



A Great While Before Day

VOLUME XIII

PART ONE:
January 1–June 30

A New Devotional from
DON & PEARL ANDERSON

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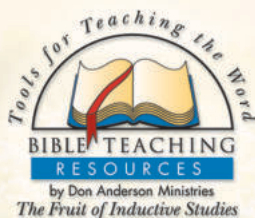
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A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

Volume XIII (January-June)

Daily Devotional

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Bible Teaching Resources

by Don Anderson Ministries

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A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

The gospel writer Mark records that Jesus “rising up a great while before day... went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” (1:35 KJV) Whenever and wherever you spend your time with the Father each day, we hope that these devotional verses and thoughts will be encouraging. Unless otherwise noted, New Testament verses are taken from Don Anderson’s translations from the original text.

Our devotions will pick up where we left off in 2013. We will continue with 2 Corinthians.

JANUARY

January 1 — Let Your Love Flow Freely (2 Corinthians 6:11-13)

2 Corinthians 6:11: *“Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.”*

2 Corinthians 6:12: *“You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.”*

2 Corinthians 6:13: *“Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange—I am speaking as to children, open wide also to us.”*

Verse 11: “Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.”

Ministry is people. God not only uses problems, but people, too, to mature us in Christ. Interpersonal Relationships are a critical factor.

Paul makes reference to the mouth and the heart. He’s talking about words and emotions. His words have been honest communication. His emotions have expressed care, compassion and concern.

“Our mouth has spoken freely.” In other words, we have shared openly and been vulnerable and transparent before you.

We ask ourselves the question: What would be the opposite of this? It would be speaking with measured restraint and careful about words because they could ultimately be used against us. The apostle claims before the Corinthians to be a man who is transparent in *life* and *lip*.

“Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.” This means there are no hidden motives, no bitterness and no resentment. This would be a great verse for the marriage relationship. The opposite would be a closed heart. Remember the song, “You Don’t Bring Me Flowers Anymore.” The rest of the verse continues, “You hardly talk to me.”

Verse 12: “You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.”

There is a negative and a positive in this verse to demonstrate the reason for the strain in their relationship. Negatively, “You are not restrained by us.” We are sacrific-

cial servants delighted to be involved in your lives. We are honest, open and transparent. But on the other hand, positively, “You are restrained in your own affections.”

Basically, Paul is telling the Corinthians the ball is in their court. They don’t love them like they should. The real test of your spiritual condition and character is love for the brethren.

How can we be restrained in our affections? I came up with the three S’s:

1. Selfishness
2. Scars from past experience
3. Sins – of bitterness, hate, unforgiving spirit, jealousy, envy and false assumptions

J. Grant Howard wrote a great book, *The Trauma of Transparency*. He says:

Every human being has the deeply rooted tendency to find the focus of life in himself, to trust himself, to love himself more than others. This is what is at the root of all our problems – even our communication problems. We hide and hurt because we are proud, sinful, self-centered persons.

Verse 13: “Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange--I am speaking as to children, open wide also to us.”

Even as we have also opened wide our hearts to you, you are commanded to “Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange.” Paul is not the problem in Corinth.

Plummer says of these three verses: “O men of Corinth, my lips are unlocked to tell you everything about myself. My heart stands wide open to receive you and your confidences. There’s no restraint in my feelings toward you.”

There is an inviolable principle of human nature: What you really love will ultimately be revealed in your relationships. What you really love is also where you will spend most of your time.

Paul is challenging the Corinthians by saying: Come on! Open up your hearts and let your love for us flow freely. They are obviously stifling the fruitage of the Spirit in their lives if their love has become selective.

LORD, MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF THY PEACE.
WHERE THERE IS HATRED LET ME SOW LOVE;
WHERE THERE IS INJURY, PARDON;
WHERE THERE IS DOUBT, FAITH;
WHERE THERE IS DESPAIR, HOPE;
WHERE THERE IS DARKNESS, LIGHT;
WHERE THERE IS SADNESS, JOY.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing one of Fanny J. Crosby’s great hymns, “**Draw Me Nearer.**” Let’s sing together verse 1: “*I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, And it told Thy love to me; But I long to rise in the arms of faith, And be closer drawn to Thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side.*”

January 2 — Careful With Your Conduct Toward Unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14)

2 Corinthians 6:14: “*Stop being bound together with unbelievers; for what have*

righteousness and lawlessness in common, or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

Verse 14: "Stop being bound together with unbelievers; for what have righteousness and lawlessness in common, or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

The fruition of wrong love will be wrong commitments in relationships. Remember what we said earlier: what you really love will ultimately be revealed in your relationships. Out of love come commitments! Plummer calls this section in his commentary: "A Warning Against Intimacy with the Heathen."

Stop being bound together." What does that mean? The word Paul chooses to use in the Greek text is the word that could be translated "yoked."

Deuteronomy 22:10: "Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together."

When our love flows in wrong channels; we end up with friendships, commitments and associates that are not a part of God's ultimate plan for our lives. It is really good for us to remember what we love and with whom we spend our time will have a powerful influence on the direction of our lives.

1 Corinthians 15:33: "Do not be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals."

Paul enforces his warning with five argumentative questions designed to show how unnatural, how incongruous, how unsafe such alliances should be considered. The reason for the command, "Stop being bound together with unbelievers," is spelled out in these five questions.

Question #1: "For what have righteousness and lawlessness in common?"

Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

1 John 3:4: "Every one who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness."

The first question has to do with our *deeds*. The second question has to do with our *destiny*:

Question #2: "Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

John 3:19-21: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

This morning, let's sing verse 2 of Fanny Crosby's hymn, "Draw Me Nearer":
"Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, By the pow'r of grace divine; Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, And my will be lost in Thine. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side."

January 3 — We Are the Temple of the Living God (2 Corinthians 6:15-16)

2 Corinthians 6:15: "Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

2 Corinthians 6:16: "Or what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people.'"

Verse 15: “Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?”

The third question regards a decision we have to make.

Question #3: “Or what harmony has Christ with Belial?”

Matthew 16:23: “But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me Satan! You are a stumbling-block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’”

In the temptation scene in Matthew 4:10, we see Jesus saying to Satan: “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” The decision has to be made as to who is going to be our leader: Christ or Satan. There is no harmony between the two whatsoever.

Belial is another name for Satan, a word meaning “worthlessness,” referring to Satan and his activities. What he does is always worthless, with no enduring values; it disappears; it is *froth*, it is gone in an instant.

Don Baker in *Acceptance: Loosing the Webs of Personal Insecurity* says:

It’s interesting to note right here that the same Satan who works overtime to convince spiritually dead people that they are alive also expends a similar amount of demonic energy to convince spiritually alive people that they are still dead.

Joshua issues the challenge to the people in Joshua 24:15: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

This choice has incredible consequences. Question #1 focused on our *deeds*, Question #2 focused on our *destiny*, and Question #3 focuses upon a *decision* – whether to follow Jesus Christ or Satan.

Question #4: “What has a believer in common with an unbeliever?”

This is making a *declaration*, taking a stand, issuing a statement.

Chuck Swindoll says:

“When you put a white glove in the mud, you have a muddy glove not a gloved mud.”

Verse 16: “Or what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people.’”

The 5th and final question has to do with our *devotion*.

Question #5: “What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?”

There is no agreement:

1. One is *living* and the other is *dead*.
2. One focuses on *worship* and the other on *works*.
3. One focuses on *salvation* and the other on *sacrifice*.

1 John 5:21: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”

We have been focusing on five questions that have to do with (1) our *deeds*, (2) our *destiny*, (3) a *decision* we must make, (4) a *declaration* we must speak and (5) a *devotion* we must declare.

“For we are the temple of the living God,” - the Living God, not dead idols.

“Just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people.’”

Please worship the Lord with me and let’s sing together verse 3 of **“Draw Me Nearer”**: *“O, the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend, When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend! Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side.”*

January 4 — Welcome Home Children (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

2 Corinthians 6:17: *“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. ‘And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you.’”*

2 Corinthians 6:18: *“And I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,” says the Lord Almighty.”*

Verse 17: *“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. ‘And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you.’”*

Therefore, because we do belong to God and we are His people, He’s going to dwell in us and walk among us. It is our responsibility to make a decision of commitment – a decision to separate ourselves from those things which do not bring pleasure to the One to whom we belong.

Paul has mentioned two commands previously: (1) “Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange” – regarding compassion and (2) “Stop being bound together with unbelievers” – regarding commitment. Now, the third command: “come out from their midst and be separate.” – regarding courage. The first has to do with *affections* and *compassion*, the second with *associates* and *companionship*, and the third with *action* or *courage*.

If we are going to be pleasing to the Lord, there are things that are just going to have to go. If they don’t come out, they will destroy us.

Romans 12:1-2 (Phillips translation): “With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”

You cannot be double-minded or “on again – off again” in this kind of a situation. A choice has to be made. A separation has to take place. “A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways.”

Our next phrase in the command continues by saying: “And stop touching that which is unclean.” First, we are to separate, then we are to stop touching that which is unclean or that which defiles us.

“Come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. ‘And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you.’”

Verse 18: *“And I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,” says the Lord Almighty.”*

God blesses us when we quit and cut. The results are (1) “I will welcome you,” (2) “I will be to you a father” and (3) “You shall be sons and daughters to me.” The first

focuses on His unconditional love. God is seen in the prodigal son running to reconciliation. He never gives up on us. He loves us eternally. The second focuses on relationship. “I will be to you a father,” – the prodigal father said, “This my Son was dead, but is alive again.” The third focuses on future inheritance. It is quick – the prodigal father asks his servants to, “Bring the robe, the ring and the shoes. We will have a celebration.”

Jim Elliot says:

“One does not surrender a life in an instant. That which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime.”

Please join me in singing verse 4 of Fanny Crosby’s hymn, “**Draw Me Nearer**”:
“There are depths of love that I cannot know Till I cross the narrow sea; There are heights of joy that I may not reach Till I rest in peace with Thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side.”

January 5 — Goal: Holiness in the Fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1)

2 Corinthians 7:1: *“Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, bringing about holiness in the fear of God.”*

Verse 1: “Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, bringing about holiness in the fear of God.”

“Therefore having these promise.” What promises? We go back to chapter 6.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18: “‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

The fourth and final command in the passage follows: “let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit.” The first command had to do with our *affections* or *compassion*, the second with our *associations* or *companionship*, and the third with our *action*. Now, the fourth has to do with our *acknowledgment*, our *admission*, our *confession* and *cleansing*.

You will notice this command is different than the other three because the apostle joins the Corinthians when he says, “Let us.” He is humble enough to admit he needs this as well. The question is “Are we?” We know what filthiness of the body is, but what is filthiness of the spirit? This filthiness of the spirit refers to hatred, malice, jealousy, animosity, ill-temper, pride and a host of companion evils.

In this chapter, the goal of it all is to be “bringing about holiness in the fear of God.” The “fear of God” refers to (1) *respect*, (2) *reverence* and (3) *responsibility* to our heavenly Father.

1 Peter 1:15-16: “but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

1 Thessalonians 5:25: “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”

Ephesians 5:26-27: “that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory,

having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”

1 John 3:2: “Beloved, now we are children of God. It has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that if He shall appear, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is.”

Please join me in worship as we sing that wonderful prayer hymn by J. Edwin Orr, “**Cleanse Me.**” Let’s sing verses 1 and 3: “*Search me, O God, and know my heart today. Try me, O Savior; know my thoughts, I pray. See if there be some wicked way in me; Cleanse me from ev’ry sin, and set me free. I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin. Fulfill Thy Word, and make me pure within. Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame. Grant my desire to magnify Thy Name.*”

January 6 — Make Room in Your Hearts (2 Corinthians 7:2-3)

2 Corinthians 7:2: “*Make room in your hearts for us; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.*”

2 Corinthians 7:3: “*I am not saying this to condemn you; for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.*”

Verse 2: “Make room in your hearts for us; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.”

Part of the process in bringing about holiness in the fear of God is for Paul to have reconciliation in his relationship with the Corinthians. He makes it clear he is not at fault for the strained relationship.

“Make room in your hearts for us.” The problem in Corinth has been underscored in chapter 6:12: “You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.”

Because the Corinthians do not love the apostle Paul like they should, it has created the problems they are having. Next, the apostle gives three reasons for the command:

1. We wronged no one. In other words, we did not treat you unjustly or do wrong by you in any way.
2. We corrupted no one, morally or religiously.
3. We took advantage of no one. We were not greedy and selfish in trying to use our ministry for personal enrichment.

Verse 3: “I am not saying this to condemn you; for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.”

Paul wants the Corinthians to know he will see them at the finish line. He wants to be faithful in his relationship with them. “You are in our hearts to die together and to live together.”

“When I die, they will find your name written on my heart.” Under the present circumstances, you would assume this is a one-sided love affair.

There is nothing more secure or affirming than to have someone make a commitment like this which cannot be affected by life or death. Our hearts cry for the security of life-long commitments.

Isaiah 46:4: “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verses 2 and 4 of “**Cleanse Me**”:

"Lord, take my life and make it wholly Thine; Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine. Take all my will, my passion, self, and pride. I now surrender; Lord, in me abide. O Holy Ghost, revival comes from Thee. Send a revival - start the work in me. Thy Word declares Thou wilt supply our need. For blessings now, O Lord, I humbly plead."

January 7 — Filled with Encouragement (2 Corinthians 7:4-5)

2 Corinthians 7:4: *"Great is my confidence in you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I have been completely filled with encouragement (comfort). I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction."*

2 Corinthians 7:5: *"For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were being afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within."*

Verse 4: "Great is my confidence in you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I have been completely filled with encouragement (comfort). I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction."

The apostle Paul would have made a great coach. The first two statements in this verse help us understand two of the greatest keys to interpersonal relationships: (1) confidence and (2) boasting on their behalf.

"Great is my confidence in you." The apostle says they know what to do. They have done it, and will continue to do it. The second phrase is "great is my boasting on your behalf." Paul is saying he is proud of them and what they have done. These two statements are the keys to a productive performance.

Betty Chase in her book, *Discipline Them, Love Them*, says:

Use encouraging words that say:

You can do it! Very good. That's great! One more try and you'll make it. Fantastic! I knew you could do it. That's the best you've ever done. Much better! You did it! You worked hard. I'm proud of you. Try it! You can do it.

"I have been completely filled with encouragement (comfort)." What is it that has caused Paul to feel encouragement about the Corinthians at this time? I have called it the three P's:

1. *Progress*
2. *Potential*
3. *Positive Attitude*

The apostle has said two things here: (1) he is filled with encouragement and (2) he is overflowing with joy.

When we see our affliction in light of one of the three G's, the joy is still there:

1. What is happening is for our *Growth*.
2. What is happening is for His *Glory*.
3. What is happening is teaching us to draw upon His *Grace*.

Verse 5: "For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were being afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within."

When we came to Corinth, we had "no rest, but we were being afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within." We were getting it from all directions. The conflicts were part of the curriculum God used in conforming the apostle to Christlikeness.

The fears Paul talks about are the fears of what was happening in Corinth. Questioning what would be the final outcome of the whole process of discipline that was taking

place in that city.

Galatians 4:19: “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.”

I think it would be appropriate for us to sing verse 3 of Charlotte Elliott’s great invitation hymn, “**Just As I Am**” because it fully describes the apostle in this passage: “*Just as I am, tho’ tossed about With many a conflict, many a doubt, Fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*”

January 8 — The God of All Comfort (2 Corinthians 7:6-7)

2 Corinthians 7:6: “*But God who is comforting the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;*”

2 Corinthians 7:7: “*And not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, reporting to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.*”

Verse 6: “But God who is comforting the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;”

We must notice immediately the first two words of our verse: “But God.” What a difference God makes! “But (forms the contrast) God who is comforting the depressed.”

It is God who is doing the comforting, and He who comforts the depressed. The apostle states He “comforted us,” and the instrument He used was “by the coming of Titus.”

While I was pursuing my doctoral studies in Southern California, I received a package with one dozen homemade muffins and the following note: “Dear Dad, You aren’t alone out there. We are praying for you daily. You are touching so many lives.”

Verse 7: “And not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, reporting to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.”

There are two things Paul cites as reasons he is being comforted in this situation:

1. The coming of Titus
2. The comfort which Titus had received from the Corinthians.

Paul uses three words to describe the feelings of the Corinthians toward the apostle and his ministry: (1) Your *longing*, (2) Your *mourning* and (3) Your *zeal* for us. In other words - your ardor, your fervor, your devotion for us. What an encouragement this must have been to the apostle because he had been hearing so many negative reports from Corinth.

The result: “so that I rejoiced even more.”

James 4:8-9: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.”

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:4 said: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

There are times in our lives and ministry we do get down, discouraged and depressed. One of the great old hymns that helps us get back to focus is “**Does Jesus Care?**” Will you join me please in singing verse 1: “*Does Jesus care when my heart*

is pained Too deeply for mirth or song; As the burdens press, and the cares distress, And the way grows weary and long? Oh yes, He cares; I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief; When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares."

January 9 — Sorrow to the Point of Repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-9)

2 Corinthians 7:8: *"For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I am not regretting it; though I was regretting it, for I am seeing that this letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while."*

2 Corinthians 7:9: *"I am now rejoicing, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss through someone in no respect."*

Verse 8: "For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I am not regretting it; though I was regretting it, for I am seeing that this letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while."

Paul had obviously cared enough about the Corinthians to confront them with these issues that are recorded in the first epistle. The report Titus has given indicated it did cause them sorrow, and in obedient response to the epistle, they had carried out the instructions of the apostle.

Hebrews 12:11: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

This was something necessary to make things better.

Verse 9: "I am now rejoicing, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss through someone in no respect."

Negatively, "not that you were made sorrowful," in contrast positively, "but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance." You realized the Lord was speaking through me and you responded in repentance.

The ultimate goal in this confrontation is repentance, not defense. The reason is given: "for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God." And then the purpose is stated: "in order that you might not suffer loss through someone in no respect." It is so easy to fail in doing our duty, and Paul does not want them to fail in their responsibility in the city of Corinth.

In the last phrase, Paul expressed the ultimate purpose behind all of this: "in order that you might not suffer loss through someone in no respect." The "someone" probably has reference to the man described in 1 Corinthians 5 as being the case for church discipline who is living in open immorality.

V. Raymond Edman in his book, *The Disciplines of Life*, says:

WITH THOUGHTLESS AND
IMPATIENT HANDS
WE TANGLE UP
THE PLANS
THE LORD HATH WROUGHT.

AND WHEN WE CRY
IN PAIN, HE SAITH,
“BE QUIET, DEAR,
WHILE I UNTIE THE KNOT.”

Let's conclude our worship this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Does Jesus Care?”**:
“Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed To resist some temptation strong; When for my deep grief there is no relief, Though my tears flow all the night long? Oh yes, He cares; I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief; When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares.”

January 10 — The Fruit of Godly Sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)

2 Corinthians 7:10: *“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God is producing a repentance not to be regretted, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world is producing death.”*

2 Corinthians 7:11: *“For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.”*

Verse 10: “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God is producing a repentance not to be regretted, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world is producing death.”

Paul is continuing his argument by saying: You were made sorrowful to the point of repentance. We want to ask ourselves the question this morning: Have you ever been there? Repentance means to change your mind. It's to turn around and go in a different direction.

The first reason he gives is: “for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God.” And now in this verse we get another reason: “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God is producing a repentance not to be regretted, leading to salvation.”

There is a contrast between the sorrow of the world and the sorrow in the will of God.

The sorrow of the world is the unrepentant heart filled with anger, arrogance, apathy, self-righteousness, stubbornness and sarcasm. Whereas sorrow that is in the will of God leads to repentance where pride is set aside. There is brokenness, confession of sin, humiliation, weeping and admittance to being wrong. These accompany true biblical repentance.

When the world is sorrowful, it is sorrowful over the consequences of sin or the coming of physical death.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss says:

“You and I will never meet God in revival until we first meet Him in brokenness.”

Verse 11: “For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.”

In this verse, we have the seven results of godly repentance:

1. For behold what earnestness. This is an eagerness, excitement, enthusiasm, that is displayed in a passionate way.
“Behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, produced in you.”
2. What vindication of yourselves. This is the declaration of innocence. You did the right thing!
3. What indignation. This is righteous anger.
4. What fear. We are talking about respect and reverence, the anxiety to do the right thing.
5. What longing. It is the desire for things to be right.
6. What zeal. This is the fervor and devotion to make things right.
7. What avenging of wrong. They have made things right, which is quite obvious from the challenge of the apostle in chapter 2 “to restore the sinning brother.”
“In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.”

Their love and loyalty has been obvious in the action they have taken in response to what the apostle challenged them to do in the first letter.

Let’s return in our worship to the hymn we sang a few mornings ago, “**Just As I Am.**” Let’s sing together verses 2, 4 and 5: “*Just as I am, and waiting not To rid my soul of one dark blot, To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come! I come! Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; Sight, riches, healing of the mind, Yea, all I need, in Thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come! I come! Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*”

January 11 — Comforted by Your Action (2 Corinthians 7:12-13)

2 Corinthians 7:12: “*So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.*”

2 Corinthians 7:13: “*For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.*”

Verse 12: “So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.”

Now the apostle states the result. He makes his statement with two negatives and one positive. “So although I wrote to you, it was,” negatively (1) “not for the sake of the offender, nor (2) for the sake of the one offended,” but in contrast positively, “that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.”

We just want you to be convinced of our earnestness and love for you and our loyalty to you. It is human nature to come to the defense of those we love.

Verse 13: “For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.”

The apostle sums up by saying: “This is the reason we have been comforted.” “We rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus.” Paul then states the reason: “because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.”

The Greek word for “refreshed” is the same word used in Matthew 11:28: “Come

unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Titus had his spirit set at rest as a result of his visit in Corinth.

We see a similar situation in Philemon 7 and 20: “For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother. Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.”

Let’s consider a couple of questions at the conclusion of this section.

1. Is there someone you need to refresh by setting his spirit at rest? Setting him free to be instead of stifling him with the suffocating fumes of criticism.
2. Is there someone in whom you need to express that you have total confidence in them and their walk with the Lord?

Let’s worship the Lord together by singing words to Him. **“I Love You, Lord”:** *“I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice To worship You. O my soul, rejoice! Take joy, my King, in what You hear; May it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear.”*

January 12 — I Am Having Confidence in You (2 Corinthians 7:14-16)

2 Corinthians 7:14: *“For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.”*

2 Corinthians 7:15: *“And his affection is abounding all the more toward you, while he is recalling the obedience of you all, as with fear and trembling you received him.”*

2 Corinthians 7:16: *“I am rejoicing that in everything I am having confidence in you.”*

Verse 14: “For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.”

The apostle does a beautiful job of encouraging and affirming the Corinthians. He takes the joy of Titus and turns it into some very positive, encouraging words for them.

Basically, Paul tells them everything he has said about them to Titus is true. He has not been put to shame. When “we spoke all things to you in truth,” the result was, “our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.”

Verse 15: “And his affection is abounding all the more toward you, while he is recalling the obedience of you all, as with fear and trembling you received him.”

The apostle now tells the Corinthians that Titus’ affection is abounding all the more toward them. God is always in the business of blessing the obedient heart and bringing joy and blessing to fellow believers.

God, You do it up so great!

Ephesians 3:20: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us.”

Verse 16: “I am rejoicing that in everything I am having confidence in you.”

Back in verse 4, Paul is “overflowing with joy in all our affliction.” In verse 7, “I rejoiced even more.” In verse 9, “I am now rejoicing.” In verse 13, “We rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus.” Now in verse 16, “I am rejoicing that in everything I am having confidence in you.”

Paul is simply saying he has total confidence in the Corinthians and their walk with

God. What a way to wrap it up!

Philippians 1:6: “For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing the little chorus, “**Alleluia**”: “*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. He’s my Savior, He’s my Savior, He’s my Savior, He’s my Savior, He’s my Savior, He’s my Savior, He’s my Savior. He is Worthy, He is Worthy, He is Worthy, He is Worthy, He is Worthy, He is Worthy, He is Worthy. I will praise him, I will praise him, I will praise him, I will praise him, I will praise him, I will praise him, I will praise him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him, I will serve him.*”

January 13 — Hurting but Still Helping (2 Corinthians 8:1-2)

2 Corinthians 8:1: “*Now, brethren, we are making known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,*”

2 Corinthians 8:2: “*that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their liberality.*”

The subject changes from Christian living to Christian giving, which is a vital part of living.

Ecclesiastes 5:13: “I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner.”

Verse 1: “Now, brethren, we are making known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,”

Plummer translates this verse: “God’s grace has been and still is operating there, producing in the converts a marvelous degree of Christian generosity.”

When our giving is on the basis of grace, there is deep sacrificial gratitude involved in that which we give.

These churches Paul speaks about are 250 miles north of Corinth in the province of Macedonia. They are the churches of (1) Philippi, (2) Thessalonica and (3) Berea.

Verse 2: “that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their liberality.”

What is so impressive about this grace gift given is that if any churches had an excuse for not being generous and giving to help meet this need in Jerusalem, it would have been the churches of Macedonia.

“That in a great ordeal of affliction” could be translated as “that in much testing of affliction.” The Macedonians were being refined by the tests coming into their lives. God often tests His children to measure their progress.

2 Corinthians 2:9: “For to this end also I wrote in order that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.”

James 1:2-3: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

Make no mistake about it! This testing was severe and long.

W. Glyn Evans in *Daily with the King* says:

“Difficulties, to the Christian, are only miracles that have not yet happened.”

“That in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty.”

In other words, in a great ordeal of affliction, there is (1) abundance of joy and (2) deep poverty. They are hurting physically and financially. Deep poverty equals “*living in the Ghetto*” according to Chuck Swindoll.

Luke 21:1-4: “And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.’”

Matthew 6:21: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verses 1 and 2 of Frances Ridley Havergal’s hymn, “**Take My Life and Let It Be**”: “*Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord to Thee; Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of Thy love, At the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee; Take my voice and let me sing Always, only, for my King, Always, only, for my King.*”

January 14 — Beyond Their Ability They Gave (2 Corinthians 8:3-4)

2 Corinthians 8:3: “*For I am testifying that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,*”

2 Corinthians 8:4: “*begging us with much entreaty (earnestly) for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.*”

Verse 3: “For I am testifying that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,”

Paul states, “I am testifying (telling the truth) that according to their ability, and beyond their ability,” they gave. There was no pressure, emotional stories or pledge cards. “They gave of their own accord.”

Warren W. Wiersbe tells the story in *Be Encouraged*:

“‘The preacher says I should give until it hurts,’ said a miserly church member, ‘but for me, it hurts just to think about giving!’”

Verse 4: “begging us with much entreaty (earnestly) for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.”

It was not only of their own accord, but they were actually begging us with much entreaty (earnestly) for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

When it speaks of them acting on their own accord, they wanted to do it. The word “begging” tells us they were “*desiring*” to do it.

Acts 2:44-45: “And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

Paul had set up the R.O.T.S. fund for the Relief of the Saints. The folks in Macedonia had been giving to it of their own accord, actually begging for the favor of taking part in this project. In this giving, they saw a real opportunity for ministry and wanted to be involved.

Galatians 6:6: “And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.”

Proverbs 11:24-25: “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others

will himself be refreshed.”

2 Corinthians 9:7: “Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Take My Life and Let It Be”**: *“Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages for Thee; Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I with-hold, Not a mite would I with-hold.”*

January 15 — First to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5-6)

2 Corinthians 8:5: *“And not even as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”*

2 Corinthians 8:6: *“Consequently we urged Titus that even as he made a beginning on a previous occasion. So he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.”*

Verse 5: “And not even as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”

There is a negative and a positive in this verse. Negatively, “And not even as we expected,” then positively, “but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”

The secret to sacrificial stewardship is to give ourselves first to the Lord. And when He has everything, then God gets the glory through the grace gift that results. We have a tendency to estimate the gift by the size of the gift, but God estimates by how much we have left.

Romans 12:1-2: “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Back in verse 3, we learned “they gave of their own accord.” Now in verse 5, “they gave themselves first to the Lord.” They are just like Jesus. They gave themselves.

I asked myself the question: How do you do this? I believe there are three things involved:

1. I give all that I am – my gifts, talents and abilities to Him.
2. I give all that I have – my possessions, holdings – everything is given over to Him.
3. I make a declaration of being submissive and obedient to His lordship, allowing him to be Lord of my life.

Verse 6: “Consequently we urged Titus that even as he made a beginning on a previous occasion, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.”

Evidently, the folks in Achaia were a little hesitant in giving for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem. It is not something required by law, but this giving takes place out of the generosity of the heart that has experienced God’s grace.

The single-minded devotion of these folks in Macedonia generated their gift. They gave of their own accord, they saw an opportunity for ministry giving, and they gave of themselves first. Then, they gave their means to support the project.

Please join me in worship as we sing verse 4 of **“Take My Life and Let It Be”**: *“Take my love, my God, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store; Take myself and I will be*

Ever, only, all for Thee, Ever, only all for Thee."

January 16 — Keep Giving as Part of Your Agenda (2 Corinthians 8:7-8)

2 Corinthians 8:7: *"But just as you are abounding in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also."*

2 Corinthians 8:8: *"I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also."*

Verse 7: "But just as you are abounding in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also."

The apostle mentions five things with regard to the Corinthians' quality of Christian commitment. He begins by saying: "But just as you are abounding in everything." He means they grade high in every category. They are abounding. In other words, they are flourishing or on a roll when it comes to these five areas. They are excelling in these virtues!

Paul specifies the five areas for commendation:

1. In Faith. This is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then faith to walk with Him on a daily basis.
2. Utterance. They are being commended for the words they speak. These words obviously are meant to encourage, to affirm, to build up and to edify.
3. Knowledge. This is knowledge of the Living Word (Christ) and the written Word (the Bible).
4. Earnestness (as I have translated it). It is the word which means "haste," "speed" or "hurry." It is a word that expresses "eagerness," "diligence" or "zeal."

The Corinthians were excited about their faith and enthusiastic about the opportunities that were theirs. They were eager for evangelism.

5. Love. Paul states this is a love we inspired in you.

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love."

2 Corinthians 5:14: "For the love of Christ controls us."

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul devoted a whole chapter to this subject in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

In the last phrase, the apostle says, "see that you abound in this gracious work also." He calls giving a "gracious work." Biblical giving is the result of God's gracious work in the heart of an individual!

The main principle that should come out of verse 7 is the apostle Paul calls giving a "gracious work."

Verse 8: "I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also."

When Paul comes to the business of giving, he is not going to put pressure or command them to sign pledge cards because the whole focus upon giving should be

spontaneous, without any necessity placed upon the person doing the giving.

He chooses to challenge them rather than command them. Negatively, “I am not speaking this as a command, but” in contrast positively, “as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.”

“The others” refers to the folks in the Macedonian churches. They were earnest, eager and enthused about the project. Now, he asks the Corinthians to join in their earnestness.

The word “sincerity” could be translated “test.” Our love is tested in our giving. Our love becomes real by involvement.

Let’s respond to the Lord together this morning by singing in worship **“Give of Your Best to the Master.”** Let’s sing verse 1: *“Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Throw your soul’s fresh, glowing ardor Into the battle for truth. Jesus has set the example; Dauntless was He, young and brave; Give Him your loyal devotion, Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Clad in salvation’s full armor, Join in the battle for truth.”*

January 17 — Greater Love Has No Man Than This (2 Corinthians 8:9)

2 Corinthians 8:9: *“For you are knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He being rich for your sake became poor, in order that you through His poverty might become rich.”*

Verse 9: “For you are knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He being rich for your sake became poor, in order that you through His poverty might become rich.”

In this verse, the apostle provides a reason for them proving the sincerity of their love: “For you are knowing (by personal experience) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul uses the word “grace” rather than giving, just like he used the term “gracious work” back in verse 7. Salvation comes to us as a gift from the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf.

When you talk about giving, John 3:16 tells the whole story: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“That He being rich for your sake became poor.” The word for “poor” is the word for “*beggar*.” He was poverty-stricken. Who did He do this for? He did it “for your sake.” The purpose was in order that “you through His poverty might become rich.”

His poverty is underscored in:

1. His Birth – He was born in a stable.
2. His Life – He had no place to lay His head.
3. His Death – He died on the cross and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

You see Jesus making arrangement for an upper room, riding a donkey and preaching from a boat. When He died, they cast lots for His garments.

How do we become rich?

1. Eternal life
2. Our inheritance in Jesus Christ

1 Peter 1:5: “to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Let's worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of **"Give of Your Best to the Master"**: *"Give of your best to the Master; Give Him first place in your heart; Give Him first place in your service, Consecrate every part. Give, and to you shall be given; God His beloved Son gave. Gratefully seeking to serve Him, Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Clad in salvation's full armor; Join in the battle for truth."*

January 18 — Be Sure You Finish What You Start (2 Corinthians 8:10-11)

2 Corinthians 8:10: *"And I am giving my opinion in this matter, for this is advantageous for you, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this but also to desire to do it."*

2 Corinthians 8:11: *"But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the willingness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability."*

Verse 10: "And I am giving my opinion in this matter, for this is advantageous for you, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this but also to desire to do it."

The word "and" ties in with the illustration of the Lord Jesus in verse 9. The apostle makes clear this is not a command. He is simply giving his opinion in this matter. The reason being: "for this is advantageous for you."

Paul concludes this verse with a negative and a positive. "Who were the first to begin a year ago," negatively "not only to do this but" positively "also to desire to do it."

Phillips translates this verse: "Here is my opinion in the matter. I think it would be a good thing for you, who were the first a year ago to think of helping, as well as the first to give, to carry through what you then intended to do."

Verse 11: "But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the willingness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability."

Now the apostle does issue a command. Since the Corinthians had desired this a year ago and worked on it, he commands: "Now finish doing it also."

God delights in finishers!

John 19:30: "When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit."

Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7 says: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

The Living Bible translates: "Having started the ball rolling so enthusiastically, you should carry this project through to completion just as gladly, giving whatever you can out of whatever you have. Let your enthusiastic idea at the start be equaled by your realistic action now."

A.W. Tozer in his book, *The Pursuit of God*, says:

Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

The apostle puts this parameter on the project in the last phrase: "by your ability." He wants to make clear he is not asking them to overextend themselves and do something they are unable to do.

Let's worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **"Give of Your Best to the Master"**: *"Give of your best to the Master; Naught else is worthy His love. He*

gave Himself for your ransom, Gave up His glory above: Laid down His life without murmur, You from sin's ruin to save; Give Him your heart's adoration, Give Him the best that you have. Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth; Clad in salvation's full armor, Join in the battle for truth."

January 19 — Balancing the Scales (2 Corinthians 8:12-13)

2 Corinthians 8:12: *"For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to that which a person may have not according to that which he is not having."*

2 Corinthians 8:13: *"For this is not the ease of others and difficult circumstances for you, but as a matter of equality."*

Verse 12: "For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to that which a person may have not according to that which he is not having."

Phillips translates this verse: "After all, the important thing is to be willing to give as much as we can--that is what God accepts, and no one is asked to give what he has not got."

One of the big hurdles is the hurdle of willingness. They had already manifested this willingness a year ago. He states positively: "For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to that which a person may have," then negatively "not according to that which he is not having."

Paul is making a plea for proportional giving. Giving in view of one's resources, not in view of what he hopes to acquire. There are many folks who are going to be very generous when their ship comes in, when they win the lottery or when they receive an inheritance; but don't want to be characterized as givers now.

Moses warned the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 8:17-18a: "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me,' but remember the Lord your God. It is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth."

The Lord says through the prophet Malachi in 3:10: "'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing you will not have room enough for it.'"

Verse 13: "For this is not the ease of others and difficult circumstances for you, but as a matter of equality."

The reason stated for proportionate giving from verse 12 is now stated in verse 13. Negatively, "this is not the ease of others," positively "and difficult circumstances for you," but (in contrast) as a matter of equality." The principle here is equality, share and share alike.

We have titled this meditation: "Balancing the Scales!"

Let's enjoy worshipping the Lord together by singing verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, **"God Will Take Care of You"**: *"Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you; Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Through ev'ryday, o'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you."*

January 20 — What Goes Around Comes Around (2 Corinthians 8:14-15)

2 Corinthians 8:14: *"At this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, in order that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that*

there may be equality.”

2 Corinthians 8:15: *“Even as it has been written: ‘He who gathered much did not have too much, and He who gathered little had no lack.’”*

Verse 14: “At this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, in order that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality.”

The need in Corinth is probably spiritual, while the need in Jerusalem is material. Paul makes a contrast between the present and the future in this situation in describing what he means by equality.

Philippians 4:19: “And my God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Proverbs 11:24-25: “One man gives freely, yet gains even more. Another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”

Verse 15: “Even as it has been written: ‘He who gathered much did not have too much, and He who gathered little had no lack.’”

The apostle quotes from Exodus 16:18: “The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.”

The prevailing principle is God is supplying their needs and He is doing it on His terms.

Galatians 6:7-8: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Let’s make several observations before we sing our closing hymn.

1. It is to our advantage that we learn to give.
2. God delights in finishers.
3. Our giving should be in proportion to what we have.
4. The undergirding principle in giving is equality.
5. What a man sows, that shall he also reap.

If you will, please join me in worshipping the Lord by singing verse 2 in **“God Will Take Care of You”**: *“Through days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you; When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Through ev’ryday, o’er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.”*

January 21 — Thanks Be to God (2 Corinthians 8:16-17)

2 Corinthians 8:16: *“But thanks be to God, who is putting the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.”*

2 Corinthians 8:17: *“For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he went to you of his own accord.”*

Joseph Aldrich wrote in a great book, *Love For All Your Worth*:

When you come to the end of your life and have nothing but death to look forward to and nothing but memories to look back upon, what will you need to see to conclude that your life was a success and you are satisfied?

Since I know Joe as a personal friend, I believe when he got a call from the Home Office, Joe was satisfied.

Verse 16: “But thanks be to God, who is putting the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.”

God is in the business of putting things in our hearts in response to the truth. He has put an earnestness in the heart of Titus for the Corinthians. It is the same earnestness which Paul also feels for them.

Has the Lord ever done this to you? If so, did you respond? If you responded, you received a blessing, didn’t you?

Plummer translates the word “earnestness” as “*eager zeal*.” Phillips translates it as “*deep concern*” and The Living Bible translates it as “*real concern*.”

Verse 17: “For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he went to you of his own accord.”

There are three things we can learn about Titus in this verse:

1. He is sensitive – he “accepted our appeal.”
2. He is self-motivated – “very earnest.”
3. He is a servant – “he went to you of his own accord.” He saw how he could help!

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of “**God Will Take Care of You**”: “*All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you; Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Through ev’ryday, o’er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.*”

January 22 — Financial Accountability – Part One (2 Corinthians 8:18-19)

2 Corinthians 8:18: “*And we sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches.*”

2 Corinthians 8:19: “*And not only this, but he also was appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness,*”

Verse 18: “And we sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches.”

Whereas it was Titus in verses 16 and 17, we have the second “brother” in verses 18-21. “And we” refers to Paul and the rest of the team.

“Sent along with him (Titus) the brother.” It is believed by many this might refer to Dr. Luke, who is joining Titus on this occasion. Paul sent these men so he would not have to be personally involved in this project and for the sake of accountability.

How would you define “fame” in this verse? I would define it in the following four ways:

1. Character – chosen by the Spirit to author Luke and Acts.
2. Commitment – left his medical practice.
3. Compassion – extended Paul’s life and ministry.
4. Courage – went through a lot.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”

Dr. Luke is a man of consistent commitment. His life and actions back up his words.

Verse 19: “And not only this, but he also was appointed by the churches to travel

with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness,”

This verse continues with the descriptions of the second member of the gift delegation. The verse has a negative and a positive in it. Negatively, “and not only this” (connecting with verse 18), in contrast positively, “but he also was appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work.”

What a privilege! It is a gracious work. What “gracious work” is “being administered by us?”

“For the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness.” We see “by,” “for” and “to” in this verse: (1) “by us” (the churches), (2) “for the glory of the Lord and (3) “to show our readiness.” Ready and available to meet needs!

Paul is saying all of this is being done so the Lord Himself would get glory from this generous gift, but also to demonstrate to the believers in the Jerusalem area the readiness of believers in Macedonia and Achaia and their availability to meet needs.

Let’s continue our worship by singing verses 1 and 2 of **“There Will Be Showers of Blessings”**: “*‘There shall be showers of blessing:’ This is the promise of love; There shall be seasons refreshing, Sent from the Saviour above. Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead. ‘There shall be showers of blessing:’ Precious reviving again; Over the hills and the valleys, Sound of abundance of rain. Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead.*”

January 23 — Financial Accountability – Part Two (2 Corinthians 8:20-21)

2 Corinthians 8:20: “*taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;*”

2 Corinthians 8:21: “*for we are taking into consideration what is morally right not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men.*”

Verse 20: “taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;”

This is a good policy when dealing with money. The apostle wants this “to be for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness.” But also, we are “taking precautions that no one should discredit us.” How could they be discredited? In the following ways:

1. If they used the gift for personal benefit.
2. If there was a lack of accountability for how the gift was used.
3. If they promoted their own programs by the gift.

“Taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration of this generous gift.” For 35 years, Bible Teaching Resources has been a charter member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. We were audited by the IRS a few months ago. What a joy to have the IRS officer leave a day early because she couldn’t find anything detrimental to our membership.

What is involved in the administration of this generous gift? There are five things:

1. Need
2. Equality
3. Expenses
4. Recipients

5. Guidelines for Distribution

Verse 21: “for we are taking into consideration what is morally right not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men.”

In this verse is the reason stated for taking precaution against being discredited in the administration of the gift: “we are taking into consideration what is morally right (negatively) not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men.”

This is a fantastic principle upon which financial accountability ought to be built. “What is morally right not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men.”

Acts 24:16: “And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.”

Phillips translates these two verses: “Naturally we want to avoid the slightest breach of criticism in the distribution of their gifts, and to be absolutely above-board not only in the sight of God, but in the eyes of men.”

Please join me in worshipping the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“There Will Be Showers of Blessings”**: “*‘There shall be showers of blessing: ‘Send them upon us, O Lord; Grant to us now a refreshing, Come, and now honor Thy Word. Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead.’*”

January 24 — Financial Accountability – Part Three (2 Corinthians 8:22-24)

2 Corinthians 8:22: “*And we sent with them our brother, whom we often tested to be diligent in many things, but now even more diligent by reason of his great confidence which he has in you.*”

2 Corinthians 8:23: “*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow-worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.*”

2 Corinthians 8:24: “*Therefore openly before the churches be showing them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.*”

Verse 22: “And we sent with them our brother, whom we often tested to be diligent in many things, but now even more diligent by reason of his great confidence which he has in you.”

We come now to the third member of the gift-receiving team. There is some conjecture this could possibly be Trophimus. If so, the team would be Titus, Luke and Trophimus.

“Our brother, whom we often tested to be diligent in many things.”

This person has gone through a substantial amount of testing, and he has come out being diligent in many things. I am sure this diligence was demonstrated in:

1. His *walk* with the Lord
2. His *warfare* against the world – flesh – devil
3. His *work* for the Lord

We could say Titus is characterized as sensitive, self-motivated and a servant. Luke is characterized by character, commitment, compassion and courage. We could then add Trophimus is characterized by his walk, warfare and work.

Verse 23: “As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow-worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.”

In summary fashion, Paul speaks first of Titus: (1) He is my partner and (2) He is my fellow-worker among you.

“As for our brethren (the other two unnamed men), they are: (1) messengers of the churches” and (2) “a glory to Christ.”

We could say of them Zephaniah 3:17: “The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He takes great delight in you. He quiets you with His love. He rejoices over you with singing.”

Verse 24: “Therefore openly before the churches be showing them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.”

Paul concludes with two commands:

1. “Be showing them the proof of your love.”
2. Show them “our reason for boasting about you.”

As we conclude this chapter, a good question to ask ourselves is: What are we doing to prove our love to the Lord?

Please join me in singing verse 4 of **“There Will Be Showers of Blessings”**:

“‘There shall be showers of blessing:’ Oh, that today they might fall, Now as to God we’re confessing, Now as on Jesus we call! Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead.”

January 25 — Your Zeal Stirs Up Others (2 Corinthians 9:1-2)

2 Corinthians 9:1: “*For it is superfluous for me to be writing to you about this ministry to the saints.*”

2 Corinthians 9:2: “*For I am knowing your readiness, of which I am boasting about you to the Macedonians, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal stirred up the majority of them.*”

Verse 1: “For it is superfluous for me to be writing to you about this ministry to the saints.”

You are already aware of the believer’s responsibility to be involved in meeting legitimate needs.

The Living Bible translates this verse: “I realize I really don’t even need to mention this to you, about helping God’s people.”

Verse 2: “For I am knowing your readiness, of which I am boasting about you to the Macedonians, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal stirred up the majority of them.”

Paul has been boasting to the Macedonians about the Corinthians and this forges a powerful argument because he has used the Macedonians back in Chapter 8 as a powerful motivation for the Corinthians.

He told the Corinthians in Macedonia that the Corinthians in Achaia had been prepared since last year. Seeing what they had done, the majority of Macedonians were stirred up with zeal and enthusiasm to do their part.

GIVE AS YOU WOULD TO THE MASTER
IF YOU MET HIS SEARCHING LOOK;
GIVE AS YOU WOULD OF YOUR SUBSTANCE
IF HIS HAND THE OFFERING TOOK.

Remember the woman at the well when she came back to the city of Samaria. She had a powerful message. John 4:29: “Come see a man who told me all things that I have done. This is not the Christ, is it?” As a result of being stirred up, John 4:30 says: “They went out of the city and were coming to him.”

The question we ask ourselves this morning is: How is the Spirit of God stirring a passion within our hearts so that it is affecting others and their response to the invitation of the Savior?

Let's worship the Lord together this morning by singing that wonderful, convicting hymn, **"Channels Only."** Sing verse 1 with me: *"How I praise Thee, precious Savior; That Thy love laid hold of me; Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me That I might Thy channel be. Channels only, blessed Master; But with all Thy wondrous pow'r Flowing thro' us, Thou canst use us Ev'ry day and ev'ry hour."*

January 26 — Prepare to Meet the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 9:3-4)

2 Corinthians 9:3: *"But I sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not lose its justification in this case, so that just as I was saying, you may be prepared;"*

2 Corinthians 9:4: *"lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--(not speaking of you)--should be put to shame by this confidence."*

Verse 3: "But I sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not lose its justification in this case, so that just as I was saying, you may be prepared;"

The apostle explains why the three brethren are sent ahead of him. The purpose stated in this verse is "in order that our boasting about you may not lose its justification in this case," and then the final result is "so that just as I was saying, you may be prepared."

Verse 4: "lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--(not speaking of you)--should be put to shame by this confidence."

Paul has forged a powerful argument by the Macedonian's sacrifice and generosity with their gift. He mentions some Macedonians might come with him when he comes. He then adds there could be embarrassment if they came and found the Corinthians unprepared.

1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in Him, so that if He should appear, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."

When Paul is writing to the Philippians, he says in Philippians 1:20: "According to my earnest expectation and hope that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but with all boldness Christ shall even now as always be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

This verse motivates us to be prepared for each day and each demand the Lord would have upon our lives as we serve him.

Please join me in worship as we sing verses 2 and 3 of **"Channels Only"** this morning: *"Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me, A clean vessel in Thy hand; With no pow'r but as Thou givest Graciously with each command. Witnessing Thy pow'r to save me, Setting free from self and sin; Thou who boughtest to possess me, In Thy fullness, Lord come in. Channels only, blessed Master; But with all Thy wondrous pow'r Flowing thro' us, Thou canst use us Ev'ry day and ev'ry hour."*

January 27 — A Bountiful Gift (2 Corinthians 9:5)

2 Corinthians 9:5: *"Therefore I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they should go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not a gift that is*

grudgingly granted by greed."

Verse 5: "Therefore I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they should go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not a gift that is grudgingly granted by greed."

"Therefore I thought it necessary to urge the brethren (Titus and his two buddies) that they should go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift."

Phillips translates the last phrase: "I should like it to be a spontaneous gift, and not money squeezed out of you by what I have said."

It is interesting when the apostle makes reference to giving that he speaks of it in five different ways in the passage:

1. a gracious gift
2. a generous gift
3. a ministry to the saints
4. a bountiful gift
5. a gift

This morning, I am remembering the conclusion of Christ's Sermon on the Mount of Olives just before the cross. He tells the story of the talents. The master had given three men different talents. One was given five, another was given two and the third was given one. When the master returned, the 5-talent man had gained five more and the 2-talent man had gained two more. They were commended for their service. However, we read in Matthew 25:24-29 of the 1-talent man: "And the one also who had received one talent came up and said, 'Master, I know you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' But his master answered, 'You wicked, lazy slave. You knew that I reaped where I did not sow and gathered where I scattered no seed. Then, you ought to have put my money in the bank and on my arrival I would have received money back with interest. Therefore, take away the talent from him and give to the one with the ten talents. For to everyone who has shall more be given and he shall have an abundance. But from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.'"

We learned in this passage God is in the business of putting things on our hearts. As you prayerfully consider what you need to do in response to this message, may God by His Spirit motivate you and bless you for being responsive.

From this study, I would ask: Are you concerned about being a glory to Christ? Additionally, what is your motivation for giving? God is not interested in a gift grudgingly granted by greed.

Please join me in worship as we sing verse 4 of "**Channels Only**": "*Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit Hearts that full surrender know; That the streams of living water From our inner self may flow. Channels only, blessed Master; But with all Thy wondrous pow'r Flowing thro' us, Thou canst use us Ev'ry day and ev'ry hour.*"

January 28 — God Loves a Cheerful Giver (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

2 Corinthians 9:6: "*Now this I am saying: 'He who is sowing sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who is sowing bountifully shall also reap bountifully.'*"

2 Corinthians 9:7: “Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God is loving a cheerful giver.”

Verse 6: “Now this I am saying: ‘He who is sowing sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who is sowing bountifully shall also reap bountifully.’”

We have learned and continue to learn from these passages on giving God loves a glad, generous, grateful giver.

In this verse, he gives us the Law of the Harvest. It is important for each of us to think over the kind of harvest we want.

First of all, he says, “He who is sowing sparingly shall also reap sparingly,” and accordingly, “he who is sowing bountifully shall also reap bountifully.” The key words are “sowing sparingly” and “reaping sparingly” or “sowing bountifully” and “reaping bountifully.”

The seed isn’t going to be multiplied and blessed until we sow!

Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

Psalms 126:5-6: “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy carrying sheaves with him.”

Verse 7: “Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God is loving a cheerful giver.”

This verse is the giving principle of the New Testament.

“Let each one.” This tells us everyone needs to be involved.

“Let each one do just as he has purposed.” It is to be a private matter. He is to purpose on what kind of harvest he wants and give accordingly. “Purposed” means he has thought it through and planned so he is not blasted by all the emotional appeals that come later.

The apostle speaks of the negative attitudes and circumstances that must not prevail:

1. Not grudgingly – this word means reluctant, half-hearted, unwilling or not in the mood.
2. Not under compulsion – this word means force, pressure, stress, demand or prodding.

“Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion.” This is the reason in the last phrase: “for God is loving a cheerful giver.” To be a cheerful giver, it would involve being: (1) *glad*, (2) *generous* and (3) *grateful*.

There are two things that stand out where giving is concerned:

1. When you are giving, you are sowing in view of a harvest.
2. We are reflecting His likeness when we give.

Phillips translates this verse: “Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly nor under compulsion, for God loves the man who gives cheerfully.

I read a statement recently: “Do your giving while you’re living; then you’re knowing where it’s going.”

The last phrase tells us “God is loving a cheerful giver.” It helps us recognize one’s attitude about stewardship is very important. From our passage this morning, we have learned we can be sad, mad or glad givers. The Lord delights in the last one!

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing that wonderful chorus of praise, “**God is So Good.**” Join me in all 4 verses: “*God is so good, God is so good,*

God is so good, He's so good to me! Jesus is real, Jesus is real, Jesus is real, He's so real to me! He saved my soul, He saved my soul, He saved my soul, And He made me whole! I praise His name, I praise His name, I praise His name, He's so good to me!

January 29 — Grace Abounding (2 Corinthians 9:8)

2 Corinthians 9:8: *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, in order that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;”*

Verse 8: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, in order that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;”

We learned in verse 7 God is loving, and now in verse 8 we learn God is able. “God is able to make all grace abound to you.”

The purpose for God making all grace abound is given in the next phrase: “in order that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

This is phrased a little differently in Philippians 4:19: “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

God is able to work things out so you will have adequate funding for everything that pertains to you, and you will also have an abundance for every good deed – sharing with others and fulfilling your stewardship responsibilities.

I love Annie Johnson Flint’s hymn, “**He Giveth More Grace.**” Please join me in worship this morning as we sing verse 1: *“He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater; He sendeth more strength when the labors increase. To added affliction He addeth His mercy; To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. His love has no limit; His grace has no measure; His pow’r has no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”*

January 30 — The Harvest of Righteousness (2 Corinthians 9:9-10)

2 Corinthians 9:9: *“even as it has been written: ‘He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness is abiding forever.’”*

2 Corinthians 9:10: *“Now he who is supplying seed to the sower and bread for food shall also supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;”*

Verse 9: “even as it has been written: ‘He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness is abiding forever.’”

In this verse, the apostle quotes from Psalm 112. Here are some of the verses from that psalm: “Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever... He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever;”

Ecclesiastes 11:1-2: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.”

Verse 10: “Now he who is supplying seed to the sower and bread for food shall also supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;”

The apostle began his section by talking about “sowing sparingly” and “reaping

sparingly” or “sowing bountifully” and “reaping bountifully.” He then stated the principle for giving: “let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart.”

“Now he who is supplying seed to the sower.” This is in the present tense. We have learned what God can do in verse 8, and in verse 10 we learn what God will do.

“Now he who is supplying seed to the sower and bread for food (as a result) shall also” (do three things):

1. He shall supply.
2. He shall multiply your seed for sowing.
3. He shall increase the harvest of your righteousness.

God doesn’t multiply seed which we don’t sow! When we are giving, we are sowing in view of a harvest. There are three key words in the verse: (1) “supply,” (2) “multiply” and (3) “increase.”

Let’s join in worship by singing verse 2 of **“He Giveth More Grace”**: *“When we have exhausted our store of endurance, When our strength has failed ere the day is half done, When we reach the end of our hoarded resources, Our Father’s full giving is only begun. His love has no limit; His grace has no measure; His pow’r has no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.”*

January 31 — Enriched in Everything (2 Corinthians 9:11-12)

2 Corinthians 9:11: *“you will be enriched in everything for all generosity, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.”*

2 Corinthians 9:12: *“For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but also is overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.”*

Verse 11: “you will be enriched in everything for all generosity, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.”

Not only will He supply, multiply and increase; but He promises: “you will be enriched in everything for all generosity.”

What a fantastic statement of promise to those who are generous in their stewardship!

How does this happen? How are they enriched? I believe it comes from three things:

1. Joy of obedience
2. Satisfaction in knowing you did your part
3. The love and warm fuzzies of the recipient

Paul goes on to say: “which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.” The rest of the body of believers are affected by this generosity and involved in thanksgiving to God for it.

Verse 12: “For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but also is overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.”

The apostle states the reason their generosity is producing thanksgiving to God. “For the ministry of this service” (the giving for these poor saints in Jerusalem), negatively “is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints,” (taking care of their physical and financial needs) but positively (in contrast) “also is overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.”

It is supplying needs and overflowing in thanksgiving.

There are two things that happen when people give: (1) needs are met and (2)

thanksgiving is expressed to God in the process.

In over 40 years of ministry, we experience time and time again the needs of the ministry being met with gifts coming in. Then, in response, receipt letters are sent out expressing thanksgiving to God and to the individual for their generosity.

Let's praise and worship the Lord this morning by singing Fanny Crosby's wonderful hymn, **"To God Be the Glory."** Join me as we sing verse 1: *"To God be the glory, great things He hath done, So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, And opened the Life-gate that all may go in. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thro' Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done."*

FEBRUARY

February 1 — You Will Hear Well-Done (2 Corinthians 9:13)

2 Corinthians 9:13: *"Because of the approved character of your service they are glorifying God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution to them and to all."*

Verse 13: "Because of the approved character of your service they are glorifying God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution to them and to all."

Why are they giving thanks? "Because of the approved character of your service."

There was an opportunity to demonstrate the quality of character within by meeting a physical and financial need. They took that opportunity to give so the saints in Jerusalem are glorifying God for two reasons:

1. for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ
2. the generosity of your contribution to them and to all

The apostle states they say what they do! *Life and lip match. Creed and conduct go together.*

We learn we are obedient to our confession of the gospel of Christ when we are generous in our stewardship.

There are three lessons we can take from this passage:

1. We have the promise of enrichment for our generosity.
2. Our Christ-like character is revealed in our stewardship.
3. We are being obedient to the confession of the gospel when we give.

Please join me in singing verse 2 of Fanny Crosby's hymn, **"To God Be the Glory"**: *"O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood! To ev'ry believer the promise of God; The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thro' Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done."*

February 2 — Thanking God for the Gift of His Son (2 Corinthians 9:14-15)

2 Corinthians 9:14: *"While they also, by prayer on your behalf, are yearning for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you."*

2 Corinthians 9:15: *"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"*

Verse 14: “While they also, by prayer on your behalf, are yearning for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.”

The recipients of the Corinthians’ generosity are praying for the Corinthians and yearning for them because of the grace of God obviously evident in their lives.

A number of years ago, one of the *Our Daily Bread* readings called “Praying Backed by Giving” shared this poem:

“I’LL PRAY FOR YOU,” WE QUICKLY SAY,
AND PRAY IS ALL WE DO,
BUT PRAYER COMBINED WITH GIFTS OF LOVE
IS PRAYER WITH FOLLOW-THROUGH.

Verse 15: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

The phrase “thanks be to God” has been seen two other times in our study:

1. 2 Corinthians 2:14: “But thanks be to God who is always leading us in His triumph in Christ...”

2. 2 Corinthians 8:16: “But thanks be to God, who is putting...in the heart.”

Now, the apostle says, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

We can thank God (1) He is leading us, (2) He is putting things in our heart and (3) most of all for His indescribable gift – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gift spoken of here is the gift of Christ’s person and work. Jesus said in the upper room: “This do in remembrance of me!” His gift makes all the others possible!

What a fantastic way to conclude this section of the epistle – to put our focus upon God’s wonderful gift of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Have we availed ourselves of that precious gift and received Him as our very own? The greatest Giver is God. The greatest Gift is His Son!

It is an indescribable gift that almost makes us speechless. The Living Bible translates: “Thank God for His Son – His Gift too wonderful for words.”

Thanks be to God who is always leading us, who is putting into our hearts, and who is giving us an indescribable gift – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please join me in singing verse 3 of **“To God Be the Glory”**: *“Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done, And great our rejoicing thro’ Jesus the Son; But purer and higher and greater will be Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father thro’ Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.”*

February 3 — Meekness & Gentleness of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:1-2)

2 Corinthians 10:1: “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am lowly when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!”

2 Corinthians 10:2: “I am asking that when I am present I need not show boldness with the confidence with which I am proposing to be courageous against some, who are considering us as walking according to the flesh.”

Verse 1: “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am lowly when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!”

The little word, “I,” occurs six times in these first two verses. This would give an indication the apostle has taken the pen in hand personally and begun to write. It would

also give us an indication the apostle is separating himself from the rest of the team who have ministry in Corinth as he deals with this situation.

“Now I, Paul, myself.” He doesn’t command them. He simply makes an urgent appeal about what needs to be done in this situation.

“Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” In this first verse, we have a great illustration of the change that begins to take place as Christ-likeness is forged out in our persons. Paul, by nature, is not like this. We see him in his unconverted days going for blood in the death of Stephen. Who knows how many other Christians experienced great loss and severe personal damage because of the rampaging anger of the apostle.

Philippians 1:6: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

I’m not what I used to be. I’m not what I ought to be, but thank God I’m far from what I once was!

The apostle urging them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ is the result of the Spirit’s work in his life. Meekness points to that inward disposition and gentleness to its outward manifestation.

The rest of the verse reads: “I who am lowly when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!” Their criticisms of the apostle involved one thing he hits head-on. They claimed he manifests this meekness and gentleness of Christ when face to face with them, but he is bold toward them when absent. They are saying he’s a chicken when it comes to face to face confrontation!

They have mistaken the Fruit of the Spirit (meekness and gentleness) as a character weakness. They are calling Paul a coward.

Verse 2: “I am asking that when I am present I need not show boldness with the confidence with which I am proposing to be courageous against some, who are considering us as walking according to the flesh.”

In verse 1, the apostle is urging them. In verse 2, he is asking. Boldness is a manifestation of the Spirit-filled life. Acts 4:31: “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the Word of God with boldness.”

“I am asking that when I am present I need not show boldness with the confidence with which I am proposing to be courageous against some.” You see a reflection of Jesus’ action when he cleansed the temple.

“Who are considering us as walking according to the flesh” involves three things: (1) evaluating, (2) criticizing and (3) condemning. The message from their mouths is not of the Spirit!

Let’s sing and worship the Lord this morning with one of my all-time favorite hymns, **“Day by Day.”** Join me singing verse 1: *“Day by day, and with each passing moment, Strength I find to meet my trials here; Trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment, I’ve no cause for worry or for fear. He whose heart is kind beyond all measure Gives unto each day what He deems best. Lovingly, it’s part of pain and pleasure, Mingling toil with peace and rest.”*

February 4 — The Weapons of Our Warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

2 Corinthians 10:3: “For, though we are walking in the flesh, we are not warring

according to the flesh.”

2 Corinthians 10:4: *“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses,”*

Verse 3: “For, though we are walking in the flesh, we are not warring according to the flesh.”

The apostle’s response is great evidence he is not walking in the flesh. He states the reason for why he is handling the situation in this way. Paul is not defensive here. He used the word “though” which means he is making a concession at this point. “For though we are walking in the flesh.”

One of the key ways you can tell you have stirred up the flesh is by being defensive, in a denial stance of the criticism. So much of marital conflict is from the flesh. It is arrogance in action.

“For though we are (positively) walking in the flesh, we are (negatively) not warring according to the flesh.” Paul characterizes the Christian life as “walking” and “warring.” “Walking” in the Spirit and “Warring” against the devil!

Ephesians 6:10: “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

2 Timothy 2:3-4: “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

Verse 4: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses,”

Paul states the reason they are not warring according to the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are “divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”

These weapons are outlined in Ephesians 6 as:

1. The breastplate of righteousness
2. Shoes, the preparation of the gospel of peace
3. The shield of faith
4. The helmet of salvation
5. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God

“Divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.” This is knocking down the devil’s strongholds!

In the battle for men’s souls you are going to find oftentimes defensive fortresses are erected in which they can feel secure. What are some of these fortresses we face?

1. Evolution
2. Agnosticism
3. Materialism
4. Pleasure
5. Reincarnation
6. No After Life

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of **“Day by Day”**: *“Ev’ry day, the Lord Himself is near me With a special mercy for each hour; All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me, He whose Name is Counsellor and Pow’r. The protection of His child and treasure Is a charge that on Himself He laid; As your days, your strength shall be in measure, This the pledge to me He made.”*

February 5 — Every Thought Captive (2 Corinthians 10:5-6)

2 Corinthians 10:5: “destroying reasonings and every lofty thing offering resistance against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

2 Corinthians 10:6: “And being in readiness to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”

Verse 5: “destroying reasonings and every lofty thing offering resistance against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

In verse 4, we saw the divinely powerful weapons of warfare being used for the destruction of fortresses. In verse 5, we see the second function – destroying reasonings. Here, we get into the realm of apologetics and the destruction of arguments opposed to the credibility of Christ and the authority of Scripture.

We have found thus far in Paul’s argument the weapons of his warfare are divinely powerful for: (1) the destruction of fortresses and (2) the destroying of reasonings. Now, we have (3) for the destroying of every lofty thing offering resistance against the knowledge of God.

We are talking about pride. What are some of these lofty things that offer resistance and are a manifestation of pride? There are three:

1. No Help
2. No Need
3. No Future

They rear their ugly heads and form a resistance against the knowledge of God.

Once the battle is over and we are victorious, the apostle continues: “we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Phillips translates it: “We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ.”

We are in a great spiritual battle for the minds of men.

Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Kay Arthur in *Search My Heart, O God: 365 Appointments with God* offers this prayer:

Lord, help me to protect my mind from the onslaught of Satan’s deception. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, help me dwell only on those thoughts that are pleasing to You.

Bishop Andrewes says:

“Yea, O Lord, I beseech thee, look upon me, and put to sleep in me every earthly and evil thought.”

Take my mind and let it think thoughts that please and honor You. Let the mind of Christ my Savior show itself in all my ways! Show itself in all my ways!

“And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” This is the ultimate victory, the joy of triumph.

Verse 6: “And being in readiness to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”

Paul presents a picture of military readiness, an alert status, to discipline or punish all disobedience. The disobedience is shown in criticism, jealousy, bitterness, envy, im-

purity, hatred and revenge – all those thoughts that ultimately lead to acts of disobedience whenever your obedience is complete.

I love Psalm 19:12-14 in the New Living Translation: “How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep me from deliberate sins! Don’t let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Please join me in worship as we sing verse 3 of “**Day by Day**”: “*Help me then in ev’ry tribulation So to trust Thy promises, O Lord, That I lose not faith’s sweet consolation Offered me within Thy holy Word. Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting, E’er to take, as from a father’s hand, One by one, the days, the moments fleeting, Till I reach the promised land.*”

February 6 — We Both Belong to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:7-8)

2 Corinthians 10:7: “*You are looking at what is before your eyes. If anyone is convinced in his own mind that he belongs to Christ, let him be considering this again within himself, that just as he belongs to Christ, so also do we.*”

2 Corinthians 10:8: “*For even if I should boast somewhat further concerning our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I shall not be put to shame,*”

Verse 7: “You are looking at what is before your eyes. If anyone is convinced in his own mind that he belongs to Christ, let him be considering this again within himself, that just as he belongs to Christ, so also do we.”

“You are looking at what is before your eyes.” You can see with your own eyes. The evidence is visible. Seeing is believing!

It reminds us of when the Risen Christ met Thomas in John 20:27-28: “Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.’ Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

We learn from this we must belong to Christ to have eternal life. Are you one of His? We also learn we can be convinced we belong to Him. God said it. I believed it. That settled it!

We belong to Him twice because He made us and then He bought us with the blood of His own Son.

Fellowship begins with salvation. The apostle wants it understood at the onset that just as they feel they are Christians, they also should consider Paul and his team as being Christians in like manner.

Verse 8: “For even if I should boast somewhat further concerning our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I shall not be put to shame,”

Authority can be used in the right way or the wrong way.

There is a positive and a negative here. The “authority, which the Lord gave for (positively) building you up and (negatively) not for tearing you down.”

Plummer translates: “for your upbuilding and not your demolition.” Phillips says: “to build you up not break you down.” The Living Bible says: “authority to help you not to hurt you.”

How do you build someone up? You build someone up by affirmation, encouragement, serving them and meeting their needs.

How do you tear someone down? You tear them down by rejection, criticism, laughing at them, lying, hating and watching their every move.

The last phrase is “I shall not be put to shame.” I have been doing this with the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

James 1:9: “This you know, my beloved brethren. But let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.”

Yes, Paul has been using his authority properly.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning with one of Fanny Crosby’s well-known hymns, **“Blessed Assurance.”** Join me in singing verse 1: *“Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine! O, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood. This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

February 7 — Words Are Heavy & He is Unimpressive (2 Corinthians 10:9-10)

2 Corinthians 10:9: *“for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.”*

2 Corinthians 10:10: *“‘For his letters indeed!’ they are saying, ‘are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is unimpressive, and his speech amounts to nothing.’”*

Verse 9: “for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.”

It is possible to terrorize with authority or terrorize with threats. Paul’s letters are a reflection of the right use of authority.

Verse 10: “‘For his letters indeed!’ they are saying, ‘are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is unimpressive, and his speech amounts to nothing.’”

This is a classic illustration of how to tear someone down.

“‘For his letters indeed!’ (which come while he is absent) they are saying.” Evidently, there are several folks who are out for Paul’s hide. They are criticizing his letters in two ways describing them as “weighty” and “strong.” They are “weighty” for the way they make us think, and “strong” in how they are effective or forceful.

Criticism is simply words spoken irresponsibly.

We realize the power of the tongue in James 3:5-6: “So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.”

They are criticizing the apostle on three levels:

1. His letters when he is absent – what he writes
2. His bodily presence when he is with them – how he looks
3. What he says to them

In essence, they are saying he is ugly and unimpressive.

“And his speech amounts to nothing.” They are saying the apostle is not an impressive speaker and you can’t learn anything from him.

William J. Diehm in his book, *Criticizing*, says:

“Criticism hurts people’s feelings. It puts people down. It makes people depressed. It starts a fight, and it destroys relationships.”

WE ARE BUILDING UP OR TEARING DOWN
IN EVERYTHING WE DO;
DO WE BELONG IN THE CONSTRUCTION GANG
OR TO THE WRECKING CREW.

As we consider these criticisms of the apostle Paul and his ministry, we ask ourselves: Is the Lord the Lord of our tongue?

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of Fanny Crosby’s hymn, **“Blessed Assurance”**: *“Perfect submission, perfect delight, Visions of rapture now burst on my sight; Angels descending, bring from above Echoes of mercy, whispers of love. This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

February 8 — Our Words & Actions Are All the Same (2 Corinthians 10:11-12)

2 Corinthians 10:11: *“Let such a person be considering this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in action when we are present.”*

2 Corinthians 10:12: *“For we are not daring to class or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves; but when they are measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”*

Verse 11: “Let such a person be considering this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in action when we are present.”

In verse 7, the apostle said, “Let him be considering this again.” In this verse, he says, “Let such a person be considering.” The apostle is confronting the critic and basically asking him to give them a break.

“What we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in action when we are present.” The *words* and *works* match. The *lives* and *lips* go together. Our *words* and *actions* are consistent.

Verse 12: “For we are not daring to class or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves; but when they are measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”

You can almost sense a touch of cynicism in these remarks. “For we are not daring to class or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves.”

They are in first class and we are in coach. They are 40-0 on the season, and we win some and lose some.

“We are not daring to class or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves.” Personal commendation can be distorted by: (1) pride, (2) blindness, (3) wishful thinking and (4) focusing only on strengths.

Ray Stedman in *Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness* says:

So how do we spot the phonies who are all around us? They commend themselves, for the most part. They are always boasting of their accomplishment, printing it and spreading it around so you can see.

A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God* says:

I trust it is not a cynical observation to say that they appear these days to be a requisite for popularity in some sections of the church visible. Promoting self under the guise of promoting Christ is currently so common as to excite little notice.

“For we are not daring to class or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves; but when they are measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.” They are using the wrong yardstick. They are measuring and comparing themselves with each other.

It reminds me of the old cowboy song, “I Am Living Up to Her Low Expectations.

“When they are measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.” The reason they are without understanding is because God demands perfection. He is the standard of measurement according to the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Blessed Assurance”**: *“Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest; Watching and waiting, looking above, Filled with His goodness, lost in His love. This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

February 9 — Fulfilling God’s Assignments (2 Corinthians 10:13-14)

2 Corinthians 10:13: *“But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the limits which God assigned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.”*

2 Corinthians 10:14: *“For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;”*

Verse 13: “But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the limits which God assigned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.”

In contrast to the action on the part of those in Corinth, the apostle says, “we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the limits which God assigned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.”

We have a negative and a positive here. Negatively, “not beyond our measure, but” positively “within our measure.” God’s measurement for us was long enough to reach you. You were mentioned in the orders from headquarters. You were in the parameters of the will of God for us.

Verse 14: “For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;”

In this verse are two reasons why the apostle will not boast beyond, but will stay within the measure of the limits which God assigned.

1. “For we are not overextending ourselves.” We are not trying to reach you in the flesh, but were directed to Corinth by the Spirit. We were in the will of God when the work was established in the city of Corinth.
2. “For we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ.” We

were the first ones on the scene with the gospel.

1 Corinthians 3:10: “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 1 and 2 of Isaac Watt’s great hymn, “**Am I a Soldier of the Cross?**”: “*Am I a soldier of the cross, A follow’r of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause, Or blush to speak His name? Must I be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize, And sailed thro’ bloody seas?*”

February 10 — We Are Not Boasting Beyond Measure (2 Corinthians 10:15-16)

2 Corinthians 10:15: “*not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men’s labors, but having hope that as your faith is growing we shall be, within our limits, enlarged even more by you.*”

2 Corinthians 10:16: “*So as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the limits of another.*”

Verse 15: “not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men’s labors, but having hope that as your faith is growing we shall be, within our limits, enlarged even more by you.”

We are “not boasting beyond our measure.” We are in the will of God in what we say, and as we speak of these things, we speak of them in this light – “not boasting beyond our measure.” The apostle defines this as “in other men’s labors.”

“That as your faith is growing we shall be, within our limits, enlarged even more by you.” The apostle explains that as the Corinthians’ faith is growing, they will be enlarged within their limits. They are staying in their boundaries.

Our faith was designed that we might grow. Are we making progress? Are we changing?

Colossians 1:6: “which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;”

Ephesians 4:15: “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,”

Joseph C. Aldrich in *Love for All Your Worth* says:

“Don’t stop growing or encouraging others to grow. You and I value growth, and our hearts follow value. Today’s the day to start, and it’s always too soon to quit.”

Jerry White in *Choosing Plan A in a Plan B World* says:

When Christ is truly Lord of my life, I see others not according to their observance of rules, but by their spiritual hunger and growth. When there are actions or issues they should abandon, let it be like the shedding of a butterfly’s cocoon—the natural outcome of growth.

Lewis B. Smedes in *Choices: Making Right Decisions in a Complex World* says:

Growth is of the essence for spiritual creatures like us; we need to become more of what we are. When we stop growing, we begin to die, even if we postpone our funerals for fifty years.

Verse 16: “So as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to

boast in what has been accomplished in the limits of another.”

The result is the apostle would be able to be enlarged because of their growing faith to the point of preaching the gospel to the regions beyond them. The field is the world, and the need is great.

“And not to boast in what has been accomplished in the limits of another.” Not to boast like others have been.

Please join me in worship as we sing verses 3 and 4 of Isaac Watt’s hymn, “**Am I a Soldier of the Cross?**”: “*Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God? Sure I must fight, if I would reign; Increase my courage, Lord; I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain Supported by Thy Word.*”

February 11 — Boasting in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17-18)

2 Corinthians 10:17: “*But he who is boasting, let him be boasting in the Lord.*”

2 Corinthians 10:18: “*For not he who is commending himself is approved, but whom the Lord is commending.*”

Verse 17: “But he who is boasting, let him be boasting in the Lord.”

This is the third usage of the word “let”:

1. “Let him be considering again” in [verse 7](#)
2. “Let such a person be considering this” in [verse 11](#)
3. “Let him be boasting in the Lord” in [verse 17](#)

The focus of our boasting should be vertical and not horizontal. It should be toward the Lord. Our boasting should glorify Him. It ought to magnify the Lord Jesus and His faithfulness to us in provision, power and peace. It’s what the Lord has done that has top priority.

Verse 18: “For not he who is commending himself is approved, but whom the Lord is commending.”

Now we have the reason for the command of verse 17: “let him be boasting in the Lord.” Negatively, “For not he who is commending himself is approved” (as we have noted earlier), in contrast positively, “but whom the Lord is commending.”

It is the Lord who will say: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” It is the Lord who knows whether we have built on “gold, silver and precious stones,” or “wood, hay and stubble.”

2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Phillips translates this verse: “He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord. It is not self-commendation that matters; it is winning the approval of God.”

The Living Bible paraphrases it this way: “When someone boasts about himself and how well he has done, it doesn’t count for much. But when the Lord commends him, that’s different!”

Here are three observations for our meditation this morning:

1. Personal commendation can be distorted by pride, blindness, wishful thinking and focusing only on our strengths.
2. God’s limits and standard of measurement are all that really matters.
3. Commendation by the Lord is top priority.

I find myself singing, worshipping and praising the Lord this morning with that

wonderful hymn, **“Glory to His Name.”** Please join me singing verse 1: *“Down at the cross where my Saviour died, Down where for cleansing from sin I cried, There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name! Glory to His Name, Glory to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name.”*

February 12 — I Am Jealous for You (2 Corinthians 11:1-2)

2 Corinthians 11:1: *“I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.”*

2 Corinthians 11:2: *“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I gave you in marriage to one husband that I might present you to Christ as a pure virgin.”*

Verse 1: “I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.”

Plummer comments:

“Forgive my foolish boasting, which is caused by anxious affection. I fear lest these self-asserting imposters should seduce you from Christ.”

Paul expresses a wish for the Corinthians to bear with him, and then affirms that they are bearing with him in this little foolishness.

Verse 2: “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I gave you in marriage to one husband that I might present you to Christ as a pure virgin.”

Paul states the reason they need to bear with him in his little foolishness: “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.”

What kind of jealousy is a godly jealousy?

Exodus 20:5: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.”

Exodus 34:14: “Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Zechariah 8:2: “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.’”

“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I gave you in marriage to one husband that I might present you to Christ as a pure virgin.”

The Living Bible paraphrases this verse: “I am anxious for you with the deep concern of God himself – anxious that your love should be for Christ alone, just as a pure maiden saves her love for one man only, for the one who will be her husband.”

I am jealous for you because I don’t want you messing around with these false teachers and entering into intimate relationships with them, thus giving away your virginity to them and becoming involved in their false teachings.

Let’s celebrate our eternal salvation in Jesus Christ by singing verse 2 of **“Glory to His Name”**: *“I am so wondrously saved from sin, Jesus so sweetly abides within; There at the cross where He took me in; Glory to His Name! Glory to His Name, Glory to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name.”*

February 13 — Devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

2 Corinthians 11:3: *“But I am fearing, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”*

2 Corinthians 11:4: “For if indeed one is coming and is preaching another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you are receiving a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you are putting up with it well enough (quite easily).”

Verse 3: “But I am fearing, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

“I am fearing.” Paul fully understands what Satan is capable of doing. 1 Peter 5:8: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

These false brethren have crawled into Corinth and have been used by Satan to deceive the brethren.

“Lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness.” He will stop at nothing. One of Satan’s major tools is deception. What are some of the other tools he uses?

1. Discouragement
2. Depression
3. Desires
4. Defeat
5. Doctrinal deviation

All of these coupled with deception give us six of the tools in his kit to work on believers.

Harry Ironside says:

Satan never says, “Good morning, I am the devil! I want to mislead you, I want to seduce you, I want to turn your heart away from God, I want to ruin you for time and eternity.”

The little phrase “your minds should be led astray” is the key to Satanic attack. This is where the attack comes – messing with our minds! The key to handling this onslaught is to memorize and meditate on the Word of God. That is our great defense!

“But I am fearing, lest... your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” Whatever fills your mind determines your behavior. 2 Corinthians 10:5: “...we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

Satan’s greatest desire is to lead us astray from (1) “the simplicity” and (2) “purity of devotion to Christ.” Satan wants to complicate and divide!

Thomas à Kempis has expressed this same idea:

“By two wings man is lifted from the things of the earth – simplicity and purity.”

Many people like to say they love Jesus while they are carrying on an affair with the devil.

Warren Wiersbe in *Be Encouraged* says:

“A divided heart leads to a defiled life and a destroyed relationship.”

Verse 4: “For if indeed one is coming and is preaching another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you are receiving a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you are putting up with it well enough (quite easily).”

Satan has a Jesus, a spirit and a gospel according to this verse.

Paul tells the Corinthians they are going along without saying anything. No one is taking a stand and straightening things out. There are no Martin Luthers in Corinth at this time.

Let's continue worshipping and praising the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of "**Glory to His Name**": *"O, precious fountain that saves from sin, I am so glad I have entered in; There Jesus saves me and keeps me clean; Glory to His Name! Glory to His Name, Glory to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name."*

February 14 — I Am Not Inferior (2 Corinthians 11:5-6)

2 Corinthians 11:5: *"For I am considering myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles."*

2 Corinthians 11:6: *"But even if I am unskilled in speaking, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we made it evident to you in all things."*

Verse 5: "For I am considering myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles."

The apostle does not have any self-image problems. He doesn't consider himself in the least inferior to the most eminent. This could be translated "best of the best" apostles.

Don Baker in his book, *Acceptance: Losing the Webs of Personal Insecurity*, says:

I really don't know when I went into hiding. I do know that at some time and for some reason not completely known to me, I began spinning a web – a web consisting of the strangest notions – neurotic little notions of inferiority, inadequacy, guilt, rejection, unworthiness, insecurity, tentativeness and ambivalence – notions that caused me to be guarded and withdrawn, to feel unloving and unloved.

How refreshing to see the apostle Paul stands with great dignity and confidence in the message of the cross of Christ. What a witness!

Verse 6: "But even if I am unskilled in speaking, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we made it evident to you in all things."

The apostle expresses he might not wow them on the platform, but he has the right stuff. As far as knowledge is concerned, he is certainly in no way unskilled. He uses a positive and a negative here. Positively, "I am unskilled in speaking," but negatively "I am not so in knowledge."

I may be a poor speaker, but I know what I'm talking about!

Paul had previously told the Corinthians in his first letter 2:1-5: "And when I came to you, brethren, I came not as a superior person in speech or wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and that One having been crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my word (message) and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, in order that your faith should not be resting on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

Let's worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 4 of "**Glory to His Name**": *"Come to this fountain so rich and sweet, Cast thy poor soul at the Saviour's feet; Plunge in today, and be made complete; Glory to His Name! Glory to His Name, Glory*

to His Name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name.”

February 15 — Financial Transparency (2 Corinthians 11:7-8)

2 Corinthians 11:7: “Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself in order that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?”

2 Corinthians 11:8: “I robbed other churches, having taken wages from them to serve you;”

Verse 7: “Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself in order that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?”

Paul raises a pointed question, asking them if he committed a sin in humbling himself. His purpose is “in order that you might be exalted;” and the reason given “because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge.”

I love the way Paul handles financial matters with the Philippian church. In Philippians 4:10-13 we read: “But I rejoiced greatly in the Lord, that already once more you made alive your thought for me in which also you were thoughtful, but you were having no opportunity. Not that I am speaking because of need, for I have learned in whatever circumstances I am to be content. I am knowing how to discipline myself in lowly circumstances (to be humbled); I am knowing how to be having abundance. In everything and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, and to be having abundance and to be in need. I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong.”

One of the *Our Daily Bread* readings from a few years ago included this little poem.

WHEN A PREACHER SCHEMES AND HOLLERS
JUST TO RAISE A FEW MORE DOLLARS,
HE’S BETRAYED HIS HOLY CALLING –
DON’T YOU FIND SUCH MEANS APPALLING?

Verse 8: “I robbed other churches, having taken wages from them to serve you;”

Paul makes it clear funds were given to him from other churches in his ministry to sustain the ministry he had in Corinth.

While he was in Corinth, we also know he worked at tent making with Priscilla and Aquila to sustain himself financially.

Back in the early 50’s when I was in high school; George Beverly Shea introduced a song that has become one of my favorites, “**I’d Rather Have Jesus.**” I think it would be good for us to worship the Lord by singing verse 1: “*I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold; I’d rather be His than have riches untold; I’d rather have Jesus than houses or lands. I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand. Than to be the king of a vast domain, Or be held in sin’s dread sway; I’d rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today.*”

February 16 — When in Need, the Lord Used Others (2 Corinthians 11:9-10)

2 Corinthians 11:9: “And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and I will continue to do so.”

2 Corinthians 11:10: “As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting shall not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.”

Verse 9: “And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and I will continue to do so.”

Paul had a wonderful association with the churches in Macedonia which involved Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. The epistles tell us of gifts which were sent by some of these folks to the apostle.

Philippians 4:15-16: “And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.”

Verse 10: “As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting shall not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.”

Achaia is the surrounding regions where Corinth is located.

The apostle spoke of knowledge in verse 6, and now he speaks of the truth of Christ. He says this “truth of Christ is in me,” and then he says “this boasting” which takes us back to verse 9, “in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you.”

“This boasting shall not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.” Paul is going to constantly remind everybody “in the regions of Achaia” the price he paid for the ministry there when he charged nothing.

I think it would be a meaning act of worship to continue singing **“I’d Rather Have Jesus.”** Please join me in singing verse 2: *“I’d rather have Jesus than men’s applause; I’d rather be faithful to His dear cause; I’d rather have Jesus than worldwide fame. I’d rather be true to His holy name. Than to be the king of a vast domain, Or be held in sin’s dread sway; I’d rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today.”*

February 17 — God Knows I Love You (2 Corinthians 11:11-12)

2 Corinthians 11:11: “Why? Because I am not loving you? God is knowing I do.”

2 Corinthians 11:12: “But what I am doing, I will also continue to do, in order that I may cut off the opportunity of those who are desiring an opportunity in order that they may be found just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.”

Verse 11: “Why? Because I am not loving you? God is knowing I do.”

The apostle raised the first question in verse 7:

1. “...did I commit a sin in humbling myself in order that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?”

He has two more questions in this verse. He raises the question:

2. “Why?” – am I boasting about not being a burden?

Then he answers with another question:

3. “Because I am not loving you?” Then Paul answers, bringing God as his witness: “God is knowing I do.”

2 Corinthians 2:4: “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.”

Verse 12: “But what I am doing, I will also continue to do, in order that I may cut off the opportunity of those who are desiring an opportunity in order that they may be found just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.”

The apostle is really tough when he explains what he is doing. He states he will

“continue to do” in the future. His purpose is stated twofold in the rest of the verse:

1. “In order that I may cut off the opportunity of those who are desiring an opportunity.”

These leeches are looking for opportunities where others have labored. You will often find cults and devious teachings spend all of their time preying on new converts or those who have no or little discernment.

2. “In order that they may be found just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.”

It is obviously the purpose of these false teachers to come into Corinth (1) to lead the people astray from Christ and (2) to make some money in the process by seeking maintenance for their ministry.

It is Paul’s intent and purpose to cut off any opportunity for either of these desires of the false teachers to be successful.

Paul is focused on Jesus and Jesus only.

I love the words of verse 3 of this hymn. Please join me in worship and praise as we magnify our Savior. Sing with me **“I’d Rather Have Jesus”**: *“He’s fairer than lilies of rarest bloom; He’s sweeter than honey from out the comb; He’s all that my hungering spirit needs. I’d rather have Jesus and let Him lead Than to be the king of a vast domain, Or be held in sin’s dread sway; I’d rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today.”*

February 18 — The Imitator (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

2 Corinthians 11:13: *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”*

2 Corinthians 11:14: *“And no wonder, for even Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light.”*

2 Corinthians 11:15: *“Therefore it is no great thing if also his servants are disguising themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”*

Verse 13: *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.”*

The apostle gets more specific about these opponents he is facing in Corinth. He characterizes them as (1) “false apostles” and (2) “deceitful workers.” They are disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

Deceiving and Disguising are the devil’s dirty deeds.

2 Corinthians 2:11: “In order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

Verse 14: *“And no wonder, for even Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light.”*

In verse 13, we had the words “disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” In verse 14, we have their father: “Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light.” He is the imitator.

You have Satan’s declaration in Isaiah 14:14: “I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High.”

This takes us back to the “serpent” in verse 3 who “deceived Eve by his craftiness. From this act, the Corinthian “minds should be led astray from the simplicity and

purity of devotion to Christ.”

Verse 15: “Therefore it is no great thing if also his servants are disguising themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

You have the word “disguising” in verses 13 – 15. In verse 13: “disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” In verse 14: “Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light.” In verse 15: Satan’s “servants are disguising themselves as servants of righteousness.”

“Whose end shall be according to their works.”

Revelation 20:10: “And the devil, the one who is deceiving them, was thrown in the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

We are not interested in the imitation. We want the real thing. It is found in Jesus and Jesus only.

Satan is to be avoided as a lion, dreaded as a serpent, and feared most as an angel of light.

There are six observations we make from this chapter:

1. Deceiving and disguising are the devil’s dirty deeds.
2. Satan is just as active today as he was in the Garden of Eden.
3. It is Satan’s desire to lead us astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.
4. Paul fully understands what Satan is capable of doing.
5. Memorizing and meditating on the Word of God is our greatest protection from the onslaughts of the wicked one.
6. Satan has a Jesus, a spirit, a gospel and a kingdom.

I think it would appropriate this morning as we worship the Lord to sing Martin Luther’s great hymn, **“A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”** Please join me in singing verse 1: *“A mighty Fortress is our God, A Bulwark never failing; Our Helper He amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing; For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, And armed with cruel hate, On earth is not His equal.”*

February 19 — The Suffering of a Real Servant (2 Corinthians 11:16-17)

Did it ever occur to you that God might want you to go through something rather than be delivered from it? Much of our suffering is God taking us at our word.

2 Corinthians 11:16: *“Again, I am saying, let no one think me to be foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, in order that I also may boast a little.”*

2 Corinthians 11:17: *“That which I am speaking, I am not speaking as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.”*

Verse 16: “Again, I am saying, let no one think me to be foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, in order that I also may boast a little.”

The word “again” takes us back to 2 Corinthians 11:1: “I wish that you would bear with me a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.”

The apostle recognizes the foolishness of boasting, but he says, “receive me even as foolish, (for the purpose) in order that I also (as the false teachers are doing) may boast a little.”

Verse 17: “That which I am speaking, I am not speaking as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.”

The apostle says of what he is speaking: Negatively, he is “not speaking as the Lord would,” but positively “as in foolishness.” The Lord wouldn’t boast, but the apostle is put into the position of boasting in this situation.

This boasting by Paul is a defense of the gospel. It is done so truth might prevail.

Please join me in singing verse 2 of Martin Luther’s great hymn, “**A Mighty Fortress is Our God**”: *“Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing, Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God’s own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth, His name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle.”*

February 20 — Boasting in the Flesh (2 Corinthians 11:18-19)

2 Corinthians 11:18: *“Since many are boasting according to the flesh, I also will boast.”*

2 Corinthians 11:19: *“For you, being so wise, are gladly tolerating those who are foolish.”*

Verse 18: “Since many are boasting according to the flesh, I also will boast.”

Paul feels they need to know what the Lord has done through them and what has been going on in their lives to help the Corinthians understand the intense level of commitment on the part of Paul and his staff.

The apostle states the reason he is taking this approach: “many are boasting according to the flesh.” 2 Corinthians 10:2-4: “I am asking that when I am present I need not show boldness with the confidence with which I am proposing to be courageous against some, who are considering us as walking according to the flesh. For, though we are walking in the flesh, we are not warring according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”

Verse 19: “For you, being so wise, are gladly tolerating those who are foolish.”

The reason Paul needs to do this is because the Corinthians are going along with this “boasting according to the flesh” by the “many.”

“For you, being so wise.” It is ironic you are bearing with the unwise, since you are wise. “For you, being so wise, are gladly tolerating those who are foolish.”

2 Corinthians 11:4: “For if indeed one is coming and is preaching another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you are receiving a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you are putting up with it well enough (quite easily).”

Make no mistake. We are in warfare where it is so easy to get distracted and off-track on what the Lord would have us to do.

Paul concludes 2 Timothy 2:26 with these words: “And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, under the spell of his will.”

Yes, it is a serious matter and we are at war.

2 Timothy 2:3-4: “Suffer hardships with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one engaging in military service is allowing himself to become entangled in civilian pursuits in order that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

Recognizing this battle, let’s worship and praise the Lord as we sing verse 3 of “**A Mighty Fortress is Our God**”: *“And tho this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The*

Prince of Darkness grim, We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure; One little word shall fell him."

February 21 — Tolerating False Teaching (2 Corinthians 11:20-21)

2 Corinthians 11:20: *"For you are tolerating anyone if he is reducing you to slavery, if he is devouring you, if he is taking advantage of you, if he is exalting himself, if he is slapping you in the face."*

2 Corinthians 11:21: *"To my shame I am saying, that we have been weak by comparison, but in whatever respect anyone else is bold, (I am speaking in foolishness,) I am just as bold myself."*

Verse 20: "For you are tolerating anyone if he is reducing you to slavery, if he is devouring you, if he is taking advantage of you, if he is exalting himself, if he is slapping you in the face."

The apostle lists five things describing what these "false apostles" and "deceitful workers" are doing in Corinth. They describe so many of the cults in existence today.

Galatians 2:4: "But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage."

When these people are honest, they have to say "I love you" for all the wrong reasons.

Let's look at these five things more closely, "for you are tolerating anyone if":

1. "He is reducing you to slavery." He is taking away your rights and making you dependent upon him. Whereas truth proclaims freedom.
2. "If he is devouring you." He exploits, robs you and takes all your money for his own purposes. Whereas truth proclaims we are servants and gives.
3. "If he is taking advantage of you." Taking advantage of your time, your talents and abilities. Whereas truth serves.
4. "If he is exalting himself." The focus is on the individual rather than upon the Christ. It is the individual who's being exalted, not Jesus Christ. Whereas truth exalts Jesus.
5. "If he is slapping you in the face." This could be physical abuse, but could also be mental and emotional abuse. Whereas truth proclaims help and healing.

In direct contrast to falsehood, truth (1) proclaims freedom, (2) gives, (3) serves, (4) exalts Jesus and (5) helps and brings healing.

Verse 21: "To my shame I am saying, that we have been weak by comparison, but in whatever respect anyone else is bold, (I am speaking in foolishness,) I am just as bold myself."

Paul expresses we just don't operate that way. He uses the word "weak" in this verse and will use again several times in the next couple of chapters.

The word "weak" is used 44 times in Paul's epistles. The word in the gospels refers to "illness." In these remaining chapters of 2 Corinthians, the apostle uses the word "weak" 14 times meaning "*the opposite of strong*."

In the classical Greek, it would refer to body weakness or illness, but here the apostle is using it with regard to the inward nature of man.

Paul wants them to know we don't do any of that stuff. We aren't into slavery, de-

vouring, taking advantage, exalting ourselves and slapping you in the face.

If tyranny, arrogance and violence are the credentials of true apostleship; Paul must admit to his own shame he has failed as a leader in Corinth.

How appropriate for us to join in worship and praise as we sing verse 4 of “**A Mighty Fortress is Our God**”: *“That word above all earthly powers, No thanks to them, abideth; The Spirit and the gifts are ours, Thru him who with us sideth; Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also; The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still; His kingdom is forever.”*

February 22 — Credentials (2 Corinthians 11:22-23)

2 Corinthians 11:22: “*Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.*”

2 Corinthians 11:23: “*Are they servants of Christ? (I am talking as if I were beside myself) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.*”

Verse 22: “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.”

This is a statement of three of the four questions in these two verses. These questions regard heritage and background, but have nothing to do with the person’s performance in his work for God.

Philippians 3:4-6: “although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”

These who are causing the difficulty in Corinth are obviously Jews from the questions being raised.

Verse 23: “Are they servants of Christ? (I am talking as if I were beside myself) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number often in danger of death.”

The fourth question regards the record of their lives and what they’d been through. You might say they were equal through the first three questions, but the obvious separation takes place in the fourth question: “Are they servants of Christ?”

The apostle is stating he has them beat on this score: “(I am talking as if I were beside myself) I more so.” By the characteristics described in verse 20, we certainly do not see a servant of Christ.

Beginning in verse 23 through 28, the apostle will list the many troubles he has been through. There are 24 examples described in all demonstrating the apostle is a servant of Christ.

In essence, Paul is saying let me tell you what it takes to be a servant. Look at my record!

How different is the apostle’s focus with regard to the success of his ministry from ours in the 21st century. Our focus seems to always be on statistics and successes, not on suffering. The authenticity of a servant is seen by what he has suffered.

When it comes down to it, your commitment is really measured by these two things:

1. What you have been through

2. Are you still hanging in there

The Kenny Rogers song stated: “You’ve got to know when to hold ‘em and know when to fold ‘em.” Paul never turned his back and walked away.

In the next few mornings, we will look at these 24 credentials for servanthood. The first four are in this verse:

1. “In far more labors.” Just as the apostle was intensely involved in Judaism, he is intensely involved in Christianity and the spreading of the gospel.
2. “In far more imprisonments.” Our records show Paul was imprisoned at least seven times during his ministry.
3. “Beaten times without number.” He lost track how many times he faced the whip.
4. “Often in danger of death.” It was a miracle the apostle survived many of the difficult circumstances he experienced as a result of a faithful proclamation of the gospel. He was stoned at Lystra and thought to be dead.

There is no more appropriate hymn for us to praise the Lord this morning than Margaret Clarkson’s “**So Send I You.**” Please join me in singing verse 1: “*So send I you to labor unrewarded, To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown, To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing; So send I you to toil for Me alone.*”

February 23 — Resume (2 Corinthians 11:24-25)

2 Corinthians 11:24: “*Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.*”

2 Corinthians 11:25: “*Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.*”

Verse 24: “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.”

The apostle continues the list of 24 credentials on his resume.

5. “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.” This experience caused many men to die or fall unconscious just by going through it once. Paul had been through the experience five times.

Verse 25: “Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.”

6. “Three times I was beaten with rods.” Acts 16:22: “And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.”
7. “Once I was stoned.” Acts 14:19-20: “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.”
8. “Three times I was shipwrecked.” One experience is described in Acts 27:41-44.
9. “A night and a day I have spent in the deep.” This means he spent twenty-four hours drifting in the open sea. We suspect he was thrown into the sea as a result of one of the other shipwrecks. Then, he floated on a plank or some debris for a twenty-four hour period before being rescued.

Please join me in singing verse 2 of “**So Send I You**”: “*So send I you to bind the bruised and broken, O’er wand’ring souls to work, to weep, to wake, To bear the bur*

dens of a world a-weary; So send I you to suffer for My sake."

February 24 — Facing Hardships (2 Corinthians 11:26-27)

2 Corinthians 11:26: *"I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from those of my own race, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren,"*

2 Corinthians 11:27: *"I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."*

Verse 26: "I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from those of my own race, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren,"

10. "I have been on frequent journeys." We know of three journeys in the book of Acts, but are sure there were others.
11. "In dangers from rivers." We have no record of flooding rivers, but certainly the apostle in his travels had to face the dangerous problem of crossing rivers with flash flooding.
12. "Dangers from robbers." I'm sure they experienced this on numerous occasions.
13. "Dangers from those of my own race." Most of Paul's ministry was spent fighting off the opposition of the Jews after he became a Christian.
14. "Dangers from the Gentiles." In a number of cities, the apostle faced opposition not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles.
15. "Dangers in the city." There are numerous cities where Paul was asked to leave with mobs and threats of violence.
16. "Dangers in the wilderness." We have no specific references in the book of Acts, but feel certain Paul experienced all kinds of difficulties with heat and thirst.
17. "Dangers on the sea." Acts 27:20: "And since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned."
18. "Dangers among false brethren."

Verse 27: "I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."

19. "I have been in labor and hardship."
20. "Through many sleepless nights."
21. "In hunger and thirst."
22. "Often without food."
23. "In cold and exposure."

Please join me in singing verse 3 of "**So Send I You**": *"So send I you to loneliness and longing, With heart a-hung'ring for the loved and known, Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one; So send I you to know My love alone."*

February 25 — Boasting About Weakness (2 Corinthians 11:28-30)

2 Corinthians 11:28: *"Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me, of concern for all the churches."*

2 Corinthians 11:29: “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is being led into sin and I am not burning with readiness to aid?”

2 Corinthians 11:30: “If I have to boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness.”

Verse 28: “Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me, of concern for all the churches.”

The previous twenty-three things mentioned are external things. Now the apostle turns to internal stress. The list first focused on things happening from the outside, now it focuses on things going on inside.

24. “There is the daily pressure upon me, of concern for all the churches.” If you have ever been involved in leadership in a church, you know the pressure is a daily concern from which you can never get away.

Because it is daily, he constantly faces this internal stress.

The churches are a concern to him because he wants them to be characterized by the three F’s:

1. Faithful
2. Fruitful
3. Flourishing

As mentioned earlier, your commitment is really measured by these things: It’s what you’ve been through, and are you still hanging in there.

Verse 29: “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is being led into sin and I am not burning with readiness to aid?”

After this horrendous list the apostle has taken us through, he asks two very pointed summary questions:

1. “Who is weak, and I am not weak?”
2. “Who is being lead into sin and I am not burning with readiness to aid?”

It is so easy to throw in the towel and go the easy route. Demas and John Mark are illustrations of leaving. Should one of them stumble in his Christian walk, Paul treats it as though it were his own stumbling, enduring the same pain and feeling the same vexation.

The principle states he is boasting in weakness and glorying in God’s power.

Verse 30: “If I have to boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness.”

Only one kind of boasting is pleasing to the Lord: boasting in one’s weakness. Since Christian character is paramount to all other requirements, weakness becomes an essential quality for apostleship. It is seen in brokenness, surrender, humility, holiness, perseverance and trust.

Please join me in worshipping the Lord this morning singing verse 4 of **“So Send I You”**: *“So send I you to leave your life’s ambition, To die to dear desire, self-will resign, To labor long, and love where men revile you; So send I you to lose your life in Mine.”*

February 26 — Let Down in a Basket (2 Corinthians 11:31-33)

2 Corinthians 11:31: “The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, is knowing that I am not lying.”

2 Corinthians 11:32: “In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,”

2 Corinthians 11:33: “And I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and was escaping out of his hands.”

Verse 31: “The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, is knowing that I am not lying.”

The apostle says: I have told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

What a joy having gone through it all, the apostle still is able to bless God. He’s still got his song after all we have looked upon. He has an attitude of gratitude!

2 Corinthians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassionate mercies and God of all comfort (encouragement).”

The apostle calls God to witness the record of the experiences he has outlined for them.

Verse 32: “In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,”

Verse 33: “And I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and was escaping out of his hands.”

At the time of his conversion, the apostle Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest the Christians there. The record of this event is in Acts 9. In Acts 9:23: “And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him.”

This is what Paul means when he says, “I will boast of the things that concern my weakness.” This is the crowning illustration of weakness: being let down through a window in a basket. This is how it all started. Such humiliation!

The apostle came to town as the persecutor and left as the persecuted. The independent became dependent, the pursuer became the pursued.

Ray Stedman says of the apostle Paul: “He became a basket case!”

How wonderful it is that there are brethren to side with the apostle Paul and care for his needs on this occasion.

I think it would be good for us to meditate upon the prayer of one who said:

I ASKED FOR STRENGTH THAT I MIGHT ACHIEVE.

GOD MADE ME WEAK THAT I MIGHT OBEY.

I ASKED FOR HEALTH THAT I MIGHT DO GREAT THINGS.

I WAS GIVEN GRACE THAT I MIGHT DO BETTER THINGS.

I ASKED FOR RICHES THAT I MIGHT BE HAPPY.

I WAS GIVEN POVERTY THAT I MIGHT BE WISE.

I ASKED FOR POWER THAT I MIGHT HAVE THE PRAISE OF MEN.

GOD GAVE WEAKNESS THAT I MIGHT FEEL THE NEED OF HIM.

I ASKED FOR ALL THINGS THAT I MIGHT ENJOY LIFE.

GOD GAVE ME LIFE THAT I MIGHT ENJOY ALL THINGS.

I RECEIVED NOTHING I ASKED FOR, ALL THAT I HOPED FOR;

MY PRAYER WAS ANSWERED.

Please join me in singing the final verse of that wonderful hymn, “**So Send I You.**”

Let's sing verse 5: "So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred, To eyes made blind because they will not see, To spend, tho' it be blood, to spend and spare not; So send I you to taste of Calvary."

February 27 — Visions & Revelations (2 Corinthians 12:1-2)

2 Corinthians 12:1: "Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord."

2 Corinthians 12:2: "I am knowing a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago,--whether in the body I am not knowing or out of the body I am not knowing, God is knowing--such a man was caught up to the third heaven."

2 Corinthians 12:3: "And I am knowing how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I am not knowing, God is knowing--"

Verse 1: "Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord."

There is no benefit to be gained from boasting. The apostle then says "I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord."

2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." These visions and revelations are of the Lord.

Verse 2: "I am knowing a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago,--whether in the body I am not knowing or out of the body I am not knowing, God is knowing--such a man was caught up to the third heaven."

Paul is speaking of himself in a very humble and self-effacing manner on "knowing a man in Christ." This person is a Christian. This happened "fourteen years ago." If the date of the letter is 55 A.D., he's speaking about something that happened in 41 A.D. This would be only 4-5 years after the apostle became a Christian.

The apostle does not say, "I knew a man in Christ," but uses the present tense: "I am knowing a man in Christ."

"--Whether in the body I am not knowing or out of the body I am not knowing," he calls God to witness, "God is knowing--such a man was caught up to the third heaven." There are numerous references in the Scripture to people being "caught up."

It is believed:

1. The First Heaven is the atmospheric heaven.
2. The Second Heaven is the heaven of outer space.
3. The Third Heaven is the dwelling place of God himself.

Warren W. Wiersbe in *Be Encouraged* says:

Paul affirmed here the reality of heaven and the ability of God to take people there. The third heaven is the same as "paradise," the heaven of heavens where God dwells in glory.

I find myself already singing that wonderful hymn, "O That Will Be Glory." Please join me in singing verse 1: "When all my labors and trials are o'er, And I am safe on that beautiful shore, Just to be near the dear Lord I adore, Will thro' the ages be glory for me. O that will be glory for me, Glory for me, glory for me; When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory, be glory for me."

February 28 — Caught Up Into Paradise (2 Corinthians 12:3-4)

2 Corinthians 12:3: “*And I am knowing how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I am not knowing, God is knowing—*”

2 Corinthians 12:4: “*that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*”

Verse 3: “And I am knowing how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I am not knowing, God is knowing—”

“Whether in the body or apart from the body I am not knowing, God is knowing.” This is repeated again for emphasis. It also helps us to understand that consciousness goes on after death.

Verse 4: “that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.”

Again we have the use of the words “caught up.” This time he makes reference to “paradise” which is the same as the third heaven.

We remember the Lord’s words to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43: “And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”

Revelation 2:7: “‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.’”

Not only was he “caught up,” but he also “heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.” Our natural curiosity makes us wonder what these words were and the meaning of the expressions Paul heard.

Please join me in singing verse 2 and 3 of “**O That Will Be Glory**”: “*When by the gift of His infinite grace, I am accorded in heaven a place, Just to be there and to look on His face, Will thro’ the ages be glory for me. Friends will be there I have loved long ago; Joy like a river around me will flow; Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know, Will thro’ the ages be glory for me. O that will be glory for me, Glory for me, glory for me. When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory, be glory for me.*”

February 29 — Boasting in my Weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:5-6)

2 Corinthians 12:5: “*Concerning such a man as this I will boast, but concerning myself I will not boast except in my weaknesses.*”

2 Corinthians 12:6: “*For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I am refraining from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he is seeing in me or hearing from me.*”

Verse 5: “Concerning such a man as this I will boast, but concerning myself I will not boast except in my weaknesses.”

Paul uses the word “weakness” or “weaknesses” five times in these first ten verses of chapter 12. He is definitely following the path for spiritual growth and maturity by using these words. “I will not boast except in my weaknesses.” He could have been proud, arrogant and independent, but in a broken, contrite spirit, this servant of God boasts in his weaknesses.

Verse 6: “For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I am refraining from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he is seeing in me or hearing from me.”

When you start boasting, then you have to face the issue of credit.

“For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish,” (the reason why) “for I shall

be speaking the truth.” Paul doesn’t want more than his due in Corinth: “no one may credit me with more than he is seeing in me or hearing from me.”

Seeing in my *life*, or hearing from my *lips*. Seeing in my *conduct*, or hearing from my *communication*. Seeing in my *works*, and hearing in my *words*. They must see it in me before they want to hear it from me.

1 Peter 3:15: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”

I think it would be fitting this morning to worship the Lord by singing John Newton’s famous hymn, “**Amazing Grace.**” Let’s sing together verses 1 and 2: “*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see. ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!*”

MARCH

March 1 — A Thorn in the Flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-8)

2 Corinthians 12:7: “*And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me--in order that I may not be exalting myself.*”

2 Corinthians 12:8: “*Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times in order that it might depart from me.*”

Verse 7: “And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me--in order that I may not be exalting myself.”

The “surpassing greatness of the revelations” was probably five in number:

1. the relationship aspect of being in Christ
2. the role Paul would play as an apostle to the Gentiles
3. the church, the bride of Christ, made up of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ
4. the rapture of the church
5. the regathering of Israel

The apostle understands the reason for the “thorn”: “to keep me from exalting myself.” It’s to keep him humble and make him holy.

The “thorn” was a gift with a purpose. We do not know exactly what that “thorn” was. We do know the Lord knows how to balance *blessing* and *buffeting* in our lives.

V. Raymond Edman said it so well in *The Disciplines of Life*:

Our discipline is to keep on climbing when sight is dim and strength is debilitated, when friends fail and foes are fierce, when handicaps hinder and hardships harry. God has use for the heart that no difficulties can deter!

One unknown writer said it well:

HEROES ARE FORGED ON ANVILS HOT WITH PAIN,
AND SPLENDID COURAGE COMES BUT WITH A TEST.
SOME NATURES RIPEN AND SOME NATURES BLOOM
ONLY ON BLOOD-WET SOIL, SOME SOULS PROVE GREAT
ONLY IN MOMENTS DARK WITH DEATH OR DOOM.

Satan is the instrument, and God uses him to carry out His plan. He did the same

thing in the life of Job and on Calvary.

“There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me.” This is in the present tense so it is continually going on. “A messenger of Satan, to buffet” (continue buffeting) me or continue beating upon me. The purpose behind this was in order that “I may not be exalting myself.”

Plummer calls this: “a painful malady, like a stake driven into my flesh.”

Joni Eareckson Tada says it well when she found out she had cancer:

“God must be up to something big.”

Verse 8: “Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times in order that it might depart from me.”

I prayed about this “thorn” or “messenger of Satan.” I prayed to the Lord on three occasions in order that it might depart from me. On three different occasions, Paul prayed to be free of this thing.

The purpose of facing this affliction was: (1) to accept it, (2) to understand it, (3) to be thankful for it and (4) to sing in the storm.

Please join me in worshipping the Lord this morning, and praising His name by singing verses 3 and 4 of “**Amazing Grace**”: “*Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home. The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.*”

March 2 — Adequate Grace (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

2 Corinthians 12:9: “*And He has said to me, ‘My grace is adequate for you, for power is finding its consummation (or reaching perfection) in the presence of weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*”

2 Corinthians 12:10: “*Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and difficulties on behalf of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong.*”

Verse 9: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is adequate for you, for power is finding its consummation (or reaching perfection) in the presence of weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

“And He has said to me.” The Lord is unmoved by the three appeals and His viable alternative is “my grace is adequate for you.” This is in the present tense. It is my grace is continually available and adequate for you.

Charles Spurgeon in a time of depression shared:

“The Lord said, ‘My Grace is sufficient.’ His reply was, ‘Lord, I should think it is.’”

When we are truly drawing on His grace, it is not a case of exalting ourselves.

God’s “no” always obligates Him to a better plan.

His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is adequate for you,’” - the reason - “for power is finding its consummation (or reaching perfection) in the presence of weakness.”

The Living Bible translates it: “My power shows up best in weak people.”

Following the Lord’s response to Paul’s petition, we read: “Most gladly, therefore,

I will rather boast about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” What a fantastic attitude! “Most gladly,” the apostle says. He got a “no,” but still has a good attitude. He has not lost his confidence in God nor in the ordering of circumstances in his life for the development of Christlike character.

“Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast.” If glory comes through weakness, then I’ll glory in weakness.

Philippians 4:13: “I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who is indwelling me.”

Verse 10: “Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and difficulties on behalf of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul’s further response is “therefore, I am well content with weaknesses.”

There are five words that describe the apostle’s response:

1. Weaknesses.
2. Insults
3. Distresses (or Calamities)
4. Persecutions
5. Difficulties

The reason is given: “for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Oh yes, the Lord’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. There is adequate grace for any curriculum He has designed for us.

I think it would be appropriate for us to sing verses 5 and 6 of John Newton’s wonderful hymn, “**Amazing Grace**”: “*And when this flesh and heart shall fail, And mortal life shall cease; I shall possess within the veil A life of joy and peace. When we’ve been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise Than when we’d first begun.*”

March 3 — Signs of a True Apostle (2 Corinthians 12:11-12)

2 Corinthians 12:11: “*I have become foolish; you yourselves forced me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles even though I am nothing.*”

2 Corinthians 12:12: “*Indeed the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with every kind of patience, by signs and wonders and miracles.*”

Verse 11: “I have become foolish; you yourselves forced me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles even though I am nothing.”

Dr. Paul Tournier, Swiss psychiatrist and author, says:

How beautiful, how grand and liberating the experience is when people learn to help each other. It is impossible to overemphasize the need humans have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood...No one can develop freely in this world and find a full life without feeling understood by at least one person...He who would see himself clearly must open up to a confidant freely chosen and worthy of such trust.

In this passage, we can see how much Paul needed this in Corinth.

Paul states their commendation would have kept him from boasting. Instead of being criticized, he should have been “commended.” Why is it so hard just to say something

nice to be a blessing – to affirm our wives, children, our associates?

Instead of love and loyalty, they laid Paul low with criticism.

“Even though I am nothing.”

Galatians 6:3: “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

1 Timothy 1:15: “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”

Verse 12: “Indeed the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with every kind of patience, by signs and wonders and miracles.”

The word “indeed” expresses an emotional outburst on the apostle Paul’s part emphasizing what is being said: “the signs of a true apostle.”

Back in chapter 11, Paul spoke of the false apostles. In chapter 12, he vindicates his ministry when he speaks of the “signs of a true apostle” performed among them.

Paul wanted and was waiting for a proper Corinthian response. Instead, he received calloused, cold, critical indifference on their part.

As a servant of the Lord, I have often found comfort in the inspired words of Isaiah 54:17: “‘No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,’ declares the Lord.”

This morning, I find myself drawn to Fanny Crosby’s wonderful hymn, “**He Hideth My Soul.**” Let’s sing verse 1 together: “*A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, A wonderful Savior to me; He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, Where rivers of pleasure I see. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand.*”

March 4 — I Asked for Nothing (2 Corinthians 12:13-14)

2 Corinthians 12:13: “*For what is there in which you were treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong.*”

2 Corinthians 12:14: “*Look! This is a third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you for I am not seeking what is yours but you; for children are not under moral obligation to be saving up for their parents, but the parents for the children.*”

Verse 13: “For what is there in which you were treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong.”

Question to the Corinthians: How were you treated so differently than other churches who are so positive?

Paul then makes a statement of irony when he raises the question: “except that I myself did not become a burden to you?” Other churches helped so he could give himself to them in ministry and share Christ with them.

Then he says: “forgive me this wrong.” We know this is a statement of sarcasm because of other passages that speak of the stewardship responsibilities of those who are receiving ministering.

1 Timothy 5:18: “For the scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is

threshing,' and 'the laborer is worthy of his wages.'"

Verse 14: "Look! This is a third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you for I am not seeking what is yours but you; for children are not under moral obligation to be saving up for their parents, but the parents for the children."

This is the third time Paul is ready to come back to them. He keeps coming back for more and more. He is a humble man, not affected by criticism or opposition. Courage is a man who just keeps coming on!

The apostle then gives the reason: "for I am not seeking what is yours but" in contrast "you;" - a further reason - "for children are not under moral obligation to be saving up for their parents, but the parents for the children."

The bottom line is he loves them and not what they have!

As believers, we need to watch a ministry any time the focus gets off people and on possessions. Paul is not interested in the possessions, but the people in his ministry. It's not the *possessions*, but the *persons*. The apostle's focus is on people.

The apostle considers himself as the spiritual father of many of these Corinthians who have responded to Christ under his ministry. He is making the point quite clear it is the responsibility of the parents to make provisions for the children and not the reverse.

Let's return this morning to that great hymn, "**He Hideth My Soul.**" Please join me in worship as we sing verse 2: "*A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, He taketh my burden away; He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved, He giveth me strength as my day. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand.*"

March 5 — I Most Gladly Will Spend & Be Spent (2 Corinthians 12:15-16)

2 Corinthians 12:15: "*And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I am loving you the more, am I to be loved the less?*"

2 Corinthians 12:16: "*But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, being crafty I took you in by deceit.*"

Verse 15: "And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I am loving you the more, am I to be loved the less?"

In view of the fact he doesn't want to be a burden, and he is not seeking their possessions but them as people, he says: "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls."

Paul's song could be "Broken, Spilled Out and Used Up for Thee."

He says something similar in Philippians 2:17: "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all."

I have been blessed by the ministry of Steve and Annie Chapman over the years. On her album, *A Mother's Touch*, she wrote this song, "No Charge":

My little boy came in to the kitchen,
This evening while I was cooking supper.
And he handed me a piece of paper He'd been writing on.
And after wiping my hands on my apron
I read it and this is what it said.

For mowing the yard \$5.00
And for making my own bed this week \$1.00
And for going to the store \$.50
And for playing with little brother while you went shopping \$.25
Taking out the trash \$1.00
Getting a good report card \$5.00
And for raking the yard \$2.00
Total owed \$14.75

Well, I looked at him standing there,
Expectantly and a thousand memories
Flashed through my mind. So I picked up the pen,
Turned the paper over and this is what I wrote.
“For the nine months I carried you
Growing inside me, no charge.
For the nights I sat up with you
Doctoring you, praying for you, no charge.”

“For the time and the tears and the cost through the years
There’s no charge when you add it all up
The full cost of my love is no charge.”

“For the nights filled with dread,
And the worries ahead, no charge.
For advice and the knowledge,
And the cost of your college, no charge.
For the toys, food and clothes,
And for wiping your nose, there’s no charge, son.”

“When you add it all up,
The full cost of my love is no charge.”
Well, when he finished reading
He had great big ole tears in his eyes
And he looked up at me and said,
“Mama, I sure do love you.”
Then he took the pen and wrote in great big letters
“Paid in full.”

When you add it all up the cost of real love is no charge.

Verse 16: “But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, being crafty I took you in by deceit.”

“I did not burden you myself.” However, the critics from Corinth have said: “Nevertheless, being crafty I took you in by deceit.”

Joseph C. Aldrich in his book, *Love for All Your Worth*, says:

Why do we find love slipping away from our relationships? Why do we sometimes feel like last year’s model? Why do we find ourselves overlooking the

precious value of others? Could it be that our own self-centeredness has distorted our perception of true value? Perhaps our own fingerprints have smudged the lenses. Perhaps we have lost some value in the sight of others. We've slipped, we've changed, we've become negligent, forgetful, and unappreciative.

The apostle can overcome all of that criticism by simply keeping his focus upon Jesus. Let's keep our focus this morning while we sing verse 3 of Fanny Crosby's hymn, **"He Hideth My Soul"**: *"With numberless blessings each moment He crowns, And filled with His fullness divine, I sing in my rapture, O, glory to God For such a Redeemer as mine! He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand."*

March 6 — All Things Are For Your Upbuilding (2 Corinthians 12:17-19)

2 Corinthians 12:17: *"Certainly of those whom I have sent to you, there was not one through whom I took advantage of you, was there?"*

2 Corinthians 12:18: *"I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?"*

2 Corinthians 12:19: *"For a long time you are thinking that it is to you I am presenting my verbal defense. In the sight of God in Christ we are speaking, but all the things, beloved, are for your upbuilding."*

Verse 17: "Certainly of those whom I have sent to you, there was not one through whom I took advantage of you, was there?"

"Certainly of those," of whom we know: Titus, Luke, Trophimus, Timothy, Silas and Apollos. There may have been others who had been assigned some service in Corinth. Of all those workers I sent to you, "there was not one through whom I took advantage of you, was there?"

"Took advantage" refers to making the Corinthians obligated to them financially.

Verse 18: "I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?"

Verse 19: "For a long time you are thinking that it is to you I am presenting my verbal defense. In the sight of God in Christ we are speaking, but all the things, beloved, are for your upbuilding."

"For a long time you are thinking that it is to you I am presenting my verbal defense."

2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

"In the sight of God in Christ we are speaking."

Hebrews 4:13: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The Lord is seeing and listening. He sees what we are doing and listens to what we are saying.

"But all the things, beloved, are for your upbuilding." Everything we have done is for you. Every project, every program, every personal sacrifice has been made for your personal benefit.

“But all things, beloved.” He speaks of them very affectionately. “Are for your upbuilding.” This “upbuilding” involves three things:

1. the spiritual walk
2. strengthening for service
3. edifying other members of the body of Christ as a result

We certainly will have a different perspective when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. Fanny Crosby writes about this in verse 4 of **“He Hideth My Soul.”** Please join me in worship and praise singing: *“When clothed in His brightness, transported I rise To meet Him in clouds of the sky, His perfect salvation, His wonderful love, I’ll shout with the millions on high. He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock That shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life with the depths of His love, And covers me there with His hand, And covers me there with His hand.”*

March 7 — What I Am Fearing (2 Corinthians 12:20-21)

2 Corinthians 12:20: *“For I am fearing that perhaps, having come, I may find you to be not what I am wishing and I may be found by you to be not what you are wishing; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, outbreaks of selfishness, slanders, gossips, inflated egos, disturbances;”*

2 Corinthians 12:21: *“I am afraid that having come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned previously and did not repent of the impurity and immorality and sensuality which they practiced.”*

Verse 20: “For I am fearing that perhaps, having come, I may find you to be not what I am wishing and I may be found by you to be not what you are wishing; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, outbreaks of selfishness, slanders, gossips, inflated egos, disturbances;”

Paul says “I am fearing” in verse 20, and then “I am afraid” in verse 21.

Galatians 4:11: “I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.”

Most of the apostle’s emotional energy was probably spent in these interpersonal relationships.

The apostle then lists eight things he might find there among them: “that perhaps there may be.” Let’s look at these for a few brief moments:

1. Strife
2. Jealousy
3. Outbursts of Anger
4. Outbreaks of Selfishness
5. Slanders
6. Gossips
7. Inflated Egos
8. Disturbances

If you put this list together with the works of the flesh from Galatians 5:19-21, you have a clear picture of what the problems are in Corinth: “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Verse 21: “I am afraid that having come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned previously and did not repent of the impurity and immorality and sensuality which they practiced.”

One of the problems is the Corinthians have sinned previously, and did not repent. Repentance is the key to restoration. Our question is: How can Paul tell if they repented? I would say by the following five ways:

1. Making confession
2. Forsaking the sin
3. Restitution where it is necessary
4. A walk with God that involves prayer, the Word, and fellowship with believers
5. An attitude of dependence upon God and upon other believers

God uses *pain, people* and *problems* to mold us into the image of His Son.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing with the Gaithers

“Something Beautiful”: *“Something beautiful, something good All my confusion He understood All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife But he made something beautiful of my life.”*

March 8 — Justice Will Be Served (2 Corinthians 13:1-2)

2 Corinthians 13:1: *“This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact shall be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses.”*

2 Corinthians 13:2: *“I have said previously when present the second time and though now being absent I am saying beforehand to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare anyone.”*

Verse 1: “This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact shall be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses.”

The apostle still has some real people problems in Corinth. There is strife and lack of repentance. At the beginning of this chapter and the discussion of his visit, the apostle emphasizes the rule they must follow when he comes: “every fact shall be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses.”

Deuteronomy 19:15: “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 18:15-16: “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”

Verse 2: “I have said previously when present the second time and though now being absent I am saying beforehand to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare anyone.”

The apostle is steadfast and standing his ground in this situation. He is addressing these sharp remarks to those: (1) “who have sinned in the past” and (2) “to all the rest” advising “that if I come again I will not spare anyone.”

Paul is going to confront and chasten these citizens of Corinth.

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”

Hebrews 12:11: “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrow-

ful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

As we worship the Lord this morning, let’s sing verse 1 of Fanny Crosby’s hymn, **“Close To Thee”**: *“Thou, my everlasting portion, More than friend or life to me; All along my pilgrim journey, Saviour, let me walk with Thee. Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee.”*

March 9 — The Power of God (2 Corinthians 13:3-4)

2 Corinthians 13:3: *“Since you are seeking a proof of the Christ who is speaking in me, He who is not weak toward you but powerful in you.”*

2 Corinthians 13:4: *“For indeed He was crucified because of weakness yet He is living because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.”*

Verse 3: “Since you are seeking a proof of the Christ who is speaking in me, He who is not weak toward you but powerful in you.”

“Since you are seeking a proof of the Christ who is speaking in me,” is the reason I will not spare anyone.” Paul is going to be consistent in his confrontation and chastening process in Corinth. It is “Christ who is speaking in me.”

Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” In this Galatians passage, Christ is *living* in the apostle. In this passage, Christ is *speaking* in the apostle. Christ is *living* and *speaking* in Paul.

The little word “in” occurs several times in these verses. It teaches us we must invite Him “into our lives,” and it is through this salvation experience Christ begins *living* and *speaking* through us.

But Christ is “powerful in you.” It is this source of power that can cause us to live a triumphant and victorious life. There is no excuse for continued defeat!

Verse 4: “For indeed He was crucified because of weakness yet He is living because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.”

It is “He” and “we” in verse 4: “He was crucified” and “He is living” then “we are also weak” and “we shall live.” We see weakness in the cross and power in the resurrection.

A.W. Tozer says:

“The resurrection and the judgment will demonstrate before all worlds who won and who lost. We can wait.”

2 Corinthians 2:14: “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

Please join me in singing verse 2 of Fanny Crosby’s hymn, **“Close To Thee”**: *“Not for ease or worldly pleasure, Nor for fame my prayer shall be; Gladly will I toil and suffer, Only let me walk with Thee. Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee.”*

March 10 — Examining Yourself (2 Corinthians 13:5-6)

2 Corinthians 13:5: *“Be putting yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; be examining yourselves! Or are you not recognizing this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you are failing the test?”*

2 Corinthians 13:6: *“But I am hoping that you will realize that we ourselves are not failing the test.”*

Verse 5: “Be putting yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; be examining yourselves! Or are you not recognizing this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you are failing the test?”

The apostle gives a double command here:

Command #1: *“Be putting yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith.”*

Command #2: *“Be examining yourselves!”*

The word “yourselves” occurs first in the Greek text because Paul wants it to be their first priority – to first focus on “yourselves” and not on us.

The Corinthians have their guns pointed in the wrong direction. They need to be checking their own charts and spiritual health first, and not constantly focusing on the apostle. **Command #1:** *“Be putting yourselves to the test.”*

Once again, the apostle uses the little word “in.” There must come a time when we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and we invite Him to come into our lives.

Command #2: *“Be examining yourselves.”*

Psalm 139:23-24: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Psalm 26:2-3: *“Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.”*

“Unless indeed you are failing the test?” Boy, this is a question that will make a religious person without a relationship furious.

Verse 6: *“But I am hoping that you will realize that we ourselves are not failing the test.”*

Let’s continue our worship and praise this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Close To Thee”**: *“Lead me through the vale of shadows, Bear me ov’r life’s fitful sea; Then the gate of life eternal May I enter, Lord, with Thee. Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee.”*

March 11 — Doing What Is Right (2 Corinthians 13:7-8)

2 Corinthians 13:7: *“Now we are praying to God that you do no wrong, not that we ourselves may appear approved, but in order that you may be doing what is right, even though we should appear unapproved.”*

2 Corinthians 13:8: *“For we are not able to do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.”*

Verse 7: “Now we are praying to God that you do no wrong, not that we ourselves may appear approved, but in order that you may be doing what is right, even though we should appear unapproved.”

Phillips translates this verse: “I pray God that you may find the right answer to your test.”

Basically, the apostle says we are praying to God that you quit fighting and resisting, and make things right. We don’t want you failing the rest! You must have your vertical

relationship with God made right, and then it will show up in your horizontal relationships with each other.

The issue is not “how we look,” but “doing the right thing.” Eternal destinies are at stake. Doing what is right is critical. This whole matter has nothing to do with us, but with your relationship to Christ and your willingness to do the right thing.

Someone has said:

“Oh, the perils and tragedies of the unexamined life.”

Verse 8: “For we are not able to do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.”

The apostle gives a reason for why he is praying for them: that they would “be doing what is right.” He uses the negative and positive approach. Negatively, “for we are not able to do anything against the truth,” then positively “but only for the truth.”

You are fighting a losing battle when you are fighting against the truth. You can only win by cooperating with the truth.

Let’s worship the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of Robert Robinson’s marvelous hymn, **“Come Thou Fount”**: *“Come, Thou Fount of ev’ry blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above; Praise His name! I’m fixed upon it! Name of God’s redeeming love.”*

March 12 — Building You Up (2 Corinthians 13:9-10)

2 Corinthians 13:9: “For we are rejoicing when we ourselves are weak but when you are strong; for this we also are praying, that you may be made complete.”

2 Corinthians 13:10: “For this reason I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not have to deal sharply in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.”

Verse 9: “For we are rejoicing when we ourselves are weak but when you are strong; for this we also are praying, that you may be made complete.”

The apostle tells us he is “rejoicing when we ourselves are weak.” Paul uses the word “weak” meaning he doesn’t need to use the authority or make issues because everything is heading in the right direction.

“We are rejoicing.” We are glad when things are right.

In the midst of his inadequacy and apparent disabilities, God is at work – the grace of God which enables him to be “more than a conqueror.”

Romans 8:37: “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”

“For we are rejoicing when we ourselves are weak but when you are strong.” When you’ve got it together and you’re going in the right direction, energized by the Spirit of God, then you are strong.

“For this we also are praying, that you may be made complete” – meaning (1) “fitting together,” (2) “outfitting,” (3) “mending of nets” and (4) “setting the bones.” It is the same word that occurs in 1 Thessalonians 3:10: “as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?”

“Made complete” means you are growing, maturing in the faith and manifesting the fruitage of the Spirit.

Verse 10: “For this reason I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not have to deal sharply in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.”

Our motivation for writing is in our prayers: “that you do no wrong” and “that you may be made complete.”

Paul writes “sharply” in hopes that he may not have to act “sharply.” He is asking the Corinthians to get involved in answering the prayers they have prayed for them - by doing what is right and moving toward spiritual maturity.

You can use authority in two ways – the right way or the wrong way. The right way is “for building up,” but in the wrong way “for tearing down.”

Hebrews 10:24: “And let us constantly be giving careful attention to one another for the purpose of stimulating one another to love and good works.”

Let’s join in worship and sing verse 2 of “**Come, Thou Fount**”: *“Hitherto Thy love has blest me; Thou hast bro’t me to this place; And I know Thy hand will bring me Safely home by Thy good grace. Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God; He, to rescue me from danger, Bought me with His precious blood.”*

March 13 — Prescription For Peace (2 Corinthians 13:11-12)

2 Corinthians 13:11: *“Finally, brethren, be rejoicing, be mending your ways, be comforted, be of the same mind, be living in peace. And the God of love and peace shall be with you.”*

2 Corinthians 13:12: *“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”*

Verse 11: “Finally, brethren, be rejoicing, be mending your ways, be comforted, be of the same mind, be living in peace. And the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

The word “finally” tells us the apostle will be bringing his epistle to a conclusion. He addresses them as “brethren.” Paul treats them as though they “passed the test” previously administered back in verse 5.

In this verse, the apostle issues five commands and an accompanying promise. These five commands are a *recipe for revival*:

Command #1: “Be rejoicing.”

Psalm 32:11: “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”

Command #2: “Be mending your ways.”

2 Corinthians 13:9: “For we are rejoicing when we ourselves are weak but when you are strong; for this we also are praying, that you may be made complete.”

Command #3: “Be comforted.”

When we change, the criticism changes to comfort.

Command #4: “Be of the same mind.”

The apostle encourages them to “be harmonious in thought and aim.”

A. W. Tozer says:

To want a thing or feel that we want it and then to turn from it because we see that it is contrary to the will of God is to win a great battle on the way to spiritual-mindedness. To bring our desires to the cross and allow them to be nailed there with Christ is a good and a beautiful thing.

Command #5: “Be living in peace.”

Isaiah 26:3: “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”

When these five commands are fulfilled, “the God of love and peace shall be with you.” The Father keeps company with these commands. “The God of love and peace shall be with you.” His presence shall be real.

Verse 12: “Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

This could be considered **Command #6**. It is an outward expression of the inward work produced by the previous commands. Phillips translates this verse: “A handshake all round, please!”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Come, Thou Fount”**: *“O to grace how great a debtor Daily I’m constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here’s my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.”*

March 14 — Blessing by the Trinity (2 Corinthians 13:13-14)

2 Corinthians 13:13: “All the saints are sending greetings to you.”

2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”

Verse 13: “All the saints are sending greetings to you.”

If the apostle is writing this letter from north in Macedonia, the saints at the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea are sending their greetings to the Corinthians.

Verse 14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”

The Trinity is here in the final verse of our study.

Three things stand out in this final benediction:

1. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Corinthians 8:9: “For you are knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He being rich for your sake became poor, in order that you through His poverty might become rich.”

2. “The love of God.”

1 John 4:8: “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son (that’s grace), that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

3. “The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”

The foundation of fellowship among believers is in the person of the Holy Spirit. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”

This threefold wish he has for them, expressed in this verse, will only become a reality when verse 11 is implemented, and they fulfill the five commands given there.

The question we ask ourselves as we close 2 Corinthians: Are we experiencing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit?

Let’s sing that wonderful song, **“He Touched Me.”** Join me praising and worshipping our Lord as we sing both verses: *“Shackled by a heavy burden, ‘Neath a load of guilt and shame - Then the hand of Jesus touched me, And now I am no longer the same. Since I met this blessed Savior, Since He cleansed and made me whole; I will*

never cease to praise Him - I'll shout it while eternity rolls. He touched me, O, He touched me, And O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know He touched me and made me whole."

March 15 — Giving Thanks & Praying For You (1 Thessalonians 1:1-2)

1 Thessalonians 1:1: "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace."

1 Thessalonians 1:2: "We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;"

Verse 1: "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace."

In this first verse, we get the names of the three men who are involved in the ministry at Thessalonica, the name of the church to whom the letter is addressed and a greeting.

Paul, Silas and Timothy are three wonderful personalities that step before us in this first verse. They are fine examples of men who have come to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

"In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus said in John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." Out of this vital union, there is a security in the storm.

What a tremendous place to be when you are in the midst of persecution and difficulty.

"Grace to you and peace." This is a very familiar greeting the apostle uses in most of his letters. He never reverses the two for man must first experience the grace of God before he can know anything of the peace of God.

Verse 2: "We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;"

In the first part of verse 2, we are talking about *praise* and *petition* in the second part. "We are always giving thanks to God for all of you." Paul was excited about them. Do you have an attitude of gratitude for the saints around you?

Then, the petition: "making mention of you in our prayers." We see Paul at prayer on three different occasions in this letter: (1) here at the beginning, (2) once in the middle and (3) then at the conclusion.

"Giving thanks to God for all of you." It is blessing by encouragement.

You will note he is giving thanks to God concerning all of these Christians in Thessalonica. These young converts had been such a blessing and encouragement to the apostle that he lifts his voice in praise and thanksgiving to God for their progress to this point.

The apostle tells them right at the beginning he is (1) "giving thanks to God" for them and (2) "making mention" of them in prayer.

This morning, I find myself worshipping and praising the Lord with John. W. Peters' hymn, "**Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled my Soul.**" Let's sing together verse 1: "O what a wonderful wonderful day, Day I will never forget; After I'd wandered in darkness away, Jesus my Savior I met. O what a tender, compassionate Friend He met the need of my heart; Shadows dispelling, With joy I am telling, He made all the dark-

ness depart! Heaven came down and glory filled my soul, (filled my soul) When at the cross the Savior made me whole; (made me whole) My sins were washed away And my night was turned to day, Heaven came down and glory filled my soul! (filled my soul)

March 16 — Loved by God (1 Thessalonians 1:3-4)

1 Thessalonians 1:3: “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father;”

1 Thessalonians 1:4: “knowing, brethren loved by God, His choice of you,”

Verse 3: “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father;”

Whereas in verse 2, Paul was “giving thanks” and “making mention,” now in verse 3, he is “bearing in mind” three things:

1. “Your work of faith”
2. “Your labor of love”
3. “Your perseverance of hope”

These are items of praise:

1. Their conversion – the work done by their faith
2. The service – the cost involved that arose out of love
3. Endurance – which is inspired by hope

The “work of faith” points to the *past*. The “labor of love” points to the *present*. The “perseverance of hope” points to the *future*.

The word “constantly” is used in the papyri as “*a man with a hacking cough*,” one which recurs at frequent intervals.

Paul’s prayer life was one of continuous communion with the Father. He is certainly practicing what he is about to preach in chapter 5 when he admonishes the Thessalonians to unceasingly be praying.

The “work of faith”: is Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

The “labor of love” could be better translated “*the toil of love*.” Philippians 2:17: “But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.”

F. B. Meyer says of the “labor of love”:

And how can we ever show our gratitude except by serving the living God?

We are redeemed to serve, not to be owned absolutely. Who can refuse a service so reasonable, fraught with blessedness so transcendent.

The “perseverance of hope.”

Lenski says:

It is full of perseverance (hupomone), remaining under any load the Lord imposes, ever looking with brave endurance to the day of fulfillment promised by the Lord--always holding out as in the Father’s presence.

The verse concludes with the phrase “in the presence of our God and Father.” What a wonderful place for our hope to be! We may rest assured in His word in John 14:3: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself;

that where I am, there you may be also.” For He is in the presence of our God and Father!

In this verse, we see *faith working, love laboring and hope enduring*.

Verse 4: “knowing, brethren loved by God, His choice of you,”

Because of the evidence of a “work of faith,” a “labor of love” and a “perseverance of hope;” the apostle says he now knows with great confidence God’s choice of them. In other words, because of their response to the gospel and these evidences seen, Paul has come to a settled persuasion about them.

“Knowing, brethren loved by God.”

John F. Walvoord says:

“Christians are the elect of God because God chose them before they chose Him.”

The divine choice was manifested to the apostles by the three qualities considered in verse 3. Where these things are found, we know we are in the presence of God’s elect.

Please join me in worship by singing verse 2 of **“Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled my Soul”**: *“Born of the Spirit with life from above Into God’s fam’ly divine, Justified fully thru Calvary’s love, O what a standing is mine! And the transaction so quickly was made When as a sinner I came, Took of the offer Of grace He did proffer He saved me, O praise His dear name! Heaven came down and glory filled my soul, (filled my soul) When at the cross the Savior made me whole; (made me whole) My sins were washed away And my night was turned to day, Heaven came down and glory filled my soul! (filled my soul)”*

March 17 — Power & Joy (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6)

1 Thessalonians 1:5: “because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.”

1 Thessalonians 1:6: “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word while in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,”

Verse 5: “because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.”

Is there a time in our lives when the gospel came to us in the power of the Spirit as the Word was ministered to bring about a real conviction of sin? Then, was there a response on our behalf in accepting Jesus Christ as God’s provision for our sin?

I trust if you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and if you’ve never responded to His marvelous program for your life, you will during this first study in the book of 1 Thessalonians.

Paul uses the positive and the negative approach. Negatively, “Our gospel came to you not only in word, but” positively “also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”

The verse ends: “even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.” We backed up our message by being servants.

Someone has said:

“What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.”

How important it is that our lives reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ and we mani-

fest to others in our daily conduct by our lives that we do know Jesus Christ as our personal Savior.

Verse 6: “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word while in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,”

These Thessalonians “became imitators” of the messengers who shared the gospel, and then of the Master, the Lord Jesus. It was because of their enthusiastic acceptance of the Word of God.

“Having received the word while in much affliction.” The little word “in” describes their external circumstances at the time they received the Word of God.

Erma Bombeck in *The Grass is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank* said:

“It was either Thomas Jefferson--or maybe it was John Wayne--who once said, ‘Your foot will never get well as long as there is a horse standing on it.’”

Sammy Tippit said in *Fire in Your Heart*:

“Nothing fans the flame of the heart like winds of adversity.”

Note also it was received “with joy of the Holy Spirit.” The “joy of the Holy Spirit” is not affected by affliction.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane said in John 15:11: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

Acts 16:25: “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

Externally, they were “in much affliction,” but internally they were experiencing the “joy of the Holy Spirit.”

Please join me in singing verse 3 of **“Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled my Soul”**: “*Now I’ve a hope that will surely endure After the passing of time; I have a future in heaven for sure, There in those mansions sublime. And it’s because of that wonderful day When at the cross I believed; Riches eternal And blessings supernal From His precious hand I received. Heaven came down and glory filled my soul, (filled my soul) When at the cross the Savior made me whole; (made me whole) My sins were washed away And my night was turned to day, Heaven came down and glory filled my soul! (filled my soul)*”

March 18 — Sounding Forth the Word (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8)

1 Thessalonians 1:7: “so that you became an example to all those who are believing in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

1 Thessalonians 1:8: “For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we are not finding it necessary to be saying a thing.”

Verse 7: “so that you became an example to all those who are believing in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

These Thessalonian converts had experienced such wonderful things in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin, they responded to the Word of God enthusiastically. In the midst of suffering, they became imitators of Paul and of the Lord, so much so, that they became examples to all of those in the surrounding areas.

After washing the feet of the disciples in the Upper Room, the Lord Jesus said in John 13:15: “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

Paul tells young Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12: “Let no one look down on your youth

fulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

Verse 8: “For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we are not finding it necessary to be saying a thing.”

The Thessalonian Christians were very much like a sounding board in this situation. They received the word, reinforced it, and sent it on to others. It was almost like an echo, or reverberations. “For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth.”

This is in the present tense. Something that happened in the past is continuing in the present.

In verse 5, we will note the word “came” to them. In verse 6, the word was “received” by them. Now in verse 8, “the word of the Lord has been sounded forth” from them.

Thessalonica was a great commercial and political center. The faith of these Christians in that city was sounding forth in every place.

I love that beautiful prayer that says:

LEAD ME TO SOME SOUL TODAY.
OH, TEACH ME, LORD, JUST WHAT TO SAY.
FRIENDS OF MINE ARE LOST IN SIN
AND CANNOT FIND THEIR WAY.
FEW THERE ARE WHO SEEM TO CARE
AND FEW THERE ARE WHO PRAY.
MELT MY HEART AND FILL MY LIFE.
GIVE ME ONE SOUL TODAY.

I remember as a young child we would sing that wonderful hymn, “Jesus Saves,” many times in the evening services at our church. Let’s worship the Lord this morning singing verse 1: “*We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Spread the tidings all around: Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Bear the news to every land, Climb the mountains and cross the waves; Onward! ’tis our Lord’s command; Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*”

March 19 — Serving the Living & True God (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

1 Thessalonians 1:9: “*For they themselves are reporting about us what kind of an entrance we had to you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serving the living and true God,*”

1 Thessalonians 1:10: “*and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who is rescuing us from the wrath which is coming.*”

Verse 9: “For they themselves are reporting about us what kind of an entrance we had to you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serving the living and true God,”

Paul states the reason why he knows their faith has gone forth and is making an impact in so many places.

You will notice it is a confirmation of the three things we saw in verse 3:

1. the “work of faith,” – “turned to God from idols”
2. the “labor of love” – “serving the living and true God”

3. “perseverance of hope.”

The two key words in this verse pointing us back to verse 3 are “turning” and “serving.”

Verse 10: “and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who is rescuing us from the wrath which is coming.”

The word “waiting” points us back to “your perseverance of hope in verse 3. “Turned” points us to the past, “serving” to the present, and “waiting” to the future.

We have encompassed the entire responsibility of the man of God in these three words:

1. *Turning* to faith
2. *Serving* to love
3. *Waiting* to hope

You will note the final phrase in this section: “Jesus, the one who is rescuing us from the wrath which is coming.”

John 5:24: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

Please join me in singing verse 4 of that wonderful hymn, “**Jesus Saves**”: “*Give the winds a mighty voice, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Let the nations now rejoice, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Shout salvation full and free; Highest hills and deepest caves; This our song of victory, Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*”

March 20 — Courage in Conflict (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2)

1 Thessalonians 2:1: “*For you yourselves are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you, that it has not been without results,*”

1 Thessalonians 2:2: “*but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, even as you are knowing, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.*”

Verse 1: “For you yourselves are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you, that it has not been without results,”

You are going to have a fantastic model for ministry in the apostle Paul and the way he handles the situation in Thessalonica.

The word “you” is in the emphatic position in the Greek text. The word “knowing” occurs four times in these verses. He talks about something they already know in making his defense for his integrity.

“For you yourselves are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you, that it has not been without results.” Their entrance made an impact. Fruit has been born and lives were changed.

Remember Paul was only in Thessalonica for three Sabbath days.

We are going to see (1) his *message* was genuine, (2) his *motives* were pure and (3) his *methods* were without guile.

The Greek word I have translated “without results” can also mean “*empty of content*.” The words Paul spoke were filled with solid content. The Spirit of God used these words to bring conviction to the Thessalonians.

Verse 2: “but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, even as you are knowing, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in

much conflict.”

2 Corinthians 7:5: “For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.”

“But after we had already suffered” - the beating in the public square in Philippi - “and been mistreated.”

Acts 16:37: “But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.’”

“We had the courage in our God.” God was *sustaining* and *strengthening* them as they came to Thessalonica and entered into this new ministry. Courage is displayed when you go another round in the conflict after you have just been clobbered.

Lang says:

“The Lord’s true messengers are for the most part prepared in the school of suffering.”

Maybe God is just telling you that you need the courage to keep on hanging in there. “But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, even as you are knowing, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.”

Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.”

2 Samuel 22:17-20: “He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.”

The meditation for this morning reminded me of that wonderful hymn, “**He Leadeth Me.**” Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1: “*He leadeth me, O blessed thought! O words with heav’nly comfort fraught! Whate’er I do, where’er I be Still ’tis God’s hand that leadeth me. He leadeth me, He leadeth me! By His own hand He leadeth me! His faithful foll’wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me.*”

March 21 — Pleasing God Not Men (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

1 Thessalonians 2:3: “*For our exhortation was not out of error, neither out of impure motive nor in deceit;*”

1 Thessalonians 2:4: “*but even as we have been found worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we are speaking, not as pleasing men but God, who is examining our hearts.*”

Verse 3: “For our exhortation was not out of error, neither out of impure motive nor in deceit;”

“For our exhortation” is a reference to the proclamation of the gospel of God. Paul is focusing on the message he brought to Thessalonica.

In this verse, we get a statement of the negative. His message was:

1. “Not out of error”
2. “Neither out of impure motive”
3. “Nor in deceit”

All of these things would be works of the devil, and Paul is a servant of the living God.

Psalm 119:42: “then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word.”

There are three things Paul has to say about his ministry in Thessalonica:

1. His *message* – “our exhortation was not out of error.”
2. His *motivation* – “neither out of impure motive.”
3. His *method* – “nor in deceit.”

This word “deceit” is translated in many different ways. The idea of the word is “*to catch with bait*” or “*the use of tricks*.”

Verse 4: “but even as we have been found worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we are speaking, not as pleasing men but God, who is examining our hearts.”

The word “but” forms the contrast to the previous verse. We now have the process involved in putting Paul in this position of being entrusted with the gospel. Whereas in verse 3, we are focusing on the message, now in verse 4, we are focusing on the messenger.

The words “found worthy” mean “*to put to the test*,” “*to examine*” or “*to prove by testing*.”

John F. Walvoord says:

“The final test of every life and of every message or sermon is, What does God think about it?”

“But even as we have been found worthy (after testing) by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we are speaking, (negatively) not as pleasing men but (positively) God, who is examining our hearts.”

“Examining our hearts” is a present participle indicating it is a process going on all the time in our lives.

This is the same verb used in the first part of the verse we translated “have been found worthy.” We “have been found worthy” as a result of the test. This process is going on all the time to continue to determine the worthiness.

Ephesians 5:10: “trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

We can say the “heart” involves the *intellect*, the *emotions* and the *will*. Maybe it would be good for each of us as we put aside this meditation for this morning to make our own personal heart check, test ourselves with Psalm 26:2-3 or Psalm 139:23-24.

Please join me in singing verse 3 of “**He Leadeth Me**”: “*Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine, Nor ever murmur nor repine; Content, whatever lot I see, Since 'tis my God that leadeth me. He leadeth me, He leadeth me! By His own hand He leadeth me! His faithful foll'wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me.*”

March 22 — God Is Our Witness (1 Thessalonians 2:5-6)

1 Thessalonians 2:5: “*For neither were we found using flattering words, even as you are knowing, nor in pretense desiring advantage--God is witness--*”

1 Thessalonians 2:6: “*nor seeking glory from men, nor from you nor from others,*”

Verse 5: “For neither were we found using flattering words, even as you are knowing, nor in pretense desiring advantage--God is witness--”

There are three more things Paul wants to make clear:

1. “For neither were we found using flattering words.”

This word “flattering” is only used here in the New Testament. Paul wasn’t trying

to impress them by using words that would flatter them, but he was deeply concerned about transmitting the gospel of Jesus Christ in a language they could understand.

2. “Nor in pretense desiring advantage.”

Paul tells us he was not pretending to be something he was not in order to gain unfair advantage of them. The Bible calls the type of person who is “*playacting*” or “*in pretense*” a “*hypocrite*.” Christianity was never meant to develop your acting ability.

Someone has said:

“The devil rejoices more over one hypocrite than over 99 real sinners.”

“God is witness.” The apostle calls God to witness because He is the only one who looks on the heart.

Job 13:16: “He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite shall not come before him.”

Verse 6: “nor seeking glory from men, nor from you nor from others,”

We have noted in verse 5: (1) he was not using “flattering words,” nor (2) was he coming “in pretense desiring an advantage.” This verse states the third reason the apostle was free.

3. “Nor seeking glory from men, nor from you [from the Thessalonians] nor from others,”

Paul was not guilty of personal positive *prattle*, *pretending* or ministering to his *pride* in the work he was doing. His *message* was genuine, his *motives* were pure and his *methods* were sincere.

I am sure Paul would join us this morning as we worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 4 of “**He Leadeth Me**”: “*And when my task on earth is done, When by Thy grace the vict’ry’s won, E’en death’s cold wave I will not flee, Since God through Jordan leadeth me. He leadeth me, He leadeth me! By His own hand He leadeth me! His faithful foll’wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me.*”

March 23 — We Were Gentle Among You (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

1 Thessalonians 2:7: “*though being able to be in a position of dignity as Christ’s ambassadors. But we became gentle in your midst, even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children.*”

1 Thessalonians 2:8: “*So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.*”

Verse 7: “though being able to be in a position of dignity as Christ’s ambassadors. But we became gentle in your midst, even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out: “Paul shifts emphasis from the preachers to the hearers at this point.”

The apostle and his team had surrendered their rights in order to serve and to give. “But we became gentle,” meaning “*guileless*” and “*good*.” Their gentleness was a manifestation of the Spirit’s presence in their lives. It is illustrated by the next phrase.

“Even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children.” “A nursing mother” is involved in three things: (1) caring, (2) feeding and (3) guarding her child. The word for “tenderly caring” is the picture of a mother bird warming her young.

Matthew 23:37-38: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones

those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!”

Paul says something similar to the Galatians in Galatians 4:19: “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—“

Verse 8: “So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.”

In this verse, the apostle continues to share what it means to be a “nursing mother” who “is tenderly caring for her own children.”

“So feeling kindly for you.” This is the only place where this word is used in the New Testament. It is a term of endearment that has been derived from the word “nursery.”

While doing a Bible conference in a church in Canada, I saw a sign on a nursery door: “They shall not all sleep, but they shall all be changed.”

“So feeling kindly for you” like a nursing mother for her own children, affected our conduct for “we were delighting.” There was great joy in “imparting to you not only the gospel of God [we brought to you] but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.” Rather than being greedy, they came to give.

Hannah Hurnard has said:

“Sacrifice is the ecstasy of giving the best we have to the one we love the most.”

There are two things mentioned which they brought to the Thessalonians:

1. the “Gospel of God” – their original mission
2. their “own souls” – they gave willingly as well

I find myself singing this great hymn often in the morning **“Hiding in Thee.”** Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1: *“O safe to the Rock that is higher than I, My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly; So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine would I be; Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee. Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee.”*

March 24 — Night & Day Laboring (1 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

1 Thessalonians 2:9: “For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”

1 Thessalonians 2:10: “You are witnesses, and [so is] God, as to how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we proved ourselves among you who are believing;”

Verse 9: “For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Genuine love finds expression in giving to people.”

The reason Paul felt it necessary to labor “night and day” was so they “might not be a burden to any” of the saints in Thessalonica.

The purpose for this “laboring” was to “proclaim(ed) to you the gospel of God.” This verse calls to mind their remembrance of the “toil and hardship” involved in order “that we might not be a burden [financially] to any of you” - the purpose - “while we

proclaimed to you [the Thessalonians] the gospel of God.”

Verse 10: “You are witnesses, and [so is] God, as to how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we proved ourselves among you who are believing;”

The word “you” is in the emphatic position as it was in verse 1. “You are witnesses, and [so is] God.” Paul points out three things they have witnessed, “we proved ourselves among you who are believing”:

1. “How devoutly”
2. “Uprightly”
3. “Blamelessly”

First, Paul looks upward and says: “You are witnesses, and [so is] God, as to how devoutly” – in a manner pleasing to God. Then, he looks outward “and uprightly” – conforming to the laws of God and man. They were model citizens and doing what is right. He then looks inward “and blamelessly” – they acted in an irreproachable manner. Their lives can bear close inspection.

Psalms 119:42: “so shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me, for I trust in Thy word.”

Let’s worship the Lord together by singing verse 2 of **“Hiding in Thee”**: *“In the calm of the noontide, in sorrow’s lone hour; In times when temptation casts o’er me its pow’r; In the tempests of life, on its wide, heaving sea, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee. Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee.”*

March 25 — Walking Worthy (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

1 Thessalonians 2:11: “just as you are knowing how to each one of you as a father his own children:”

1 Thessalonians 2:12: “exhorting you, and encouraging [you] and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.”

Verse 11: “just as you are knowing how to each one of you as a father his own children:”

The illustration changes from “a nursing mother” in verse 7 to “a father” in verse 11.

Paul told the Thessalonians no hardship was too great to bear, even if it meant working and laboring long into the night and the early morning hours so as not to burden them unnecessarily, and to have the opportunity of proclaiming the gospel.

There are three things to note in this verse and verse 12. These are things a father should do, and which they did when they were in Thessalonica:

1. Exhorting them
2. Encouraging them
3. Bearing witness

You will notice Paul mentions “each one of you.” This involves much investment working with them on an individual basis.

Dag Hammarskjöld, past Secretary-General of the United Nations, once made a profound, far-reaching statement:

“It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses.”

Verse 12: “exhorting you, and encouraging [you] and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.”

The function of the father is described here in three ways:

1. Exhortation
2. Encouragement
3. Example – by word and deed, “bearing witness”

When it comes to exhorting, we would turn to Hebrews 10:24: “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”

The word “encouraging” is the word used for “*coming alongside*.”

Paul not only was “exhorting” them in their responsibility to God, and “encouraging” them by showing them he had confidence in their ability, but he backed up his exhortation and encouragement with a real live flesh-and-blood example of how a Christian is supposed to live and act in “bearing witness.”

“To the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.” “Calling” is in the present tense, so God’s call never ceases.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise by singing verse 3 of “**Hiding in Thee**”: *“How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe, I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe; How often, when trials like sea billows roll, Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul. Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee.”*

March 26 — You Welcomed God’s Word (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

1 Thessalonians 2:13: “*And because of this we also are constantly giving thanks to God, because when you took to yourselves the word of divine preaching that goes out from us, you welcomed not the word of men, but even as truly it is, God’s Word, which also is operating in you who are believing.*”

Verse 13: “And because of this we also are constantly giving thanks to God, because when you took to yourselves the word of divine preaching that goes out from us, you welcomed not the word of men, but even as truly it is, God’s Word, which also is operating in you who are believing.”

“And because of this we also are constantly giving thanks to God.” It’s a continuous attitude of gratitude.

The reason is: “because when you took to yourselves the word of divine preaching that goes out from us, you welcomed not the word of men, but even as truly it is, God’s Word.”

There are four steps involved:

1. They *heard* the Word of God.
2. They *received* it.
3. They *welcomed* it.
4. It *worked* in their lives.

Harold J. Ockenga says:

As men gain knowledge of the content of the word, they must give assent to it and make a commitment of their lives to the truth. For them it became the living word which convicted, converted, cleansed and changed them.

Paul speaks of their message as a “word of divine preaching that goes out from us.”

Charles Spurgeon says:

“This is the revelation of God, and I will die sooner than I will ever by any action of mine permit a doubt to be cast upon it.”

When the Thessalonians received the message (1) they welcomed it, (2) they were thrilled with it, and (3) they were eager and desirous to have more of it.

“Even as truly it is, God’s Word.”

Acts 17:11: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “The spoken Word of God has an inherent power to change.”

The Word of God working in our lives is doing two things:

1. It is *purifying* us.
2. It is *rearranging our priorities*.

The word “operating” is in the present tense, indicating this is something going on all the time.

When we realize how central and crucial the Word of God is to our spiritual development, we understand why Satan would do everything in his power to hinder us from having daily time for meditation and study in the scriptures.

A great old hymn has become the basis for our worship and praise this morning, “**Know Whom I Have Believed.**” Let’s sing verse 1 together: “*I know not why God’s wondrous grace To me He hath made known, Nor why unworthy, Christ in love, Redeemed me for His own. But ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed Unto Him against that day.’*”

March 27 — You Became Imitators (1 Thessalonians 2:14)

1 Thessalonians 2:14: “*For you became imitators, brethren, of the assemblies of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen, even as also they did from the Jews,*”

Verse 14: “For you became imitators, brethren, of the assemblies of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen, even as also they did from the Jews,”

The reason why Paul and his fellow workers knew the Word of God was working in the lives of the Thessalonians is they followed a pattern. They “became imitators, brethren, of the assemblies of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus.” Furthermore, “you also suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen, even as also they did from the Jews.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Those whose lives are being changed by God often find themselves the objects of criticism and attack by people in whom there is no divine life.”

These Christians the Thessalonians were imitating had two spheres of operation. Their *physical* sphere of operation was in “Judea” and their *spiritual* sphere of operation was “in Christ Jesus.”

The way in which they imitated these Christians in Judea is seen in the next phrase, “because you also suffered the same things at the hands of your own countrymen, even

as also they did from the Jews.” Paul was a chief authority in the business of persecution in the land of Judea. Before he became a Christian, the apostle was one of the most avid persecutors of the Christians there.

F.B. Meyer says:

Who shall estimate the hundred-fold of blessing from every moment of pain? The psalms are crystallized tears, the epistles were in many cases written in prison, the greatest teachers of mankind have learned their most helpful lessons in sorrow’s school, the noblest characters have been forged in a furnace. Acts which will live forever, masterpieces of art and music and literature have originated in ages of storm and tempest and heart-rending agony. So also is it with our earthly discipline. The ripest results are sorrow born.

Let’s continue our worship this morning by singing verse 2 of **“I Know Whom I Have Believed”**: *“I know not how this saving faith To me He did impart, Nor how believing in His Word Wrought peace within my heart. But ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed Unto Him against that day.’”*

March 28 — Filling Up the Measure (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16)

1 Thessalonians 2:15: *“those who also killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and are not pleasing God and are hostile to all men,”*

1 Thessalonians 2:16: *“forbidding us to tell the Gentiles in order that they might be saved; to the end that they might fill up the measure of their sins always. And there came upon them the wrath in the end.”*

Verse 15: “those who also killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and are not pleasing God and are hostile to all men,”

Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the Jews and the things of which they were guilty so they could recognize it was not abnormal to go through the crucible of suffering at this time.

In these two verses, we have five Greek participles. They give us a five-fold indictment of the Jews by presenting us the errors which they have committed.

1. They “killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets.”

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 23:37: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.”

Barclay says:

“No man ever rendered a message inoperative by slaying the messenger who brought it.”

2. They “drove us out.”

Paul is referring to the many places where the Jews opposition caused them to be driven out of the area where they were ministering during his journeys. This was certainly true in Thessalonica.

3. They “are not pleasing God.”

This point would hit home with any godly Jew. Their whole lives were spent in pursuit of wanting to please God by the performance of certain laws and ordinances which were to bring about pleasure to God.

4. They “are hostile to all men.”

They were just concerned about their own rights and privileges, thinking only of themselves.

Verse 16: “forbidding us to tell the Gentiles in order that they might be saved; to the end that they might fill up the measure of their sins always. And there came upon them the wrath in the end.”

This verse has the final participle.

5. These Jews are “forbidding us to tell the Gentiles in order that they might be saved.”

“And there came upon them the wrath in the end.” The certainty of God’s judgment is seen here in conclusion.

In God’s covenant with Abraham, we see in Genesis 15:16: “In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 4 of “**I Know Whom I Have Believed**”: *“I know not what of good or ill May be reserved for me, Of weary ways or golden days, Before His face I see. But ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed Unto Him against that day.’”*

March 29 — We Wanted a Reunion (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18)

1 Thessalonian 2:17: *“But we, brethren, were made orphans by separation from you for a short season--in person, not in heart (outwardly not inwardly)--we made every effort all the more with much desire to see your face.”*

1 Thessalonians 2:18: *“Because of this we desired to come to you, indeed, I Paul, not only once but twice, but Satan hindered us.”*

Verse 17: “But we, brethren, were made orphans by separation from you for a short season--in person, not in heart (outwardly not inwardly)--we made every effort all the more with much desire to see your face.”

The word “but” beginning this verse forms a great contrast to the Jews of whom we have been speaking in the previous verses.

This separation from the Thessalonians was a very painful one. It was only “in person.” Paul says he left his heart with them. I am sure the apostle sang often, “I left my heart in Thessalonica.”

There is a positive and a negative here. Positively, “But we, brethren, were made orphans by separation from you for a short season--in person,” then negatively “not in heart.” The word “orphans” is only used here in the New Testament. It also means “*to be bereaved of a child.*”

“We made every effort all the more with much desire to see your face.” Evidently, Paul, Silas and Timothy endeavored to return to the city of Thessalonica, and were not able to do so.

Verse 18: “Because of this we desired to come to you, indeed, I Paul, not only once but twice, but Satan hindered us.”

In this verse, we recognize Satan is in the hindering business: (1) hindering us from becoming Christians and (2) hindering us from growing in Christ.

Galatians 5:7: “You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?”

The word “hindered” is a military word for “*breaking up the road to construct bridges.*”

Horatius Bonar says it well:

With many of us the Christian life has not gone on to maturity. “Ye did run well. Who did hinder you?” It has been a work well begun but left unfinished. A battle boldly entered on but only half fought out. A book with but the preface written but no more. Is not thus Christ dishonored?

I love the way Paul wraps up the book of Romans in Romans 16:20: “And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

Satan’s strategy is summarized in these three points:

1. He *hinders* us
2. He *hurts* us
3. He *hurries* us

Isobel Kuhn, in her book *Ascent to the Tribes*, verifies this fact when she says:

SO ALL THINGS ARE WORKING FOR THE LORD’S BELOVED.
SOME THINGS MIGHT BE HARMFUL IF ALONE THEY STOOD.
SOME MIGHT SEEM TO HINDER, SOME MIGHT DRAW US BACKWARD;
BUT THEY WORK TOGETHER AND THEY WORK FOR GOOD.

ALL THE THWARTED LONGINGS, ALL THE STERN DENIALS,
ALL THE CONTRADICTIONS, HARD TO UNDERSTAND,
AND THE FORCE THAT HOLDS THEM, SPEEDS THEM AND RETARDS
THEM,
STOPS AND STARTS AND GUIDES THEM, IS OUR FATHER’S HAND.

1 John 4:4: “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”

Please join me in singing verse 5 of “**I Know Whom I Have Believed**”: “*I know not when my Lord may come, At night or noonday fair; Nor if I walk the vale with Him, Or ‘meet Him in the air.’ But ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed Unto Him against that day.’*”

March 30 — You Are Our Glory & Joy (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)

1 Thessalonians 2:19: “*For what is our hope or joy or crown of glorying? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?*”

1 Thessalonians 2:20: “*For you are our glory and joy.*”

Verse 19: “For what is our hope or joy or crown of glorying? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”

Paul raises the question: “For what is our hope or joy or crown of glorying?” Then he proceeds to answer the question with another question: “Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”

Dwight L. Moody said:

“The only monument I want is a two-legged one. One that I led to Jesus Christ.”

These Thessalonians were *everything* that was worth *anything* to Paul.

When we focus on “hope,” we focus on Galatians 4:19: “My children, with whom I

am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.”

When we focus on “joy,” we can say, “You light up my life.” 3 John 4: “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

Verse 20: “For you are our glory and joy.”

Paul answers his questions emphatically they are his “glory and joy.” The great glory and joy of the Savior is going to be the simple fact that sinful, fallen man, who has been redeemed, will enjoy the pleasures of glory with Him forevermore.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “When life is over and we stand in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming, you Thessalonians will be our source of glory and joy. You mean that much to us.”

Please join me in worship as we sing together a very familiar song, “**Be Still, My Soul.**” Let’s sing verse 1: *“Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side; Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. Leave to thy God to order and provide; In ev’ry change He faithful will remain. Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend Thro’ thorny ways leads to a joyful end.”*

March 31 — No Longer Able to Bear It (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

1 Thessalonians 3:1: “Wherefore no longer being able to bear it, we considered it good to be left behind in Athens alone;”

1 Thessalonians 3:2: “and we sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker of God (God’s helper) in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you concerning your faith;”

Verse 1: “Wherefore no longer being able to bear it, we considered it good to be left behind in Athens alone;”

Wherefore” takes us back to three things:

1. In light of our desire to see you.
2. In view of the hindrances we experienced on two previous attempts.
3. We did the next best thing, we sent Timothy.

“Wherefore no longer being able to bear it.” This phrase helps us understand Paul’s love and compassion runs deep. There are two things that stand out:

1. the *intensity* of his feelings
2. the *deep love* he has for the Thessalonians even though he has only been with them a brief time

This verse does nothing more than describes love in action - love no longer content to be separated without knowledge of the one that is loved.

Verse 2: “and we sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker of God (God’s helper) in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you concerning your faith;”

Timothy is described in two ways:

1. “Our brother” – the result of him being born again by the Spirit into God’s family
2. “Fellow Worker of God” – which speaks of his unselfish acts of service.

I love how Paul describes Timothy in Philippians 2:19-23: “But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of

the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me.”

The apostle’s mission for the Thessalonians has a two-fold purpose regarding their faith:

1. “To strengthen”
2. “Encourage”

Timothy, with the sensitivity of the Spirit, comes “to strengthen” those who are beaten down and to “encourage” by lifting the spirits of those who are suffering.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “To “strengthen” would be to establish them firm and solid in the faith, and to “encourage” them would be to provide what they needed to fight the good fight of faith.”

Much of the ministry was grounding new converts in the faith.

Timothy was a man who was willing to go anywhere at any cost to do anything for the glory of God.

Acts 14:22: “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise singing verse 2 of that wonderful hymn, “**Be Still, My Soul**”: *“Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake To guide the future as He has the past. Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake; All now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.”*

APRIL

April 1 — Destined to Suffer (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)

1 Thessalonians 3:3: “so that no one might be deceived in these afflictions; for you yourselves are knowing that we are destined for this.”

1 Thessalonians 3:4: “For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were to be afflicted; even as also it came to pass, and you are knowing.”

Verse 3: “so that no one might be deceived in these afflictions; for you yourselves are knowing that we are destined for this.”

This is the goal for Timothy’s mission: “so that no one might be deceived in these afflictions.”

The word “*deceived*” is the word “*unsettled*.” It is used describing a dog wagging its tail and points to a picture of the Thessalonians going back and forth because of their persecutions. The word can also mean “*fawn upon*” or “*flatter*.” It only occurs here. It would be better to translate it “*to move*,” or “*disturb*,” or “*to agitate*”: “so that no one might be [shaken or disturbed.]”

In other words, so no one might pull on your chain or rattle your cage by the circumstances you are going through.

“So that no one might be deceived in these afflictions.” You will note it is in not by

Philippians 1:29: “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

1 Peter 1: 6-7: “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being

more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Satan is the master at deceit. Paul’s main concern is the Thessalonians will not recognize and accept the idea that living the Christian life is not just a bed of roses, but we are to expect afflictions and problems along the way. These are simply tools for spiritual growth and Christlikeness.

We raise the question this morning: How is it possible to be deceived in the midst of affliction? There are four possible misreadings that can take place:

1. Assuming direction has been missed or is being changed as a result of affliction.
2. Doubting God’s control and goodness in the midst of affliction.
3. Assuming God’s displeasure toward us in the midst of affliction.
4. Receiving discipline from the heavy hand of God upon us.

“So that no one might be deceived in these afflictions; for you yourselves are knowing that we are destined for this.” Trials are the Christian’s appointment and destiny. They are tools for spiritual growth.

2 Timothy 3:12: “And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Romans 8:38-39: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Charles Ryrie says:

“Affliction is the normal lot of the Christian and should not be regarded as something unusual or strange. We are appointed to such.”

Horne says:

“Tribulation is the divinely appointed lot of God’s children. It is inevitable.

Through it God teaches us those many lessons necessary to our spiritual growth.”

Verse 4: “For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were to be afflicted; even as also it came to pass, and you are knowing.”

In verse 3, the apostle says they are destined for this affliction and have been taught to expect it. Now in this verse, he gives the reason they should not be surprised or deceived by this coming to pass: they were told in advance to expect adversity and it “came to pass.”

Someone has said:

“Claim Him, don’t blame Him.”

It is a truth of life that trials and suffering come to the man and the woman God wants to greatly use. Paul reminds the Thessalonians they were foretold to expect these trials. Basically, he is stating they are normal. Nothing has gone wrong.

“If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

The poet put it this way:

I THANK GOD FOR THE BITTER THINGS,
THEY’VE BEEN A FRIEND TO GRACE.
THEY’VE DRIVEN ME FROM THE PATHS OF EASE
TO STORM THE SECRET PLACE.

I THANK HIM FOR THE FRIENDS WHO FAILED
TO FILL MY HEART'S DEEP NEED.
THEY'VE DRIVEN ME TO THE SAVIOR'S FEET
UPON HIS LOVE TO FEED.

I'M GRATEFUL, TOO, THROUGH ALL LIFE'S WAY
NO ONE COULD SATISFY;
AND SO I FOUND IN GOD ALONE
MY RICH, MY FULL SUPPLY.

Our response to this passage should be as the words of this hymn. Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **"Be Still, My Soul"**: *"Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on When we shall be forever with the Lord, When disappointment, grief and fear are gone, Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored. Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past, All safe and blessed we shall meet at last."*

April 2 — God Is In Control (1 Thessalonians 3:5)

1 Thessalonians 3:5: *"Because of this I also, when I could not bear it any longer, sent [him] that I might come to know your faith, lest perchance the one who is tempting tempted you, and our work should be in vain."*

Verse 5: "Because of this I also, when I could not bear it any longer, sent [him] that I might come to know your faith, lest perchance the one who is tempting tempted you, and our work should be in vain."

In this verse, we are resuming what was said in verse 1: "Wherefore no longer being able to bear it, we considered it good to be left behind in Athens alone;"

"Because of this I also, when I could not bear it any longer, sent [him, Timothy] that I might come to know your faith."

Romans 4:20-21: "yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

The reason Paul was concerned about their faith: "lest perchance the one who is tempting tempted you, and our work should be in vain." This is certainly one of the hazards of evangelism. The tempter can pluck away the seed that has been sown and thus cause the ministry to be of no avail, to be fruitless, or to be empty.

In chapter 2:18, we notice it was Satan who was "hindering" the men as they endeavored to go to Thessalonica. In verse 3, he is the one who is doing the "deceiving" and in this verse, he is seen as the one who is "tempting."

He is tempting them as Christians in the midst of adversity and persecution to get them to go back on their faith.

Hebrews 6:1: "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity."

Paul was concerned Satan might snatch away the seed before it had a chance to take root. The apostle was concerned his "labor" might have been "in vain," not that their faith had been in vain.

When we see "the one who is tempting tempted you," we ask ourselves how he did it. Satan uses:

1. the world and its allurements

2. the flesh within us wanting our own way
3. often he himself attacks us on the spiritual plane to get us entangled with messed up priorities, not spending any time with the Lord, attacking the relationship

When Satan does attack, the four D's become a reality:

1. Discouragement
2. Depression
3. Disobedience
4. Defeat

1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

I have chosen a hymn this morning that was written for the Stamps-Baxter quartet. It has always been such a joy to sing **"Farther Along."** Please join me in singing verse 1: *"Tempted and tried will oft' me to wonder Why it should be thus all the day long; While there are others living about us, Never molested, though in the wrong. Farther along we'll know more about it. Farther along we'll understand why; Cheer up my brother live in the sunshine We'll understand it all by and by."*

April 3 — Focus on the Positive (1 Thessalonians 3:6)

1 Thessalonians 3:6: *"But now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you,"*

Verse 6: "But now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you,"

As we meditate on this passage, we must ask ourselves: Are we an encouragement to others in our walk with the Lord?

"But now Timothy" has come with "good news." His "good news" comes in three areas:

1. Their "faith" which is standing strong
2. Their "love" for the ministers
3. Their "kindly remembrance of us" – fond memories of the time we were with them.

In the latter part of this verse, we read: "and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you."

Everything seemed so dark and gloomy, but how invigorating is the report which comes. What an encouragement it must have been!

Genesis 45:27: "But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived."

The Spirit of God prompts us to focus on the positive and eliminate the negative.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 4 of **"Farther Along"**: *"When we see Jesus coming in glory; When He comes from His home in the sky; Then we*

shall meet Him in that bright mansion. We'll understand it all by and by. Farther along we'll know more about it. Farther along we'll understand why; Cheer up my brother live in the sunshine We'll understand it all by and by."

April 4 — We Were Encouraged (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8)

1 Thessalonians 3:7: "because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;"

1 Thessalonians 3:8: "because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord."

Verse 7: "because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;"

"We were encouraged" to keep hanging in there by this good report.

In the midst of their calamities and afflictions, the strong faith of these new converts had really been an encouragement and help to them. It is not difficult to imagine the opposite feelings on the part of the apostle and his team when they receive the report of the problems in the Galatian churches.

In studying this verse, it is good to focus on the prepositions: "because of this we were encouraged, brethren" (1) "about you," (2) "in all our calamities and afflictions," and (3) "through your faith."

2 Corinthians 7:5: "For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within."

Are we an encouragement to others in our walk with the Lord?

We can be an encouragement in our *words* and our *works*. How can we be an encouragement? There are five ways:

1. Becoming a *Servant* and giving yourself unselfishly to others.
2. Making *Sacrifices* for the sake and the comfort of others.
3. Being *Steadfast*.

1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

4. By *Studying*.

2 Timothy 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

5. *Sharing* your struggles.

When we are (1) consistent in our walk with the Lord, (2) pursuing the disciplines of Bible study, prayer and scripture memory, (3) sharing our faith and (4) living a Christ-like life in faithfulness and perseverance; we encourage others to continue on in their walk with the Lord.

There are two things involved in doing all of these things:

1. An attitude of gratitude
2. Affirmation

Verse 8: "because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord."

Paul has been on a roll when it comes to stirring up calamities and afflictions in response to his preaching and teaching ministry. It lifts his spirits and gives him great encouragement of heart when he realizes he is not alone. These Thessalonian believers have responded and are standing firm in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 16:13: “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

Ephesians 6:10-11: “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

Paul expresses to the Thessalonians how he and his team really enjoy life when they know these Christians are standing firm in the Lord.

It strengthens you to withstand the storms of life when you realize in the midst of those storms you are not alone.

Psalms 112:7-8: “He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.”

This morning for our worship, I have chosen one of Bill and Gloria Gaither’s great songs, **“Because He Lives.”** Let’s sing verse 1 together: *“God sent His Son - they called Him Jesus; He came to love, heal and forgive. He lived and died to buy my pardon; An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow; Because He lives, All fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future And life is worth the living just because He lives.”*

April 5 — Complete What is Lacking in Your Faith (1 Thessalonians 3:9-10)

1 Thessalonians 3:9: *“For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you for all the joy with which we are rejoicing on account of you in the presence of our God,”*

1 Thessalonians 3:10: *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?”*

Verse 9: “For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you for all the joy with which we are rejoicing on account of you in the presence of our God,”

“For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you.” Paul is experiencing joy at this moment over the good report from Timothy. He recognizes it is a direct result of God being at work in them.

Even in the midst of afflictions and calamities, there can be an overwhelming joy flooding from our hearts produced by the Spirit of God within us. It is God’s work that has gone on in the lives of the Thessalonians. As a result, this work has brought joy to His servants when they were made aware.

The joy which they are experiencing now is the joy of answered prayer for the Thessalonians.

Verse 10: *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?”*

There are two things the apostle is praying for:

1. that he might “see [their] face”
2. “complete what is lacking in [their] faith”

If we are having spiritual problems, it is probably due to the need for some adjustment in the relationship. We might have the need to grow in our understanding of the relationship in specific areas, or perhaps, it is some blind spot that is keeping us from the blessing the Lord would like to shower upon us.

Paul spends the rest of this epistle dealing with some of these areas of need.

“Night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face.” From Paul’s perspective, it was necessary for him to be on location to accomplish this task in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

However, Paul received a “no” on this petition. One thing we must always remember: God is sovereign. He has the big picture, and He certainly knows how to deploy His servants as they allow Him to work in their lives.

Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Can you imagine how God’s greater purpose has blessed us even in the 21st century and countless centuries that have preceded us? Paul was denied entrance back to Thessalonica. Out of that denial, two wonderful epistles have been among the 66 books of the inspired Word of God.

There are two words we want to focus on in this last phrase: “complete what is lacking in your faith.” They are “complete” and “lacking.” The word Paul uses for “complete” is very interesting. It is used of “*reconciling factions*,” medically it was used for “*setting of bones*.” It was used in the military for “*supply of provisions*,” and in the fishing industry, it was used for the “*mending of nets*.”

Paul is most likely using the military sense of “*supply of provisions*.” His purpose for coming to Thessalonica is to “*outfit*” them for their conflict and journey in the Christian life. There were a lot of loose ends that had been left unattended by their quick departure from Thessalonica.

At this point, what is lacking in your faith?

What was “lacking” with the Thessalonians involves (1) rooting and (2) fruiting.

Rooting: Colossians 2:6-7: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.”

Fruiting: Jeremiah 17:7-8: “But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; Its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 and 3 of “**Because He Lives**”: *“How sweet to hold a newborn baby And feel the pride and joy he gives; But greater still the calm assurance: This child can face uncertain days because He lives. And then one day I’ll cross the river; I’ll fight life’s final war with pain. And then, as death gives way to vict’ry, I’ll see the lights of glory - and I’ll know He reigns. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow; Because He lives, All fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future And life is worth the living just because He lives.”*

April 6 — God’s Guidance (1 Thessalonians 3:11)

1 Thessalonians 3:11: “*Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;*”

Verse 11: “Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;”

In these next three mornings, we are going to meditate on one verse each morning. This is Paul’s prayer in the middle of the epistle. Let’s ask ourselves some questions as we begin to study the apostle’s prayer:

1. How much do we really pray?
2. How consistent are we in prayer?
3. How much do we really believe God to undertake on our behalf?
4. How much time have we spent in prayer during our lifetime?

The little word “may” occurs three times, once in each of the three verses and in these three verses, we have three petitions.

“Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you.”

Paul recognizes God’s sovereignty, and He is the One who guides and directs in life. He is the One who leads the way. The secret to real fulfillment and effective praying is found in surrendering to His sovereignty.

In this first request, Paul is asking God to clear the way so they can go and be with the Thessalonians.

Psalm 32:8: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”

Isaiah 30:21: “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”

This is a prayer God answers “no.” When God answers our prayer with a “no,” the “no” always obligates God to reveal a better plan.

Ruth Myers tells of her husband suffering from cancer:

Even in his suffering, Dean would say, “Remember, Ruth, God has our best interest at heart.” And God comforted us with a quotation someone sent us: “God is too wise to ever make a mistake and too loving to ever do anything unkind.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verse 1 of “**Sweet Hour of Prayer**”: *“Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer; That calls me from a world of care, And bids me at my Father’s throne Make all my wants and wishes known; In seasons of distress and grief, My soul has often found relief, And oft escaped the tempter’s snare, By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.”*

April 7 — A Work in Progress (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

1 Thessalonians 3:12: “*and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you;*”

Verse 12: “and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you;”

The first petition in verse 11 was about the direction of the apostle and his team to Thessalonica. The second petition regards the love of the Thessalonian believers. The key to ministry is love. This could be translated: “But as for you, may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all men.”

Paul’s prayer is (1) they might “increase,” (2) they might “abound in love,” and (3) this love would not just be limited to one another, but it might be “for all men.”

The apostle will have more to say about “love” in chapter 4, but here he prays they will “increase in love” and “abound in love.” Paul is talking about the kind of “love” that isn’t just a frothy, surface-type of love, but it is a love produced by the Spirit of God in our hearts.

This is the reason he prays “may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love.”

Jesus made this a priority and addressed this issue before Calvary in John 13:34-

35: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus addressing the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:4 said: “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

The love Paul is talking about is a fruitage of the Spirit and it is produced by communion with our Lord. This love has been modeled for them in the apostle Paul and his team. The last phrase of the verse says: “just as we also do for you.”

Barbara Johnson in *Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life* says:

On the back of the main door to the Joy Room is a huge sign with my favorite motto: “WHATEVER, LORD!” Beneath the sign sits a doll that looks like a little old lady, and she asks, “Dear God, if I give all my love away, can I have a refill?”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**Sweet Hour of Prayer**”: “*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, Thy wings shall my petition bear, To Him whose truth and faithfulness Engage the waiting soul to bless; And since He bids me seek His face, Believe His Word and trust His grace, I’ll cast on Him my ev’ry care, And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.*”

April 8 — A Work Finished (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

1 Thessalonians 3:13: “*so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.*”

Verse 13: “so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

The first two petitions regarded *direction* and *love*. This third petition is about *holiness*. “So that” speaks of the result of their increasing and abounding in love for one another and for all.

“So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness.” Again, we have the little word “may” for the third time, indicating his recognition of the Father’s sovereignty.

The word for “establish” is the word “sterizo.” We get our word “steroids” from it. The Thessalonians needed strengthening by God in their inner being.

“Holiness” here means “*to be separated to God in their hearts and habits.*”

The result will be: “your hearts” will be established “blameless in holiness.” The more you love, the more you are set apart.

“So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

What a blessed event that is going to be!

John F. Walvoord says:

The coming of the Lord is mentioned again in verse 13. In Thessalonians every chapter deals with the Lord’s coming. The last verse of chapter 1 dealt with waiting for the Lord’s return. Chapter 2 spoke of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming in verse 19. The last verse of chapter 3 deals once again with the coming of the Lord.

1 John 3:2-3: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we

shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

The big question we ask ourselves after these last three mornings is: How is our prayer life?

Please join me in singing verse 3 of “**Sweet Hour of Prayer**”: “*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, May I thy consolation share, Till, from Mount Pisgah’s lofty height, I view my home and take my flight: This robe of flesh I’ll drop, and rise To seize the everlasting prize; And shout, while passing through the air, ‘Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!’*”

April 9 — Keep Walking & Pleasing God (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

1 Thessalonians 4:1: “*Finally therefore, brethren, we are asking and exhorting you in the Lord Jesus, in order that, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God (just as also you are walking), in order that you may abound more and more.*”

Verse 1: “Finally therefore, brethren, we are asking and exhorting you in the Lord Jesus, in order that, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God (just as also you are walking), in order that you may abound more and more.”

Having made the statement he is really joyful over the faith of the Thessalonians and he has a concern to complete what is lacking in their faith, Paul now enters into dealing with some very practical areas as far as their lives are concerned.

The apostle had just completed his prayer for them, and now enters upon this instruction in chapters 4 and 5.

Asking focuses on *favor*. *Exhortation* focuses on *responsibility*.

Hogg and Vine say:

“The only way to holiness is along the path of obedience to the revealed will of God.”

“Finally therefore, brethren, we are asking and exhorting you in the Lord Jesus, in order that, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.” “Ought to walk” focuses on their conduct and “to please God” focuses on their concern.

Pleasing God is our top priority.

Someone has wisely said:

“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

“To walk” focuses on *conduct*, and “to please” focuses on *commendation*.

“Just as also you are walking.” Then we have the exhortation: “in order that you may abound more and more.”

The Christian life was not meant to be a *standstill* or *arrived experience*. There is no finality to it. It is always going up or down.

Paul is saying they had received instructions as to how they “ought to walk and to please God.” They were doing this currently, but his encouragement was they would “abound more and more” in that direction.

The apostle was never content with past spiritual achievement.

E. M. Thomas in his book, *If I Perish, I Perish*, says:

I am convinced that there are tens of thousands of young people who profess to be Christians but whose conduct within the evangelical context conforms to

certain prescribed patterns that make them acceptable within the society to which they adhere, not because they have any deep spiritual conviction in the matter but simply because they have been evangelically house-trained.

Yes, we are operating under the eye of God, and what a wonderful thrill to face the end of life and hear those words: "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joys I have prepared for thee."

I find myself worshipping and singing already this morning that very familiar hymn, "**Higher Ground.**" Please join me in singing verse 1: "*I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day; Still praying as I'm onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground." Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven's tableland, A higher plane that I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*"

April 10 — Flee Fornication (1 Thessalonians 4:2-3)

1 Thessalonians 4:2: "*For you are knowing what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.*"

1 Thessalonians 4:3: "*For this is the will of God, your being set apart; that you should keep yourselves away from fornication;*"

Verse 2: "For you are knowing what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus."

Paul reminds them what they are "knowing." He states the reason why they can "abound more and more" because: they "are knowing what instructions" they were given "through the Lord Jesus," while Paul was there in ministry.

The word "instructions" is a military word.

In chapter 3, we noted the apostle had taught them with regard to suffering and affliction in the Christian life. Now in chapter 4, we see he spent some time talking with them about their Christian walk and testimony.

The instructions which had been given to the Thessalonians were not instructions which were made up by man, but they were "instructions...through the Lord Jesus." Paul emphasizes the instructions weren't from them, but from Jesus.

Verse 3: "For this is the will of God, your being set apart; that you should keep yourselves away from fornication;"

"The will of God" takes us back to verse 1 where we read: "just as you received from us how you ought to walk and [by so doing] to please God."

Walking according to "the will of God" will certainly please Him.

Romans 12:1-2: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

The bottom line is it is God's will that His people be holy.

"For this is the will of God, your being set apart."

Charles Ryrie says:

God's will includes sanctification. And since sanctification includes holiness in body as well as spirit, fornication nullifies it. To sanctify means to set apart for God or to be holy.

The little word “that” occurs three times in these next few verses.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “These three ‘that’s’ are there to produce greater holiness.”

Phrase #1: “That you should keep yourselves away from fornication.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Avoid and abstain from any and every form of sexual practice that lies outside the circle of God’s revealed will.”

We must be sick to condone practices that are less than the will of God.

There are four things that converge to make us vulnerable to sexual temptation:

1. The mind

Satan is in the mind-blinding business.

2. Poor judgment

Proverbs 6:32: “But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.”

It was Mark Twain who said:

“Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment.”

A good friend said:

“Good judgment is what you have right after you needed it.”

3. Compromise

Proverbs 6:25: “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.”

4. Focus on self – what I need and what I want is more important than my fidelity and faithfulness to a commitment.

It is better to *flee* than *fight* because you will not win this battle.

“For it is the will of God, [for you to be] set apart.” How do you take steps to implement that in your life:

1. Honesty

2. Accountability

3. Dependence

4. Obedience

5. A teachable spirit

Charles Colson prays:

Lord, help me to shut out of my life anything that would make my mind and heart course – television programs, magazines and films that smear vulgarity across the screen and call it art. Strengthen me so that they don’t lead me away from the God of beauty and purity, and leave me unfit to associate with your children.

Please join me in praise and worship as we continue singing that wonderful hymn, **“Higher Ground.”** This morning let’s sing verse 2: *“My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay; Tho’ some may dwell where these abound, My prayer, my aim, is higher ground. Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven’s tableland, A higher plane that I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”*

April 11 — Take a Wife or Gain Control (1 Thessalonians 4:4-5)

1 Thessalonians 4:4: *“that each one of you should know that he is to take a wife*

for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor,”

1 Thessalonians 4:5: “*not in lustful passion, even as also the Gentiles who do not know God;*”

Verse 4: “that each one of you should know that he is to take a wife for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor,”

In this verse, we find the second “that” phrase, Phrase #2. Phrase #1 was in verse 3: “that you should keep yourselves away from fornication.” Now:

Phrase #2: “**That each one of you should know that he is to take a wife for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor.**”

Sexual desire can be controlled by the Christian through God’s power.

The will of God provides two options with regard to this matter of sexual purity:

1. Marriage
2. Self-control

The control over the appetites of the body is a constant spiritual struggle. We have to deal with: (1) anger, (2) diet, (3) exercise, (4) the tongue and (5) sexual desires, just to name a few.

1 Corinthians 9:27: “but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

Verse 5: “not in lustful passion, even as also the Gentiles who do not know God;”

There is a difference in the way the saved and unsaved approach these matters of sex.

Paul states from the negative: “not in lustful passion, even as also the Gentiles who do not know God.” He points out that entering into marriage should not be satisfying animal appetites, but cultivation of real love that only God can give to two people.

Let’s continue our worship and praise by singing verse 3 of “**Higher Ground**”: “*I want to live above the world, Tho’ Satan’s darts at me are hurled; For faith has caught the joyful sound, The song of saints on higher ground. Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven’s tableland, A higher plane that I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*”

April 12 — There are Consequences for Disobedience (1 Thessalonians 4:6)

1 Thessalonians 4:6: “*that no one be overstepping and taking advantage of his brother in this matter because the Lord is the one who punishes concerning all these things, even as we also told you before and warned you.*”

Verse 6: “that no one be overstepping and taking advantage of his brother in this matter because the Lord is the one who punishes concerning all these things, even as we also told you before and warned you.”

In this verse, we find the third and final “that” phrase. Back in verse 3, we learned it is “the will of God” our “being set apart.”

Phrase #1: “**That you should keep yourselves away from fornication.**”

Phrase #2: “**That each one of you should know that he is to take a wife for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor.**”

Phrase #3: “**That no one be overstepping and taking advantage of his brother in this matter.**”

The three “that” phrases we have considered are followed by three reasons why those things are true:

1. God is the avenger concerning these things – in verse 6.
2. He called us to be holy – in verse 7.
3. The man who rejects this becomes a personal opponent of God – in verse 8.

Reason #1: “**The Lord is the one who punishes concerning all these things, even as we also told you before and warned you.**”

Ecclesiastes 11:9: “Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.”

God’s plan for a Christian includes purifying his life. Sexual immorality frustrates the purpose of God’s call. A holy life demonstrates God’s supernatural power at work overcoming what is natural and it glorifies God.

This morning, please join me in praise and worship as we sing together verse 4 of “**Higher Ground**”: *“I want to scale the utmost height And catch a gleam of glory bright; But still I’ll pray till Heav’n I’ve found, “Lord, lead me on to higher ground. Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on Heaven’s tableland, A higher plane that I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”*

April 13 — God Called Us to Holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8)

1 Thessalonians 4:7: “For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.”

1 Thessalonians 4:8: “Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.”

Verse 7: “For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.”

Paul makes a negative and a positive statement. “For God called us” negatively “not for uncleanness, but” positively “in holiness.”

We have looked at Reason #1: “The Lord is the one who punishes concerning all these things, even as we also told you before and warned you.” God is the avenger. Here we have Reason #2.

Reason #2: “**For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.**”

In this verse, Paul states the reason why: it is the will of God to keep ourselves clean in these matters.

This is the fourth time “holiness” occurs in these eight verses.

Verse 8: “Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.”

Our study begins and ends with “therefore.” “Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.”

John 12:48: “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”

We have seen three reasons why we need to be obedient:

1. In verse 6: God is the avenger concerning these things.
2. In verse 7: He has called us to be holy.
3. In verse 8: The man who rejects this becomes a personal opponent of God.

This verse is in the present tense.

When we are stubborn, sin, and fail; we grieve and quench the Spirit of God. The exhortation is to avoid sexual immorality. The enablement is the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:20: “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us”

Haddon W. Robinson in *The Solid Rock Construction Company* said:

A cartoon in the morning newspaper pictures a psychologist listening to a patient: “Mr. Figby,” the psychologist finally says, “I think I can explain your feelings of guilt. You’re guilty!”

How easy it is to conform and fail to confront the issue of sin in our lives. This is a serious matter. The Lord never stops loving you. He is gracious and waiting patiently for each of us to be specific about sin in our lives.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss in her book, *Surrender The Heart God Controls*, says:

Take my heart, it is Thine own, it shall be Thy royal throne.

Am I allowing Christ to reign and rule over my affections, my emotions, and my responses? Am I allowing anyone or anything other than Christ to control my emotions and responses? Are my desires, appetites, and longings under Christ’s control? Am I in bondage to any earthly, fleshly, or sinful desires or appetites? Am I indulging or making provision for my fleshly desires (Romans 13:14)? Do I trust God’s right to rule over the circumstances of my life?

The big question that comes to mind at this point is: How do we survive? Here are four suggestions:

1. Stay in the Word – Meditating and Memorizing.
2. Accountability – find as many friends as you can and be accountable to them in every area of your life.
3. Focus on Servanthood – if you are single, focus on the Savior. If you are married, focus on the Savior and your wife or husband.
4. Stay away from Situations that could lead to Temptation and Compromise.

Listen to the Psalmist in Psalms 19:8: “The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, **“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”**: *“O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There’s a light for a look at the Savior; And life more abundant and free! Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace.”*

April 14 — Taught by God (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)

1 Thessalonians 4:9: *“Now concerning brotherly love, you are not having need that I should be writing to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;”*

1 Thessalonians 4:10: *“for indeed, you are doing the same for all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia. But we are exhorting you, brethren, to excel more and more [in this love],”*

Verse 9: “Now concerning brotherly love, you are not having need that I should be writing to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;”

Charles Ryrie says:

“Christianity should always be distinguished by purity and love. This latter is the next thing in which Paul asks the Thessalonians to abound.”

When it comes to the subject of brotherly love, Paul says: “you are not having need that I should be writing to you,” and the reason is “for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.”

1 John 3:18: “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

“For you yourselves are taught by God.” This is the only place in the New Testament where this phrase occurs: “taught by God.” To be “taught by God” is to be one who is the recipient of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us truth, and the fruitage of His presence in our lives is love.

True love flows from the streams of humility.

Verse 10: “for indeed, you are doing the same for all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia. But we are exhorting you, brethren, to excel more and more [in this love].”

We have the second reason Paul does not need to be writing to them about “brotherly love.” The first reason was in verse 9: “for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” In this verse, the second is: “for indeed, you are doing the same for all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia.”

The apostle Paul wants to see persistence and consistency in their love. His challenge is they are to grow in this love.

1 John 4:17: “As we live with Christ, our love grows more perfect and complete.”

The more we get to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater is the capacity for love flowing through our lives.

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* said:

The happiness which God designed for his higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water.

Amy Carmichael prayed:

“Oh Lord Jesus, My Beloved, may I be a joy to you.”

Please join me in singing that wonderful little chorus, “**Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me**”: “*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, All His wonderful passion and purity; Oh, Thou Spirit divine, All my nature refine Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. Let the fruit of the Spirit be seen in me, Grant me grace all sufficient that I may be True and faithful each day, Every step of the way, Pointing souls to the Saviour on Calvary.*”

April 15 — Your Ambition to Live Quietly (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

1 Thessalonians 4:11: “and to make it your ambition to live quietly and to busy yourselves with your own affairs and to work with your hands, even as we commanded you;”

1 Thessalonians 4:12: “in order that you may behave decently toward those who are outside and you may not be having need of anything.”

Verse 11: “and to make it your ambition to live quietly and to busy yourselves with your own affairs and to work with your hands, even as we commanded you;”

We find Paul’s recipe for a *worthy walk* in this verse. 1 Thessalonians 4:1: “Finally therefore, brethren, we are asking and exhorting you in the Lord Jesus, in order that,

just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God (just as also you are walking), in order that you may abound more and more.”

You need to work on getting better in your walk. The apostle directs what is involved in his estimation of a *worthy walk*.

Paul is expecting these three qualities mentioned in this verse will be part and parcel of every Christian's experience.

“And to make it your ambition.” The Greek word for “ambition” is made up of two parts, meaning “*love honor*.” It could be translated “*to strive restlessly after*” or “*relentless in pursuit*.”

Our passionate love for the Lord ought to fuel our purposes, resulting in a plan of action to achieve what He desires.

In this verse, we have the three ingredients of a worthy walk:

1. “to live quietly”

“To live quietly” has nothing to do with the tongue, but the Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Quiet means restful, less frantic.”

Charles Ryrie says:

“It means tranquility of mind, and this comes only when one's whole desire in life is to let Christ be magnified in his life.”

I find myself already bursting out in song, “*Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.*”

Quiet people usually run deep.

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”

2. “to busy yourselves with your own affairs”

This is no time for meddling. It is time to get busy on the task assigned to you. We can make a demonstration of our love for others by minding our own business.

Proverbs 25:17: “Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house -- too much of you, and he will hate you.”

3. “to work with your hands, even as we commanded you”

Essentially, this verse says take it easy, no meddling and no idleness. Needy idlers are not good Christians. There is no room for laziness in the Christian life.

When you find someone who is walking in intimate fellowship with the Lord, you usually find the following three things:

1. Urgency

2. They want to run well

3. A restless longing to do more

Basically, this verse says: (1) sit down and shut up, (2) mind your own business, and (3) do your job.

Verse 12: “in order that you may behave decently toward those who are outside and you may not be having need of anything.”

To “behave decently” means “*according to good fashion*” or “*in good form*.”

This is letting your light shine by (1) living quietly, (2) busying yourself with your own affairs, and (3) working with your hands.

This is *staying by the stuff* and living it one day at a time.

Now Paul gives us the purpose for walking the way he has described in verse 11. It is (1) “in order that you may behave decently toward those who are outside” “and (2)

you may not be having need of anything.”

When we experience need in our life, it means one of two things:

1. It can be pointing out areas where our life might be off course with the divine plan.
2. It could be a providential dealing in order to direct us.

I mentioned this hymn earlier in our meditation. This was Hudson Taylor’s favorite hymn. Please join me in worship this morning by singing verse 1 of **“Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting”**: *“Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, And Thy beauty fills my soul, For by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole. Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.”*

April 16 — Not Mourning Over Death (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

1 Thessalonians 4:13: *“Now we are not wishing you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are falling asleep, in order that you may not be mourning, even as also the rest who are having no hope.”*

Verse 13: “Now we are not wishing you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are falling asleep, in order that you may not be mourning, even as also the rest who are having no hope.”

“Now” indicates Paul is taking up a new subject. He also says: “we are not wishing you to be ignorant, brethren.”

Evidently, some of the believers who came to know Christ during Paul’s ministry there had died, and there was concern among the rest as to what happened to those who died in Christ.

Paul’s purpose in giving this instruction was: they would “not be mourning, even as also the rest who are having no hope.”

We have a living Christ who has promised to come again and receive us unto Himself: “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

Someone said:

“Life is like a bus ride and death is just the next stop.”

When we see Jesus Christ rose from the dead and is Conqueror over death, and we are identified with Him, then death should not have its fears like it would over a person who does not know Him.

Let’s join together in singing verse 2 of that wonderful hymn, **“Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting”**: *“O, how great Thy loving kindness, Vaster, broader than the sea! O how marvelous Thy goodness, Lavished all on me! Yes, I rest in Thee, Belovèd, Know what wealth of grace is Thine, Know Thy certainty of promise, And have made it mine. Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.”*

April 17 — Left Behind for the Coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:14-15)

1 Thessalonians 4:14: *“For since we are believing that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:15: *“For this we are saying to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, we who are left behind for the coming of the Lord, we shall by no*

means precede those who fell asleep.”

Verse 14: “For since we are believing that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.”

Because He lives, we too shall live.

Verse 15: “For this we are saying to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, we who are left behind for the coming of the Lord, we shall by no means precede those who fell asleep.”

Paul gives us the order of the resurrection and deals with those who are living and left at the coming of the Lord. Those who are living and remaining on the earth will by no means precede those who are dead in Christ in the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53: “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting”**: *“Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, I behold Thee as Thou art, And Thy love, so pure, so changeless, Satisfies my heart; Satisfies its deepest longings, Meets, supplies its every need, Compasseth me round with blessings: Thine is love indeed! Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.”*

April 18 — The Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

1 Thessalonians 4:16: *“Because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the call of the trumpet sounded by God’s command; and the dead in Christ shall be raised first.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:17: *“Then we who are living, who are left behind, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:18: *“So keep on encouraging one another with these words.”*

Verse 16: “Because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the call of the trumpet sounded by God’s command; and the dead in Christ shall be raised first.”

The Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of God in heaven. He will leave and come down from heaven.

There are three things stated in this verse “Because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven”:

1. “With a cry of command”
2. “With the voice of an archangel”
3. “With the call of the trumpet sounded by God’s command”

Jesus simply gave a shout, “Lazarus come forth.” Lazarus obeyed the call of the Savior and came forth, even in his grave clothes, but alive. If the Lord Jesus had not said, “Lazarus,” He would have emptied the whole graveyard. The resurrection would have taken place at that moment.

It is “with a cry of command” and “with the voice of an archangel.” This is a reference to Michael. And “with the call of the trumpet sounded by God’s command.”

Our verse concludes with “and the dead in Christ shall be raised first.”

Verse 17: “Then we who are living, who are left behind, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

In verse 16, we had the three things that will happen: (1) the “cry of command,” (2) “the voice of an archangel,” and (3) “the call of the trumpet sounded by God’s command.” These three things happening will lead to the following:

1. “The dead in Christ shall be raised first.”
2. “Then we who are living, who are left behind, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

Paul is speaking of the dead in verse 16 and the living in verse 17. Paul puts himself in the living group because of his belief that Christ was going to return in his lifetime.

The result of this being “caught up” is “so we shall always be with the Lord.”

The focus is on the person and not the place.

Verse 18: “So keep on encouraging one another with these words.”

“These words” which are not words from man, but words from the Lord, can serve as a basis of encouragement.

Psalm 116:15: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

Please join me in worship as we sing verse 4 of **“Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting”**:
*“Ever lift Thy face upon me As I work and wait for Thee; Resting ’neath Thy smile,
Lord Jesus, Earth’s dark shadows flee. Brightness of my Father’s glory, Sunshine of my
Father’s face, Keep me ever trusting, resting, Fill me with Thy grace. Jesus, I am resting,
resting In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving
heart.”*

April 19 — The Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2)

1 Thessalonians 5:1: “Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you are not having need that I should be writing to you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:2: “For you yourselves are knowing accurately that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief at night.”

Verse 1: “Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you are not having need that I should be writing to you.”

In chapter 4, we had the outline of the rapture of the church. Now in chapter 5, we have an outline of the things that are going to be happening just preceding the second coming of Christ to set-up His kingdom.

“Now concerning the times and the seasons.” This phrase is never used concerning the rapture.

Acts 1:6-7: “And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.’”

Matthew 24:36: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

The word “times” has to do with “quantity” and the word “seasons” has to do with “quality.”

Verse 2: “For you yourselves are knowing accurately that the day of the Lord is

coming as a thief at night.”

Paul had taught them carefully about “the day of the Lord” during the brief three-week period he was in Thessalonica. “The day of the Lord is coming as a thief at night.” It is coming in an unexpected fashion.

“The day of the Lord” is prophesized in many of the Old Testament scriptures.

Zephaniah 1:14-16: “The great day of the Lord is near -- near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says of “the day of the Lord”: “It is God at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been—including both blessing and judgment. It begins immediately after the rapture and ends with the conclusion of the millennial kingdom.”

Peter in his Pentecostal sermon in Acts 2:20 speaks of “the day of the Lord”: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.”

He also speaks of it in his second epistle in 2 Peter 3:10: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”

Charles Ryrie says:

“Paul is not discussing the entire day of the Lord but only its coming. This is important for it explains why he deals only with the judgment aspect of that day.”

When we are speaking of “the day of the Lord” from the standpoint of the judgment, it is called by the names:

1. Daniel’s 70th week
2. the time of Jacob’s trouble
3. the Great Tribulation

This is a seven-year period of divine wrath being poured out upon the earth.

Revelation 6-19 describes a series of 21 judgments involved in this period. There are 7 Seal Judgments, 7 Trumpet Judgments and 7 Bowl Judgments.

As you know, I am a great fan of Fanny Crosby hymns. One of my favorites since she is blind is **“My Saviour First of All.”** Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1: *“When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide, When the bright and glorious morning I shall see; I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side, And His smile will be the first to welcome me. I shall know Him, I shall know Him, And redeemed by His side I shall stand; I shall know Him, I shall know Him, By the print of the nails in His hand.”*

April 20 — Sudden Destruction (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

1 Thessalonians 5:3: *“When they are saying, ‘Peace and security,’ then sudden destruction is coming upon them even as birth pains upon a woman with child; and they shall by no means escape.”*

Verse 3: “When they are saying, ‘Peace and security,’ then sudden destruction is coming upon them even as birth pains upon a woman with child; and they shall by no

means escape.”

Notice the apostle uses the word “they.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Note that Paul did not include himself and his readers with the group who would see the day of the Lord as he did when describing the rapture. Evidently they and them refers to those left behind at the rapture, that is, non-Christians.”

At a time when people are at ease saying “peace and security,” then this is the time “sudden destruction” is going to come and “the day of the Lord” upon them.

It will be like September 11, 2001, only a hundred times worse. It will be the complete shock of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

It is too late to study for the examination when the test paper is before you. It is too late to make your house secure when the storm has burst.

One thing we can be sure, the tidal wave of God’s judgment is certain.

“When they are saying, ‘Peace and security,’ then sudden destruction is coming upon them.”

Luke 21:34: “Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap.”

“Even as birth pains upon a woman with child; and they shall by no means escape. This is Paul’s second illustration with regard to “the day of the Lord.” The first was in verse 2 when he used the illustration of a thief that comes at night. Here, he uses the illustration of a woman experiencing birth pains.

Just like the flood in Noah’s day, once the divine judgment begins, there is no stopping it. No one escaped once the door of the ark was closed.

The Greek text in the last part of this verse uses a double negative to make it very clear they shall by no means escape.

Hebrews 2:3: “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.”

For personal comfort and worship this morning, let’s sing verse 2 of “**My Saviour First of All**”: *“Oh, the soul thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face, And the luster of His kindly beaming eye; How my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love and grace, That prepare for me a mansion in the sky. I shall know Him, I shall know Him, And redeemed by His side I shall stand; I shall know Him, I shall know Him, By the print of the nails in His hand.”*

April 21 — Sons of Light (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5)

1 Thessalonians 5:4: “*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should come down upon you as a thief;*”

1 Thessalonians 5:5: “*for all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness;*”

Verse 4: “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should come down upon you as a thief;”

The word “but” forms a contrast. The apostle changes pronouns again from “they” to “you” and addresses them again as “brethren.”

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should come down upon you as a thief.”

John 3:19-20: “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”

This is a picture of living in sin under Satan’s domination.

In this verse, Paul again returns to the illustration of the “thief,” even as he spoke back in verse 2.

Verse 5: “for all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of darkness;”

Now, the apostle amplifies his further statement by giving a reason why “the day of the Lord” should “not come down upon them as a thief.”

There is a two-fold positive statement in this verse. “For all of you are” (1) “sons of light” and (2) “sons of day.” Paul then identifies with his readers when he changes to the word “we.” Negatively, “We are not of” (1) “the night nor” (2) “of darkness.”

“The day of the Lord” is characterized as a *day of darkness* by several of the minor prophets.

Joel 2:2: “*a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.*”

Zephaniah 1:15: “That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, *a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.*”

As believers, this is our challenge in Ephesians 5:8-9: “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth).”

Let’s join Fanny Crosby in worship by praising the Lord singing verse 3 of “**My Saviour First of All**”: “*Oh, the dear ones in glory, how they beckon me to come, And our parting at the river I recall; To the sweet vales of Eden they will sing my welcome home; But I long to meet my Saviour first of all. I shall know Him, I shall know Him, And redeemed by His side I shall stand; I shall know Him, I shall know Him, By the print of the nails in His hand.*”

April 22 — Awake & Self-Controlled (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

1 Thessalonians 5:6: “*so then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest, but let us be awake and self-controlled.*”

Verse 6: “so then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest, but let us be awake and self-controlled.”

The words “so then” point us to the result or to the certain conclusions drawn from what has been said. On that basis, Paul now admonishes them with regard to “the day of the Lord.”

There are going to be five commands given in these remaining verses. The first is a negative command and the second is a positive command.

Command #1: “**So then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest.**”

A.W. Tozer says it well:

“We start doing things by *rote*, then we get in a *rut*, then we start to *rot*, and then we are *ruined*.”

Romans 13:11-12: “And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

“So then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest, but let us be awake and self-controlled.”

Command #1 is a negative command, but Command #2 is a positive command.

Command #2: “**Let us be awake and self-controlled.**”

It is so easy to:

1. Fall into a lukewarm, careless attitude about spiritual things.
2. Be indifferent with regard to the needs of others and the urgency of the moment.
3. Waste time thinking we have lots of it.

Psalms 90:12: “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Let’s join Fanny Crosby once again this morning and sing the last verse of “**My Saviour First of All**”: *“Thro’ the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white, He will lead me where no tears will ever fall; In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight; But I long to meet my Saviour first of all. I shall know Him, I shall know Him, And redeemed by His side I shall stand; I shall know Him, I shall know Him, By the print of the nails in His hand.”*

April 23 — Clothed With a Breastplate & Helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:7-8)

1 Thessalonians 5:7: “*For those who are sleeping are sleeping at night, and those who are getting drunk are getting drunk at night.*”

1 Thessalonians 5:8: “*But we who are of the day, let us be self-controlled, having clothed ourselves with a breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.*”

Verse 7: “For those who are sleeping are sleeping at night, and those who are getting drunk are getting drunk at night.”

The apostle equates *sleeping* and *intoxication* with the night.

Ephesians 4:18-19: “being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart, and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

In verse 7, the apostle is describing those who are outside of Christ.

Verse 8: “But we who are of the day, let us be self-controlled, having clothed ourselves with a breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

The word “but” forms the contrast from verse 7. It is “those” in verse 7, but “we” in verse 8: “But we who are of the day.”

Paul gives us Command #3. In verse 6, Command #1 was “So then, let us not go on sleeping as do the rest” and Command #2 was “Let us be awake and self-controlled.”

Command #3: “**Let us be self-controlled, having clothed ourselves with a breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.**”

Paul includes his favorite little trio of *faith*, *love* and *hope*. It is “a breastplate of faith and love” to guard your heart and the “helmet” of hope, “the hope of salvation,” to guard the mind.

This takes us back to chapter 1:3: “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith

and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father.”

What a glorious day it will be when we take off our helmets for a crown and put up our swords for palm branches!

I would like to invite you to join me in singing that wonderful hymn, **“Faith is the Victory.”** Let’s sing verses 1 and 2 this morning: *“Encamped along the hills of light, Ye Christian soldiers, rise, And press the battle ere the night Shall veil the glowing skies. Against the foe in vales below Let all our strength be hurled; Faith is the victory, we know, That overcomes the world. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O, glorious victory, That overcomes the world. His banner over us is love, Our sword the Word of God; We tread the road the saints above With shouts of triumph trod. By faith they, like a whirlwind’s breath, Swept on o’er every field; The faith by which they conquered death Is still our shining shield. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O, glorious victory, That overcomes the world.”*

April 24 — Not Appointed to Wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

1 Thessalonians 5:9: *“Because God did not appoint us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*

1 Thessalonians 5:10: *“who died for us, in order that whether we are awake or sleeping, we might live together with Him.”*

Verse 9: “Because God did not appoint us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”

Paul gives the reason why he wants us to put on the “breastplate of faith and love” and the “helmet, the hope of salvation.” In this verse, we have a negative and a positive statement. Negatively, “Because God did not appoint us to wrath, but” in contrast positively “for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The wrath of God fell upon Jesus Christ on the cross, and thus, being identified with the Savior, we have accepted God’s provision for our sin.

ON HIM ALMIGHTY VENGEANCE FELL

THAT WOULD HAVE SUNK A WORLD TO HELL.

HE BORE IT FOR A CHOSEN RACE

AND THUS BECOMES OUR HIDING PLACE.

The word “appoint” focuses on God’s sovereignty. “Because God did not appoint us to wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is the only way.

Verse 10: “who died for us, in order that whether we are awake or sleeping, we might live together with Him.”

This is probably the oldest statement of the most fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, the fact that Jesus died for us. He took the wrath of God for our sin on the cross of Calvary.

This is the “cup” He asked to avoid if at all possible. This is why He cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The Father turned His back upon the Son as He was made sin for us. The purpose for doing this is seen in the next phrase: “in order that whether we are awake or sleeping, we might live together with Him.”

This morning, please join me in singing verses 3 and 4 of **“Faith is the Victory”**: *“On ev’ry hand the foe we find Drawn up in dread array; Let tents of ease be left*

behind, And onward to the fray; Salvation's helmet on each head, With truth all girt about, The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread, And echo with our shout. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O, glorious victory, That overcomes the world. To him that overcomes the foe, White raiment shall be giv'n; Before the angels he shall know His name confessed in Heav'n. Then onward from the hills of light, Our hearts with love aflame, We'll vanquish all the hosts of night, In Jesus' conquering name. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O, glorious victory, That overcomes the world."

April 25 — Encouraging & Building One Another Up (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

1 Thessalonians 5:11: *"Therefore be encouraging one another, and be building one another up, one the other even as also you are doing."*

Verse 11: "Therefore be encouraging one another, and be building one another up, one the other even as also you are doing."

Therefore, in view of "the day of the Lord," the Thessalonians are commanded to be doing two things:

1. "Be encouraging one another."
2. "Be building one another up."

We are to be encouraging and edifying!

This verse takes us back to chapter 4:18: "So keep on encouraging one another with these words."

When we are operating in the flesh rather than the spirit, the opposite of these two words is true. We are criticizing others and tearing them down.

Hebrews 10:23-25: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

I find myself singing that wonderful little prayer hymn, **"Lord, Be Glorified."** Please join me this morning in singing all three verses: *"In my life, Lord, Be glorified, be glorified. In my life, Lord, Be glorified today. In my song, Lord, Be glorified, be glorified. In my song, Lord, Be glorified today. In Your Church, Lord, Be glorified, be glorified. In Your Church, Lord, Be glorified today."*

April 26 — Honor The Leadership (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

1 Thessalonians 5:12: *"Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,"*

1 Thessalonians 5:13: *"and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves."*

Verse 12: "Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,"

Paul characterizes Christian leadership in three ways. They are:

1. "Toiling among you."
2. "In authority over you."
3. "Exhorting you."

Hebrews 13:17: "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over

your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

If you are surrendered, broken and submissive; you can live comfortably under authority.

Verse 13: “and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”

In this verse, Paul gives the next two commands:

Command #4: “Be respecting them very highly in love for their work.”

It is *recognition* in verse 12 and *respect* in verse 13.

Command #5: “Be at peace among yourselves.”

“Peace” is the fruit of proper recognition of those in authority over us and a respect motivated by love for their leadership. Almost all of the relational problems in the church involve a power struggle more than a personality conflict.

Recognizing the work of the devil is to divide and separate, and get people into warring factions; Paul gives them this admonition: “Be at peace among yourselves.”

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”

Isaiah 26:3: “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of **“Have I Done My Best for Jesus?”**: *“I wonder, have I done my best for Jesus, Who died upon the cruel tree? To think of His great sacrifice at Calv’ry! I know my Lord expects the best from me. How many are the lost that I have lifted? How many are the chained I’ve helped to free? I wonder, have I done my best for Jesus, When He has done so much for me?”*

April 27 — Meeting Needs of Fellow Believers (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)

1 Thessalonians 5:14: “Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle), be encouraging the discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.”

1 Thessalonians 5:15: “Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.”

Verse 14: “Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle), be encouraging the discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.”

In this verse, we have the apostle’s next four commands:

Command #6: “Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle).”

The word for “lazy” or “idle” is the word used for “a soldier who has left the ranks.” He is out of rank, he is not in order.

Command #7: “Be encouraging the discouraged.”

There are probably people who have lost loved ones through the persecution and the circumstances that have happened in Thessalonica. They are in need of comfort. Essentially, Paul is saying “put your arms around the weak ones.” Give them a good hug!

1 Samuel 23:16: “And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.”

People all around are hurting, wounded by discouragement. God has called us to befriend them, bringing His encouragement.

Command #8: “Be paying attention to those who are weak.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary defines “weak” as: “They have not yet learned to lean on the Lord as much as they should for their spiritual needs.”

These are young believers. They are still forging their convictions in the light of divine revelation. Many of these things have not taken form yet. Therefore, they are those whom Paul considers “weak” in the faith.

Command #9: “Be patient toward all.”

Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet.

Verse 15: “Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.”

This verse has two more commands:

Command #10: “Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone.”

Romans 12:19-21 in the Phillips translation: “Never take vengeance into your own hands, my dear friends, stand back and let God punish if He will, for it is written, ‘Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense,’ and these are God’s Words. ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirsts, give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.’ Do not allow yourself to be overpowered with evil, take the offensive, overpower evil by good.”

Command #11: “Be pursuing the good for one another and for all.”

Philippians 2:3-4: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 and 3 of **“Have I Done My Best for Jesus?”**: *“The hours that I have wasted are so many, The hours I’ve spent for Christ so few; Because of all my lack of love for Jesus. I wonder if His heart is breaking too. I wonder, have I cared enough for others, Or have I let them die alone? I might have helped a wand’rer to the Savior, The seed of precious Life I might have sown. How many are the lost that I have lifted? How many are the chained I’ve helped to free? I wonder, have I done my best for Jesus, When He has done so much for me?”*

April 28 — Rejoicing, Praying & Giving Thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

1 Thessalonians 5:16: “Always be rejoicing;”

1 Thessalonians 5:17: “unceasingly be praying;”

1 Thessalonians 5:18: “in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Verse 16: “Always be rejoicing;”

Command #12: “Always be rejoicing.”

Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”

George Muller said:

I never allow myself to begin a day without facing before God anything that has left me unhappy or distressed because I want to be before Him always in the spirit of joyfulness.

John F. Walvoord points out:

This verse is the shortest verse in the Bible. Some think that “Jesus wept” (John 11:35) is the shortest, and in the English it is. In the New Testament in Greek 1 Thess. 5:16 is the shortest verse in the Bible. It contains only 2 words and they are short words. Whereas in the original for “Jesus wept” there are 3 words and they are longer words. Even though it is the shortest verse in the Bible it certainly says a great deal.

Verse 17: “unceasingly be praying;”

Command #13: “Unceasingly be praying.”

1 Thessalonians 3:10: “night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?”

Paul was certainly a wonderful example of this admonition. *Continual communion* is the key to *continual joy*.

Charles Spurgeon said:

“When joy and prayer are married, their firstborn child is gratitude.”

To the apostle, prayer was like breathing. As he was praying, he was alive spiritually. As he breathed, he was alive physically.

Verse 18: “in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Command #14: “In everything be giving thanks.”

How can we do this? He loves me. He has everything under control. I can trust him fully and completely to carry out His plan and purpose in my life every day I am living.

Three present tense commands are given in these verses. This is a very clear and important segment of the passage. If you come to me and ask what is the will of God for you. I can tell you these three specific things:

1. Rejoice always – “always be rejoicing.”
2. Pray without ceasing – “unceasingly be praying.”
3. Give thanks in everything – “in everything be giving thanks.”

The reason for the command “be giving thanks” is stated in the last part of the verse: “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

These are three marks of a real Christian:

1. He’s happy.
2. He is praying.
3. He is thankful.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing that wonderful prayer hymn of surrender, “**Have Thine Own Way, Lord.**” Join me in singing verse 1: “*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Mould me and make me After Thy will, While I am waiting, Yielded and still.*”

April 29 — Careful Not to Stifle the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20)

1 Thessalonians 5:19: “Stop stifling the Spirit;”

1 Thessalonians 5:20: “stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.”

Verse 19: “Stop stifling the Spirit;”

John. F. Walvoord says:

“In verses 19-22, there is a further admonition. These 4 verses relate to the 1st

command of this section, ‘quench not the Spirit.’”

The word for “stifle” in the Greek text has a number of meanings. In the authorized version, it is translated “*to quench*.” It also means “*to withdraw fuel from the fire*” or “*to drown it by pouring water on it*.”

Command #15: “Stop stifling the Spirit.”

The command is to let the Holy Spirit guide and prompt them, and not to squelch the Spirit in their lives.

Verse 20: “stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.”

The next command is a present negative command.

Command #16: “Stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.”

Ray Stedman says:

“Dr. F. F. Bruce, one of the great expositors of our day, says, ‘Prophesying is declaring the mind of God and the power of the Spirit.’”

Please join me in praise and worship as we sing verses 2 and 3 of **“Have Thine Own Way, Lord”**: *“Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Search me and try me, Master; today! Whiter than snow, Lord, Wash me just now, As in Thy presence, Humbly I bow. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Wounded and weary, Help me, I pray! Power all power Surely is Thine! Touch me and heal me, Saviour divine!”*

April 30 — Holding Fast the Good (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

1 Thessalonians 5:21: “*But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast the good;*”

1 Thessalonians 5:22: “*be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.*”

Verse 21: “But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast the good;”

Whereas we had two negative commands in verses 19 and 20, we have two positive commands in this verse. The word “but” forms the contrast.

Command #17: “But be putting all things to the test.”

Acts 17:11: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

In essence, Paul is saying for us to test all the manifestations of the Spirit in the local assembly.

Command #18: Be “holding fast the good.”

Hebrews 6:19: “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.”

Verse 22: “be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.”

Paul is saying keep holding yourselves away from every kind of evil.

Command #19: “Be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Counterfeit teaching and living should be rejected and avoided.”

1 Thessalonians 4:7: “For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.”

We are to steer clear of all evil.

Max Lucado says in his book, *In the Eye of the Storm: A Day in the Life of Jesus*:

And I hope you never forget the last Lighthouse Law: Approach life like a voyage on a schooner. Enjoy the view. Explore the vessel. Make friends with the

captain. Fish a little. And then get off when you get home. Good sailing!

To keep with that law, let's worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 4 of **"Have Thine Own Way, Lord"**: *"Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being Absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see Christ only, always, Living in me!"*

MAY

May 1 — He Will Do It (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

1 Thessalonians 5:23: *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (through and through); and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

1 Thessalonians 5:24: *"Faithful is the one who is calling you, who also will do it."*

Verse 23: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (through and through); and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The apostle Paul goes to prayer again, as we were with him in prayer in chapters 1 and 3. This is how he concludes his letter to the Thessalonians.

We will note in this passage he prays for two things:

1. "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (through and through)."
2. "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The word "Himself" is emphasized in the Greek text. It is God "Himself" who is going to "sanctify you entirely (through and through)." This is cultivated by communion with our Blessed Lord.

In essence, Paul is praying for his biggest concern in this first prayer request, to "complete what is lacking in their faith." A holiness of life would provide that completion. There would be growth and truth.

The apostle fully realized these dear Christian people in Thessalonica would not fully be consecrated through and through until they stood in the presence of the Lord Jesus "when these vile bodies are transformed into glorious bodies which are like unto His."

1 John 3:3: "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

The second prayer request is seen in the last phrase. "And may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

John F. Walvoord says:

The word "whole" here refers to the parts of our natural life: our spirit, our soul, and our body. Each of these 3 parts should be preserved wholly to God and be used by God. That means that everything we are belongs to the Lord: our physical bodies, our spiritual or intellectual life, and our psychological or natural life.

"And may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete."

2 Corinthians 4:16: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

The words "without blame" mean *"no legitimate grounds for accusation."* In other

words, it is blameless preservation.

Jude 24, 25: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Verse 24: “Faithful is the one who is calling you, who also will do it.”

Whereas we have the wish in verse 23, we have the *warranty* in verse 24. God is not only calling us to holiness of life, but He has made possible for us to have the Savior resident within our lives and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how we can live a life of holiness which is acceptable in His sight.

2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.”

The word “faithful” is in the emphatic position of the Greek text. We can say, “Yes, God is faithful.”

J. Vernon McGee says:

“You can depend upon God.”

The two key words in this verse are “calling” and “do.” When our text says, “Who also will do it,” we ask the question: Do what?

1. He will wash my record completely clean.
2. He will set me free.
3. He provides strength for victory.
4. He will come and live in me.
5. He will sustain me in suffering.
6. He will make me more and more like Christ.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning singing our daughter Becky’s favorite hymn. She often said it is not OK with my body, but it is well with my soul. Let’s sing verses 1 and 3 of **“It Is Well With My Soul”**: *“When peace, like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well, with my soul.’ My sin, O, the bliss of this glorious thought, My sin not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well (It is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

May 2 — Be Praying for Us (1 Thessalonians 5:25-28)

1 Thessalonians 5:25: “Brethren, be praying also for us.”

1 Thessalonians 5:26: “Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.”

1 Thessalonians 5:27: “I am binding you with an oath by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren.”

1 Thessalonians 5:28: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Verse 25: “Brethren, be praying also for us.”

The first word in the emphatic position is the word “brethren.” This word occurs in verses 25, 26 and 27.

Paul is making a request of them, asking them to pray for him. He begins the letter by telling them he is praying for them, and now in conclusion, he is asking them to return the favor by praying for him.

2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as

coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

THERE IS A HOLY, HIGH VOCATION
NEEDING WORDS EVERYWHERE;
IT’S THE HIGHEST FORM OF SERVICE.
IT’S THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER.

-- WOODWORTH

Verse 26: “Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.”

A *kiss* in Paul’s time was an expression of respect and affection, a token of homage and submission. This can be seen in the *kiss of Judas* at the betrayal of Christ.

For our culture, my sons said this verse means that brothers should shake hands and pat each other on the back.

Verse 27: “I am binding you with an oath by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren.”

Verse 28: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Paul ends the letter as he began. It is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” which is so important. The grace is manifested through His death, burial and resurrection which makes us a new creation in the Savior.

Ray Stedman says:

There is only a limited time of testing to go through now. It cannot go on forever. I often think of the motto that used to be prominent in many homes: “Only one life, ‘twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.” I would like to change one word in that verse: “Only what’s done BY Christ will last.” That is where the apostle leaves us, with the coming of our Lord and the resources God has provided so that we may live in a new and different way in the midst of this modern age.

Ian Thomas in his book, *If I Perish, I Perish*, says:

“Lord Jesus, I can’t but you can, and that is all I need to know. Let’s go!”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 and 4 of **“It Is Well With My Soul”**: *“Though Satan should buffet, tho’ trials should come, Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul. And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend, ‘Even so,’ it is well with my soul. It is well (It is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

May 3 — Delighting the Heart of God (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2)

2 Thessalonians 1:1: “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:”

2 Thessalonians 1:2: “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is our joy this morning to continue with the study of the Thessalonians as we look at the second epistle. It followed the first epistle by about 12 months. In this second epistle, we are raising the question: Are we delighting the heart of God?

I have written a list of seven characteristics to describe a person that answers the question positively.

1. He is a person of *Worship*.
2. He is focusing on *Obedience*.

3. He is in *Communion* with the Father.
4. He is *Submissive* – doing it God’s way.
5. There is an *Unconditional Commitment* to His will.
6. He *Surrenders* to His Lordship.
7. He is a *Sacrificial Servant*.

Keep these seven things in mind as we pursue our study of 2 Thessalonians this morning.

Verse 1: “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

These first two verses form the Salutation to this epistle. It is nearly the same as the salutation for 1 Thessalonians. The only difference is the word “our.” “In God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The same three men are mentioned in both epistles.

Verse 2: “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The addition in the second verse of the epistle is the phrase “from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This “grace and peace” Paul desires for these Thessalonian saints has a source: “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Colossians 1:20: “and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

It would be good at this point in our study to ask ourselves: What are we doing with God’s wonderful plan of salvation? There are many who are *waiting* for it. There are others who are *working* for it. Then, still others who are *worrying* about it, but all of these things are wrong. It is *wanting* it that is most important.

Why don’t we fall at His feet and worship Him? Receive what God has wonderfully provided in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 15:7: “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we celebrate our salvation by singing all four verses of “**At Calvary**”: “*Years I spent in vanity and pride, Caring not my Lord was crucified, Knowing not it was for me He died On Calvary. By God’s Word at last my sin I learned, Then I trembled at the law I’d spurned, Till my guilty soul imploring turned To Calvary. Now I’ve giv’n to Jesus ev’rything; Now I gladly own Him as my King; Now my raptured soul can only sing Of Calvary! O, the love that drew salvation’s plan! O, the grace that brought it down to man! O, the mighty gulf that God did span At Calvary! Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty, At Calvary.*”

May 4 — Giving Thanks (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

2 Thessalonians 1:3: “*We ought always to be giving thanks to God for you, brethren, even as it is fitting, because your faith is growing wonderfully, and the love of each one of you all toward one another is growing ever greater;*”

Verse 3: “We ought always to be giving thanks to God for you, brethren, even as it is fitting, because your faith is growing wonderfully, and the love of each one of you all toward one another is growing ever greater;”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Paul felt obligated to give thanks as though he owed a debt which he paid enthusiastically.”

The apostle had an attitude of gratitude for the Thessalonian saints.

Charles Wesley expressed it this way:

HELP US TO HELP EACH OTHER, LORD,
EACH OTHER’S CROSS TO BEAR;
LET EACH HIS FRIENDLY AID AFFORD,
AND FEEL HIS BROTHER’S CARE.

HELP US TO BUILD EACH OTHER UP,
OUR LITTLE STOCK IMPROVE;
INCREASE OUR FAITH, CONFIRM OUR HOPE,
AND PERFECT US IN LOVE.

There are two reasons why this giving of thanks is fitting. Paul is talking about something they justly deserve. The reasons are:

1. Their growth in faith
2. Their abounding love

The first reason: “because your faith is growing wonderfully.” The word that is translated “growing wonderfully” can be translated “*grow exceedingly*.” It is only used here in the New Testament.

2 Peter 3:18: “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Paul feels bound “to be giving thanks” because of their “growing faith” and for their “abounding love.” Faith grows within, but love by its outgrowing.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 3 and 4 of “**Tis So Sweet To Trust in Jesus**”: “*Yes, ’tis sweet to trust in Jesus, Just from sin and self to cease; Just from Jesus simply taking Life and rest, and joy and peace. I’m so glad I learned to trust Thee, Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend; And I know that Thou art with me, Wilt be with me to the end. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust Him more!*”

May 5 — You Are Hanging in There (2 Thessalonians 1:4)

2 Thessalonians 1:4: “*therefore, we ourselves are taking pride in you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring.*”

Verse 4: “therefore, we ourselves are taking pride in you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring.”

Paul states that in view of the fact their faith is “growing wonderfully” and their “love is growing ever greater,” the apostle and his team are: “taking pride in you among the churches of God.”

Next, he states the reason for this: “for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring.”

These Thessalonians knew:

1. God was going to get the glory.
2. Growth would result in their personal lives.

3. God had adequate grace for them to get through it.
God's grace gave them *hope to cope* and to *hang onto the rope*.

William Barclay says of the word which we have translated "perseverance":

"It accepts the blows of life, but in accepting them it transforms them into stepping stones to new achievement."

Ruth Harms Calkins writes:

LORD, I ASK MORE QUESTIONS
THAN YOU ASK.
THE RATIO, I WOULD SUPPOSE
IS TEN TO ONE.

I ASK:

WHY DO YOU PERMIT THIS ANGUISH?
HOW LONG CAN I ENDURE IT?
WHAT POSSIBLE PURPOSE DOES IT SERVE?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN TO BE GRACIOUS?
HAVE I WEARIED YOU?
HAVE I OFFENDED YOU?
HAVE YOU CAST ME OFF?
WHERE DID I MISS YOUR GUIDANCE?
WHEN DID I LOSE THE WAY?
DO YOU SEE MY UTTER DESPAIR?

YOU ASK:

ARE YOU TRUSTING ME?

Zephaniah 3:17: "The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Stuart Hamblin has written some great songs. One of my favorites is "**Until Then.**" Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1: "*My heart can sing when I pause to remember, A heartache here is but a stepping stone Along a trail that's winding always upwards, This troubled world is not my final home, But until then my heart will go on singing, until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home.*"

May 6 — Worthy of the Kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:5)

2 Thessalonians 1:5: "*This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.*"

Verse 5: "This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering."

In "God's righteous judgment," He is allowing persecutions and afflictions which the Thessalonians are enduring. The Thessalonians' response of "perseverance and faith" in the midst of all of this "is a plain indication" they understand "God's righteous judgment" in these matters.

God is just. God knows what He is doing. God knows what we need. God controls

the circumstances that are a part of the curriculum toward Christlikeness in our individual lives.

We indicate God's righteousness when we persevere through persecution and see it all as a part of His plan.

This kind of unshaken response on the part of the child of God has got to delight the heart of God.

It is speaking well of God no matter what!

"This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God." He deems it necessary to His purposes.

In the hand of God, trouble is a process with a purpose!

At the conclusion of verse 4, we had: "persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring." At the conclusion of this verse, we have the present tense: "for which indeed you are suffering." These are circumstance the Thessalonians are facing at the moment.

Let's continue to worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of "Until Then": *"The things of earth will dim and lose their value If we recall they're borrowed for awhile And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble, Remembered there will only bring a smile, But until then my heart will go on singing, until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home."*

May 7 — Just in the Sight of God (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7)

2 Thessalonians 1:6: *"If indeed it is just in the sight of God to repay with affliction those who are afflicting you,"*

2 Thessalonians 1:7: *"and to give relief to you who are being afflicted along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power"*

Verse 6: "If indeed it is just in the sight of God to repay with affliction those who are afflicting you,"

Romans 12:19: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

We could paraphrase as "Seeing that it is a righteous thing with God." It is a necessary part of the righteousness of God:

1. The *rebellious* face recompense

2. The *righteous* face reward

Galatians 6:7: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "God will balance the scales of justice."

Isaiah 54:17: "'no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,' declares the Lord."

Verse 7: "and to give relief to you who are being afflicted along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power"

The word for "relief" is the word "anesis." From this, we get the word "anacin." The word means "relaxing," "rest," "relaxation," or "relief."

The "relief" is the "rest" that comes.

Jesus promised this "rest" in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to Me, all who are weary

and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **"Until Then"**:
*"This weary world with all its toil and struggle May take its toll of misery and strife
The soul of man is like a waiting falcon, When it's released it's destined for the skies,
But until then my heart will go on singing, until then with joy I'll carry on, Until the day my eyes behold the city, Until the day God calls me home."*

May 8 — Full Justice (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

2 Thessalonians 1:8: *"in a fire of flame, allotting full justice to those who do not know God and who are not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus;"*

2 Thessalonians 1:9: *"and who will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"*

Verse 8: "in a fire of flame, allotting full justice to those who do not know God and who are not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus;"

"In a fire of flame" reminds us of the *burning bush* back in Exodus chapter 3.

John F. Walvoord observes:

"This portion of scripture is very clear that the destiny of the wicked is something horrible to contemplate."

In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man says, "I am in agony in this flame."

"In a fire of flame, allotting full justice to those who do not know God and who are not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus." "Allotting full justice" is a present participle.

Those experiencing this "full justice" are:

1. "Those who do not know God."
2. Those "who are not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

Verse 9: "and who will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"

In these verses, there are three phrases starting with "who" in defining the recipients of "full justice":

1. "Who do not know God."
2. "Who are not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus."
3. "Who will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "It is eternal ruination, not annihilation."

Matthew 25:46: "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Hebrews 2:3: "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard."

Max Lucado in his book, *And the Angels Were Silent*, says:

"He would rather go to hell for you than go to heaven without you."

This morning, please join me in singing that very familiar hymn, **"Battle Hymn of the Republic."** Let's sing verses 1 and 3: *"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored."*

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat; He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat; O be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet! Our God is marching on. Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Our God is marching on."

May 9 — Comes To Be Glorified (2 Thessalonians 1:10)

2 Thessalonians 1:10: *"when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all those who believed--because our testimony to you was believed."*

Verse 10: "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all those who believed--because our testimony to you was believed."

There are two things to notice in this verse. "When he comes": (1) "to be glorified in His saints on that day," and (2) "to be marveled at among all those who have believed."

Let's look closer at this first point: "when he comes to be glorified in His saints on that day."

John 17:1: "These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee.'"

Then, look at this second point: "to be marveled at among all those who believed."

Ephesians 3:10: "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

"Because our testimony to you was believed." Once again, we have the single condition of salvation in the word "believed."

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!"

IS WHAT THE ANGELS SING,

AND I EXPECT TO HELP THEM

MAKE THE COURTS OF HEAVEN RING.

BUT WHEN WE SING REDEMPTION'S STORY,

THEY MUST FOLD THEIR WINGS,

FOR ANGELS NEVER FELT THE JOY

THAT OUR SALVATION BRINGS.

Please join me in worship and praise to our God by singing verses 2 and 4 of **"Battle Hymn of the Republic"**: *"I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps; They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps; I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps; His day is marching on. In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea, With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me; As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free, While God is marching on. Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Glory! Glory, hallelujah! Our God is marching on."*

May 10 — Worthy of Your Calling (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

2 Thessalonians 1:11: *"To this end also we are praying always for you that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power;"*

2 Thessalonians 1:12: “in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Verse 11: “To this end also we are praying always for you that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power;”

In the remaining two verses of this chapter, Paul turns to intercession. He looks back over verses 5-10, and then he makes this prayer.

The first petition in Paul’s prayer is “that our God may count you worthy of your calling.” This petition regards their future: future glorification.

We saw the word “worthy” earlier in the chapter in verse 5: “*worthy* of the kingdom of God.” 2 Thessalonians 1:5: “This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment, so that you may be considered *worthy* of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.” Now, we see “*worthy* of your calling.”

The first petition spoke of our *calling*. This second petition regards our *conduct* – in the present – a *conduct* that accords with our *calling*.

“Fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.”

Psalm 37:4: “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Verse 12: “in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This third petition regards the future. Always speak well of the Lord no matter what the circumstances and accept what He allows. Job 13:15: “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.”

Max Lucado in *And the Angels Were Silent* says:

I’ve been told that during the filming of Ben Hur, Charlton Heston had trouble learning to drive a chariot (who wouldn’t?). With much practice he was finally able to control the vehicle, but still had some doubts. He reportedly explained his concerns to the director Cecil B. DeMille by saying, “I think I can drive the chariot, but I’m not sure I can win the race.”

DeMille responded, “You just stay in the race and I’ll make sure you win.”

Jesus gives you the same assurance. You stay in the race; He’ll make sure you get home.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, “**Face to Face**”: “*Face to face with Christ, my Savior; Face to face, what will it be? When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ Who died for me. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!*”

May 11 — Jesus is Coming Back (2 Thessalonians 2:1)

2 Thessalonians 2:1: “Now we are asking you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,”

Verse 1: “Now we are asking you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,”

J. Vernon McGee says:

“Our gathering together unto him’ is the rapture of the church.”

“Now we are asking you, brethren.” Paul reminds them they are believers by using the term “brethren.” In this verse, he is requesting *steadfastness* of these new believers. It is *steadfastness* with regard to “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him.” It is *steadfastness* in view of His sovereignty. He is asking them to keep up their great expectations!

This morning, please worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 2 of **“Face to Face”**: *“Only faintly now I see Him, With the dark’ning veil between, But a blessed day is coming, When His glory shall be seen. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!”*

May 12 — Don’t Get Distracted (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3)

2 Thessalonians 2:2: *“that you may not be quickly shaken from your calmness of mind or be disturbed either by a spirit or through a word or through a letter as if from us, to the effect that the Day of the Lord has come.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:3: *“Let no one in any way lead you astray, because that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”*

Verse 2: “that you may not be quickly shaken from your calmness of mind or be disturbed either by a spirit or through a word or through a letter as if from us, to the effect that the Day of the Lord has come.”

Ryrie says:

Word had circulated through the church that the Day of the Lord had already begun, and that meant that the judgments of the beginning of that Day were being experienced by the Thessalonians in the persecutions which they were then enduring.

Obviously, some prophecy buff had wanted to draw a crowd, so he told them they were already in the Day of the Lord.

Ray Stedman says:

“The phrase literally reads, ‘You were shaken out of your minds’ or, to put it in the vernacular, ‘all shook up.’ ...It was sweaty palms and white knuckles all the way!”

Hogg and Vine make this interesting observation:

“Believers are not to be controlled by the emotions, whether of dread or of desire, but by the mind, enlightened by the revelation of the mind of God.”

“That you may not be quickly shaken from your calmness of mind” or *“shaken loose from your moorings.”*

Hebrews 6:19: “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.”

Paul suggests three means in which they could “be disturbed” or upset “to the effect that the Day of the Lord has come”:

1. “A spirit”
2. “A word”
3. “A letter as if from us”

If “the Day of the Lord” had come, they were troubled because that would mean they had missed the rapture.

Matthew 24:24: “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great

signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.”

We are delighting the heart of God when we are rooted and grounded in the Living Word, the Christ, and the written Word of God, the Bible.

Verse 3: “Let no one in any way lead you astray, because that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”

The apostle pleads with them to “let no one in any way lead you astray.” Then, he gives three reasons:

1. The coming of “the apostasy”
2. The coming of the “man of lawlessness” – the man of sin, the antichrist
3. The taking away of the restrainer – the Holy Spirit leaves at the rapture of the church

Let’s remain steadfast in joyfully singing verse 3 of **“Face to Face”**: *“What rejoicing in His presence, When are banished grief and pain; When the crooked ways are straightened, And the dark things shall be plain. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!”*

May 13 — Remember What I Taught You (2 Thessalonians 2:4-5)

2 Thessalonians 2:4: *“who is opposing and exalting himself above all that is called god or that is an object of worship, so that he seats himself in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:5: *“Are you not remembering that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”*

Verse 4: “who is opposing and exalting himself above all that is called god or that is an object of worship, so that he seats himself in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God.”

This is a picture of Revelation 13:5-8: “And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”

This “man of lawlessness” is described in two ways. He is the one who is: (1) “opposing” and (2) “exalting himself above all that is called god or that is an object of worship.”

Verse 5: “Are you not remembering that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

Our meditation ends with a question. The apostle asks them to remember what he had taught them. It is the right of every teacher to give an exam at the end of the course. Paul is calling them to accountability to remember what he had taught them regarding these matters.

We can also understand why Jesus made such a point in the upper room when He instituted the Lord’s Supper by saying to them: “This do in remembrance of Me.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 4 of **“Face to**

Face”: “Face to face! O, blissful moment! Face to face, to see and know; Face to face with my Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Who loves me so. Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!”

May 14 — The Restrainer (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7)

2 Thessalonians 2:6: “And you are knowing that which is restraining him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.”

2 Thessalonians 2:7: “For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only He who is now restraining [will do so] until He goes out from the midst.”

In these verses before us, we are going to be pursuing some prophetic themes.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

“Nothing can happen, but what God ordains and therefore why should we fear.”

An unknown writer said:

“No life can surpass that of a man who gladly continues to serve God in the place where providence has placed him.”

Verse 6: “And you are knowing that which is restraining him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.”

“And you are knowing” helps us understand more fully what Paul stated in verse 5: “Are you not remembering that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

Ryrie asks the question:

“Who is powerful enough to hold back Satan? The obvious and only answer to that question is God.”

“And you are knowing that which is restraining him now.” The “him” refers to the “man of lawlessness” or “man of sin.”

“So that in his time he may be revealed.”

Horne says:

“It is a blessed thought to realize that God is in sovereign control of all these series of events.”

Verse 7: “For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only He who is now restraining [will do so] until He goes out from the midst.”

Just as “the Mystery of Godliness” is wrapped up in a Person: the Lord Jesus Christ, so “the mystery of lawlessness” is wrapped up in a person: “the man of sin,” Satan’s false messiah.

You can see this lawlessness already at work in sex, drugs, disease, violence, hatred, abortion, homosexuality, feminism, rebellion against God, resistance to the Spirit, relinquishing moral standards – all of them fruit of Satan’s kingdom.

John F. Walvoord calls this “a reversal of Pentecost.”

The Spirit of God departs with the church at the rapture.

Ryrie says:

“It should be remembered that Christ said of the divinely indwelt and empowered church that ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ (Matthew 16:18)”

In your imagination, can you comprehend what the world will be like when the Restrainer, the Spirit of God, and all of the Christians leave this old world in the rapture of the church?

To fill our hearts with joy and anticipation, let's sing for these prophetic studies **"The Way of the Cross Leads Home."** Please join me in singing verse 1: *"I must needs go home by the way of the cross, There's no other way but this; I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light, If the way of the cross I miss. The way of the cross leads home, The way of the cross leads home; It is sweet to know, as I onward go, The way of the cross leads home."*

May 15 — The Man of Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:8-9)

2 Thessalonians 2:8: *"And then that lawless one shall be revealed whom the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth and shall render inoperative by the appearance of His presence;"*

2 Thessalonians 2:9: *"that is, the one whose presence is in accord with the working of Satan, with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders,"*

Verse 8: "And then that lawless one shall be revealed whom the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth and shall render inoperative by the appearance of His presence;"

When the one "who is restraining" is taken out of the way, "then that lawless one shall be revealed."

"Whom [the lawless one] the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth and shall render inoperative by the appearance of His presence."

Make no mistake about it, God has everything under control.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "This verse spans the 7-year period of tribulation."

Ryrie says of "the breath of His mouth":

"This expression occurs only here in the New Testament and indicates a 'sweeping away like a hurricane, or killing like the blast from a furnace'..."

He is going to blow him away!

Proverbs 16:9: "In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."

Proverbs 19:21: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

Verse 9: "that is, the one whose presence is in accord with the working of Satan, with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders,"

According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary, this "lawless one" is empowered by Satan and characterized by Satan's method, counterfeiting.

In Steve Brown's book, *If Jesus Has Come*:

Vance Havner said that Jesus performed miracles and didn't advertise, and we advertise miracles and don't perform them. He has a point.

Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, "As Christians we know that here we have no continuing city, that crowns roll in the dust and every earthly kingdom must sometimes flounder, whereas we acknowledge a king men did not crown and cannot dethrone, as we are citizens of a city of God they did not build and cannot destroy."

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 this morning of **"The Way of the Cross Leads Home"**: *"I must needs go on in the blood-sprinkled way, The path that the Savior trod, If I ever climb to the heights sublime, Where the soul is at home"*

with God. The way of the cross leads home, The way of the cross leads home; It is sweet to know, as I onward go, The way of the cross leads home.”

May 16 — Delight in Wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)

2 Thessalonians 2:10: “and with every deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved.”

2 Thessalonians 2:11: “And for this reason God is sending upon them a working of error (a deluding influence) so that they might believe the lie,”

2 Thessalonians 2:12: “in order that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but took delight in wickedness.”

Verse 10: “and with every deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved.”

These citizens of Satan’s kingdom have bought into the lie:

1. Sexually – you will be happier with someone younger.
2. Addition – just a little won’t hurt you.
3. Money – you will never have enough.

The process of deception is seen in James 1:13-16: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.”

Verse 11: “And for this reason God is sending upon them a working of error (a deluding influence) so that they might believe the lie,”

There really are only two choices: (1) to receive “the love of the truth,” or (2) to “believe the lie.”

Ryrie says:

It is that God sends strong delusion. The two words translated “strong delusion” mean literally “a powerful working of error,” and the sending of it is attributed to God. It might seem that this sending of delusion ought to be the work of Satan, but it is the sovereign God who inflicts it on man because he did not receive the truth when he had the chance.

Romans 1:24-25: “Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

Ray Stedman says:

“That lie is: ‘You can be God in your own world. Really! You can run your own life. You can do whatever you want.’”

Eve bought into that lie!

Verse 12: “in order that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but took delight in wickedness.”

“God is sending upon them a working of error (a deluding influence) so that”:

1. “they might believe the lie”
2. “in order that they all might be judged”

These people are those who (1) “did not believe the truth,” and (2) “took delight in

wickedness.”

David Roper says it well:

“How easy it is to chatter on about a God we do not know and traffic in unliv-
ing truth.”

Let’s conclude our morning meditation by singing verse 3 of **“The Way of the Cross Leads Home”**: *“Then I bid farewell to the way of the world, To walk in it never-
more; For my Lord says, ‘Come,’ and I seek my home, Where He waits at the open
door. The way of the cross leads home, The way of the cross leads home; It is sweet to
know, as I onward go, The way of the cross leads home.”*

May 17 — God Chose You (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

2 Thessalonians 2:13: *“But we should always be giving thanks to God for you,
brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salva-
tion in sanctification of the Spirit and faith in the truth.”*

Verse 13: “But we should always be giving thanks to God for you, brethren beloved
by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation in sanctification
of the Spirit and faith in the truth.”

The little word “but” forms a contrast to everything we have been studying to this
point. It was “they” in verse 12, and it is “we” in verse 13.

As we begin our meditation, I would like to refer to Isaiah 14:26-27 from the New
Living Translation: “I have a plan for the whole earth, a hand of judgment upon all the
nations. The Lord of Heaven’s Armies has spoken—who can change His plans? When
His hand is raised, who can stop Him?”

Paul calls them: “brethren beloved by the Lord.”

Thanksgiving #1: “Brethren, Beloved by the Lord!” God loves me!

Thanksgiving #2: “Because God chose you from the beginning!” God chose me!
He wants me! I am valuable to Him!

Charles Spurgeon used to say it something like this:

“I am glad God chose me before I got here because if He had waited until I got
here, He never would have chosen me.”

Closely related to God’s choice is God’s sovereignty. God has the right to do what-
ever He wants to do.

Thanksgiving #3: “For Salvation!” God saved me! I have been redeemed! The
ransom has been paid! I have been released! I have been set free!

“But we should always be giving thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the
Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation in sanctification of the
Spirit and faith in the truth.”

Thanksgiving #4: By His Spirit, God is making me holy! “In sanctification of the
Spirit.”

We are taking on a family likeness – His holiness!

Thanksgiving #5: “Faith in the truth!”

In view of God’s sovereign choice, the safe choice for the saint is to surrender, and
allow the Spirit of God to do His sanctifying work in our individual lives. Some of the
work is going to involve suffering and adversity.

So in summary, the five-fold thanksgivings in this verse are:

1. God loves me!
2. God chose me!
3. God saved me!
4. God is making me holy!
5. I have put my faith in the truth!

This morning, please join me in worship by singing verse 1 of **“Is Your All on the Altar?”**: *“You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase, And have earnestly, fervently prayed; But you cannot have rest or be perfectly blest, Until all on the altar is laid. Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart, does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest, As you yield Him your body and soul.”*

May 18 — Called Through Our Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

2 Thessalonians 2:14: *“And it was for this He called you through our gospel, to the gaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Verse 14: “And it was for this He called you through our gospel, to the gaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thanksgiving #6: **“He called you through our gospel.”**

“And it was for this [salvation] He [God] called you through our gospel.” In verse 13, “God chose you,” and “God called you” in verse 14.

John 6:44: “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

1 Thessalonians 1:5: “because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.”

God called them by using the gospel as it was proclaimed by the apostolic missionaries of Thessalonica.

Ryrie observes:

“While the choosing of verse 13 is in eternity, the calling of verse 14 is related to time.”

“And it was for this He called you through our gospel, to the gaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thanksgiving #7: **“The gaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

We will share with Christ in His glory on that glorious, wonderful day when Christ is crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

1 Corinthians 2:9: “but just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’”

Jesus asked the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane in John 17:5: “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 3 of **“Is Your All on the Altar?”**: *“Oh, we never can know what the Lord will bestow Of the blessings for which we have prayed, Till our body and soul He doth fully control, And our all on the altar is laid. Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart, does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest, As you yield Him your*

body and soul.”

May 19 — Standing Firm & Holding Fast (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

2 Thessalonians 2:15: “*So then, brethren, be standing firm and be holding fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word [of mouth] or by letter from us.*”

Verse 15: “So then, brethren, be standing firm and be holding fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word [of mouth] or by letter from us.”

“So then, brethren,” in view of the fact you have been chosen by God and called by Him into a relationship, do these two things:

1. “Be standing firm”
2. “Be holding fast to the traditions which you were taught”

Both of these actions are in the present tense, indicating they should be done continually on our part.

Ray Stedman says:

“Stand firm: ‘Do not give in under pressure.’ Hold to the teachings: ‘Do not give up the truth.’”

1 Thessalonians 1:3: “Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father.”

1 Thessalonians 3:8: “Because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 16:13: “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

Exodus 14:13-14: “Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.’”

When suffering comes, don’t get sarcastic, start to shake or to stomp; but stay steadfast in the storm!

God’s *choice* leads to a *conduct*. This *conduct* is to be: (1) “standing firm” and (2) “holding fast to the traditions which you were taught.” How do you do that? You get a handle on the word of God by:

1. Reading
2. Studying
3. Meditating
4. Memorizing
5. Obeying the Truth

A.W. Tozer in his book, *The Set of the Sail*, says:

The heart seldom gets hot while the mouth is open. A closed mouth before God and a silent heart are indispensable for the reception of certain kinds of truth. No man is qualified to speak who has not first listened.

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord together by singing verse 4 of “**Is Your All on the Altar?**”: “*Who can tell all the love He will send from above, And*

how happy our hearts will be made, Of the fellowship sweet we shall share at His feet, When our all on the altar is laid? Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest, As you yield Him your body and soul."

May 20 — Comfort & Strengthen Your Hearts (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

2 Thessalonians 2:16: "*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace,*"

2 Thessalonians 2:17: "*comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."*

Verse 16: "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace,"

When you see the words "now may," it indicates Paul is back in prayer again.

David Roper in *A Burden Shared* says:

I recall a Far Side cartoon depicting a group of shackled slaves, standing on a pier, waiting for a Roman galley that was pulling into port. "That's a great ship," one observed, "I wonder what makes it go?"

We all know it is the prayers of the saints that power a ministry where souls are touched and lives are changed.

The secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.

John Wesley said:

"God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

Fenelon says:

"Perfect prayer is only another name for love."

Prayer and a holy life are one. A holy life does not live in the closet, but it cannot live without the closet.

John F. Walvoord says:

"This portion of Scripture serves as a reminder of the place of prayer and how

Christians need to let God have His way in their prayer life."

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace."

This verse tells us He "gave us" two gifts given "by grace":

1. "Eternal encouragement"
2. "Good hope"

He gave us *inward encouragement* and *outward establishment*.

It is an "eternal encouragement." It is not here today and gone tomorrow. It lasts beyond all time. It is joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Hendriksen says:

The good hope of which Paul speaks is a hope that is well-founded, namely, upon God's promises, Christ's redemptive work, is full of joy, never ends in disappointment.

Verse 17: "comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

Now, Paul focuses on two specific things he is requesting for them: (1) "comfort" and (2) "strength."

Bishop Andrewes prays beautifully:

"Abide with us, O Lord, for it is toward evening and the day of our life is far

spent.”

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

The word order helps us understand Paul’s priority is upon:

1. The living not the lip
2. The works not the word
3. The conduct rather than the conversation

I find myself singing that very familiar prayer hymn, **“I Need Thee Every Hour.”**

Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: *“I need Thee ev’ry hour; Most Gracious Lord; No tender voice like Thine can peace afford. I need Thee ev’ry hour; Stay Thou near by; Temptations lose their pow’r When Thou art nigh. I need Thee, O, I need Thee; Ev’ry hour I need Thee! O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee.”*

May 21 — Pray For Us (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

2 Thessalonians 3:1: “Finally, brethren, be praying for us in order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and be glorified, even as it is doing also with you;”

2 Thessalonians 3:2: “and that we may be delivered from perverted and evil men; for not all are having faith.”

Verse 1: “Finally, brethren, be praying for us in order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and be glorified, even as it is doing also with you;”

Whereas Paul is praying for the Thessalonians at the end of chapter 2, he opens chapter 3 asking for them to pray for him.

“Finally, brethren, be praying for us.” This is present tense, meaning keep on doing it!

Every work must have prayer behind it if it is to succeed. Every successful evangelist and preacher of the Word, every teacher of the Word who is being used of God has people who are praying for him.

A man who fails to pray limits himself to his own resources.

The purpose is spelled out in the two prayer requests: Request #1 regards the *message*. Request #2 regards the *ministers* or *messengers*.

Request #1: **“In order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and be glorified.”** This is once again in the present tense.

Ellicott says:

“may have free course and be glorified”...may find no obstacles and hindrances in its onward course and be manifested, felt and acknowledged in its true power and glory by all.

It is glorified when it works and does what it says it will do!

The Word of God: (1) confronts, (2) convicts, (3) conquers, and (4) changes.

Verse 2: “and that we may be delivered from perverted and evil men; for not all are having faith.”

Request #2: **“That we may be delivered from perverted and evil men; for not all are having faith.”**

Lenski speaks of these perverted men:

“[They are] set on stopping the free course of the Word by silencing the voice of the preachers.”

The reason for the prayer request of deliverance is given in the last phrase: “for not

all are having faith.” Many are having faith, but not all are having the faith – saving faith.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 3 and 4 of **“I Need Thee Every Hour”**: *“I need Thee ev’ry hour; In joy or pain; Come quickly and abide, Or life is in vain. I need Thee ev’ry hour; Most Holy One; O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessèd Son. I need Thee, O, I need Thee; Ev’ry hour I need Thee! O bless me now, my Saviour; I come to Thee.”*

May 22 — The Lord is Faithful (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

2 Thessalonians 3:3: *“But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”*

Verse 3: “But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out: “The word faithful is in the emphatic position.” You can translate it: Faithful is the Lord!

1 Thessalonians 5:24: “Faithful is the one who is calling you, who also will do it.”

Because “the Lord is faithful,” He will do two things:

1. He “will strengthen” – inwardly.
2. He will “protect you from the evil one” – outwardly.

We are a contrast to the Lord’s faithfulness. We let him down, fail, delay, fight, resist. Oh how patient and loving the Lord is!

Joe Aldrich in his book, *Prayer Summits: Seeking God’s Agenda for Your Community*, says:

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.” And who is that? The one who: blew out the lights in Eden; divided the kingdom of Israel; lies, deceives, and destroys; opposes Christian unity; corrupts the environment in which we live and sows unbelief in every direction.

1 Peter 5:8-9: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

He is a defeated foe! Stand up and tell him to stop! When he knocks, send the Lord Jesus to the door!

This morning, I find myself singing and worshipping with that great old hymn, **“Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”** Let’s sing verse 1 together: *“‘Great is Thy faithfulness,’ O God my Father; There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not; As thou hast been Thou forever wilt be. ‘Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!’ Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided, ‘Great is Thy faithfulness,’ Lord, unto me!”*

May 23 — God Glories in the Obedient Heart (2 Thessalonians 3:4)

2 Thessalonians 3:4: *“Now we have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord concerning you, that the things which we are commanding you are also doing and will continue to be doing.”*

Verse 4: “Now we have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord concerning you,

that the things which we are commanding you are also doing and will continue to be doing.”

Paul says they have made up their minds about the Thessalonian believers in two areas:

1. “That the things which we are commanding you are also doing.”
2. You “will continue to be doing.”

They are characterized as Christians with obedient hearts.

Because He is sovereign and He loves us unconditionally, He must be obeyed. The scripture places a high priority upon obedience.

A.W. Tozer in *The Set of the Sail* says:

“So let me say boldly that it is not the difficulty of discovering truth but the unwillingness to obey it that makes it so rare among men.”

This morning, the big question that comes to us as we meditate on this verse is:

Are we delighting the heart of God by understanding God glories in the obedient heart? Are we doing those things which He is commanding in His word? Is there a holy determination that we will continue doing the things He demands of us? Have we surrendered to the point where we have honestly said to Him, “Not my will but Yours be done”?

One of the songs the Lord used in my life when I was in junior high and we sung at camp was “**Living for Jesus.**” Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1: “*Living for Jesus a life that is true, Striving to please Him in all that I do; Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free, This is the pathway of blessing for me. O Jesus, Lord and Savior I give myself to Thee, For Thou, in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me; I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne; My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.*”

May 24 — Love of God & Perseverance of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5-6)

2 Thessalonians 3:5: “*And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness (perseverance) of Christ.*”

2 Thessalonians 3:6: “*Now we are commanding you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who is walking around undisciplined and not according to the tradition which they received from us.*”

Verse 5: “And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness (perseverance) of Christ.”

Paul expresses a prayer wish for these Thessalonian Christians: “the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.” The “love of God” is that which would motivate them to be obedient. As the love-relationship deepens, the desire intensifies to please the one loved.

Then the apostle asks for the Lord to direct their hearts into: “the steadfastness (perseverance) of Christ.” Love is the *commitment* and perseverance is *carrying it out!*

2 Corinthians 5:14: “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.”

1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

The level of our love is tested by *perseverance*.

The Greek word “direct” can be translated “*clear away all the obstacles.*”

When the love is right, the commitment is going to be there. So much of Christianity today involves *casual connections* rather than *costly commitments*.

Hebrews 12:1-2: “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance (perseverance) the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Steven J. Lawson in *Men Who Win: Pursuing the Ultimate Prize* says:

I fear there are too many “one-hundred-yard dash” Christians. They begin well, sprinting out of the starting blocks. They are at church every time the door is opened. They read their Bibles and their enthusiasm is obvious to all. But eventually, they burn out and drop by the wayside. They go up like a rocket. And come down like a rock. In the day-to-day grind of the race, they eventually weaken, waver, and lose heart.

Verse 6: “Now we are commanding you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who is walking around undisciplined and not according to the tradition which they received from us.”

“Now we are commanding you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is a very serious matter given as a command in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“That you keep away from every brother who is walking around undisciplined and not according to the tradition which they received from us.” There are two things said about this brother’s “walking around”:

1. “Undisciplined” – playing the truant
2. “Not according to the tradition which they [he] received from us”

Charles Spurgeon had much to say about the undisciplined:

“If you are idle in Christ’s work, you are active in the devil’s work.”

The manna which the children of Israel kept until morning bred worms and stank. Idle grace will soon become active corruption.

A brother prayed recently for those who are detained on beds of sick and armchairs of laziness. I am afraid there are a good many of the second type.

Idle Christians are often unhappy Christians.

He who lives by killing time dies with it.

The saddest part about this passage is they are quitting before they are done. We are living in a day when it is acceptable behavior: (1) to retire, (2) to drop out, and (3) to do what you want to do before you finally die. What a sad picture. I believe the Lord is honored when we run with all our might the race set before us, and then at death we cross the finish line and fall into His arms.

So I recommend: *light it up, lay it on and leave a legacy.*

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of “**Living for Jesus**”: “*Living for Jesus who died in my place, Bearing on Calv’ry my sin and disgrace; Such love constrains me to answer His call, Follow His leading and give Him my all. O Jesus, Lord and Savior I give myself to Thee, For Thou, in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me; I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne; My*

life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone."

May 25 — The Disciplined Life (2 Thessalonians 3:7-8)

2 Thessalonians 3:7: *"For you yourselves are knowing how you ought to be imitating us; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,"*

2 Thessalonians 3:8: *"nor did we eat bread from anyone without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you;"*

Verse 7: "For you yourselves are knowing how you ought to be imitating us; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary observes: "Paul is justifying his command with an example."

Charles Spurgeon says:

Man was not made for an idle life. Labor is evidently his proper condition.

Even when man was perfect, he was placed in the garden, not to admire its flowers, but to keep it and dress it. If he needed to work when he was perfect, how much more does he require the discipline of labor now that he has fallen.

Verse 8: *"nor did we eat bread from anyone without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you;"*

Paul states they weren't sponging off them, but instead: "with labor and hardship we kept working night and day" the result is "so that we might not be a burden to any of you."

1 Thessalonians 2:9: "For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."

Steve Brown in *If Jesus Has Come* says:

There was once a rooster who went into the ostrich pen and got one of those gigantic eggs. He rolled it over to his pen, pushed it in front of the hens, and said, "Now, I don't want you to think I'm complaining, but I did want you to see what the competition is doing."

John. F. Walvoord says:

Paul says: "That is not what I taught you. While I was among you, I earned my own living and worked in order to provide the necessities of my life. I would not be dependent on you. I paid my own way. I provided my own food. Now I have set you an example. You should be providing for your own things. You should not be living at the expense of others."

Let's continue our worship and praise this morning by singing verse 3 of **"Living for Jesus"**: *"Living for Jesus wherever I am, Doing each duty in His holy name; Willing to suffer affliction and loss, Deeming each trial a part of my cross. O Jesus, Lord and Savior I give myself to Thee, For Thou, in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me; I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne; My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone."*

May 26 — A Model for You (2 Thessalonians 3:9-10)

2 Thessalonians 3:9: *"not because we are not having the right to this, but in order*

that we might offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you might be imitating us.”

2 Thessalonians 3:10: *“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not desiring to be working, neither let him be eating.”*

Verse 9: “not because we are not having the right to this, but in order that we might offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you might be imitating us.”

There is a negative and a positive in this verse with a result. Negatively, “not because we are not having the right to this,” the contrast “but,” then positively the purpose is expressed, “in order that we might offer ourselves as a model for you.” Finally, the result is stated, “so that you might be imitating us.”

This takes us back to verse 7: “For you yourselves are knowing how you ought to be imitating us; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you.”

Paul made a point to model his message before those whom he taught. The apostle points out they had the right to expect the Thessalonians would support them financially as they ministered to them spiritually, but they surrendered their rights on this occasion so they might offer themselves as an example: “in order that we might offer ourselves as a model for you.”

Verse 10: “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not desiring to be working, neither let him be eating.”

Paul states a further reason and reminds them of the order he gave when he was there: “if anyone is not desiring to be working, neither let him be eating.”

Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.”

1 Chronicles 28:20: “David also said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.’”

We are living in a day when we have replaced initiative with entitlement.

At the entrance of one of the great manufacturing plants in America is a sign that reads, “If you are like a wheelbarrow – going no further than you are pushed – you need not apply for work here!”

Unless *character, convictions, credibility, commitment and courage* come back; we need to listen to those who say we are done.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 4 of **“Living for Jesus”**: *“Living for Jesus through earth’s little while, My dearest treasure, the light of His smile; Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem, Bringing the weary to find rest in Him. O Jesus, Lord and Savior I give myself to Thee, For Thou, in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me; I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne; My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.”*

May 27 — Walking Around Undisciplined (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12)

2 Thessalonians 3:11: *“For we are hearing that certain ones among you are walking around undisciplined, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:12: *“Now such persons we are commanding and exhorting in the Lord Jesus Christ in order that with quietness they be working and eating their own bread.”*

Verse 11: “For we are hearing that certain ones among you are walking around

undisciplined, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.”

Now the apostle focuses on the reason why he has made such an issue about work. He had received reports that certain ones among them were walking around in this undisciplined way, “doing no work at all.”

Gary Thomas in his book, *Everybody Matters*, says:

Laziness is like pride. We can't turn it on and off. It becomes a part of who we are. If we caudle laziness in one area of our lives, we will succumb to it in other areas as well. Sins are by nature self-reproducing. Selfish people are selfish in every way. How they drive, how they spend their money, how they talk and even how they serve is marked by selfishness. In the same way, if we become lazy with our physical health, we are likely to become lazy with our spiritual health. The reverse is also true. Cultivating discipline in physical fitness can make us more apt to be disciplined in spiritual fitness.

These “certain ones” had to be doing something so this inactivity resulted in “acting like busybodies.”

Barclay says:

Paul disliked the busybody intensely. There may be greater sins than gossip, but there is no sin which does more damage in the Church. A man who is doing his own work with his whole strength will have enough to do without being maliciously and pryingly interested in the affairs of other people.

I really believe the devil has a harder time hitting a moving target.

From *Our Daily Bread*:

“Trouble is usually produced by those who produce nothing else.”

From *Our Daily Bread*:

“Footprints in the sands of time are not made by sitting down.”

Verse 12: “Now such persons we are commanding and exhorting in the Lord Jesus Christ in order that with quietness they be working and eating their own bread.”

Paul speaks specifically to those who are the problem: “Now such persons we are commanding and exhorting in the Lord Jesus Christ,” stating the purpose, “in order that with quietness they be working and eating their own bread.”

Ellicott says:

“[It is] ‘with quietness;’ in opposition to the busy and meddlesome course of life followed by the [ones who are walking around undisciplined].”

Jesus said in John 9:4: “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.”

For our worship and praise these next few mornings, I want us to center on that wonderful hymn, **“Trust and Obey.”** Please join me this morning in singing verse 1: *“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, What a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.”*

May 28 — Don't Grow Weary of Serving (2 Thessalonians 3:13)

2 Thessalonians 3:13: *“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”*

Verse 13: “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”

One thing we know: we are delighting the heart of God by understanding He is thrilled when we persevere, and are faithful and consistent in what He has called us to do.

The little word “but” forms the contrast to what he has been saying in the previous section.

There were a number of those in the Thessalonian church who were living off of others, having quit their job in anticipation of the soon-coming of our Lord.

We now move from “they” to “you”: “But as for you, brethren.”

The apostle gives the first of three commands:

Command #1: “Do not grow weary of doing good.”

The words translated as “grow weary” occur 6 times in the New Testament:

1. It occurs here in 2 Thessalonians 3:13
2. It also occurs in Galatians 6:9: “And let us *not lose heart* in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not *grow weary*.”
3. The third usage is in 2 Corinthians 4:1: “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we *do not lose heart*.”
4. The fourth usage is in 2 Corinthians 4:16: “Therefore, *do not lose heart*, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”
5. The fifth occurrence is in Ephesians 3:13: “Therefore I ask you *not to lose heart* at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.”
6. The sixth usage of the word is Luke 18:1: “Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and *not to lose heart*.”

D. L. Moody said it well:

“I get weary in the work, but not weary of the work.”

Galatians 6:9-10: “And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Psalms 126:5-6: “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.”

Exodus 17:12: “When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset.”

Vince Lombardi said:

“Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light.”

Vernon Grounds said:

“At times, you and I may feel trapped by the circumstances that demand patience and persistence. Are we willing to keep digging away at whatever bog God has assigned to us?”

He concludes his meditation in saying, “In serving the Lord, it is always too soon to quit.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of **“Trust and Obey”**: *“Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, But His smile quickly drives it away; Not a doubt nor a fear, not a sigh nor a tear, Can abide while we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there’s no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.”*

May 29 — Keep Admonishing the Disobedient (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)

2 Thessalonians 3:14: *“And if anyone is not obeying our word through this letter, be taking special notice of that man (be putting a tag on that man) and do not be associating with him, in order that he may be put to shame.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:15: *“And yet do not be regarding him as an enemy, but keep admonishing him as a brother.”*

Verse 14: “And if anyone is not obeying our word through this letter, be taking special notice of that man (be putting a tag on that man) and do not be associating with him, in order that he may be put to shame.”

They are being instructed in how to handle the exceptions. Command #1 was in verse 13: **“Do not grow weary of doing good.”** Now the apostle gives Command #2:

Command #2: **“Be taking special notice of that man (be putting a tag on that man) and do not be associating with him, in order that he may be put to shame.”**

There are two instructions the Thessalonians are commanded to follow in verse 14 when they face a situation of disobedience:

1. “Be taking special notice of that man (be putting a tag on that man).” The verb is in the present tense telling us to keep an eye on him for a while.
2. “Do not be associating with him, in order that he may be put to shame.” The Greek word for this phrase means “keep no company with him” or “do not mingle with him.”

Ryrie says:

“Don’t mix yourselves up with him.”

John F. Walvoord says:

“Do not have fellowship with those who will not listen to the Word of God.”

We have the purpose behind the two-fold command: “in order that he may be put to shame.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “The design of divine discipline is always to produce repentance, not division. Social pressure can be effective.”

Verse 15: “And yet do not be regarding him as an enemy, but keep admonishing him as a brother.”

This verse contains the next command.

Command #3: **“Do not be regarding him as an enemy, but keep admonishing him as a brother.”**

We have a negative and a positive. Negatively, “do not be regarding him as an enemy,” but positively, “keep admonishing him as a brother.”

In summary, Paul has been spelling out three directives with regard to disciplinary action that ought to be taken in the face of disobedience:

1. “Be taking special notice of that man (be putting a tag on that man).”
2. “Do not be associating with him.”
3. “Do not be regarding him as an enemy.”

Hebrews 12:11 gives us the goal of discipline: “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of “**Trust and Obey**”: “*Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, But our toil He doth richly repay; Not a grief nor a loss, not a frown nor a cross, But is blest if we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.*”

May 30 — The Gift of Peace (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

2 Thessalonians 3:16: “*Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all!*”

Verse 16: “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all!”

The words “now may” indicate the apostle has again moved to prayer. In both of the Thessalonian epistles, Paul is often found in prayer. He prays for two things for the Thessalonians:

1. The Lord’s peace
2. The Lord’s presence

Paul moves from *correction* to *intercession*.

The apostle was concerned for peace through the unity of all members obeying the truth.

There are two things that indicate we are delighting God’s heart: (1) His “peace” and (2) His presence.

Jesus says in the upper room in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

Hebrews 13:20-21: “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (through and through); and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 4:6-7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

He not only wishes for the peace which the Lord can give, but also for the Lord’s presence: “the Lord be with you all!”

Exodus 33:14: “The Lord replied, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’”

Isaiah 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 4 of **“Trust and Obey”**: *“But we never can prove the delights of His love Until all on the altar we lay; For the favor He shows and the joy He bestows Are for them who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there’s no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.”*

May 31 — Grace Be With You All (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18)

2 Thessalonians 3:17: *“The greeting by my hand, the hand of Paul, which is the distinguishing mark in every letter: in this manner I am writing.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:18: *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”*

Verse 17: “The greeting by my hand, the hand of Paul, which is the distinguishing mark in every letter: in this manner I am writing.”

In this verse, we are reminded there had been a spurious letter circulating among the Thessalonian saints – attributed to the apostle Paul – saying “the Day of the Lord” was already upon them.

2 Thessalonians 2:2-3: “that you may not be quickly shaken from your calmness of mind or be disturbed either by a spirit or through a word or through a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way lead you astray, because that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

Barclay says:

“Look,” he says, “this is what my handwriting is like. Mark it, so that you will know it again.” And then, with the truth expounded, with praise and rebuke lovingly intermingled, he commends the Thessalonian Church to the grace of Jesus Christ.

Verse 18: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

This is the fourth and final usage of the word “grace” in this epistle:

1. **2 Thessalonians 1:2:** “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. **2 Thessalonians 1:12:** “In order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the *grace* of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
3. **2 Thessalonians 2:16:** “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by *grace*.”
4. **2 Thessalonians 3:18:** “The *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

Yes, there is adequate grace for every need. 2 Corinthians 12:9: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

In closing this second epistle, let’s meditate upon 2 Thessalonians 3:5: “And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness (perseverance) of Christ.”

Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton in *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* describe five characteristics of those who finish well:

1. They had perspective which enabled them to focus.

2. They enjoyed intimacy with Christ and experienced repeated times of inner renewal.
3. They were disciplined in important areas of life.
4. They maintained a positive learning attitude all their lives.
5. They had a network of meaningful relationships and several important mentors during their lifetime.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 5 of **“Trust and Obey”**:

*“Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet, Or we’ll walk by His side in the way
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go; Never fear, only trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there’s no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.”*

JUNE

June 1 — God Has the Controls (1 Peter 1:1-2)

1 Peter 1:1: *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,”*

1 Peter 1:2: *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in setting apart of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, may grace and peace be yours in ever greater measure.”*

Verse 1: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,”

It is hard to believe that a man so rough and so fond of action would be selected by the Lord of glory to write some of the sweetest words that have ever been given to console and encourage suffering and persecuted saints. Evidently, this tough exterior had been torn away through suffering.

Age either hardens or softens you. Suffering does the same thing! You are either *bitter or better, brash or broken, stubborn or submissive, sweet or sour, resisting or resting.*

Peter is addressing his letter to the chosen exiles of the dispersion. He is very fond of making reference to the fact that God chose us to be in Him before the foundation of the world. Exiles, of course, are people who are away from their real home.

“Of the dispersion” is a term James also uses in his introduction to refer to Christian Jews who were scattered into various places through the persecution.

Pilgrims passing through looking for a city are his audience.

These countries are all within close proximity of one another and can easily be located on a map which dates from this period of time.

Verse 2: “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in setting apart of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, may grace and peace be yours in ever greater measure.”

Whereas we were chosen “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” we were set “apart of (by) the Spirit” unto obedience and “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” From this passage we see:

1. God the Father chose us according to His foreknowledge.
2. God the Spirit set us apart.
3. God the Son made it possible by the shedding of His blood upon the cross.

The reference to the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” is the picture of sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat.

It is a comforting thought to remember even in the midst of difficulty, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have each had a part in our salvation. No matter what happens, we will never be left or forsaken.

Peter desires for these saints to experience present grace and peace to meet the difficulties they are encountering.

“May grace and peace be yours in ever greater measure.” We see “grace” in all three tenses:

1. Grace in the *past*, in the offering of His Son
2. Grace in the *present*, to live life for His glory
3. Grace in the *future*, which is yet to be ours at the revelation of Jesus Christ

It is Peter’s hope they might experience grace to endure the suffering that is going to be theirs and still be at peace no matter how difficult the storm.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing John W. Peterson’s great hymn, **“No One Understands Like Jesus.”** Please join me in verse 1: *“No one understands like Jesus, He’s a friend beyond compare; Meet Him at the throne of mercy, He is waiting for You there. No one understands like Jesus. When the days are dark and grim; No one is so near, so dear as Jesus; Cast Your ev’ry care on Him.”*

June 2 — A Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3)

1 Peter 1:3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”*

Verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

In this verse, Peter breaks forth in praise to God the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” for making it possible for us “to be born again to a living hope.” The basis for this new birth is “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

We have been “born again to a *living hope*” not a *dead hope* because Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and is alive at the right hand of God the Father at this time.

Lenski says:

“A living hope is the opposite of an empty, false, deceptive hope. It is bright, strong, active in us because God guarantees and produces its fulfillment.”

God the Father is the One who provided the new birth to make it possible for us to have a relationship with Him. He is also our “living hope” for the future.

This “living hope” is characterized by calmness, endurance, fortitude and purity. Thus, it is a “living hope” indeed for it: (1) *has life*, (2) *gives life*, and (3) *looks for life* so that those who are in possession of it need never be ashamed.

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 2 of **“No One Understands Like Jesus”**: *“No one understands like Jesus, Ev’ry woe He sees and feels, Tenderly He whispers comfort, And the broken heart He heals. No one understands like Jesus. When the days are dark and grim; No one is so near, so dear as Jesus; Cast Your ev’ry care on Him.”*

June 3 — Reserved in Heaven for You (1 Peter 1:4-5)

1 Peter 1:4: “unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you.”

1 Peter 1:5: “you who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Verse 4: “unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you.”

We not only have been born again to a “living hope,” but we also have the promise of “an inheritance which has been reserved in heaven for you.”

This inheritance has three qualities. It is:

1. “Imperishable” - eternal
2. “Undefiled” - pure
3. “Unfading” – won’t diminish

Everything here on earth is the opposite. It perishes, ruins, and disappears over time.

Paul Rees says:

It is imperishable, no termites, no moulding, no decaying, it is undefiled, no sin will ever stain it, no rebellion will ever rock it. It is unfading; its beauty will be forever undiminished. Its charms are ever enchanting.

A MANSION THERE, HE HAS GONE TO PREPARE

YES, A PLACE FOR YOU AND FOR ME.

FOREVER TO LIVE WITH CHRIST OVER THERE

HIS PLEASURE, OUR PLEASURE TO BE.

Verse 5: “you who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

In the last three verses, we have learned:

1. We have been “born again to a living hope” – in [verse 3](#).
2. We have “an inheritance reserved in heaven” for us – in [verse 4](#).
3. We “are being protected by the power of God” – now in [verse 5](#).

We can look *back* to a point in time when we were “born again to a living hope.” We can look *forward* to “an inheritance reserved in heaven” and no matter what happens to us in this life, we “are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The reason given for our “being protected by the power of God” is seen in the last phrase: “for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Paul Rees says:

Kept by the power of God, a tremendous phrase, who could thrill to it more than Peter. He who once tried to keep himself, impetuous, and self-reliant, full of zeal toward the Master, he was sure that though others might not hold to their loyalty, to Him, he would. Then the sickening failure, the dark denial, the bitter tears, the tender recovery.

The word for “protected” is translated “*guarded*” or “*kept*.” It is a military term referring to a small force of men who are placed inside a fort, to hold it against attack while the main body of the army moves on to take new ground.

The same power displayed in the creation of the worlds and the setting in motion of the times and seasons is the same power keeping us “through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Philippians 1:6: “Being sure of this very thing, that He who began in you a good

work will bring it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of **“No One Understands Like Jesus”**: *“No one understands like Jesus, When the foes of life assail, You should never be discouraged, Jesus cares and will not fail. No one understands like Jesus. When the days are dark and grim; No one is so near, so dear as Jesus; Cast Your ev’ry care on Him.”*

June 4 — Tested by Fire (1 Peter 1:6-7)

1 Peter 1:6: *“In this you are rejoicing, though now for a little while, if it must be (if there is need for it), you have been distressed in the midst of various kinds of testings,”*

1 Peter 1:7: *“in order that the genuineness of your faith, which is more precious than gold which is perishing, though it is being tested by fire, may be found for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”*

Verse 6: “In this you are rejoicing, though now for a little while, if it must be (if there is need for it), you have been distressed in the midst of various kinds of testings,”

In the first phrase, Peter is referring back to what has been said in the previous verses: “In this you are rejoicing.” These great truths provide a spirit of rejoicing even though the present circumstances may be difficult.

James 1:2-3 helps us understand God’s design in testing: “Deem it pure joy, my brethren, whenever you fall into various kinds of trials; knowing that the testing of your faith is producing endurance (patience or perseverance).”

Howard Ferrin says:

“The question is repeatedly asked, why is the life of a Christian drenched with so much blood and blistered with so many tears?”

Barclay points out:

“In this world, trial and affliction are not meant to take the strength out of us, but to put the strength in to us.”

Whatever life is doing to us, we have the grace of God which will enable us to meet it and to overcome it.

It would be awfully easy to get shook and feel that everything depended upon us when trials come because it seems so obvious that God is not in control. It’s a real comfort to know He designs trials and testings for a purpose. We will discover this purpose in the next verse.

Verse 7: “in order that the genuineness of your faith, which is more precious than gold which is perishing, though it is being tested by fire, may be found for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”

Dr. E. Stanley Jones wrote:

“As the affirmation for the day, grief comes to all, sours some, sweetens others, I still use it to sweeten my spirit.”

GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY HIS WONDERS TO PERFORM;
HE PLANTS HIS FOOTSTEPS IN THE SEA AND RIDES UPON THE
STORM.

YE FEARFUL SAINTS, FRESH COURAGE TAKE, THE CLOUDS YE SO
MUCH DREAD,
ARE BIG WITH MERCY AND SHALL BREAK WITH BLESSINGS ON

YOUR HEAD.

Why all the tests? “In order that the genuineness of your faith may be found for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Watchman Nee says:

What God does is right. Circumstances are His appointment for our good. They are calculated to undermine and weaken the specially strong points of our nature.

God knows what He is doing.

There is nothing accidental in the life of the believer. It is all measured out to us. We may not welcome the discipline, but in the end, it is designed to make us partakers of His holiness.

This morning, please join me in singing verse 4 of **“No One Understands Like Jesus”**: *“No one understands like Jesus, When you falter on the way, Tho’ you fail Him, sadly fail Him, He will pardon You today. No one understands like Jesus. When the days are dark and grim; No one is so near, so dear as Jesus; Cast Your ev’ry care on Him.”*

June 5 — The Salvation of Your Souls (1 Peter 1:8-9)

1 Peter 1:8: *“whom having not seen, you are loving, in whom now not seeing, yet believing, you are rejoicing with inexpressible and glorified joy,”*

1 Peter 1:9: *“obtaining as an outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”*

Verse 8: “whom having not seen, you are loving, in whom now not seeing, yet believing, you are rejoicing with inexpressible and glorified joy,”

Although we have “not seen” Him, we are “loving Him” because of who He is and what He has done on our behalf in making it possible for us:

1. To be born again
2. To have an inheritance reserved for us
3. To be protected by the power of God

“In whom now not seeing, yet believing, you are rejoicing.” Peter goes one step further and points out that although we are not seeing Him, we are believing Him and rejoicing in the expectation of those things which are ahead for us “with inexpressible and glorified joy.”

We are not able to see Him, but we can (1) *love* Him and (2) *believe* in Him.

Whereas in the previous section, we were looking at the salvation which has been made available to us, now we are looking at the Person who has made it possible.

BUT WHAT TO THOSE WHO FIND OWE THIS,

NOR TONGUE NOR PEN CAN SHOW.

THE LOVE OF JESUS, WHAT IT IS,

NONE BUT HIS LOVED ONES KNOW.

Verse 9: “obtaining as an outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

Peter gives the ultimate end of our faith. It is going to lead to the salvation of our souls. He already spoke of this in verse 5 when he said we “are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

We have also learned this faith is being refined in the present process of things “in order that the genuineness” might be proven so the outcome of the refined faith will lead to “the salvation of your [our] souls.”

There is a wonderful hymn I often sang in church while growing up, **“Love Lifted**

Me.” Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1: *“I was sinking deep in sin, Far from the peaceful shore, Very deeply stained within, Sinking to rise no more; But the Master of the sea, Heard my despairing cry, From the waters lifted me, Now safe am I. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help Love lifted me.”*

June 6 — The Suffering & Glories of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-11)

1 Peter 1:10: *“Concerning which salvation prophets searched and inquired carefully, those who prophesied concerning the grace intended for you,”*

1 Peter 1:11: *“searching what time or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was making clear when He was testifying beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glories along with them.”*

Verse 10: “Concerning which salvation prophets searched and inquired carefully, those who prophesied concerning the grace intended for you,”

In verses 10, 11 and 12; Peter speaks about the prophets who predicted this salvation he has been talking about in the earlier verses. They searched and inquired carefully concerning the grace intended for you.

Whereas the grace spoken of in verse 2 was *grace for present needs*, the grace spoken of in verse 10 is the *grace of the past*. This grace made it possible for us to have a relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Grace is a new program. We need to take fresh heart because Christ suffered before us.

Verse 11: “searching what time or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was making clear when He was testifying beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glories along with them.”

This presents a picture of one searching for the time or the “kind of time” that the Spirit of Christ was making clear to them.

Galatians 4:4-5: “But when the fullness of the time came. God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law in order that he might deliver out by the payment of a ransom those under law, in order that we might receive the adoption.”

The Psalmist foresaw the sufferings of Christ in Psalm 22 and the glories along with them in Psalm 24.

Isaiah the prophet sees the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 and the glories along with them in Isaiah 54.

God’s method is *suffering then glory*. The devil’s method is *glory then suffering*.

Romans 8:18: “For I am of the opinion that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory which is about to be revealed to us.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of **“Love Lifted Me”**: *“All my heart to Him I give, Ever to Him I’ll cling, In His blessed presence live, Ever His praises sing, Love so mighty and so true Merits my soul’s best songs; Faithful, loving service, too, To Him belongs. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help Love lifted me.”*

June 7 — Good News by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12)

1 Peter 1:12: *“To whom it was revealed that, not for themselves, but for you they were ministering these things which now have been reported to you through those*

who have proclaimed the good news to you by the Holy Spirit who was sent from heaven-which things angels are eagerly desiring to gain a clear glance (to look into).”

Verse 12: “To whom it was revealed that, not for themselves, but for you they were ministering these things which now have been reported to you through those who have proclaimed the good news to you by the Holy Spirit who was sent from heaven-which things angels are eagerly desiring to gain a clear glance (to look into).”

“Which now have been reported to you through those who have proclaimed the good news to you by the Holy Spirit.” I am sure Peter has in mind the day of Pentecost or subsequent occasions when they have heard the message of the crucified risen Lord from one of the apostles.

John 16:13: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

“Which things angels are eagerly desiring to gain a clear glance (to look into).” It is not only the prophets who are searching and inquiring carefully about this salvation which is made available to us, but the angels themselves are desiring to get a “clear glance” of what is going on and what God is doing in this present time.

“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!”

IS WHAT THE ANGELS SING,
AND I EXPECT TO HELP THEM
MAKE THE COURTS OF HEAVEN RING.

BUT WHEN WE SING REDEMPTION’S STORY,
THEY MUST FOLD THEIR WINGS,
FOR ANGELS NEVER FELT THE JOY
THAT OUR SALVATION BRINGS.

John Hunter points out:

Some people are not sure about their home in heaven. They have doubts about their future salvation. This is sad because they have no assurance. They miss the point that He, that is Christ, is my salvation. My safety does not depend upon what I keep on doing, but upon what He is.

I find myself on this occasion of our 60th wedding anniversary being enriched by words Pearl wrote a long time ago:

LORD, HOW I LONG TO SERVE THEE UPON SOME GREAT MISSION
FIELD
AND HAVE THE WORLD SEE, HOW MUCH I LOVE THEE
BY THIS MY SACRIFICE.
“NAY,” CAME HIS VOICE SO GENTLE, YET SO FIRM.
“WALK WITHIN THY HOUSE,” WITH A PERFECT HEART
AND DO NOT FOR OTHER THINGS YEARN.”

THEN LORD MAKE WITHIN THESE WALLS,

A PERFECT SACRIFICE OF THY GRACE.
A PLACE WHERE ALL WHO ENTER
MAY SEE THY FACE
AND REST AND BE RENEWED.

MAY THOSE WHO DWELL HERE LORD,
FIND ALWAYS WARM WELCOME,
PEACE AND HAPPY WORDS.
THAT WHEN THEY GO,
THEIR OWN HEARTH TO BUILD,
THEY WILL HAVE A PERFECT PATTERN,
AND THY PERFECT WILL FULFILL.

If you will, please join me in singing verse 3 of **“Love Lifted Me”**: *“Souls in danger, look above, Jesus completely saves; He will lift you by His love Out of the angry waves. He’s the Master of the sea, Billows His will obey; He your Saviour wants to be, Be saved today. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help Love lifted me.”*

June 8 — Get Tough & Start Growing (1 Peter 1:13-14)

1 Peter 1:13: *“Wherefore, when you have girded the loins of your mind, be well-balanced, set your hope fully upon the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 1:14: *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,”*

Verse 13: “Wherefore, when you have girded the loins of your mind, be well-balanced, set your hope fully upon the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“Wherefore” points back in the passage to all that has been said regarding the salvation made available to us. Now, Peter addresses what is our responsibility.

“When you have girded the loins of your mind.” The thought here is the preparation of your minds for action. You:

1. Have been born into His family
 2. Have an inheritance reserved by Him
 3. Are protected by His power
- Luck, in commenting on this phrase, says:

In Bible days, the outer garment was usually a long, loose robe. When a person wished to work, to run or even to fight, he would tuck the long undergarment under his girdle. So “gird up the loins of your mind” is a figurative expression a little like our “pull yourself together” though actually there is no idiom that expresses the same thought in our language and customs. The idea is that we must gather all our mental powers together and fully concentrate on the race that is set before us.

Therefore, to “gird up the loins of your mind” is mental discipline. It means business, decision, action, not idling, not drifting after this and that momentary attraction.

Our life is purposed to shine in *divine dignity*. Our prospects are glorious, our resources are abounding. We should therefore lay aside our laxity. Life should not

be spent in idle reverie. Our movement should not be a careless sauntering. Our rest should not be a thoughtless lounging. Life should be characterized by (1) *clear sight*, (2) *definite thought*, (3) *eager purpose*, and (4) *decided ends*.

Peter gives two commands when the mind had been prepared for action:

1. "Be well-balanced"
2. "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Verse 14: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,"

Paul says the same thing in Romans 12: "that we are not to be conformed to this world."

Flowing out of *right thinking* will come *right living*!

It was due to solid conviction that Joseph fled the scene at Potiphar's house when confronted with immorality. God abundantly blessed Daniel because he purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat.

It is *conviction*, not *conformity*; Peter is looking for in these who follow Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 6:11-12: "But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

I think it would be fitting for us this morning to worship and praise the Lord by singing that praise hymn, "**Open My Eyes That I May See.**" Please join me in verse 1: "*Open my eyes that I may see Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me; Place in my hands the wonderful key That shall unclasp and set me free. Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see; Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!*"

June 9 — Be Holy For I Am Holy (1 Peter 1:15-16)

1 Peter 1:15: "*but according to the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;*"

1 Peter 1:16: "*because it has been written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'*"

Verse 15: "but according to the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;"

F.B. Meyer says:

"Such holiness is evidently possible to us seeing the Holy God has called us to it."

His call involves two facts:

1. His holiness is within our reach.
2. He is prepared to supply all that is necessary to affect in us that to which He calls us.

Lenski says:

"The hand that points us to holiness is the hand that extends its grace to us to make us holy."

Verse 16: "because it has been written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

2 Corinthians 6:17-18: "'Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 7:1: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

1 John 3:2-3: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of **“Open My Eyes That I May See”**: *“Open my mind, that I may read More of Thy love in word and deed. What shall I fear while yet Thou dost lead? Only for light from Thee I plead. Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see; Open my mind, illumine me, Spirit divine!”*

June 10 — Live in Fear – Your Life Down Here (1 Peter 1:17-18)

1 Peter 1:17: *“If you are calling upon as Father the One who is judging impartially according to each individual’s work, live in fear the time of your stay here in a strange land;”*

1 Peter 1:18: *“knowing that not with perishable things as silver or gold were you ransomed from your futile ways of life inherited from your forefathers,”*

Verse 17: “If you are calling upon as Father the One who is judging impartially according to each individual’s work, live in fear the time of your stay here in a strange land;”

The phrase Peter uses to identify the father in this verse is “the One who is judging impartially according to each individual’s work.”

Accountability is a great motivating factor. Peter makes reference to the judgment seat of Christ Paul references in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15: “Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.”

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

In view of this judgment, Peter gives the command to “live in fear the time of your stay here in a strange land.”

The apostle has made the command for us to be holy for two reasons:

1. God Himself is holy
2. We are going to be confronted with our performance as Christians at the judgment seat of Christ.

Verse 18: *“knowing that not with perishable things as silver or gold were you ransomed from your futile ways of life inherited from your forefathers,”*

We have been redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ to holiness.

In this verse, the “perishable things” are silver and gold. These are of no value when we approach a holy God to be “ransomed from your (our) futile way of life inherited from your (our) forefathers.”

One writer said:

“Defend me from the toil of dropping buckets into empty wells, and growing old and drawing nothing up.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Open My Eyes That I May See”**: *“Open my way that I may bring Trophies of grace to Christ, my King; Echoed in love Thy word shall out-ring, Sweet as the note that angels sing. Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see; Open my way, illumine me, Spirit divine!”*

June 11 — The Precious Blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19-20)

1 Peter 1:19: *“but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

1 Peter 1:20: *“Who indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake”*

Verse 19: “but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The word “but” forms the contrast with the previous verse. We have a positive and a negative statement with the two verses. Negatively in verse 18, “knowing that not with perishable things as silver or gold were you ransomed, but” positively in verse 19, “with the precious blood of Christ.”

Hort says of this verse:

“Deliverance through the payment of a costly ransom by another.”

John Hunter in *Living the Christ Filled Life* points out:

We are cleansed by His blood, 1 John 1:7. We have redemption through His blood, Eph. 1:7. We are made nigh by the blood of Jesus, Eph. 2:13. We have been made to be at peace through the blood of His cross, Col. 1:20. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb. 10:19.

Then, Peter uses an Old Testament illustration, “like a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

In John 1:29, John the Baptist says as he saw Jesus coming toward him, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Verse 20: “Who indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake”

He, Jesus Christ, was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” tells us three things:

1. He is eternal.
2. He is God.
3. He was in existence before creation.

Ephesians 1:4-5: “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.”

It was in the purpose of God that Christ would shed His blood as a Lamb without blemish and without spot “before the foundation of the world.”

Matthew 20:28: “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we

might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The word “manifested” becomes clear when we read John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of “**Lead Me to Calvary**”: *“King of my life, I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be; Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow, Lead me to Calvary. Lest I forget Gethsemane; Lest I forget Thine agony; Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lead me to Calvary.”*

June 12 — Purifying Your Souls (1 Peter 1:21-22)

1 Peter 1:21: “*who through Him are believers in God, the one who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God*”

1 Peter 1:22: “*Having purified your souls by means of your obedience to the truth unto genuine (unhypocritical) love of the brethren, love one another from the heart earnestly,*”

Verse 21: “who through Him are believers in God, the one who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God”

The “who” in this verse refers to Christians. “Through Him,” Jesus Christ, “are believer in God.” There is no possibility of a relationship with God apart from Jesus Christ.

John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.’”

1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

In this verse, God is pictured as doing two things:

1. He is the One who raised Him, that is Christ, from the dead.
2. He gave Him, Christ, glory.

John 17:5: “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”

The reason God the Father “raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory,” is “so that your faith and hope might be in God”

Verse 22: “*Having purified your souls by means of your obedience to the truth unto genuine (unhypocritical) love of the brethren, love one another from the heart earnestly,*”

Once again, Peter makes reference to the salvation experience in the phrase “having purified your souls.” This is accomplished “by means of your obedience to the truth.”

Isaiah 1:18: “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’”

The purification of their souls was “by means of your (their) obedience to the truth. As Christians, we are to maintain a holiness and purity of life. It will be “by means of [your] obedience to the truth.”

This purification of our souls results “unto genuine (unhypocritical) love of the brethren, love one another from the heart earnestly.”

Paul writing to the Romans in 12:9-10 says: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give

preference to one another in honor.”

Peter’s plea is for a love without any ulterior motive. I am sure Peter has in mind the experience on the shores of the sea with the risen Christ when he was asked three times whether or not he loved Him.

This morning, please join me in singing verse 4 of **“Lead Me to Calvary”**: *“May I be willing, Lord, to bear Daily my cross for Thee; Even Thy cup of grief to share, Thou hast borne all for me. Lest I forget Gethsemane; Lest I forget Thine agony; Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lead me to Calvary.”*

June 13 — Born Again by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23-25)

1 Peter 1:23: *“having been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God.”*

1 Peter 1:24: *“For, ‘All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls,’”*

1 Peter 1:25: *“‘but the Word of the Lord is abiding forever.’ And this is the word of good news which was preached unto you.”*

Verse 23: *“having been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God.”*

This new birth is not of a “perishable seed” (physical), but of an imperishable (spiritual). The “imperishable” seed is the “living and abiding Word of God.” It is as the Spirit of God takes the *written word* and reveals to us the *living word* that we, by faith, experience the new birth.

Verse 24: *“For, ‘All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls,’”*

John tells us in John 1:12-13: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

The birth spoken about in verse 23 is a spiritual birth and not one of the flesh. If it were of the flesh, the “flesh is as grass and all its glory as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls.”

What Peter is teaching is that the flesh withers and the glory of it falls.

Verse 25: *“‘but the Word of the Lord is abiding forever.’ And this is the word of good news which was preached unto you.”*

In verse 24, we have the *temporary* and the *eternal* in verse 25. Peter says in verse 25, it is the *eternal* that has been preached to you.

The “good news” is that anyone, who by faith receives Jesus Christ, experiences the new birth and has “a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing that wonderful hymn, **“More About Jesus.”** Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: *“More about Jesus would I know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love Who died for me. More about Jesus let me learn, More of His holy will discern; Spirit of God, my Teacher be, Showing the things of Christ to me. More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me.”*

June 14 — Longing for Milk (1 Peter 2:1-3)

1 Peter 2:1: “Wherefore, having put away all malice and all deceit and pretenses and envies and all slanderings,”

1 Peter 2:2: “like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, in order that by it you may grow up in salvation,”

1 Peter 2:3: “for you tasted that the Lord is loving (kind, benevolent).”

Verse 1: “Wherefore, having put away all malice and all deceit and pretenses and envies and all slanderings,”

The apostle is telling them to decisively renounce these things.

James 1:21: “Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”

There are five things Peter mentions we should be putting away. They are (1) “malice,” (2) “deceit,” (3) “pretenses,” (4) “envies” and (5) “slanderings.”

Peter acknowledges there is a process to Christian growth. However, growing in grace has both a negative and a positive side. Hindrances to proper growth must be removed. The evil things that would utterly block any advance in the Christian life must be cut away first to allow for spiritual growth.

Five things of this nature are itemized:

1. “Malice” – a spirit that desires to hurt others, to make others suffer.
2. “Deceit” – or guile, Webster defines the English word as deceitful, cunning.
3. “Pretenses” – or hypocrisies, acts in which one pretends to love, good feeling which he does not at all possess.
4. “Envies” – referring to chagrin or discontent at the excellence or good fortune of another person.
5. “Slanderings” – the evil speakings of others.

Verse 2: “like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, in order that by it you may grow up in salvation,”

With all of the negative things out of the way in verse 1, it is now possible to develop a healthy appetite for things spiritual and to begin to grow.

Two vital ingredients for our spiritual growth are (1) *right thinking* and (2) *an appetite for the Word*.

We receive two commands in verses 1 and 2:

1. To put away the five things in verse 1
2. To long for this spiritual milk in verse 2, a reference to the living and abiding Word of God of chapter 1:23.

The purpose behind these commands is “in order that by it you may grow up in salvation.”

Only as we feed on the Word will we grow spiritually!

2 Peter 3:18: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Verse 3: “for you tasted that the Lord is loving (kind, benevolent).”

In this verse, Peter gives the reason why they should long for the “pure, spiritual milk” of the Word: “for you tasted that the Lord is loving (kind, benevolent).”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 3 and 4 of **“More About Jesus”**: *“More about Jesus, in His Word, Holding communion with my Lord; Hearing His voice in ev’ry line, Making each faithful saying mine. More about Jesus; on His throne, Riches in glory all His own; More of His kingdom’s sure*

increase; *More of His coming, Prince of Peace. More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me.*”

June 15 — Living Stones (1 Peter 2:4-5)

1 Peter 2:4: *“Toward whom we are drawing near a living stone, having been, it is true, rejected by men, but with God, elect, precious,”*

1 Peter 2:5: *“and you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

Verse 4: “Toward whom we are drawing near a living stone, having been, it is true, rejected by men, but with God, elect, precious,”

Something “precious” is of great value. The world sees a rock and God sees a diamond.

The Lord Jesus is called “a living stone.” “Having been, it is true, rejected by men,” then “but” forms the contrast, “with God, elect, precious.”

Jesus spoke these words after Peter’s great confession, “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!”

Ephesians 2:20-22: “Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Verse 5: “and you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

God is building us! He is shaping and readying us for use in His construction.

Peter has referred to Christ as the “living stone” and now Christians are also “living stones.” As Christians, we are a building, “a spiritual house.” We are those “living stones” together with Christ. If we do not fit into our place, carry our load and fulfill our responsibility; the “spiritual house” is structurally weakened as a result.

“Living stones,” made alive by the new birth, refined and polished by the testings of the present day, fitted into a “spiritual house” with other “living stones.”

The apostle continues to say we “as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

“Built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices” of our *bodies*, our *belongings* and our *blessings*.

This final phrase “acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” refers to the spiritual sacrifices to a holy God. They are only acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ and His blood which was shed on our behalf.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing a hymn devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, **“He Is So Precious to Me.”** Please sing verse 1 with me: *“So precious is Jesus, my Saviour, my King; His praise all the day long with rapture I sing; To Him in my weakness for strength I can cling, For He is so precious to me. For He is so precious, so precious to me; For He is so precious, so precious to me. ’Tis Heaven below, My Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.”*

June 16 — A Precious Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6)

1 Peter 2:6: “*Because of this it is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, one chosen out, a precious cornerstone, and the one who is believing on Him shall by no means be disappointed.’*”

Verse 6: “Because of this it is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, one chosen out, a precious cornerstone, and the one who is believing on Him shall by no means be disappointed.’”

Peter fortifies what he has been saying in verse 5 with a Scripture passage. “Because of this” refers back to the truth taught in the previous verse, “it is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, one chosen out, a precious cornerstone.’”

The apostle does not recognize from the Matthew 16 passage he is the stone upon which the church is going to be built. In these verses, he clarifies the “precious cornerstone,” the stone that holds all of the other stones together, is Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the “precious cornerstone.” Peter adds “and the one who is believing on Him shall by no means be disappointed.”

Our *hope* in Him is a *living hope* and we “shall by no means be disappointed.” The reality of what He has in store for us exceeds anything we can comprehend.

1 Corinthians 2:9: “But just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’”

Please join me this morning in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of “**He Is So Precious to Me**”: “*I stand on the mountain of blessing at last, No cloud in the heavens a shadow to cast; His smile is upon me; the valley is past, For He is so precious to me. For He is so precious, so precious to me; For He is so precious, so precious to me. ‘Tis Heaven below, my Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.*”

June 17 — A Head Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:7-8)

1 Peter 2:7: “*To you therefore who are believing is the preciousness, but to those who are unbelievers. ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this [stone] became a head cornerstone.’*”

1 Peter 2:8: “*and, ‘a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock which arouses opposition;’ for they are stumbling at the Word, being an unbeliever, to which indeed they were appointed.*”

Verse 7: “To you therefore who are believing is the preciousness, but to those who are unbelievers. ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this [stone] became a head cornerstone.’”

“To you” is referring to Christians “who are believing” this “preciousness.” Even as the “head cornerstone” is precious to God the Father, so He is precious to us “who are believing.” However, the opposite is true of “those who are unbelievers.” He is “the stone which the builders rejected.”

This stone which is precious to the believer and rejected by the unbeliever has become the cornerstone. Jesus Christ was cast aside and rejected by the world, but in the plan of God, He now has a place of supreme importance, the “head cornerstone.”

The world flings the Savior aside, but God the Father has chosen for Him the most honorable and important place in His building.

Isaiah 28:16: “So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion,

tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.”

Psalm 118: 22-24: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Verse 8: “and, ‘a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock which arouses opposition,’ for they are stumbling at the Word, being an unbeliever, to which indeed they were appointed.”

This “stone,” Christ, “causes men to stumble” who do not believe in Him as the Son of God. The Lord Jesus, this “rock,” “arouses opposition” which is quite evident as you read through the Gospels. The “opposition” arose from those who were unwilling to accept Christ for who He was.

The last phrase in this verse says, “to which indeed they were appointed.”

2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

It is not the desire of God the Father that any should perish, however, because of His foreknowledge; He knows there will be those who will “stumble” at the “stone.” They will be opposed to the “rock.” As a result, they will seal their own condemnation by rejecting Jesus Christ.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of “**He Is So Precious to Me**”: *“He stood at my heart’s door ‘mid sunshine and rain, And patiently waited an entrance to gain; What shame that so long He entreated in vain, For He is so precious to me. For He is so precious, so precious to me; For He is so precious, so precious to me. ‘Tis Heaven below, my Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.”*

June 18 — God’s Own Possession (1 Peter 2:9-10)

1 Peter 2:9: “*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people that have become [God’s own] possession, in order that you might proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*”

1 Peter 2:10: “*who at one time were not a people, but now are God’s people; who once had not found mercy, but now have found mercy.*”

Verse 9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people that have become [God’s own] possession, in order that you might proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

The word “but” forms a contrast to the previous verse. Peter lists four characteristics of Christians:

1. They are “a chosen race.” In verse 1, he referred to them as “chosen exiles,” now as “a chosen race.” Christians by their relationship to Jesus Christ, through the new birth, are “a chosen race.”
2. They are “a royal priesthood.” The spiritual sacrifices which we bring are the sacrifices of our *body*, our *belongings* and our *blessings*.
3. They are “a holy nation.” Even as Israel was a nation in the Old Testament, uniquely set apart for God, so the Church, the Body of Christ, becomes a nation of people uniquely related to God the Father through Jesus Christ.
4. They are “a people that have become [God’s own] possession.”

Barclay says:

“Christians are a people for God especially to possess. It frequently happens that the value of a thing lies in the fact someone has possessed it.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

Now, the purpose is given for our being “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people that have become [God’s own] possession.” It is “in order that you might proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Verse 10: “who at one time were not a people, but now are God’s people; who once had not found mercy, but now have found mercy.”

In this verse, Peter uses two negative and positive approaches to show what has taken place in our lives since we have become Christians. Negatively, there was a time when we “were not a people, but” positively, “now are God’s people.” Negatively, there was a time when we “had not found mercy, but” positively, “now have found mercy.”

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 4 of **“He Is So Precious to Me”**: *“I praise Him because He appointed a place Where, some day, thro’ faith in His wonderful grace, I know I shall see Him, shall look on His face, For He is so precious to me. For He is so precious, so precious to me; For He is so precious, so precious to me. ’Tis Heaven below, my Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.”*

June 19 — The Desires of the Flesh (1 Peter 2:11)

1 Peter 2:11: *“Beloved, I am begging you as aliens and exiles to keep away from the desires of the flesh, which are waging war against your soul.”*

Verse 11: “Beloved, I am begging you as aliens and exiles to keep away from the desires of the flesh, which are waging war against your soul.”

Peter uses the title “beloved” to show his love for these fellow Christians. How tender and thoughtful to refer to them in this way. We also notice he is begging them rather than coldly commanding them. It is a characteristic of love to plead with the one loved.

F.B. Meyer in speaking of Peter’s approach to them says:

“How tenderly these exhortations are expressed.”

Lenski points out:

“These exhortations deal with our relationships and thus naturally follow those that emanate from our relationship to God.”

The apostle once again refers to Christians as “aliens and exiles.” He references “aliens” because they are living in a strange land and “exiles” because they are away from heaven, their eternal home.

He pleads for them “to keep away from the desires of the flesh, which are waging war against your soul.”

In several places in his epistles, Paul speaks of this conflict going on between the flesh and the spirit within us.

Galatians 5:16-17: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the

desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”

Change always produces a greater closeness when it is produced by the Spirit of God.

Our flesh within us has strong desires motivated by selfishness.

James also speaks of this conflict in James 4:1-2: “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.”

Romans 13:13-14: “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”

I find myself singing a wonderful hymn we used to sing back in college, “**Sitting at the Feet of Jesus.**” Please join me in singing verse 1: “*Sitting at the feet of Jesus, O, what words I hear Him say! Happy place! so near, so precious! May it find me there each day! Sitting at the feet of Jesus, I would look upon the past; For His love has been so gracious, It has won my heart at last.*”

June 20 — Beautiful Life (1 Peter 2:12)

1 Peter 2:12: “*Having your manner of life among the Gentiles beautiful in its goodness, in order that in case they are speaking against you as those who are doing evil, as a result of your good deeds, which they are watching, they may glorify God on the day of visitation.*”

Verse 12: “Having your manner of life among the Gentiles beautiful in its goodness, in order that in case they are speaking against you as those who are doing evil, as a result of your good deeds, which they are watching, they may glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Whereas we had the *negative command* in verse 11: “keep away from the desires of the flesh,” we have the *positive command* in verse 12: “having your manner of life among the Gentiles beautiful in its goodness.”

In the Galatians passage, Paul also describes how life can be beautiful when it is in the control of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law.”

The reason for this command is given in the next phrase: “in order that in case they are speaking against you as those who are doing evil, as a result of your good deeds, which they are watching, they may glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Francis Schaeffer in his book, *Death in the City*, says:

If we are Christians and do not have upon us the calling to respond to the loss of the lost, and the compassion to those of our kind, our orthodoxy is ugly and it stinks. And it not only stinks in the presence of the hippy, it stinks in the presence of anybody who is an honest man, and more than that I'll tell you something else, orthodoxy without compassion stinks with God.

Peter's main concern is living the life rather than liping it. It is his hope that as “they are watching they may glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**Sitting at the Feet of Jesus**”: *“Sitting at the feet of Jesus, Where can mortal be more blest? There I lay my sins and sorrows, And when weary, find sweet rest; Sitting at the feet of Jesus, There I love to weep and pray, While I from His fullness gather Grace and comfort ev’ry day.”*

June 21 — Be Submissive (1 Peter 2:13-14)

1 Peter 2:13: “*Be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake, whether to a king as one who is supreme,*”

1 Peter 2:14: “*or to governors as those sent by Him to punish those who are doing evil and to give praise to those who are doing good.*”

Verse 13: “Be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake, whether to a king as one who is supreme,”

We need to focus on the word “every” at this point.

Subject to authority. The natural human tendency is to go our own way and live life as we please, subjecting ourselves to the authority of no man.

Reese points out:

“The verb “to be subject” is an aorist imperative as though Peter were saying, settle it once for all that this is to be the course of action for you to follow.”

Many people believe in law and order as long as they can lay down the law and give the orders.

Fulton Sheen says:

“Civilization is always in danger when those who have never learned to obey are given the right to command.”

OURS IS NOT TO REASON WHY,
OURS IS NOT TO MAKE REPLY,
OURS IS BUT TO DO AND DIE.

The reason given for this command of submission is “for the Lord’s sake.”

Verse 14: “or to governors as those sent by Him to punish those who are doing evil and to give praise to those who are doing good.”

In this verse, Peter gives the chain of command of our responsibility, whether it is to the “king as one who is supreme (the supreme authority)” or “to governors as those sent by Him” to do two things:

1. “To punish those who are doing evil”
2. “To give praise to those who are doing good”

In other words, Peter instructs we are to be submissive to those over us in authority and not just to be submissive to the greatest authority.

Stu Weber in *Four Pillars of a Man’s Heart: Bringing Strength Into Balance* says:

I’m reminded of the local deputy sheriff I recently saw on the nightly news. The poor guy was in a hurry to get home after his shift and he had to make a quick stop on the way to pick up a few groceries. In his haste, he pulled his squad car up to the curb and dashed into the store. What he hadn’t noticed was that he’d parked his car in a “no parking” zone. Moments later, when he came out of the store, he sheepishly noticed the sign. What to do?

No hesitation in this good man! He simply pulled out his pad and, there in front of the smiling passerby, wrote himself a seventeen-dollar ticket. The passerby,

buoyed by his consistency, applauded. And you've got to believe they will more readily accept their own lumps from this authority figure whose justice is consistent—even when it hurts.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise by singing verse 3 of **“Sitting at the Feet of Jesus”**: *“Bless me, O my Savior, bless me, As I sit low at Thy feet; O look down in love upon me, Let me see Thy face so sweet; Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus, Make me holy as He is; May I prove I’ve been with Jesus, Who is all my righteousness.”*

June 22 — The Will of God (1 Peter 2:15-16)

1 Peter 2:15: *“For so is the will of God, that by doing good you might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”*

1 Peter 2:16: *“As free and not as those who are using their freedom as a covering for evil but as bondslaves of God.”*

Verse 15: “For so is the will of God, that by doing good you might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

The first reason for the command to “be subject to every human institution” was “for the Lord’s sake.” In verse 15, we have the second reason: “for so is the will of God.”

What a powerful second argument for Christian’s submission to every human institution! It is God’s desire that this be done.

What is “the will of God, that by doing good you might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men?”

In Peter’s day as well as in our own, there are many who were verbalizing complaints and criticisms of Christianity without having all the facts. At this point, a good rule to follow is to remember a man who does not have all the facts has no right to an opinion.

Verse 16: “As free and not as those who are using their freedom as a covering for evil but as bondslaves of God.”

It is as we submit to the authority over us we experience *true freedom*.

In this verse, we again have a negative and a positive statement. Negatively, “not as those who are using their freedom as a covering for evil, but” positively, “as bondslaves of God.”

Freedom provides the opportunity for us to achieve, but it also permits us to be (1) lazy, (2) unconcerned, and (3) to accomplish selfish ends.

Peter uses the positive statement to emphasize being “bondslaves of God,” people who have no rights of their own. They are those who have learned the lesson of submission to every human institution for the Lord’s sake. As a result, they are truly free because they have submitted to the authority over them.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 3 of **“Jesus is the Joy of Living”**: *“Heav’nly wisdom He provides me, Grace to keep my spirit free; In His own sweet way He guides me When the path I cannot see. Jesus is the Joy of Living, He’s the King of Life to me; Unto Him my all I’m giving, His forevermore to be. I will do what He commands me, Anywhere He leads I’ll go (I’ll go); Jesus is the Joy of Living, He’s the dearest Friend I know.”*

June 23 — Honor All Men (1 Peter 2:17)

1 Peter 2:17: “Honor all men; be loving the brotherhood, be fearing God, be honoring the king.”

Verse 17: “Honor all men; be loving the brotherhood, be fearing God, be honoring the king.”

Gaebelein in commenting on this verse says:

“Here there is what we might call a four-point summary of Christian duty.”

How do we live out our relationship to authority:

1. “Honor all men” – or respect all men. God so loved the world.
2. “Be loving the brotherhood” – this is agape, sacrificially loving your brothers and sisters in Christ in the power and fruitage of the Spirit.
3. “Be fearing God” – to respect, surrender and be obedient.
4. “Be honoring the king” – being a law-abiding citizen.

It is only as we take our position “as bondslaves of God” that we are able to fulfill the four-fold commands of this verse.

1 Corinthians 9:19, 22: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”

Keith Miller’s prayer in *Habitation of Dragons* would be appropriate:

Lord thank you that you have not called upon me to be all powerful or omnipresent but only to be a part of a larger family; a team. Forgive me when I try to pitch, catch, hit and manage the entire team all at the same time. But help me to have enough sense and courage to play the position you have given me in this changing world, even if it is not in the big leagues. Somehow in my megalomania it is hard for me to participate when I cannot lead or when I cannot at least see the hope of solving the whole problem through my efforts. Help me to learn the value to you, of a cup of cold water where it’s really needed and how to use a bucket to wash some tired smelly feet without an audience.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 1 and 2 of “**Jesus is Lord of All**”: “*All my tomorrows, all my past - Jesus is Lord of all. I’ve quit my struggles, contentment at last! Jesus is Lord of all. All of my conflicts, all my thought - Jesus is Lord of all. His love wins the battles I could not have fought; Jesus is Lord of all. King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Jesus is Lord of all; All my possessions and all my life, Jesus is Lord of all. Lord of all.*”

June 24 — This is Approved (1 Peter 2:18-19)

1 Peter 2:18: “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are kind and gentle, but also to those who are harsh (unjust).”

1 Peter 2:19: “For this is approved, if through a spiritual awareness of God, he is enduring pain while suffering unjustly.”

Verse 18: “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are kind and gentle, but also to those who are harsh (unjust).”

Peter is stating the disposition of authority does not provide excuses for not submitting.

The subject of submission is continued on into chapter 3. In this verse, we find the apostle is commanding servants to be submissive to their masters. This submission is

taken a step further in this verse. It is not only to be submissive to those “who are kind and gentle, but also to those who are harsh (unjust).”

How many times have you heard someone say they won’t submit unless the other person deserves it or they would submit if the other person would be nice?

We’ve got to understand God loves a *cheerful submitter*.

It is well to note this submission is to be “with all respect” and not to be done grudgingly or with a feeling of necessity because of your relationship to Jesus Christ.

Verse 19: “For this is approved, if through a spiritual awareness of God, he is enduring pain while suffering unjustly.”

This has God’s stamp of approval upon it.

2 Timothy 2:15: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”

“For this is approved.” This submission “to your masters with all respect,” whether they are kind or harsh, “is approved” in the sight of God.

I would like to sneak in a little piece of cowboy poetry. This is *The Joy of His Embrace* by G.T. Burton:

WHEN THE PROBLEMS OF MY EARTHLY LIFE
ARE MORE THAN I CAN STAND,
AND I LEARN WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME
IS A HEAVY HARSH DEMAND.

I FIND MY LORD IS EVER NEAR
WITH COMFORT FOR THE DAY,
AND PROBLEMS THAT HAVE PLAGUED MY LIFE
SO QUICKLY FADE AWAY.

THO’ HE COMFORTS ME ALONG MY PATH
THIS WORLD WILL NOT RELENT,
EACH DAY I FACE ANEW THE THREAT
OF PROBLEMS LIFE HAS SENT.

BUT WHEN THE SILVER CORD OF LIFE
HAS FINALLY REACHED THE END,
THE GLORY OF HIS PERFECT LOVE
WILL MAKE ME COMPREHEND.

EVERY PROBLEM, CARE, AND THREAT
WILL BE CONQUERED BY HIS GRACE.
AND I’LL SPEND A GRAND ETERNITY
IN THE JOY OF HIS EMBRACE.

This morning let’s worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 3 “**Jesus is Lord of All**”: “*All of my longings, all my dreams - Jesus is Lord of all. All of my failures His power redeems; Jesus is Lord of all. King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Jesus is Lord of all; All my possessions and all my life, Jesus is Lord of all. Lord of all.*”

June 25 — Commendable in the Sight of God (1 Peter 2:20)

1 Peter 2:20: “For what credit is it, if when you are sinning and if you are enduring being beaten? But if when you are doing good and suffering for it and this you are enduring, this is commendable in the sight of God.”

Verse 20: “For what credit is it, if when you are sinning and if you are enduring being beaten? But if when you are doing good and suffering for it and this you are enduring, this is commendable in the sight of God.”

“For what credit is it, if when you are sinning and if you are enduring being beaten?” The obvious answer to the question is *there is no credit because you are only getting just payment for your sin. It is just getting what you deserve.*

The word “but” forms the contrast. “If when you are doing good and suffering for it and this you are enduring, this is commendable in the sight of God.”

Once again, Peter states the same principle in verse 19. If you’re (1) “doing good and suffering” and (2) “enduring” rather than striking out or striking back, “this is commendable in the sight of God.” It was “approved” in verse 19 and “commendable” in verse 20.

Jan Karon in her book, *A Continual Feast*, quotes Oswald Chambers:

“If we are going to be made into wine, we will have to be crushed; you cannot drink grapes.”

Joni Eareckson Tada wrote:

“Suffering hurries the heart homeward.”

Jerry White in *Making Peace With Reality: Ordering Your Life In a Chaotic World* says:

“The words of a song express it well: Why do new waves of trouble keep pounding around me before yesterday’s waves ebb away.”

Bill Bright in his book, *Promises: A Daily Guide to Supernatural Living*, said:

Fanny Crosby, the hymn writer, gave us more than eight thousand gospel songs. Although blinded at the age of six weeks, she never held any bitterness in her heart because of it.

“I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showed so many other gifts upon you,” a friend once said to her.

“Do you know,” she responded quickly, “that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind.”

“Why?” asked the astounded clergyman.

“Because,” she replied, “when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning with a very familiar, old hymn, “**Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.**” Please join me in singing verses 1 and 3: “*What a fellowship, what a joy divine, Leaning on the everlasting arms; What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, Leaning on the everlasting arms. What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, Leaning on the everlasting arms. Leaning, leaning, Safe and secure from all alarms; Leaning, leaning, Leaning on the everlasting arms.*”

June 26 — Follow His Footprints (1 Peter 2:21)

1 Peter 2:21: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you a model to imitate in order that you might follow in His footprints.”

Verse 21: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you a model to imitate in order that you might follow in His footprints.”

Peter gives the reason for the principle stated in verses 19 and 20: “For to this you have been called.” There have been three callings in Peter’s epistle:

1. In 1 Peter 1:15: we were *called* to be holy in all of our conduct.
2. In 1 Peter 2:9: we were *called* out of darkness into his marvelous light.
3. In 1 Peter 2:21: we have been *called* to suffer.

John Ortberg in *God Is Closer Than You Think* says:

We generally associate well-being with the presence of God and assume that suffering means someone has done something wrong. No one writes a book called *Where Is God When It Feels Good?* No one wins the lottery and cries out, “Why me, God?” And of course, it is true that pain was not part of God’s original plan, and the day is coming when he will wipe every tear from every eye.

Sheila Walsh in *Life is Tough But God is Faithful: How to See God’s Love in Difficult Times* says:

When the heat of problems and pain burns into our very souls, we can crawl away and hide when it gets too hot, or we can choose to be living sacrifices who stay on the altar for His sake.

John Eldredge in *Wild at Heart: Discovering The Secret of a Man’s Soul* says:

“As Rick Joyner says, ‘It is an honor to be wounded in the service of the Lord.’”

Albert Wells in his book, *Inspiring Quotations*, says:

“Suffering does two things for the Christian that could not otherwise be so well accomplished: It cultivates humility and develops strength.”

Philippians 1:29: “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

Psalms 119:67, 71: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.”

The reason given in the latter part of the verse is “because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you a model to imitate” with the purpose behind the model, “in order that you might follow in His footprints.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of “**Footsteps of Jesus**”:
“Sweetly, Lord, have we heard Thee calling, Come, follow Me! And we see where Thy footprints falling Lead us to Thee. Footprints of Jesus, that make the pathway glow; We will follow the steps of Jesus where’er they go.”

June 27 — Without Sin (1 Peter 2:22-23)

1 Peter 2:22: “He committed no sin, nothing false was found in His mouth.”

1 Peter 2:23: “When He was being reviled, He was not reviling in return; and who while suffering, was not threatening, but was committing Himself to the One who is judging righteously.”

Verse 22: “He committed no sin, nothing false was found in His mouth.”

There are five things said about the model we are to follow in these next verses:

1. “He committed no sin.”

2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Hebrews 4:15: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

2. "Nothing false was found in His mouth."

To bear a false witness, or to lie, was considered breaking the law. Since this would be sin, and He committed no sin, it is obvious nothing false was found in His mouth.

Verse 23: "When He was being reviled, He was not reviling in return; and who while suffering, was not threatening, but was committing Himself to the One who is judging righteously."

3. "When He was being reviled, He was not reviling in return."

In Acts 8 Philip finds the Ethiopian eunuch reading in Isaiah 53:7-8: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken." Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this Scripture told him the good news of Jesus.

4. "Who while suffering, was not threatening, but was committing Himself to the One who is judging righteously."

We have the illustration of Jesus Christ, the model, fulfilling the principle stated earlier in the study: "For this is approved, if through a spiritual awareness of God, he is enduring pain while suffering unjustly."

We have a negative and a positive statement in this fourth characteristic about the Christ whom we are following. Negatively, "Who while suffering, was not threatening, but" positively, "was committing Himself to the One who is judging righteously."

It is recorded at the cross of Calvary as the spikes were being driven into His hands and feet, and the cross was lifted between heaven and earth, the Savior was in prayer saying, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The final words from the cross were also a prayer to the Father, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

He "was committing Himself to the One who is judging righteously," the One who never makes a wrong judgment, the One who is always just, right and fair in that which He does.

Let's worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing a very familiar hymn, **"Jesus Paid It All."** Please join me in singing verses 1 and 2: *"I hear the Saviour say, 'Thy Strength indeed is small; Child of weakness, watch and pray, Find in Me thine all in all.' Lord, now indeed I find Thy pow'r and Thine alone, Can change the leper's spots, And melt the heart of stone. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."*

June 28 — Jesus Paid It All (1 Peter 2:24)

1 Peter 2:24: *"Who Himself carried our sins to the cross in His body, in order that we having died to sins, might live to righteousness, by His wound you have been healed."*

Verse 24: "Who Himself carried our sins to the cross in His body, in order that we having died to sins, might live to righteousness, by His wound you have been healed."

5. "Who Himself carried our sins to the cross in His body."

He became our sin bearer.

HE SUFFERED IN OUR STEAD,
HE SAVED HIS PEOPLE THUS;
THE CURSE THAT FELL UPON HIS HEAD
WAS DUE BY RIGHT TO US;
THE STORM THAT BOWED HIS BLESSED HEAD
IS HUSHED FOREVER NOW,
AND REST DIVINE IS MINE INSTEAD
WHILE GLORY CROWNS HIS BROW.

His purpose in carrying our sins to the cross: “in order that we having died to sins, might live to righteousness.”

Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”

The last statement in this verse is “by His wound you have been healed” is taken from Isaiah 53:4-5: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“Jesus Paid It All”**:
“For nothing good have I Whereby Thy grace to claim, I’ll wash my garments white In the blood of Calv’ry’s Lamb. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.”

June 29 — Sheep Going Astray (1 Peter 2:25)

1 Peter 2:25: *“For you were as sheep going astray, but now have been turned back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”*

Verse 25: “For you were as sheep going astray, but now have been turned back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

Peter states the reason for Jesus Christ being made sin for us. In the past, we were “as sheep going astray.” Isaiah 53:6: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

“You were” speaks of the *past*. “Now” speaks of the *present*, “have been turned back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

One of Peter’s favorite subjects was the subject of redemption and Christ’s death on the cross for us. He could recall the early events leading up to the crucifixion and the horrible times of denial he experienced at the critical moment.

In verses 24 and 25, we see:

1. The purpose for redemption: “in order that we having died to sins, might live to righteousness.”
2. The price of redemption: “by His wound you have been healed.”
3. The provision of redemption: “now have been turned back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

How far should my submission go? All the way to the cross! “Father, if it be possible, nevertheless, not My will by Thine be done.”

In a real sense, this was Peter’s personal experience. I’m sure he was thinking of the

shores of Galilee and the great Shepherd of the sheep asking him whether or not he loved Him. Then, Jesus instructing him to be feeding His sheep.

How really willing are we to follow where He leads and to go even the path of suffering which He has trod?

Ron Dunn said:

“Not long ago, I visited with a delightful Christian who, when we said our good-byes, fired this parting shot: ‘Love God! Hate sin! And watch out for trucks!’”

Craig Barnes in *When God Interrupts: Finding New Life Through Unwanted Change* says:

“We do not live by faith in God’s intervention. We live by faith in God’s grace when there is no intervention.”

Patrick Shaughnessy said:

“There are four things you can do with the hurts that come into your life, nurse them; curse them; rehearse them; or reverse them.”

Joni Eareckson Tada says:

“When God denies your dearest desire, get ready to open up your heart even wider, for He will become that desire Himself.”

Fenelon in *The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics* says:

Suffering is necessary for all of us. You will be purified by dying to your own desires and will. Let yourself die! You have excellent opportunities for this to happen – don’t waste them.

David Roper in his book, *In Quietness and Confidence: The Making of a Man of God*, says:

Suffering is not an evil to be avoided, but a call to be embraced: “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him.” Philippians 1:29

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 4 of “**Jesus Paid It All**”: “*And when, before the throne, I stand in Him complete, ‘Jesus died my soul to save,’ My lips shall still repeat. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.*”

June 30 — Won Without a Word (1 Peter 3:1)

1 Peter 3:1: “*In like manner, wives, be putting yourselves in subjection to your own husbands in order that even though certain ones are disbelieving the Word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.*”

Verse 1: “In like manner, wives, be putting yourselves in subjection to your own husbands in order that even though certain ones are disbelieving the Word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

Peter turns to marriage this morning as we finish our final study for the month of June. I’m reminded of the *Our Daily Bread* with these quotes:

“Husbands and Wives, remember love can stand anything, but neglect.”

“Many marriages would be happier if the husband tried as hard to keep his wife as he did to win her.”

Put Christ first if you want your marriage to last.

In her book, *It’s My Turn*, Ruth Bell Graham says:

I pity the married couple who expect too much from one another. It is a foolish woman who expects her husband to be to her what only Jesus Christ can be: always ready to forgive, totally understanding, unendingly patient, invariably tender and loving, unfailing in every area, anticipating every need, and making more than adequate provision. Such expectations put a man under an impossible strain.

In the opening statement of this third chapter, Peter uses the phrase “in like manner,” referring back to 2:18: “Servants, be submissive to your masters.” Now, “in like manner, wives, be putting yourselves in subjection to your own husbands.”

The purpose for this admonition to the wives to “be putting themselves into subjection to their own husbands” is seen in the next phrase, “in order that even though certain ones are disbelieving the Word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

The wife’s greatest witness is by her submission.

How is this witness of the wife to take place? Peter says “they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.” A husband can be won simply by observing the beautiful behavior of their wives.

In Augustine’s confession regarding his mother, he said:

When she came to marriageable age, she was bestowed upon a husband and served him as her lord and she did all she could to win him to Thee, speaking to him of Thee by her deportment, whereby Thou madest her beautiful and reverently loveable and admirable to her husband. Finally, when her husband was now at the end of his earthly life, she won him unto Thee.

The word for “disbelieving” in the text is fairly strong and would convey the idea there is the possibility of open opposition here in the entrenchment of the husband in rebellion against the truth.

Barclay’s comment on the wife’s responsibility:

By the silent preaching of the loveliness of her life she must break down the barriers of prejudice, hostility and win her husband for her new master. She must be submissive.

The extent of submission on the part of the wife has been illustrated by the model we’ve looked at back in chapter 2 in the person of Jesus Christ.

Ray Stedman, in commenting on the statement, says:

“Without a word on the part of the wife” does not mean she is never to speak to him. It simply means she is not to nag him. It is clearly nagging that is in view here. I heard of a man who called his wife Peg although she really had another name. Someone asked him why he did this and he said, “Well, Peg is short for Pegasus, and Pegasus was an immortal horse, and an immortal horse is an everlasting nag. That’s why I call my wife Peg.”

I love the songs of the 40s. Kitty Kallen sings a wonderful song, “Little Things Mean a Lot”:

BLOW ME A KISS ACROSS THE ROOM
SAY I LOOK NICE WHEN I’M NOT
TOUCH MY HAIR AS YOU PASS MY CHAIR
LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

GIVE ME YOUR ARM AS WE CROSS THE STREET
CALL ME AT SIX ON THE DOT
A LINE A DAY, WHEN YOU'RE FAR AWAY
LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

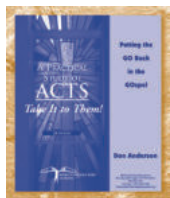
DON'T HAVE TO BUY ME DIAMONDS OR PEARLS
CHAMPAGNE, SABLES OR SUCH
I NEVER CARED MUCH FOR DIAMONDS AND PEARLS
'CAUSE HONESTLY, HONEY, THEY JUST COST MONEY

GIVE ME A HAND WHEN I'VE LOST THE WAY
GIVE ME YOUR SHOULDER TO CRY ON
WHETHER THE DAY IS BRIGHT OR GRAY
GIVE ME YOUR HEART TO RELY ON

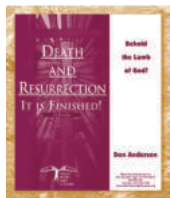
SEND ME THE WARMTH OF A SECRET SMILE
TO SHOW ME YOU HAVEN'T FORGOT
FOR NOW AND FOREVER, THAT'S ALWAYS AND EVER
HONEY, LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

For our time this morning of worship and praise, I want us to sing a song made famous by the Promise Keepers. Let's sing together **"Let It Be Said of Us"**: *"Let it be said of us That the Lord was our passion, That with gladness we bore Every cross we were given; That we fought the good fight, That we finished the course; Knowing within us the power of the risen Lord. Let it be said of us, We were marked by forgiveness; We were known by our love And delighted in meekness; We were ruled by His peace, Heeding unity's call, Joined as one body That Christ would be seen by all. Let the cross be our glory And the Lord be our song! By mercy made holy, by the Spirit made strong. Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song! 'Till the likeness of Jesus be through us made known. Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song."*

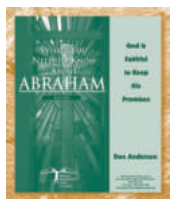
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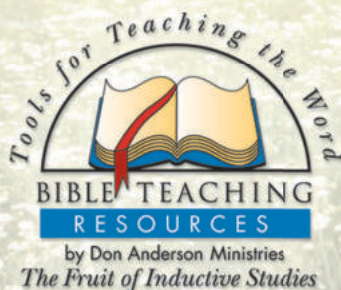
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