all but forgotten. June 14 is flag day, a day set aside or designated to honor the flag of the United States of America. A flag that represents our great nation. A flag that is

to be honored and esteemed, not burned or trampled upon. Chapter 1 of Title 4 of the United States Code is the United States Flag Code which includes rules for care and display of the flag. Unfortunately, few people are familiar with the flag code resulting in a generation that often fails to display the proper respect due the flag.

Flags are important, especially in terms of what they represent. Those who fail to respect the flag are displaying contempt for those it represents. In essence, any American who disrespects the flag is also disrespecting the nation and the people of the nation of which they are a part. Just as Malachi included himself in the “we,” so too must every American. Every American should be taught to respect the flag and to stand with hand over heart while saying the pledge of allegiance or during the presentation of the national anthem. To fail in this regard is a shame and disgrace. Take a moment to reflect upon the pledge of allegiance to our nation’s flag. “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” What do these words mean to you?

There are three pledges we teach our children. The pledge to the American flag, the pledge to the Christian flag, and the pledge to the Bible. Have you made these pledges part of your life and can you say them from memory? If not, learn them today and meditate upon what they say and represent. “I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag, and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands. One Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again with life and liberty to all who believe.” “I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God’s Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will hide its words in my heart, that I might not sin against God.

Coming back to our text, Malachi goes on to say that calling these individuals “happy” or “blessed” when in truth they are an abomination to God, is wicked. How does a nation or a people go from that which is normal to such perversion, wickedness and immorality? Read **Romans 1:18-32**.

## **Week 23**

## **National Sins, Part II**

As we continue with Malachi 3:15, he goes on to say, “they that work wickedness are set up.” To set up means to exalt. Not only is wickedness

tolerated, but it is exalted. In is given a place of prominence in the nation's laws, media, and entertainment. Almost every show on present day TV involves a character or participants who are openly immoral. Humanistic thinking permeates society and is often promoted by politicians and judges who write and interpret laws. That which is wholesome, godly, and true is often ridiculed and mocked as being antiquated and irrelevant. Consider **Isaiah 3:8-9,11-13**. Is it any wonder the Sodomite movement is identified with pride?

Six times in **Isaiah 5:8-23**, Isaiah says, "Woe unto them..." Woe is an exclamation of misery or sorrow. Read each of the Woes in Isaiah 5 and mark them in your Bible. Identify the type of individual upon whom each woe is declared. The fourth woe says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil..." This is the inversion Malachi is referring to in Malachi 3:15. Wickedness is exalted, but goodness and righteousness is disdained. Read **Isaiah 10:1**. To decree is to enact a law. God does not look lightly upon those who legislate sin. What are some national sins that have been deemed legal? If something is legislated as legal, does that make it acceptable for the believer? I once heard of a preacher who was arrested for a crime of immorality. In his defense he stated, "I knew it was sin, but I didn't know it was illegal." Which is the higher standard, God's law or man's law?

Third, Malachi said, "they that tempt God are even delivered." The word translated delivered means delivered from judgment. As believers we would expect that God would punish or judge those who live an immoral, ungodly, sinful life. Yet when we look around at the world we live in, it appears the ungodly are getting away with their sin. Read **Psalms 73:1-16**. What was David's attitude? Have there been times when you have been envious at the prosperity of the wicked? Maybe like James and John, you want to call down fire from God upon them. Now read **Psalms 73:17-22**. What was David's attitude in these verses? What brought about the change in him?

As believers we must remember that in the end, we are delivered from everlasting punishment, but the wicked, the ungodly, the unsaved, are doomed to an eternal hell. Rather than being discouraged by the continual prosperity of their sin, we need to have compassion upon their eternal soul.

According to **II Peter 3:9**, why doesn't God destroy the wicked right away? If God was not longsuffering with you, where would you be today? The ungodly may be delivered from present judgment, but it is only to give them an opportunity to repent. If they fail to repent, an everlasting judgment awaits them in hell. Keep in mind that if we fail to warn them of their sin, we too shall be called into judgment. Read **Ezekiel 3:17-21** and **Ezekiel 33:1-11**. What was the watchman's responsibility? In what way are we as believers to be watchmen? What are some of the consequences of our failure as watchmen?

## Week 24

## Edifying Speech

As we have seen, **Malachi 3:13-15** is a picture of the ungodly world we live in. As we come to **Malachi 3:16-18**, Malachi turns his attention to the people of God. In context he is addressing the believing remnant of Israel. He identifies them as "they that feared the Lord." Today we would identify them as believers, those who make up the true church, the body and bride of Christ. In Bible times, the nation of Israel was God's chosen people and stood in contrast to the heathen Gentiles. In the New Testament these same two groups are identified as Jew and Gentile. Today we identify them as the church and the world.

The first thing we notice about these believers is they "spake often one to another." This speaks of our Christian fellowship. As believers we are to gather together as a church body or family to edify and encourage one another. **Hebrews 10:22-27** warns against forsaking the assembling together of the body. Believers who neglect the house of God are sinning willfully. The world does not understand the importance or necessity of the church, because they are not part of the body of Christ, but for the child of God, God's house is where God's family gathers to feast on God's Word. If we as believers fail to live and act in accordance with our knowledge of truth, we can expect the chastening judgment of God. According to **Hebrews 11:5-11**, why does God chasten His children? What does it prove and how is it profitable? According to **Ephesians 4:11-16**, why has God given us the church? A believer who neglects God's house will never mature spiritually. According to **Hebrews 5:12-14**, what must we do if we are to grow up spiritually? **I Peter 2:2** says,

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Babies need milk, nourishment, and exercise to grow. The same is true of believers. Are you a growing Christian, or are you still a babe in Christ? In what ways are you currently growing? What can you do to facilitate further spiritual growth?

Not only do we notice that they spoke to one another, but we also note what they spoke about. Generally speaking, much of the conversation that takes place at church has nothing to do with the Lord. Many times, we engage in innocent conversation about the weather, sports, politics, family, and such like without giving it a thought. How much of your “church” conversation interests God? I’m afraid much of our conversation is vain. It is empty and of no value. What should we talk about when we come to church? How can our speech be edifying and encouraging to other believers? The end of Malachi 3:16 says they “thought upon his name.” Their thoughts and thus their conversation was centered around Christ and the things of God. Only the things of God are spiritually edifying. **Romans 14:19** says, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” This includes our conversations. While the things of this life provide common ground for conversation with the world, the things of God are what bind us together as believers. If we only talk about the things of this life, what does it say about our own spiritual maturity? Consider your own conversations. What do you talk about the most? How can you change the topics of conversation to develop more edifying speech?

## **Week 25**

## **God is Listening**

Last week we considered the matter of edifying speech. Why is edifying speech important? Notice the middle of **Malachi 3:16**. Concerning the conversation of the believers the Bible says “...the Lord hearkened, and heard it.” We know that God hears everything. He is the omniscient, omnipresent God. Nothing escapes God. What does it mean then that “the Lord hearkened and heard it?” While God hears everything, there are some things that get God’s attention more than others.

Most often we speak of God listening in terms of our prayers. We know God hears and answers pray, but God is listening even when we are

not speaking directly to Him. The word hearkened means to prick up one's ears. It is illustrated by a horse or a dog, turning his ears at the sound of his master's voice. The word heard means to bow low so as not to miss a word. God loves to hear His children talk about His Son and the things that pertain to godliness. While God was always listening, when the believers began to speak about the Lord, God pricked up His ears and bowed low so as not to miss a word.

God not only pays particular attention when we speak about His Son, but He also pays particular attention when people speak against the Lord. In **verses 13-14** which we studied previously God was able to repeat the words they had spoken against Him. In **Numbers 12:1-4**, what sin did Miriam and Aaron commit? What was God's response? What were the consequences for Miriam and Aaron? While edifying words please the Lord, grievous words kindle the wrath of God. In **Numbers 11:1-2**, who was speaking and what was the manner of their conversation? How did God respond and what were the consequences? Also read **Deuteronomy 1:34-35**.

When we gather together in the house of the Lord, what should be the topic and nature of our conversation if we are to please the Lord? First, our words should be words of praise. The book of Psalms is the hymn book and prayer book of the Bible. It concludes with the great psalm of praise, **Psalm 150:1-6**, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise Ye the Lord." Generally, we think of praising the Lord in terms of music and singing, but we are also to praise the Lord with our words or conversation. How should I direct my conversation if it is to praise the Lord?

Second, our words should be words of thankfulness. **Psalm 100:1-5** begins with the element of praise followed by service. The context of the psalm is the house of the Lord, coming into His presence, entering into His gates, and entering into His courts. Which verse deals with being thankful? What is the basis for our thankfulness?

Third, our words should be words of peace. Psalm 34:13-15 "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." No doubt Peter was

referring to this passage when he wrote **I Peter 3:10-12**. Rather than using our tongues for evil and guile, we are to use them for good and peace.

## Week 26

## God is Writing

We live in a society that preaches “free speech.” The purpose of the freedom of speech is primarily to protect one’s right to proclaim the truth of God’s Word. Lost man does not want to hear the Word of God and history reminds us they will do everything in their power to suppress the preaching of God’s Word. Many of God’s faithful servants have been persecuted, imprisoned, and martyred for preaching, proclaiming, and printing the Word of God. This protection, however, has also been used by the world to proclaim its false teachings and philosophies. But with every right comes a responsibility. Just because we have the right to speak, doesn’t mean we should. As citizens and as Christians, we are responsible for our words, what we write, what we say, how we say it, when we say it, and to whom we say it. One day we will have to give an account for the words we have spoken. Matthew 12:36-37 “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

As we continue in **Malachi 3:16** it is important to note that not only is God listening, but God is also writing. He is keeping a written record of our words. Malachi 3:16 says, “...a book of remembrance was written before him...” There are two reasons why a book of remembrance would be written.

First, as a reminder. In Exodus 17, Joshua led the children of Israel into battle against the Amalekites. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of a hill overlooking the battle. When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed, but when he lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed. As Moses’ arms grew heavy and tired, he sat upon a rock and Aaron and Hur held up his arms. In **Exodus 17:10-14**, what did God tell Moses to do after the battle was over? The written record was to serve as a reminder to Joshua of what God had done. But God is omniscient, He doesn’t need a reminder, so why a book of remembrance?

Second, it serves as a record. In Daniel 7:10 the Bible says, “...the

judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Read **Revelation 20:12**. The eternal judgment of man will not be based on opinion. It will be based on the written record of our lives. A record that will be true and accurate. A record that cannot be changed or rewritten. At the judgment bar of God, your record will either confirm your faith in Christ or it will deny you a place in heaven. In **Matthew 7:20-23**, how many thought they were going to heaven? What did the Lord say to them? According to verse 23, what was the problem? The question is not, “Do you know God?” The question is, “Does God know you as one of His children, born into His family through the new birth?” Many people profess to know God who have never been born into God’s family. Although they may do many outward works, they are not truly born of God.

Have you been born again through faith in Jesus Christ? Is your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Read again **Revelation 20:12** and compare it to **Revelation 21:27**. Only those whose name is written in the book of life will be allowed into heaven. Take a few moments to read and meditate upon **Romans 10:1-10** and **John 3:1-18,36**. If you have never asked Christ to save you, why not do so right now?

## Week 27

## God is Separating

Read again **Malachi 3:13-18**. As we come to the final meditation on this passage, we notice in verse 18 that God will make a difference “between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.” While we are often able to discern the difference based on the outer man, the truth is, we cannot see the heart and may therefore be easily fooled. In **I Samuel 16:4-7**, was Samuel able to discern God’s anointed based on what he could see? How was Samuel, the man of God, fooled? In **II Kings 4:25-27** was everything well with the woman of Shunem? Why could Elisha not perceive the difficulty? There are many things that are hidden from our eyes, but nothing is hid from the eyes of God. He sees and knows everything. He knows those who are His and those who are pretenders. Consider **Matthew 7:21-24**. Many people profess Christ who do not possess Christ. What is the difference? Outwardly it would appear they lived fruitful lives for Christ and based on **Matthew 7:20** we might conclude they were saved, but God

saw something man could not see. While there was an outward obedience, they had never obeyed God in terms of salvation.

As we come to the end of Malachi and the end of the Old Testament, Israel has fallen on hard times because of their disobedience and rejection of God, but there was still a remnant of those who believed God and trusted in His Word. In **Malachi 3:17**, God said, as a father, He would spare His children in that day when He makes up His jewels. As God's children, we are the jewels that make up His crown.

In this world, the saved and the unsaved dwell together, but there is coming a day when God will separate the wheat from the tares and the sheep from the goats. The first separation takes place at the rapture. Those who are saved will be caught up in the clouds, while those who are unsaved are left behind (**I Corinthians 15:51-57**, **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**). The second separation takes place at the final judgment. Read **Matthew 13:24-30**. The wheat represents the saved and the tares represent the unsaved. According to verse 30, which group is gathered together first? This is not referring to the rapture, because at the rapture the saved are gathered out, but at the final judgment, the unsaved are gathered out. Read **Matthew 25:31-46**. How do we know **verse 31** is not referring to the rapture? At the rapture Christ does not return to the earth to sit upon His throne. He only returns to the clouds, and we are caught up with Him. The end of this passage refers to the final judgment recorded in **Revelation 20:11-15**. At this judgment, Christ is seated on a great white throne from whence the lost are judged and sentenced to eternal death, eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. It is a certain, final, and irreversible judgment. It is from this judgment that Christ has saved those who believe or trust in Him. As believers should we glory or mourn over those who are judged at this judgment? What is your present attitude toward those who are lost or those who mistreat you as a believer? Remembering that we were like them, and that Christ has died for them, what ought our attitude to be? Are there those in your family you do not want to be separated from for all eternity? What can you do to help bring a lost soul to Christ?

## Unit V

### II Chronicles 34-35

#### Week 28

#### Josiah's Heritage

Up to this point our weekly meditations have focused on a particular passage of scripture. For this series of meditations, I would like to focus on a person, King Josiah. Our primary text will be **II Chronicles 34-35** along with the parallel passage of **II Kings 22-23:30**. Before we begin this week's thought, take some time to read these two passages of scripture to become familiar with King Josiah.

Josiah is often referred to as the "boy king," because he began to reign at the age of eight. He was one of several "boy kings." According to **II Kings 11:21-12:2**, how old was Jehoash when he began to reign? How long did he reign and was he a good king or an evil king? Jehoash is called Joash in the parallel passage of **II Chronicles 23-24**. In **II Chronicle 36:9**, how old was Jehoiachin when he began to reign and how long did he reign? Was he a good king or an evil king? Jehoash reigned before Josiah and Jehoiachin reigned after Josiah. Manasseh, who we will read about shortly, was another boy king, starting his reign at the age of twelve.

Before we look at the life of Josiah, let us consider his heritage or family history. Josiah was a king of Judah, a descendant of King David. His great-grandfather was King Hezekiah, a godly king under whom Judah experienced a spiritual revival. In **II Chronicles 29-31** Hezekiah cleansed the land and reinstated the Passover. It was a time of great spiritual prosperity. Then in **II Chronicles 32**, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came to fight against Judah. Hezekiah turns to the Lord and God gives him a great victory over the Assyrians. **II Chronicles 32:24** then refers to events recorded in **II Kings 20**. Hezekiah is sick unto death and God sent word to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah, that he was going to die. Hezekiah humbles himself before the Lord and God extends his life and reign an additional fifteen years. Unfortunately, the extension of Hezekiah's life led to a season of pride, **II Chronicles 32:25**. Why is this important? According to **II Chronicles 33:1**, how old was Manasseh when he began to reign? Was he born before or after God extended Hezekiah's life? Hezekiah was twenty-five when he began to reign. His total reign was

twenty-nine years. How old was Hezekiah when he died? Since his life had been extended fifteen years, how old was Hezekiah when the Lord healed him? How old was Hezekiah when Manasseh was born? It is likely that Hezekiah had other sons, but for some reason he chose Manasseh, a son who was born after he was healed of his sickness.

According to II Chronicles 33:2, was Manasseh a good king or evil king? According to **II Kings 21:16** and **II Kings 24:3-4**, what did Manasseh do that God would not pardon? Despite his wicked reign, how long did Manasseh reign? What happened to Manasseh in **II Chronicles 33:10-16**? Essentially, Manasseh's life can be divided into two parts. The first was characterized by his wickedness. The second followed a time of repentance and restoration. Amon, Manasseh's son was strongly influenced by his father during the first part of his reign, as a result **II Chronicles 33:22-23** reveal that he was a wicked king who only reigned for two years. Manasseh was forty-one when Amon was born and fifty-seven when his grandson Josiah was born. It is likely that after Manasseh's repentance, it was too late to influence his son for good, but he was able to influence his grandson, Josiah. We must be careful never to underestimate the influence of a parent or grandparent on the life of a child, whether it be for good or evil. Who are or were some of the greatest influences in your life for good or for evil? What can you do to show your appreciation to those who had a positive influence in your life? As a parent or grandparent, what kind of influence are you having on your descendants?

## **Week 29**

## **Josiah's Reign**

Josiah came to the throne of Judah at the tender age of eight. **II Chronicles 34:1-7** chronicle the first eighteen years of his reign, from age eight through age twenty-six. Verse 2 is a descriptive summary of his early reign. Notice three things in this verse of Scripture.

First, Josiah "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Josiah's primary concern was obeying the Lord. Verse 3 tells us that Josiah "began to seek after the God of David" in the eighth year of his reign or at the age of sixteen. Four years later he begins to purge Judah and Jerusalem. One might ask, "What did Josiah do for the first eight years

of his reign?” What do most boys between the ages of eight and sixteen do? He went to school. He was instructed in the ways of the Lord. Although the Bible doesn’t specifically state anyone by name, there is no doubt that Josiah had godly teachers instructing and influencing his life. In **II Kings 11:21** and **II Kings 12:2**, how old was Jehoash when he began to reign? Who influenced and instructed him that he might do right in the sight of the Lord? According to II Chronicles 34:9, who was priest during Josiah’s reign? Most likely he had a strong influence in the early years of Josiah’s life.

Second, Josiah “walked in the ways of David his father.” David wasn’t literally Josiah’s father. Amon was his father. The phrase “David his father” simply means he was of the house and lineage of David. He was a direct descendant of David. According to **Matthew 1:1**, who else was a “son of David?” Read down through the list of the names in Matthew 1 and see if you can find Josiah’s name. Who is the last man listed in this genealogical list? According to **Luke 2:4**, why did Joseph travel to Bethlehem as opposed to some other city? Every king of Judah is identified as good or evil based upon whether or not he walked in the ways of David his father or not. Keep in mind that the northern kingdom of Israel was not ruled by the offspring of David. All the northern kings were wicked and ungodly kings. Not one of them could claim affiliation to David’s godly heritage. In the Davidic covenant, God promised David that his seed would sit upon the throne forever (**II Samuel 7:8-17**, **Psalms 132:11**). This promise is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and His throne is eternal.

The Scripture says he “walked in the ways of David his father.” What does it mean to walk in the way? Essentially, he followed the pattern of David’s life. The Bible says David was a man after God’s own heart. According to **Acts 13:22**, what does that mean? At what age should a person begin to do the will of God? **Ephesians 6:1-3** indicates it begins at a very young age. Consider **II Timothy 3:14-15**. The word child in verse 15 means a babe. You are never too young to consider and obey the Word and Will of God.

Third, Josiah turned not “to the right hand, nor to the left.” The Hebrew word translated decline means to turn off (the path) or to depart.

Josiah had a single focus. He was not distracted by worldly things. What are some things that distract people today and keep them from following wholly after the Lord? It is a known fact that we follow after things we see. When I am driving down the road, I must be careful not to look around, but to keep my focus on the road ahead. If I don't, I will quickly drift out of my lane in the direction I am looking. The same is true of a person walking or riding a bike. How does this principle apply to us spiritually? What things in your life have a tendency to become a distraction or to get you off course? What can you do to keep yourself "in the way?"

## Week 30

## Josiah's Reforms

After being anointed king of Judah at the young age of eight, Josiah spent the next eight years of his reign receiving educational and spiritual instruction. Now at the age of sixteen, **II Chronicles 34:3** tell us that he began to seek after God. It is unfortunate today that most young people are not characterized as having a tender heart toward spiritual things. Early and frequent exposure to the world through modern technology hardens many hearts at a much younger age. Notice that this renewed interest in spiritual things did not lead to immediate results. It was four years before he began implementing his reforms. In **II Chronicles 34:5-7**, Josiah began to purge and cleanse Judah and Jerusalem. The word purge in verse 3 and the word cleansed in verse 5 are the same Hebrew word, meaning to purify or to cleanse.

Israel had fallen into idolatry and spiritual decay. The first step was to destroy the places of idolatry. The high places, the groves, the images, and the altars all had to be destroyed. He broke them into pieces and pounded them into dust. When he was finished there was nothing left of the places of idolatry. It was all gone and destroyed. As believers, we are to purge or cleanse our lives of sin. Just as Josiah left no place for idolatry to return, so too, we must leave no place for sin to return in our lives. **Romans 13:14** says we are to make no "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." In **Galatians 5:13**, Paul says we are not to use our "liberty as an occasion to the flesh..." When we confess our sins, God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness,” **I John 1:9**, but we must also take steps to remove any opportunity or occasion of temptation to return to that sin. What are some sins you struggle with? What occasions or things in your life lead you into that sin? How can you remove the opportunities for temptation?

Josiah’s second step was to destroy all the people who practiced and preached idolatry. He literally put the idolatrous priests to death and then burned their bones upon the altars of their false gods. In so doing he desecrated both their bodies and their altars. Certainly, we cannot kill those who lead us astray, but it may be necessary to cut off some friendships in order to prevent a return to sin. In what way do your friends influence you? How would you describe your influence on your friends? If there are some relationships in your life that need to change, determine to sever the tie in as gracious a manner as possible, explaining your personal desire to walk or grow closer to Christ.

Notice in verse 4 that Josiah was present during the purging process. He did not send someone else to do it but was personally involved. No one else can clean up your life for you. You must make the difficult decisions that will enable you to purge your life of sin. After he had purged the land, he returned to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the center of the spiritual life of Israel and Judah. What is the center of our spiritual life today? The center of our spiritual life today is the person of Jesus Christ and the central place of worship is the church. After purging the land, Josiah had to get the people back to the true and living God and back to the temple of God. The house of God is fundamental to our spiritual well-being. Any person who gets away from the house of God will soon fall into worldly idolatry. God has created the church to help us live a victorious life. It is a sanctuary from the world. It is a place of refreshment and restoration. It is a place of edification and encouragement. **Hebrews 10:22-25** warn us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. How does the church help the believer in their walk with God? Do you appreciate the gift of the church God has given you? Are you faithful to attend the house of God, every time the doors are open for worship? How can you express your appreciation for the church? What reforms need to take place in your life?

## Week 31

## Josiah's Repairs

Six years after starting the process of purging the land and cleansing the people, Josiah recognizes the need to repair the house of the Lord. Read **II Chronicles 34:8-13**. At the age of twenty-six, Josiah is now in the eighteenth year of his reign. Although Josiah's reforms are described in just five verses, the process has taken six years. From this we learn that spiritual change is a process that often takes time. While there are some things that change almost immediately following an individual's profession of faith in Christ, there may be other things that take time as the individual grows in Christ. We must be careful not to criticize those who are babes in Christ, but rather we are to encourage them in their spiritual walk and growth.

The second lesson we learn from this passage is things left to themselves will naturally decay. This is true in both the physical and spiritual realm. If you purchase a new car, park it in a garage, and leave it there for a year or two untouched, what might happen to the car? You might find the battery has lost some of its charge, the tires may lose some of their air pressure, and dust may accumulate on the dashboard. Although it may take some time, eventually the tires would begin to dry rot, the metal would begin to rust, and the paint would begin to chip or bubble. The fact that it is protected from the elements will slow the process of decay, it cannot stop it. The same principle applies spiritually. The Christian life is not stationary. We are either growing closer to Christ and moving forward in our Christian walk or we are sliding backwards away from the Lord.

In this case there were two root causes to the decay of the temple. The first was neglect. Every homeowner knows, it takes a lot of work to maintain or keep up a piece of property. The nation of Israel had forsaken the house of the Lord to worship in the high places and groves of Baal. Many times, when a person turns away from the things of God, people are left to wonder what happened. In most cases the spiritual decay began long before they turned away. Usually, it begins with the neglect of spiritual disciplines. We don't mean to neglect spiritual things we just get busy and find ourselves easily distracted. What are some spiritual disciplines people tend to neglect? How can you encourage others to be

faithful in spiritual things?

The second root cause of the decay of the temple is found in verse 11. The kings of Judah had actually destroyed the house of God by desecrating and defiling it. In **II Chronicles 33:4-9**, What did King Manasseh do to defile God's temple? Not only can a person's spiritual life can be ruined by neglect, it can also be destroyed by the actions of others. In what ways can a person be guilty of hurting another spiritually? Consider **Proverbs 6:14,19, Proverbs 16:28, I Corinthians 3:3, and James 4:16**.

Finally, we see that it took a lot of money, a lot of people, and a lot of oversight to complete the work. The Levites who were to serve in the temple, were responsible for the collection of the money, the hiring of the workers, and the oversight of the entire process. Even those who served as musicians and scribes (verses 12-13) had to take on oversight responsibilities. When it came to repairing the house of the Lord, it was all-hands on deck. Unfortunately, in the church today, it seems like it is the faithful few who do the majority of the work when it should be all-hands on deck. In what way are you contributing to or participating in the work of the Lord through your local church? What else can you do to be involved?

## Week 32

## Josiah's Repentance

As the Levites were in the process of repairing the house of God, they found a copy of a portion of the Word of God, hidden in the temple. Read **II Chronicles 34:14-28**. Apparently, hiding copies of books to keep them from being stolen or destroyed, was not an uncommon practice. A number of years later, Jeremiah wrote scripture by the hand of Baruch which was then read to Josiah's son, King Jehoiakim. In **Jeremiah 36:21-25**, how did King Jehoiakim respond to the reading of Jeremiah's letter? No doubt during the reign of Josiah's grandfather, King Manasseh, the priests were compelled to hide copies of the Word of God to keep them from being destroyed.

Josiah's response to the reading of God's Word was three-fold. First, he humbled himself before the Lord. **Verse 19** says "he rent his clothes." Rending of one's clothes, fasting, and putting on sackcloth and ashes were all signs of humility. What might a person do today as a demonstration of

humility? Humility is the first step of repentance. A person who refuses to humble themselves before God will never be repentant. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. His ministry was to prepare the heart of the people and to announce the coming of the Messiah. According to **Mark 1:4**, **Acts 13:24**, and **Acts 19:4**, what was John's message? The word repent means to express sorrow for something done in the past, "to change the mind in consequence of the inconvenience or injury done by past conduct." (Webster's 1828 dictionary). This change in one's mind leads to a change in direction. True repentance is turning from sin and turning to God, **I Thessalonians 1:9**. If a person turns from sin to a hobby or some other "wholesome" activity, is it true repentance? Although they may express sorrow and turn from their sinful behavior, if they do not turn to Christ, it is not true repentance. Inevitably, they simply move from one sin or hinderance to another. How do we know Josiah was genuinely sorry for the sin of the nation?

Second, he enquired of the Lord. It is interesting to note that Josiah sent others to enquire of the Lord instead of going himself. Most likely, because he was in a state of mourning over the sin of the people, having rent his clothes, he considered it inappropriate to enquire himself. In **II Kings 19:14-20**, what did Josiah's great-grandfather, King Hezekiah do when he received bad news in the form of a letter? Even though Hezekiah went to the House of God and prayed himself, did God answer him directly or through another? As God answered Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah, now God sends an answer to Josiah through Huldah the prophetess. In the Old Testament, God spoke to His people through the prophets. How does God speak to us today? Does He still use specific individuals to communicate to His people and if so, who? One of the key differences between the Old Testament and the church today, is we have the complete Word of God. During the reign of the Kings of Israel and Judah, the law of Moses was the only scriptures they had. Over time the Psalms of David and others were used in the temple worship and the letters from the prophets were recorded and added to the scrolls of the temple to be read and studied as the Word of God.

What was God's answer? It was a confirmation of the coming judgment upon Israel for their sin. Israel had provoked God to the point

that the only remedy was judgment. Turn over to **II Chronicles 36:16**. Without doing harm to scripture, read the verse again adding the two words, “except judgment” to the end of the verse. Even though Josiah repented, God’s wrath could not be quenched. God does, however, recognize the humility of Josiah and chooses to defer the judgment until after Josiah’s death.

We will look at the third aspect of Josiah’s response in our next meditation.

As we conclude, consider your own response to the reading and preaching of God’s Word. On any given Sunday, how do you respond to the preaching of God’s Word? Does your response demonstrate humility, indifference, or rebellion? What might have happened if Josiah had not responded with humility? What consequences might you face if you are indifferent or rebellious to God’s Word?

### **Week 33**

### **Josiah’s Response**

In our last meditation we began considering Josiah’s response to the Word of God that was found during the process of repairing the temple. The first thing Josiah did was to humble himself before the Lord. He rent his clothes as a sign of humility. The second thing Josiah did was to enquire of the Lord concerning the prophecies written in the scroll. God then sent word to Josiah that the judgments recorded in the book would indeed come to pass, but because he had humbled himself before the Lord, they would not come during his lifetime. That brings us to the third aspect of Josiah’s response, he entered into a covenant before the Lord. Read **II Chronicles 34:29-33**.

When God sent word to Josiah that the judgment would not come in his lifetime, it encouraged his walk with the Lord. The first thing he did was to gather everyone together at the house of the Lord. This included men and women, adult and child, great and small, spiritual and political leaders, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He then read all the words of the book that was found in the house of the Lord to everyone that was present. No one was excluded and no one could claim they didn’t know what God had said in His Word. As a Christian, how important to you is attendance to the house of God and to the reading and preaching of His

Word? In **Matthew 6:33** Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...” The Biblical principle of priorities places the things of God above all else. As believers we need to be faithful and reverence God’s Day, God’s House, God’s Word, and God’s Time. Are there things in your life that you allow to keep you from the things of God? Are the things that you value most temporal or eternal in nature?

After reading God’s Word, Josiah made a covenant with the people before the Lord. There are two aspects to the covenant. The first was the action. There are three words in **verse 31** that describe the action, walk, keep, and perform. All three words speak of obedience. Not just a verbal consent, but a doing of the things consented to. The word walk means to pursue after. The word keep means to hedge about or protect. The word perform means to do or accomplish. What actions of obedience does God expect from you?

The second aspect of the covenant was the attitude. Josiah entered into the covenant with all his heart, and soul. Similar wording is used by Christ in describing the first or greatest commandment. Read **Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30-33, and Luke 10:27**. We are to be whole-hearted in our devotion, single-minded in our focus, and mentally tough in our effort. Do these verses describe your walk with the Lord? If not, what needs to change and how can you accomplish that change?

In **verse 32**, Josiah then caused all the people to stand to the covenant. This is not talking about standing up for the reading of the covenant but standing firm to the words of the covenant. In **verse 33** the idea of standing firm is expressed in the negative, departed not. A person who turns away or departs, is not standing true or firm. In **Ephesians 6:10-13**, what are we told to stand against and to withstand? According of **Ephesians 6:14-17**, what do we need in order to stand firm? Consider George Duffield’s hymn, “Stand Up for Jesus.”

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross!

Lift high His royal banner it must not suffer loss.

From vict’ry unto vict’ry His army shall He lead,

Till ev’ry foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey;  
Forth to the mighty conflict in this His glorious day.  
Ye that are men now serve Him against unnumbered foes;  
Let courage rise with danger and strength to strength oppose.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone;  
The arm of flesh will fail you ye dare not trust your own.  
Put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer;  
Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the strife will not be long;  
This day the noise of battle the next, the victor's song.  
To him that over-cometh a crown of life shall be;  
He with the King of glory shall reign eternally.

Verse 33 ends with this testimony, “And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.” This ought to be our response to the Word of God as well.

## Week 34

## Josiah's Passover

After entering into a covenant with the people before the Lord, Josiah held a Passover feast according to the law. While it is likely that the devout Jews still held the annual Passover in their homes with their family, due to the spiritual decay of the nation, the feast had not been commemorated on a national scale since the days of Hezekiah. We gain some insight into the spiritual condition of the nation in **verse 3** where Josiah instructs the priests to “Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build.” Apparently, the Ark of the Covenant had been removed from the temple, most likely replaced with some form of idolatry, but it was now time to put it back where it belonged. Reinstating the Passover was not a simple task, there was a lot that had to be done.

First, Josiah prepared the Priests and Levites, **II Chronicles 35:1-6**. In beginning the process of preparing them for the Passover, **verse 2** says he “encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord.” Rather than belittling or berating them for their failure, he encouraged them to resume

their duties. When someone is struggling spiritually and perhaps has fallen away from the Lord, do you tear them down for their failure or attempt to build them up and encourage them to start anew? The first step of preparation was to prepare the temple. After years of neglect and abuse, the house of the Lord had to be cleansed and the ark of the covenant restored to its proper place. This was the culmination of the process that began back in **II Chronicles 34:8**. The second step of preparation was to prepare themselves. This involved sanctifying themselves and their brethren and organizing themselves to be ready to stand in their place and do their duty as outlined in the law of Moses. If we are to serve in the house of the Lord, we must also take time to prepare and sanctify ourselves. What does this process of sanctification involve? What are the dangers of not properly preparing ourselves before serving the Lord?

Second, Josiah made provision for the people. In **II Chronicles 35:7-9**, Josiah and the princes provided the lambs and bullocks necessary for the nation to commemorate the Passover. God does not tell us how many lambs were provided, but how many bullocks did Josiah provide? How much cattle and oxen did the princes provide? What was the total number of animals provided for the Passover? These animals were not part of the Passover meal. The Passover sacrifice had to be a lamb without blemish and without spot, **Exodus 12:1-20**. The bullocks, oxen, and cattle were for the sin and burnt offerings that were necessary to cleanse the people in preparation for the Passover and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread which immediately followed the Passover.

Third, Josiah practiced the Passover according to the law of Moses, **II Chronicles 35:10-18**. Planning and preparation would have been meaningless if the people had not followed through and actually observed the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Good intentions do not equate with obedience. There must be a doing of that which is required. Are there some spiritual things you intended to do, but perhaps never accomplished? When God speaks to our heart, it is important to act immediately, lest Satan come and undo the work of the Holy Spirit in our heart. In keeping the Passover there are two things worthy of note. First, **verse 15** tells us the singers were in their place. Music and singing plays an important part in the service of the Lord. Musicians need to be prepared

and in their place in order to minister before the people. If you serve in the music ministry of your church, how seriously do you prepare for your ministry? Of course, this principle applies to all ministries. Christians should never approach their ministry for the Lord in a slipshod manner. Second, Josiah's Passover surpassed all other Passovers held by the previous kings of Israel. The magnitude of what Josiah accomplished is emphasized in **verse 19**. Everything recorded from **II Chronicles 34:8** through **II Chronicles 35:19** happened within the space of one year. It's amazing what we can accomplish in a year if we put our hearts and minds to the task. What are your spiritual goals for this year? How is your progress in regards to those goals?

## **Week 35**

## **Josiah's Pride**

We come now to the last episode in Josiah's life – **II Chronicles 35:20-27**. Verse 20 begins, "After all this..." After the great revival and all the work that went into repairing the temple and commemorating the Passover, a test came. Success is often followed by trial as God seeks to prove the heart. Success can often lead to pride which God hates. In **II Kings 20**, Hezekiah was sick unto death, but when he prayed, God healed him and added to his life, fifteen years. Immediately after, we read in **II Kings 20:12-19**, that God tested the heart of Hezekiah. A test which he failed. Pride had entered his heart. Notice the personal pronouns in verse 13. Hezekiah showed them his precious things, his armor, his treasures, his house, and his dominion. He failed to give God the glory. In what way has pride entered your heart? Notice in **II Chronicles 32:24-26**, Hezekiah humbled himself, but the judgment still came in the days of his descendants.

Now Josiah faces a similar test. Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt, came to fight against the king of Assyria in Charchemish by the Euphrates. Find a map of the middle East. Charchemish by the Euphrates is north of Israel. Egypt is to the southwest of Israel. In order of the king of Egypt to get to Charchemish, he would have to pass through the land of Israel. Keep in mind that the northern kingdom of Israel had already fallen to the Assyrians. Judah was a small country that basically encompassed Jerusalem. Pharaoh-nechoh would have passed by the west of Judah

through the land of Philistia when Josiah decided to come out against him in battle.

In **verse 21**, Necho sends ambassadors to Josiah. Their message was three-fold. First, Necho was not coming to fight against Judah. Second, Necho was going to war according to God's command. Third, Necho asked Josiah not to fight against him, lest he be destroyed. According to **verse 22**, who was Necho's message from? According to **verse 21**, who was Josiah meddling with? Rather than humbly minding his own business, Josiah determined to fight against Necho in the valley of Megiddo, north of Judah, just west of the Sea of Galilee. The decision was a fatal one. According to **II Kings 23:25-27**, why did God command Pharaoh-nechoh to go against the king of Assyria? It was all part of God's plan to bring judgment against the nation of Judah.

Nevertheless, Josiah was a good king, a godly king. **II Chronicles 35:26** tells us his goodness was written in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah. **Verse 25** tells us that the nation of Judah lamented the death of Josiah, led by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He had the difficult task of ministering during the decline and fall of Judah, **Jeremiah 1:1-3**.

It is unfortunate that many godly men have suffered a spiritual failure later in life. It is a reminder that we must always be on our guard. The process of walking with God never ends. Spiritual tests come in all stages of life. May the Lord help us to be faithful to the end.

## Unit VI

### Romans 10:1-10

#### Week 36

#### Man's Need of Salvation

**Romans 10:1-10** is a classic passage on salvation. Before we begin to break it down verse by verse, take time to read the passage in its entirety. Notice who Paul is writing to. He is writing to those in Rome who are saved on behalf of those of the nation of Israel who are not saved. His initial expression is his desire for his countrymen to be saved. Herein we see their need to be saved. Being a Jew or a follower of the law was not sufficient grounds for salvation. Salvation was dependent upon one's faith in Jesus Christ. As we consider man's need of salvation, notice three truths.

First, man is lost in ignorance. Men do not come to Christ for salvation, because they are ignorant of their need for salvation. How are the lost described in **John 12:39-40** and **II Corinthians 4:3-4**? Have you ever witnessed to someone only to discover they could not see the truth, because of their blindness? They live in darkness, **Ephesians 5:8**, **Colossians 1:12-14**, **I Thessalonians 5:4-5**, and **I Peter 2:9**. The lost are described as being in darkness because their eyes and minds are blind to the truth of the gospel. Their hearts are hardened, and they are spiritually dead, **Ephesians 2:1,12**. Without God they have no hope. The Psalmist describes them in **Psalms 58:4-5** as being "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." The natural heart of man has no desire for God and because he is spiritually blind, he is ignorant of his own need. How then can a man be saved?

Second, we see the Spirit's illumination. No one is ever saved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God has to open the eyes of the blind and convict the hardened heart before a person can be saved, **Ephesians 1:17-19**. The Spirit enlightens the mind to give wisdom and understanding. His tool to accomplish this is the Word of God. **Ephesians 6:17** identifies the Word of God as the Spirit's Sword, a sword that is sharper than any two-edged sword, **Hebrews 4:12**. In John 3, Jesus refers to salvation as a new birth. Every birth involves two parents. A physical

birth requires a father (male) and a mother (female). Two men cannot produce off-spring and two women cannot produce off-spring. It requires a male and a female. Spiritual birth also involves two parents. These are identified in **John 3:5** as the water and the spirit. The spirit refers to the Spirit of God. No one is born again apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, but what is the water? Some think the water refers to the waters of baptism, but this interpretation is inconsistent with scripture which teaches salvation through Christ and Christ alone. The answer is found in **Ephesians 5:26**. The water is the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict the lost of their sin and to reveal God's plan of salvation.

Third, we see the apostle's concern. Paul's desire and prayer was for the salvation of his people, the Jews. How concerned are you for your people? Do you have friends and family who are lost? To what degree do you witness to them and pray for them? Does it bother you that they have no hope? **I Corinthians 15:34** "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." **II Peter 3:9** "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If God is not willing for any to perish, why should we be willing to let them die in their ignorance?

Think of someone you know who is lost and pray for them. Then ask God to give you an opportunity and the boldness to speak to them about their spiritual need. Time is of the essence. No one has a guarantee of tomorrow. If they die without Christ, they will perish for all eternity. May the Lord give us hearts of compassion for those who are abiding under the wrath of God. And remember, you and I were once one of them.

## **Week 37**

## **Man's Need of Salvation, Part II**

In the opening verse of Romans 10, we see the necessity of salvation. Man in his lost estate is ignorant of his need for salvation and helpless to secure such salvation of his own accord. His only hope is a moving of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and mind to convince him of his need for salvation and to illumine his eyes and mind to the means of salvation. As

we continue our thoughts upon man's need of salvation, we notice three necessities.

First, is the necessity for faith. **Ephesians 2:8** says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith..." **John 3:16** "...whosoever believeth in him should not perish..." In **Acts 16:30-31** the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" To which Paul and Silas replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." No one is saved apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is the key that unlocks the door of salvation, but faith is only effectual when it is placed in Christ. Many people have faith in their church or in their religion, they may have faith in their parents or in their heritage, but none of these things will save them. The object of your faith or the basis of your faith is important in determining whether or not the faith will lead to salvation. Read **I John 5:10-13**. Eternal life and thus salvation is given to those who believe on the Son of God. **Acts 2:21** "...whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." **Acts 4:12** "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." **Romans 10:13** "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Using a concordance find at least five more verses that speak of the necessity of faith for salvation.

Second, is the necessity of the new birth. Read **John 3:3-7**. Life is always the result of a birth. Physical life is the result of a physical birth. Spiritual life is the result of a spiritual birth. A person who is not born again or who has not experienced the new birth is still lost and abiding under the wrath of God, **John 3:36**. The new birth occurs when the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to speak to the heart about one's need of salvation, leading them, by faith, to call upon the Lord for salvation. Thus, our spiritual parents are the Spirit of God and the Word of God, referred to in **John 3:5** and **Ephesians 5:26**, as the water of the Word. Which spiritual birth parent is identified in **I Peter 1:23**? According to **John 1:12-13**, who is born of God? Physically we are born once, at a specific time and place, often recorded on a birth certificate. Spiritually we are born once, at a specific time and place. Sometimes our spiritual birth is recorded in a Bible or in a church record, but even if you don't know the specific time or place, you should have knowledge of the spiritual birth.

Has there been a point in your life when you asked God to save you?

Third, is the necessity of a new nature. We are all born with a sinful flesh nature. The Bible refers to it as the old nature or the old man. It is a corrupt nature and incapable of producing spiritual fruit. Following a brief discussion on salvation in **Matthew 7:13-14**, Jesus teaches on the importance of producing good fruit in **Matthew 7:16-21**. We are not saved by producing good fruit. Good fruit is evidence that we are saved but in order for us to produce this good spiritual fruit, we need a new nature. **II Corinthians 5:17** says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” The word creature means creation. When we are saved or born again, we receive a new nature. According to **Ephesians 4:20-32** and **Colossians 3:1-11**, what are some of the differences between the old nature and the new nature? As you examine your own life, would you say it reflects more characteristics of the old nature or the new nature? If you are saved, you have a new nature, and even though you still have the old sin nature, you have no excuse to continue in sin. A life that is characterized by habitual sin is a life that is lived according to the old nature.

Faith leads to the new birth which results in a new nature. A person who has no new nature has never been born again and is still living in unbelief. Read again **Matthew 7:21-23**. Many profess to know the Lord who do not possess the Lord. Are you one of the many or are you one of the few?

## Week 38

## Sincerity Cannot Save

Understanding man’s need for salvation in verse 1, Paul continues in **Romans 10:2-5** to discuss three things that cannot save, man’s sincerity, man’s righteousness, and the law. We will begin by considering man’s sincerity. There are many who are sincere in their faith and practice, but unfortunately, they are sincerely wrong. Paul says the Jews, specifically the Pharisees, of whom Paul was trained, had a zeal of God, but they lacked the knowledge of God. Paul himself zealously persecuted the church, creating fear and havoc among the Christians of his day, **Galatians 1:13-14**, **Acts 22:3-5**; and **Acts 26:9-11**. Sometimes you may hear a

person say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere in your belief.” Is this a true statement? The answer is a resounding NO. What you believe makes all the difference in the world. What you believe may very well be the difference between an eternity in heaven or an eternity in hell.

Paul testified against the Jews that their zeal lacked knowledge. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees likewise in **Matthew 23:15**. They would go to great lengths to make a proselyte, but because of their lack of knowledge, they made them twofold more the child of hell. Those who practice a false religion are often difficult to win to Christ, because the false teaching is so engrained into their mind and manner of living. In Hosea 4:6 God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Why did they lack knowledge? They had forgotten the law of God. What was true in the Old Testament is true for today as well. Churches are being destroyed for lack of knowledge. They have forsaken and turned away from the cardinal doctrines of the faith. They have rejected sound doctrine in favor of that which sounds good and is pleasing to the ear, **II Timothy 4:3-4**. The lack of knowledge of the truth binds men in darkness. In **I Corinthians 15:34**, Paul says, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” We have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel of Christ and to teach people the knowledge of God that they might be saved and live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, **Romans 10:14-15, 17**. Were the people in **Matthew 7:21-24** sincere in their faith? Did their faith lead them to do many wonderful works? Why then shall they not enter into heaven?

A man’s conduct is a result of His knowledge and faith. Man can only act upon that which he knows and believes. If a man has knowledge of the truth, but doesn’t believe it to be true, he will act accordingly. In like manner, if something is not true, but a man believes it to be true, he will act accordingly. Knowledge and faith are the roots of the tree that produces fruit. If either the knowledge or faith are corrupt, the fruit of the tree is corrupt, **Matthew 7:16-20**. Essentially there are three types of trees, those who produce no fruit, those who produce evil fruit, and those who produce good fruit. What does the fruit reveal about the roots of the tree? What would you say to a person who knows the gospel and sincerely

believes they are saved, but produces no fruit or evil fruit?

Read **Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23, Mark 4:3-8, 14-20, and Luke 8:5-8, 11-15**. In the parable of the sower, what are the four types of ground? Which ground produced good fruit? Did the good ground always produce the same amount of fruit? Can you identify the four thorns which choke out the Word of God? What happens to the fruit that attempts to grow among thorns? What type of soil represents your heart and to what degree are you producing fruit? Are there some thorns that need to be weeded out of your life?

## **Week 39**

## **Righteousness Cannot Save**

In our last meditation we saw that sincerity cannot save from sin. While we ought to be sincere in our faith, it is our faith in Christ that saves, not our sincerity. Many people are sincerely religious and yet lost without Christ and without hope. Today we come to **Romans 10:3**, where we see that righteousness cannot save. Righteousness, like sincerity, is important, but it cannot save.

In this verse Paul contrasts the righteousness of man with the righteousness of God, but before we consider these two, let us first define righteousness. Righteousness is the state or quality of being or doing that which is right or just, according to a rule, standard, or test, thereby distinguishing it from wrong. Where there is no rule or law, right and wrong lose their meaning and the difference between them ceases to exist. In order to determine what is right and wrong, there must be a clearly defined rule or standard. Herein lies the problem. Who has the authority to establish rule or law in order to determine what is right and wrong? Is each person free to establish their own code of right and wrong? Obviously not. Such thinking would lead to anarchy and chaos, so government was established to enact and enforce laws. But where does government get its authority and how does it determine what is right and wrong? If government gets its authority from man, as men come and go the laws would change. What we need is an unchanging authority upon which to base our rule of law.

Since man was created by God, only God has the authority to establish rules of right and wrong. Fortunately, God has not left us without guidance

as to His will regarding right and wrong. God has given us His Word, the Holy Scriptures, as a guide. God's Word contains laws, statutes, judgments, principles, rules, etc. which govern the lives of men. What do **Psalm 19:7-11** and **II Timothy 3:16-17** teach us about God's Word? It is God's Word that determines what is right and what is wrong. If a nation uses the Word of God as the basis for their governing, the nation will be characterized by righteousness, but when a nation rejects or turns away from the Word of God, the nation will be characterized by unrighteousness. Our American democracy was established on principles from God's Word. What are some Bible principles or rules that our nation has gotten away from and what has been the result? Dr. James H. Brooks says, "The law of God is like a plumb-line, let down from heaven to test the uprightness of our character and the rectitude of our conduct; it is like an exact measure applied both to our inward and outward life to discover whether it is according to holiness..."

The righteousness of man refers to that which is just and right in the eyes of man. It is man's attempt to do right, to be a good person. What do **Psalm 14:1-3** and **Romans 3:10-19, 23** teach us about man's righteousness? **James 2:10** says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." No matter how good or righteous we are, the Bible says we have all sinned and are therefore guilty before God. It is not a matter of being more righteous than other men, God requires absolute righteousness. Man, at his very best, falls far short of absolute righteousness. We are all born with a sin nature. Even when we try to do good, we fail. Read over Paul's dilemma in **Romans 7:14-25**. What two laws were at work in Paul's life? How does Paul refer to these two opposing forces in **Galatians 5:16-17**? Can you think of some Bible characters who trusted in their own righteousness, only to be rejected by God? If man's righteousness is insufficient to save, what hope is there?

## **Week 40**

## **Righteousness Cannot Save, Part II**

The righteousness of man refers to that which is just and right in the eyes of man. It is man's attempt to do right, to be a good person and falls far short of God's standard of absolute righteousness. Thankfully, we do not have to rely on our own righteousness. Jesus Christ, God's only

begotten Son, died on Calvary's cross in my stead. When a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, God saves them from their sin and clothes them in the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God. In **Romans 10:3**, Paul said of the Jews, they had a zeal of God, but lacked knowledge. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God and had not submitted themselves to it. According to **Philippians 3:8-9**, what righteousness was Paul resting in? How is this righteousness obtained? It is not the righteousness of Christ that saves us, but faith in Christ. When we put our faith in Christ, the righteousness of Christ is then applied to our account, so God sees Christ's righteousness and not our own. According to **II Corinthians 5:21**, in order for us to receive the righteousness of Christ, what did Christ have to become for us?

Turn back to **Romans 3:19-26**. The law condemns us as guilty, for whosoever offendeth in one point, is guilty of all, **James 2:10**. But the righteousness of God is not obtained by the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. What does the word propitiation mean in verse 25? How did Christ atone for our sin and appease the wrath of God?

The righteousness of God denotes the perfection of His nature and sets before us the fact that God is holy and just in Himself and in all His dealings with His creatures. The law demands absolute righteousness, but as we cannot meet such a high demand, by grace, God gives us the righteousness of His only begotten Son. Nothing less will satisfy the character and demand of God. The faintest stain of sin must be excluded from the presence of God, therefore the only righteousness that can appear in His presence must be absolute. It is this righteousness of God, apart from any righteousness of our own, that makes us accepted in the beloved.

In **Isaiah 61:10-11**, Isaiah the prophet mentions the garments of salvation, which includes the robe of righteousness. As a bride adorned for her husband, we are to be adorned in the righteousness of Christ. How does one receive this garment? Only through faith in Jesus Christ. At the moment of salvation, my filthy garments, the garments of my righteousness, are exchanged for Christ's righteousness. What does **Isaiah 64:6** call our righteousness?

Last week we defined righteousness as the state or quality of being or doing that which is right or just, according to a rule, standard, or test,

thereby distinguishing it from wrong. The law or rule that determines what is right must then be used to judge that which is wrong. When you stand before the judgment bar of God, what righteousness do you want to be judged by, your own or Christ's? In **Psalm 35:24** David said, "Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness."

Let us conclude with the Old Testament example of Abraham. **Hebrews 11:8-10,17-19** make it clear that Abraham was a man of faith. According to this passage, how did Abraham demonstrate his faith in God? According to Galatians 3:6-9, what was accounted to Abraham as a result of his belief or faith in God? What was the gospel that was preached unto Abraham? Paul comes back to this blessing in **Galatians 3:14**. The promise was given to Abraham and his seed. According to **Galatians 3:26, 29**, how does this apply to us as Gentiles? Abraham was not saved by his own righteousness, but through faith in God. His faith was then accounted to him for righteousness. The same is true today. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is applied to our account. **Ephesians 2:8-9** and **Titus 2:5** remind us that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works of righteousness which we have done.

## **Week 41**

## **The Law Cannot Save**

Having seen that sincerity and righteousness cannot save, we now come to Paul's third argument, the law cannot save, **Romans 10:4-5**. The Jews had been given the law of Moses. We refer to it as the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Specifically, the Mosaic laws are outlined in Exodus through Deuteronomy. On a broader scale, the law refers to all of scripture. During Jesus' earthly ministry, the Old Testament was the only scripture they had. It included the books of the law, the books of history, the books of poetry, and the books of the prophets. Prior to the advent of Christ, the Jews followed or were under the Mosaic law. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes were the priests and religious rulers. They zealously kept "the law" which by this time included many man-made traditions. Jesus condemned them as having a zeal for the law outwardly, but not following the intent of the law in their heart. Read **Matthew 23** and **Luke 11:37-54**.

After the resurrection of Christ, many of the Jews continued to

emphasize the importance of the law. Even when they acknowledged faith in Christ, they still wanted to hold on to the law. Paul frequently addressed this difficulty in his epistles. Salvation is not by the law, nor is it through Christ and the law. Salvation is by faith alone, apart from the law. It is important to understand, Christ did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law, **Matthew 5:17**.

Does that mean the law has no place in the life of the believer today? No. The law is still important today as it reveals our need for salvation. The law was never meant to save, it was the purpose of the law to reveal man's inability to meet God's perfect standard of holiness. Consider **Romans 3:19-22,28** and **Galatians 2:16**. What is the purpose of the law? The law condemns all men as sinners, thus the need for Christ's sacrificial death on Calvary's cross.

Last week we looked at the faith of Abraham in Galatians 3. Let's return to **Galatians 3:10-14**. Can the law justify a man in the sight of God? According to **Galatians 3:19**, wherefore then serveth the law? In **Galatians 3:21-24**, is the law against the promises of God? The schoolmaster was both a teacher and a disciplinarian. Education cannot take place where there is no discipline. Spiritually, the law is our disciplinarian, revealing our sinfulness and total inability to save ourselves. Dr. James Brooks says, "There are only two ways by which men expect to enter heaven. One is by doing, the other is by believing." All systems of religion can be reduced to one of these two.

There are times when those who hold to and preach high standards of conduct are labeled as legalists. In most cases, this is an incorrect application of the term. A legalist is one who believes keeping the law is necessary for salvation. In essence, salvation is by doing, not believing. If a person believes the maintaining of Christian standards is necessary for salvation, then yes, they are a legalist. If, however, a person believes the maintaining of Christian standards is the outflowing of a life of holiness after salvation, they are not legalists. Consider **I Peter 1:15-16** and **II Peter 3:11**. This life of holiness is the new life created in Christ Jesus unto good works, **Ephesians 2:10**. **II Corinthians 5:17** reveals that in Christ we have a new life. Paul goes into more depth in **Ephesians 4:21-32**. As you consider the difference between the life of the saved and the

unsaved, what differences do you believe should be evident? How does **Romans 12:1-2** apply to this discussion? Are there areas in your life that still resemble the world? What can you do to change to become more Christlike?

## **Week 42**

## **Only Christ Can Save**

Having seen that sincerity, righteousness, and the law cannot save, what or who can save? The answer is found in **Romans 10:4**, Christ alone can save. He is the end or fulfillment of the law to everyone who believes in Him. In **John 14:6** Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." There are not many ways to heaven, there is only one way to heaven and that is through the person of Jesus Christ. In identifying Himself as the way to heaven, He excluded or ruled out all other ways. **Acts 4:10-12** "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Salvation is through Christ and Christ alone. But who is Christ that salvation can only be obtained through Him?

First, Christ is the Son of God. In **John 3:16** we read that God sent "His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How do we know that Jesus is the Son of God? The demons testified that He was. The demons are fallen angels. Prior to the fall they served God in heaven. They knew who Jesus was, because they had served Him prior to Satan's rebellion, **Matthew 8:28-29**, **Mark 3:11**, **Luke 4:41**, and **Luke 8:28**. The Scriptures testify that Jesus was the Son of God, **Mark 1:1**, **John 20:31**, and **Hebrews 4:14**. God the Father testified that Jesus was His Son, **Matthew 3:7; 17:5**, **Mark 1:11; 9:7**, **Luke 3:22; 9:35**, and **II Peter 1:17**. Jesus Himself claimed to be the Son of God, **John 9:35-38** and **John 10:36-38**. Look up the following passages and identify who testified that Jesus was the Son of God, **Matthew 14:33; 16:16; 27:54**, **Mark 15:39**, **John 1:34; 6:69; 11:27**,

**Acts 8:37; 9:20-22, Romans 1:3-4, and II Corinthians 1:19.** The title Son of God, identifies Jesus' Deity.

Second, Christ is the Messiah. The name Christ means Messiah or the anointed one. It identifies Jesus as the promised seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the serpent, **Genesis 3:15.** In **John 4:25-26,** Jesus enters into a conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

Third, Christ is the Son of Man. The title Son of Man identifies Jesus' humanity. Jesus Christ was the only God-man that ever lived. Fully God as though He had never been man, and fully man as though He had never been God. In order to atone for the sin of man, Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, would become a flesh and blood man, to give His life a ransom for many. He would die on the cross of Calvary, shedding His blood for the remission of sin. The atonement for sin required a pure, sinless blood sacrifice. This could only be accomplished through the human, sinless Son of God. The gospels are full of references to Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. Take a few moments to consider the following passages, **Matthew 9:4-6; 12:39-40; 16:13-16,27-28; 17:22-23; 18:11; 20:18-19,28, Mark 2:9-11; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33,45, Luke 5:23-24; 9:22; 19:10, and John 3:13-15; 8:28.**

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became the Son of Man that He might die for the sin of man, thus making a way of salvation for all men. **I Peter 1:18-19** "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." **I Peter 2:22-25,** speaking of Christ, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

As you meditate on the things of God this week, focus your thoughts upon the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on Calvary's cross for your sin. Consider the communion of the Lord's Supper which we are commanded to observe in remembrance of Him. What do the two elements represent and why is it important that they never be forgotten?

## Week 43

## Salvation is By Believing

Understanding that salvation is through Christ and Christ alone, there remains the question of how salvation in Christ is obtained. Many religions emphasize doing, what we refer to as a works salvation. Certainly, works are important, but works cannot save. **Ephesians 2:8-9** clearly teaches that salvation is by grace through faith, not of our own works or doing, lest we should have occasion to boast. Throughout scripture, the law is contrasted to grace. In fact, the law reveals our need for grace. The law says, "Do and live." Grace says, "Live and do." The law says, "Do and be saved." Grace says, "Believe and be saved." The law curses everyone who fails to keep the entire law. Grace says, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Therefore, the righteousness we seek in Christ, cannot be obtained by the law, but only through faith or by believing. **Romans 10:6-8** reveals that this righteousness is not far away, that is, it is not up in heaven or down in hell where it would be unattainable, but it is in thy mouth and in thy heart. It is found through faith in the Word of God. Take a few moments to memorize **Romans 10:17**.

In order for a person to believe, they must first hear the Word of God. Salvation involves two spiritual parents, the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict the heart of sin and enlighten the mind to the truth. According to **John 3:5**, what two things must a man be born again of? According to **Ephesians 5:26**, what is the water that sanctifies the believer? Consider **John 17:17** and **II Thessalonians 2:13**, what is the "truth" in these verses? No one is saved apart from the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

If faith cometh by hearing, how does one hear? **Romans 10:8** says the word must be preached. Read **Romans 10:14-15**. Paul told Timothy in **II Timothy 4:2** to "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of

season...” According to **I Corinthians 1:17-18, 21**, what does the world think of preaching? As believers, what should our attitude be towards preaching? Are you faithful to attend the preaching services of the church? Do you listen attentively and take notes during the preaching? Preaching is not man’s invention, it is God’s command.

In terms of our hearing, God’s Word gives to cautions. Take heed what you hear - **Mark 4:24**, and take heed how you hear – **Luke 8:18**. How you hear speaks of attentiveness to what is being said or sung. What you hear speaks of the choices we make in selecting what we listen to. In terms of attentiveness, how you hear, the Bible gives five warnings.

First, is the danger of drifting – **Hebrews 2:1**. Does your mind ever drift away while someone is speaking? We often refer to it as daydreaming. Essentially it means we are not paying attention thus we allow what we hear to slip away.

Second, is the danger of disbelieving or doubting – **Hebrews 3:12**. Sometimes we hear what is being said, but we are not convinced as to its truthfulness. In **Romans 14:23** we find doubting as opposed to believing, is sin. How do I know if what I am hearing is truth? Compare it to the Bible. As we saw previously, the Word of God is truth. Preaching that comes from the Bible is true preaching. That does not mean every preacher is preaching truth, so what should we do? What did the Bereans do in **Acts 17:10-11**? Notice how they received the Word of God and what they did after they heard the Word of God. During the preaching, do you follow along in your Bible? Do you take and review notes to help with your understanding and retention of God’s Word?

Third, is the danger of dullness – **Hebrews 5:11**. Dullness occurs when we consider something to be boring. It is evidence of a lack of interest. Do you find the things of God to be interesting? The Word of God can only become more real in your life if you are willing to attentively read and study it.

Fourth, is the danger of despising – **Hebrews 10:26**. To despise is to look down upon. At this point the listener has rejected the Word of God. According to **Hebrews 10:27**, what can a person who has rejected the Word of God expect?

Fifth, is the danger of defying – **Hebrews 12:25**. Once a person

rejects the truth of God's Word, they will refuse to listen or heed God's Word.

Notice carefully the progression. Drifting, not paying attention, leads to doubting, which leads to dullness, which leads to despising, which leads to defying. In terms of your listening to the Word of God, are you anywhere in this progression? What should a person do who finds they have a difficulty listening to the preaching of God's Word? **I Peter 2:2** teaches us to develop a desire for the Word, that we may grow thereby. A healthy appetite is necessary for life and growth. A person who has no desire for the Word of God, will not grow spiritually. Often it is evidence of a lack of genuine salvation. If they are saved, they will be too weak to continue in spiritual things. What is your spiritual appetite like?

## **Week 44**

## **Salvation is By Believing, Part II**

When I was a boy, I attended a Christian summer camp for boys. One summer the speaker taught us that **Romans 10:9-10** was the power of God unto salvation. He uses the letters for **Ten, Nine and Ten** to form an acrostic, **TNT**, which represents dynamite. He taught us that these verses were the dynamite power of God unto salvation. It was a lesson I never forgot. In this passage, Paul makes the matter of salvation clear. There are two steps that take place simultaneously, confession and belief. Confession is the outward expression of the inward faith or belief. Both are necessary for salvation.

As we saw previously, salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. Notice that saving faith is rooted in the heart, not the mind. In **James 1:19**, James tells us the devils or demons believe, but they are not saved. They know who God is, they have a mental understanding and belief regarding God, but they do not have faith in God. In the heart, they have rebelled against God. A mental belief in God is not a saving faith. Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 52:1 "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." According to **Romans 1:21-22**, when they knew God but glorified Him not as God, what was darkened? While there must be a mental understanding, saving faith comes from the heart, not the mind. The mind is important in knowing what you believe about God. Paul emphasizes that saving faith is in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

I Corinthians 15 is the great resurrection chapter of the Bible. Paul begins this chapter with a detail explanation of the gospel, **I Corinthians 15:1-4**. Saving faith believes that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. The resurrection of Christ was confirmed by personal witness. According to **I Corinthians 15:5-8**, how many people saw the resurrected Christ? Why is the resurrection so important? Read **I Corinthians 15:13-20**. If there is no resurrection, then our faith and hope are in vain. What you believe about Christ is important and will determine where you spend eternity.

Saving faith, however, must be expressed outwardly by the mouth. In fact, a person who is genuinely born again, will not be able to keep their mouth shut when it comes to speaking of their faith in Christ. When Jesus healed people and forgave them of their sins, He frequently charged them not to make Him know, but the more He charged them, the more they proclaimed who He was and what He had done for them. **Mark 7:36** “And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.” If you profess to be a believer, to what degree do you publish abroad what God has done for you?

This outward expression of faith is called confession. To confess means to agree with. When a person is charged with a crime, if they confess, they are agreeing that they are guilty of the charge against them. We often think of confession in terms of sin. When we sin, we are to confess, or agree with God, about our sin, **I John 1:9**, and while confession of sin is part of salvation, the confession Paul is speaking of here in **Romans 10:9-10** is the confession of faith in Jesus Christ. It is agreeing with God about who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us. We are to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, the Only Begotten Son of God, who died on Calvary’s cross for our sin. There are many so called Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is God’s son and that He was born of a virgin and died on a cross. They commemorate Christmas and Easter and are familiar with and accept the Bible stories as true, but they are not saved, because they have never confessed Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. They have a mental belief, but not a heart belief. They have never

called upon the Lord for salvation, **Romans 10:13**. They are religious, but still lost. How do we know if we are genuinely born again or not? How do we know if our faith is rooted in the heart and not just in the mind? **Matthew 7:13-23**, genuine faith will produce genuine, godly fruit. Consider the fruit of your own spiritual life. What does it reveal about your faith?

## **Week 45**

## **Evidence of Salvation**

Having considered what salvation is and is not, we must ask ourselves a final question. Is it possible to make a profession of faith in Christ and to pray a sincere prayer of forgiveness and still not be genuinely saved? I believe the answer is yes, especially when the profession and prayer are rooted in emotion instead of conviction. How then can a person know if they are genuinely saved? If a person is genuinely born again, there will be certain evidence in their life. This evidence is not something that might be, these are things that will most definitely be true in the life of the believer. Many times, I have dealt with families of believing parents who are dealing with an ungodly child, all the while clinging to a sliver of hope that their child is saved, because they prayed a prayer when they were young, even though there is no evidence of genuine salvation. Their faith is in a prayer instead of in a person. What are some of the things that will be true in the life of a genuine born-again believer?

The first evidence of salvation is a changed life. **II Corinthians 5:17** – when a person is saved, what changes? Everything! For a person who has lived a life of sin, this change will be very evident. For a person who was saved at a young age and never experienced the depths of sin, it may be more of a contrast between what they are and what they would be if they had not been saved. Some people believe if they have never experienced the depths of sin, they do not have a testimony to share with others. This is not true. Some people are saved out of a life of sin, others are saved from a life of sin. If God saved you from a life of sin, praise the Lord. You have a wonderful and powerful testimony for Christ.

The second evidence of salvation is love for God. **I John 5:1** – He that begeth is God the Father, he that is begotten is God the Son. You cannot love one without loving the other. **I John 4:15-16,19** – Our love for God

is born out of God's love for us. How is this love manifested? **I John 5:2-3** – We demonstrate our love for God by keeping His commandments. A person who is genuinely born-again, will demonstrate a love for, a hunger for, and a thirst for God's Word. A person who has no interest in the Word of God, places a question mark over their own profession of faith.

The third evidence of salvation is love for the brethren. **I John 4:11,20-21** – In **John 13:35** Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The brethren are our brothers and sisters in Christ. A person who is genuinely saved will enjoy and want to spend time worshipping and fellowshiping with other believers. This is accomplished through the ministry of the local church. A person who professes to be saved, but has no interest in the local church, places a question mark over their profession of faith.

The fourth evidence of salvation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **I John 4:13** – The Bible refers to the Spirit of God as the earnest of our inheritance. Read **II Corinthians 1:21-22**, **II Corinthians 5:5**, and **Ephesians 1:13-14**. The word earnest speaks of a down payment. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of God's promises yet to be fulfilled in the life of the believer. How do I know if I have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? In **Ephesians 5:18-21** Paul identifies three evidences of a spirit filled life. A person who has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will manifest a singing spirit, a thankful spirit, and a submissive spirit. Do these three spirits describe your spirit? Then in **Galatians 5:22-23**, Paul identifies the fruit of the spirit. Paul lists nine parts of the fruit of the spirit. The first three, love, joy, and peace and inward fruit. The second three, longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness are outward fruit. The last three, faith, meekness, and temperance are upward fruit. A person who is living in the Spirit will produce spiritual fruit.

All of this evidence of salvation is contrasted with the evidence of a lack of salvation. The fruit of the spirit is contrasted with the works of the flesh in **Galatians 5:19-21** and **Revelation 21:8**. The love of God is contrasted with a love for the world and the things of the world, **I John 2:15-17** and **James 4:4**. In **Ephesians 4:20-32** and **Ephesians 5:8-11**, Paul contrasts the old life of sin with the new life in Christ. In **Ephesians 5:10** and **II Corinthians 13:5**, Paul tells us to prove our own selves, to put

ourselves to the test. **I Corinthians 11:28**, “But let a man examine himself...” The purpose of evidence is not for us to judge others, but to judge ourselves. Does my life give evidence to faith in Jesus Christ? Evidence of salvation gives us confidence in our profession of faith in Christ. Where there is no evidence, there will be no confidence. What does your life say about your profession of faith?

## Unit VII

### Psalm 1:1-6

#### Week 46

#### The Blessed Man

It is natural for men to desire happiness, peace, and contentment in this life. When writing the Declaration of Independence, our forefathers stated that all men have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The phrase, the pursuit of happiness, is not speaking of seeking after happiness, but rather practicing or experiencing happiness. The Bible word for happiness is blessed. As we begin a series of meditations on Psalm 1, we are introduced to two contrasting individuals, the blessed man and the ungodly man. Read **Psalm 1:1-6** and consider the contrasts between these two individuals, especially as it relates to practicing happiness.

Before we go any further, it would be helpful to define or understand what true happiness is. How would you define happiness? When do you most often experience happiness or what things in life make you happy? If you look up blessed in Strong’s concordance, you will notice that there are primarily two words in the Hebrew and two words in the Greek that are translated blessed. The one speaks of blessing another (Strong’s Hebrew 1288 and Greek 2127), and the other speaks of happiness, fortunate, or being well off (Strong’s Hebrew 835 and Greek 3107). Webster in his 1828 dictionary defines happiness as “the agreeable sensations which spring from the enjoyment of good; that state of being in which his desires are gratified, by the enjoyment of pleasure without pain.” In Matthew 5-7, Jesus begins His earthly ministry with the sermon on the mount. The first section of His message, **Matthew 5:3-12**, are known as the beatitudes. As you read this passage make a note of the distinguishing characteristics of the blessed or happy man.

God wants us to be happy and to enjoy life. In **I Timothy 6:17**, Paul told Timothy that “the living God... giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” Sometimes people resist coming to Christ, because they think the Christian life is a life of sacrifice, surrender, and service that ultimately leads to missing out on the pleasures of life. While it is true that the Christian life is a life of sacrifice, surrender, and service, the greater truth is that

sacrifice, surrender, and service lead to greater happiness in this life. The life of sin is a miserable life because it has no hope for the future. In **Ephesians 2:12**, Paul describes those without Christ as having no hope in this world. In **I Corinthians 15:19**, Paul says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” True happiness is only found where there is true hope and true holiness. A holy life is a happy life, and a happy life is a life of hope. In **Revelation 3:14-22** we have the letter to the church at Laodicea. The Laodicean church was a lukewarm church that was trusting in their wealth instead of in God. In verse 17 Jesus said, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” One of the lies of Satan is that happiness is found in the material things of this world. The truth is the things of this world will always leave you wanting more. True happiness is found in the spiritual things of God.

King Solomon, the writer of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, was the wisest and richest king to have ever lived. In **Ecclesiastes 2:1-11** Solomon pursued everything this world had to offer and found it to be vanity and vexation of spirit. What does vanity and vexation of spirit mean? Do you find your life to be satisfying or full of vanity? What was Solomon’s conclusion in **Ecclesiastes 12:8,13-14**?

Unfortunately, the pursuit of the cares, riches, pleasures, and things of this world is often a stumbling block in the pursuit of true happiness. In the parable of the Seed and the Sower, Jesus identifies these four things as thorns that choke at the Word and lead to an unfruitful life (**Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:18-19, and Luke 8:14**).

There are many passages of scripture that teach about the blessed or happy man. Perhaps they could all be summed up in one verse, **Psalms 84:12** “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” True happiness can only be found in the person of Jesus Christ. The first step to a happy or blessed life is putting your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, calling upon Him for salvation. Are you truly a happy person today? If not, what is the next step you need to take to become a happy person?

As we begin to consider the blessed man of Psalm 1, the Psalmist begins with the negative, what the blessed man does not do. Herein is a Bible principle, in order for change to take place, there must first be a putting off of the old before putting on the new. There must be a turning from the old life in order to turn to the new life, a turning from the world to God. Consider **Ephesians 4:21-32** and **Colossians 3:5-17**. What things are we to put off and then what things are we to put on?

Coming to our text, **Psalm 1:1**, there are three individuals listed we are to refrain from, the ungodly, the sinner, and the scornful. Each of these speak of the old crowd. When a person is born again by faith in Jesus Christ, their company or companions will change. **I Corinthians 15:33** says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." The word communications speaks of companions. When we are with our friends, we spend time communicating. Evil companions tend toward evil communications. Godly companions tend toward godly communications. Why type of communications do you have with your friends and what does that say about the type of companions you have?

The first evil companion is the ungodly. This is the immoral person. Their words and thoughts are corrupt. They have no thought for God. In **Romans 1:18-32**, Paul gives us a downward progression of those who suppress the truth of God. They go from being fools, to being unclean, to being reprobates. **Jude 15** says they will be judged for their ungodly deeds and their ungodly words. Because the mind of the ungodly is corrupt, their counsel is also corrupt. The counsel or advice of the world will always lead you astray. The book of Proverbs gives many strong warnings against listening to or following the ungodly. **Proverbs 1:10-19, 29-31** is just one example.

The second evil companion is the sinner. The sinner is one who is accounted guilty. **Romans 3:23** says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We are all accounted as guilty sinners. **James 2:10** says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." According to **Romans 3:19**, who is guilty before God? The path or way of the guilty always leads to destruction. The way speaks of the course of life. While all of us are sinners, the psalmist is specifically referring to those whose overall direction of life is a life of sin.

The third evil companion is the scornful. To scorn is to scoff or mock, to make fun of or ridicule. Do your companions make fun of spiritual things? Do they mock those who try to do right? What is their attitude towards authority, parental, educational, civil, commercial, etc.? **Proverbs 13:20** “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Do you have some friendships that need to be discontinued? You can still be friendly without being a close companion. The company you keep will determine the direction of your life. Be very careful about the friends you choose, and the type of friend you are.

Finally in this verse we see a downward progression. When a person falls in with the wrong crowd it begins with their walk. Their paths begin to cross and they find themselves joining together for various activities and recreations. Next, they are found standing with them. This speaks of a closer relationship. They went from participating in the same activities to hanging out together. Finally, they are seated with them. This is the closest relationship as they are now considered part of the group.

The classic example from scripture is Abraham’s nephew Lot. To understand the context begin reading in **Genesis 13:1-9**. Abraham and Lot had become wealthy men, so much so, that the land was not able to sustain both of them, so they decided to separate. Lot based his choice upon saw. The plains of Sodom and Gomorrah were well watered like the land of Egypt, where Abraham had traveled during a previous famine. In **Genesis 13:10-12**, Lot initially pitches his tent toward Sodom. He is still dwelling in tents like his uncle Abraham, living in the plain outside of the city. In Genesis 14, God raises up a group of kings to fight against a coalition of kings including the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah. During the battle, Lot is taken captive. Notice where Lot was dwelling in **Genesis 14:12**. He is no longer living in a tent on the plain, but is dwelling in a house in Sodom. Abraham arms his servants and delivers Lot from the enemy kings only to see Lot return to Sodom. We next read about Lot in **Genesis 19:1-14**. Not only is he dwelling in a house in Sodom, but in verse 1 he is sitting in the gate. The men who sat in the gate were considered men of leadership and influence in the city. In verse 7, Lot refers to the men of the city as brethren. He has become one of them. Lot

went from walking, pitching his tent toward Sodom, to standing, dwelling in Sodom, to sitting in the gate as one of the men or leaders of Sodom.

The question is, what ever happened to all his wealth that initially led him to separate from his uncle Abraham? It may have been lost in the battle in Genesis 14 or he may have traded in the life of a herdsman for the life of a city dweller. Regardless, at the end of Genesis 19 we find him dwelling in a cave with his two daughters. His decision to move toward Sodom cost him everything. He went from being a blessed man to being a miserable man. The same can happen to any one of us if we are not careful about the friends we keep. If you want to be blessed of God, you may have to sever certain friendships.

## **Week 48**

## **What He Delights In**

After separating from the wrong crowd, the blessed man turns his attention to that which now brings him delight, the Word of God. The Bible speaks of salvation as a new birth, **John 3:1-7**. When a baby is born, one of the first things it desires is to nurse. No matter the time, day or night, an infant has a natural desire to eat. The same is true spiritually. When a person experiences the spiritual birth, they will have a desire for the milk of God's Word. Peter uses this illustration in **I Peter 2:2-3**. A newborn infant that will not eat, will not survive. Nourishment is essential for life. Likewise, a born-again child of God who has no desire for the Word of God will be weak and lifeless, due to a lack of nourishment. The Word of God provides the nourishment needed to live and grow.

Continuing with the illustration of a newborn infant, we know that in the early stages of life, they are only able to take milk or liquid. As they grow, they progress to more solid food, eventually being able to chew and digest meat. In **Hebrews 5:12-14**, the believers had failed to grow or mature in the word. As a result, they were unable to teach others in the Word, needing themselves to be taught again the first principles of God's Word. They were still living on the milk of God's Word instead of progressing to the meat of God's Word. The difficulty is identified in verse 14 as a lack of use or exercise. Three things are essential for growth, nourishment, exercise, and rest. As a child plays and exercises, they develop and master certain skills. First, they learn to roll, then crawl, then

stand, then walk, and eventually run. Skipping jumping and other skills will soon follow. A person who is unskillful in the word is like a child who hasn't learned to walk or run. They have not been exercising themselves in the word. Exercise speaks of our service. Many Christians enjoy taking in the Word of God, but often fail when it comes to putting into practice that which they have learned. Serving the Lord and spiritual exercise are essential to the maturity of a believer.

This process of spiritual growth and maturity depends upon our ability to digest the principles of the Word of God. This is accomplished through meditation on God's Word. According to **Joshua 1:8**, what does meditation in God's Word lead to? Many Christians struggle in the Christian life because they have never learned to meditate on God's Word. The word meditate means to chew the cud, to mull it over in one's heart and mind. It is not enough to simply read the Word of God, we must meditate upon it, going over it again and again in order to digest the truths found therein. An animal who chews the cud begins by grazing in the field. After they have eaten, they lie down and regurgitate that which they have eaten, chewing it again in order to get all the nutrients out of it. Meditation requires taking time to rest and think about what God has said in His Word. While the world rushes on, we need to take time to rest and meditate on God's Word. Take time to read and meditate upon the following passages: **Psalms 63:5-7; 77:10-12; 119:14-16, 23-24, 47-48, 77-78, 148; 143:4-6**. Did you notice how often the word delight is found in these passages? Go back and read them again. God wants us to delight in His Word. The word delight means to take pleasure in something, to consider it to be of value. To what degree do you value the Word of God?

Notice also that meditation is something we are to do continually, day and night. It is not something we do once each day and then cross off the list. It is a process of renewing the mind, of changing the way we think. **Romans 12:2** speaks of it as a transformation. How can you develop the habit of meditating on God's Word? What needs to change in regards to your thinking or approach to your quiet time with God?

## **Week 49**

## **His Fruitfulness**

Delighting and meditating in the Word of God leads to fruitfulness in

the spiritual life. In **Psalm 1:3**, the psalmist uses the illustration of a fruit tree to picture one who meditates in the Word of God. Notice several truths about this tree.

First, it is planted by the rivers of water. Water is essential to a tree. The water is a picture of the Word of God. In terms of salvation, there are two spiritual birth parents, the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Word of God is spoken of as the water of the Word, **John 3:5**, **Ephesians 5:26**, and **II Thessalonians 2:13**. No one is ever saved apart from the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict the heart of sin and to enlighten the eyes to salvation. Salvation in turn results in eternal life. In other words, the water of the Word is essential for spiritual life. The same is true of a tree. A tree depends upon water for life.

A tree also depends upon water for growth. If you cut down a tree and observe the crosscut section of the tree, you will notice a series of growth rings. The thickness of the ring indicates the amount of growth the tree experienced in each successive year. The thicker the ring, the greater the growth, usually due to the amount of water available to the tree.

The tree also depends upon water to produce fruit. During a drought, a tree may not produce fruit, due to a lack of water. A tree prioritizes its use of water first for life, second for growth, and third for fruitfulness. The same is true in the spiritual life. We need the water of God's Word first for life, then for growth. The amount of God's Word we are able to digest determines the amount of growth. As we continue to take in the Word of God, we are able to produce spiritual fruit. Of course, even in fruitfulness, you cannot separate the Word of God from the work of God through the Holy Spirit as all spiritual fruit is fruit of the Spirit, **Galatians 5:22-23**.

Second, it brings forth fruit in its season. Not all seasons are conducive to producing fruit. In the spring, the tree buds and blossoms at which time the blossoms are pollinated thus producing fruit buds. During the summer, the fruit grows and then in the fall it is ready to be harvested. Depending upon the climate, the seasons may vary, but the process is always the same. The point is fruit takes times to come to fruition or to maturity. It takes time to ripen.

Third, it prospers in all it doeth. The prosperity of the tree is contrasted

with the withering of the tree. A tree that does not get enough water will wither and a withering tree will not prosper. Read again **Joshua 1:8**. Consider the story of Joseph in **Genesis 39:1-12, 21-23; 41:38-52**. Joseph did not have a Bible like we have today, but clearly as a young boy he was taught the Word of God by his father. What evidence in the life of Joseph leads us to this conclusion? Notice however, that meditating on the Word of God alone is not enough for one to prosper and produce fruit. What else is necessary for spiritual success, **Deuteronomy 29:9, Joshua 1:7, I Kings 2:3, I Chronicles 22:13, and Matthew 7:24-27?**

In **Matthew 13:3-9** we read the parable of the sower. Jesus' explanation is given in **Matthew 13:18-23**. The parallel passages are found in **Mark 4:3-20** and **Luke 8:5-15**. According to **verse 22**, when does the seed fail to produce fruit? There are actually four thorns, only two are mentioned in Matthew. Can you discern the other two? Of those who produced fruit, did they all produce the same amount or percentage of fruit? What do you think determines how much fruit is produced?

Would you consider yourself to be a fruitful Christian? What evidence can you give to support your conclusion? What can you do differently to become more fruitful in your Christian life?

## **Week 50**

## **The Way of the Ungodly**

As we come to the second half of Psalm 1, God identifies two groups of people and two ways or paths that lead to two different and specific outcomes. The way of the ungodly shall perish, while the way of the righteous shall prosper. Before we begin to look at these two paths it is important to understand that the outcomes or destination of each way is defined in terms of that which is spiritual, not physical or material. The ungodly may prosper materially, but they will perish spiritually, **Psalm 73:3-28**. David was envious of the wicked when he saw their prosperity. What changed his mind or attitude? When did this change occur? As believers we must be careful to maintain a right spirit or attitude towards the ungodly, even when they cause us to suffer persecution.

As you read **Psalm 1:4-6**, the psalmist is dealing primarily with the ungodly in contrast to the righteous or blessed. Notice three things about the ungodly way. First, it is like chaff. Chaff is the thin outer shell of

grain. When harvesting a grain such as wheat, the kernels were thrown up into the air, allowing the wind to separate the chaff from the grain. The chaff is worthless and of no value. It has no lasting or abiding purpose. The righteous are rooted and grounded as a tree and thus able to withstand the wind and storms. The chaff has no foundation and is easily separated from the kernel and blown away by the wind. In the book of Jude, Jude deals with the matter of false teachers. Referring to the preaching of Enoch, in **Jude 15-16** he calls them ungodly murmurers and complainers, walking after their own lusts. Read the entire book of Jude and notice the Old Testament references to Egypt, fallen angels, Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses, Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Make a list of all the descriptive words that Jude uses to describe the ungodly. **Verse 12** in particular mentions they are “carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth... plucked up by the roots.” This is similar to the wording or picture in Psalm 1.

As believers we are not to be blown around like the ungodly. According to **Ephesians 3:17** and **4:14**, we are to be rooted and grounded in love, not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Notice also **Hebrews 13:9**. Being grounded in the Word of God provides stability against the winds of false doctrine. The ungodly have no foundation and are thus blown about by every strange wind of doctrine that man can imagine or create.

Second, the ungodly will not stand in the judgment or in the congregation of the righteous. The Hebrew word translated stand means to rise. On the day of judgment, the ungodly will have no standing before God. They will have nothing to plead or offer as payment for their sin. Though they may rise to positions of power and prestige in this life, at the judgment bar of God they will be brought low. No place will be found for them among the congregation of the righteous. Instead, they will be cast out.

Thus, in verse 6 we see thirdly, the ungodly shall perish. This judgment is recorded in **Revelation 20:11-15**. The dead in verse 12 are those who died without Christ. As proof of their condition, the books are opened to reveal their names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life. They never trusted Christ as Savior. In verse 14, death speaks of the body and hell speaks of the soul. When a person dies physically, the body is

buried awaiting the day of resurrection, but the soul and spirit are cast into hell. At the great white throne judgment, the body will be resurrected and united with the soul, to be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. In **John 5:25-29**, Jesus calls it the resurrection of damnation or judgment.

As Christians, what should our attitude be towards the ungodly, knowing they will perish on the day of judgment? To what degree do you pray for the ungodly and witness to them of God's saving grace? The truth is, at one time, we were all part of the "ungodly." **Ephesians 2:1-10** makes it clear that salvation is by the grace of God. Consider where you would be today if not for the grace of God in your life.

## **Week 51**

## **The Way of the Righteous**

The way of the ungodly is as chaff, blown by the wind, but the way of the righteous is as a tree rooted and grounded by the rivers of water. The way of the ungodly will perish as it leads to eternal damnation in the lake of fire, but the way of the godly leads to life eternal in heaven with God. Reason dictates that choosing the way of the righteous is clearly the best path, yet few there be that find it, **Matthew 7:13-14**. In this passage, the way of the ungodly is identified as the broad way that leadeth to destruction, while the way of the righteous is identified as the narrow way that leadeth to life eternal. Few find the narrow way, but many are on the broad way. Knowing where each way leads, why do you think most people are content to follow the broad way? Notice also in verse 13, to enter either way, one must go through a gate. The gate that leads to the broad way is wide, allowing many to pass through, while the gate that leads to the narrow way is strait or strict. The word strict means limited as in restricted. There is only one way through the narrow gate and that is through the person of Jesus Christ, **John 14:6**. Read **Matthew 7:21-23**. The many in verse 22 are part of the many in verse 13. The only way through the strait gate is salvation.

In **Psalms 1:3**, the psalmist says the way of the righteous is fruitful. Here in **Matthew 7:16-20**, Jesus emphasizes the importance of fruitfulness. The way of the righteous will produce spiritual fruit. A person who professes to know Christ, but produces no fruit, is likely deceived and in great danger. We must examine ourselves to determine if

we are in the faith, **II Corinthians 13:5**. To examine means to put to the test. Does your life pass the test of fruitfulness?

In **Psalm 1:6**, the psalmist says, “the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.” God knows who the righteous are. That’s why He said in **Matthew 7:23**, depart from me, I never knew you. We know that God knows everything and everyone, so what does Jesus’ statement mean? It speaks of the family relationship. They profess to know the Lord, but the Lord professes He never knew them as one born into His family. You must be born into God’s family, **John 3:1-7**. Notice the middle phrase of **II Timothy 2:19**, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

In **Proverbs 4:11**, Solomon says to his son, “I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, I have led thee in right paths.” The path of the righteous or right paths, is identified as the way of wisdom. In **verse 18**, he identifies it as the path of the just. Then in **verses 14-17, 19** he contrasts right paths with the path of the wicked or the way of evil men. Solomon concludes this passage by placing an emphasizing five things, **verses 23-27**. First, the heart must be right, for everything flows from the heart. If the heart is right, secondly, the mouth will be right. **Matthew 12:34** “...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” A froward, perverse, or profane mouth indicates a heart that is cold and dead. Third, a right heart will keep the eyes looking in the right direction. We tend to travel or move in the direction we are looking. That’s why parents emphasize to their children when teaching them to drive, “Watch where you’re going.” Our vision determines our direction. What is your spiritual vision? What direction are you headed in life, spiritually? Therefore, fourth, the feet will follow the eyes. If the eyes are looking straight ahead, watching the path closely, the feet will be able to follow without stumbling or tripping. A person who is sure-footed looks before they step. **Psalm 37:22** “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.” When we choose to walk the right path, God helps us with our steps. Fifth, the heart determines what the hands find to do and **Ecclesiastes 9:10** says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...”

When we are on the right path, the path of the righteous, it will be

evident in every aspect of our lives. It will be evident in our heart, in our mouth, in our eyes, in our feet, and in our hands. What does your life say about the path you are on? Why do many travel the broad path when reason dictates otherwise? Because it is not a matter of the mind, it is a matter of the heart. If you're not on the right path, give your heart to Christ and begin life anew on the path of righteousness.

## **Week 52**

## **The Importance of Writing**

At the start of volume 1, I emphasized the importance of learning to meditate upon God's Word. Reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, and listening are all important in terms of our taking in, learning, and understanding the Word of God. When we think of our daily quiet time with God, we often think of it in terms of spiritual nourishment, feeding on the Word of God. It is God communicating to us. This is coupled with a time of prayer which is our communicating back to God. To be a healthy Christian, not only must we take in the Word of God, but we must also give out the word of God. We often think of this in terms of serving in the local church and witnessing in our community, but there is a third aspect of giving out what we take in that can be and should be part of our daily quiet time with God, and that is writing. Writing is a tool whereby we can express our thoughts regarding what we are learning from God's Word.

The Apostle Paul was an avid writer. He wrote at least thirteen epistles, nine to churches and four to individuals. James, Peter, and John all wrote epistles. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John also contributed by writing the gospels and Acts. In the Old Testament, David wrote many psalms which were both songs and prayers used in the temple worship. Moses wrote much of the law and Solomon contributed numerous books of wisdom. Then you have the writings of all the prophets. As a result, we now have in our possession the written Word of God. Add to this the volumes written as study helps, sermons, and topical books and we find a vast library of written material to help us grow in Christ. I would encourage every believer to learn to write about what they are learning from God's Word. Begin by keeping a daily journal of your personal time with God. Include the passage of Scripture, what it means, and how you can apply it to your own life. Use a devotional guide or other resources to

help with the meaning and application. Take notes of messages you listen to. Learn to organize what you are hearing into a logical progression. Most pastors endeavor to organize and outline their messages to make easier to follow and remember. As you grow as a writer, learn to expand your personal thoughts on each passage or topic. What are the benefits of learning to write?

First, it forces you to study and meditate. Writing is not easy. It requires one to research and think about what they are reading. I found that when I had to teach the Word of God to a class of students, it forced me to study, causing me to learn and grow as a Christian. Writing does the same thing as you put on paper what you might otherwise be speaking to a class.

Second, it helps you to organize your thoughts. When you are teaching or preaching, it is easy to go down a rabbit trail. As you write, you are able to review and edit your work, enabling you to stay on track.

Third, writing is good discipline. As it forces you to study and organize your thoughts, you also have to learn proper grammar and sentence structure. It will improve your vocabulary and your ability to communicate clearly, not only in your writing, but also in your teaching, preaching, and conversation.

Fourth, what you write can be a blessing to others. Over the years I have written gospel tracts, daily devotions, weekly meditations, and biographical sketches. I have made many of these available to others to help and encourage them in their spiritual walk. It also gives me something of value that I can leave to my children and grandchildren. As they read what I have written, not only will they get to know my God better, but hopefully they will get to know me better and the spiritual heritage I have endeavored to give them.

Fifth, writing gives purpose to your reading. In **Ephesians 3:3-4**, Paul says, "...as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." As you read, do you read for comprehension and understanding? Or do you just read to check it off your list? Consider John's statement in **I John 5:13**, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name

of the Son of God.” The writers of scripture always had a purpose in writing.

As we conclude this volume of meditations, what are some things you have learned and how has it helped you to grow? Take a few minutes and write down some thoughts about how meditating on God’s Word has been a help to you, then take a passage, read it, meditate upon it, and then write out a brief devotional thought related to it, including its application to one’s spiritual life.